

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The Home Front Journal: The *Ladies' Home Journal* and the Making and Distribution of American World War I Propaganda.

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This thesis attempts to exemplify how mass media outlets played an integral role in the creation of the voluntaristic mindset that characterized the American home front during World War I by using the *Ladies' Home Journal* as a case study. Due to the limited size of the federal government in 1918, war time agencies such as the Committee on Public Information and the Food Administration were reliant on assistance from the private sector to direct a diverse population towards unified goals. Commercial publications, such as the *Journal*, were pivotal in the successes of selective service, thrift, and numerous other issues of mobilization during the Great War. The *Ladies' Home Journal* was chosen for this study because it was the largest magazine of the time, and remained so throughout the war, and because of its efforts towards aiding the war effort.

This study examines how certain key individuals within the *Journal's* leadership grew the publication into the largest, and one of the most influential, magazines prior to America's entrance into World War I, as well as select reform attempts undertaken by these individuals using the magazine prior to 1918. From there, it outlines how the *Journal* propagated and enhanced war messages from various federal agencies, completely shifting its focus towards achieving the various aims of mobilization on the home front. Finally, since the *Journal* was so influential in many American homes, this paper will also explain how the magazine reconciled the focus change with its readers.

Keywords: World War I, Edward Bok, *Ladies' Home Journal*, Propaganda, Volunteerism, Home front.

THE HOME FRONT JOURNAL:
THE *LADIES' HOME JOURNAL* AND THE MAKING AND DISTRIBUTION OF
AMERICAN WORLD WAR I PROPAGANDA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	i
 <u>CHAPTER</u>	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 REFORMING WOMEN’S PERIODICALS.....	7
3 ASSISTING UNCLE SAM.....	41
4 REFORMING THE HOME.....	65
5 CONCLUSION.....	87
6 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	94

Introduction

When America entered the Great War in 1917, numerous obstacles had to be overcome before mobilization could take place. Perhaps the most challenging was to create a united home front to support the war effort. The nation was divided between its polyglot populations of ethnics, many of whom were split in loyalty to their homelands among belligerent powers during the war. First generation immigrants from nations now considered to be America's enemies felt conflicted when deciding which belligerent to support. Pacifist groups, such as the Mennonites, also posed a problem for government authorities. Isolationism was the final major factor hindering American unity. Many Americans viewed World War I as Europe's war, as non-intervention in European affairs had been America's primary foreign relations doctrine since the nation's inception. President Woodrow Wilson faced immense problems on the home front concerning support for the war effort. It would require more than the tools in Wilson's immediate disposal to achieve full mobilization and unity.¹

While World War I resulted in a substantial increase in the federal government's power, in 1917 it was not capable of a full mobilization campaign without substantial aid from the private sector. Government agencies and programs accomplished a great deal towards home front mobilization, but their successes were often joint efforts with the private sector and multitudes of citizen volunteers. Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo's Liberty Bond sales program and Herbert Hoover's calls for food conservation as head of the U.S. Food Administration are two of the most well-known examples of

1. David Kennedy, *Over Here, The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45-74.

federally influenced volunteer programs during World War I. Instead of examining the multiple facets of volunteerism that occurred in America during the war, this thesis will inquire how America's private sector helped instill the voluntarist mindset into a population adamantly against the war before 1917.

Federal agencies and officials who championed public persuasion such as George Creel and the Committee of Public Information (CPI) will receive some attention in this study but will not be the primary focus since they have been thoroughly and adequately examined in prior works such as Stephen Vaughn's *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information*, Ronald Schaffer's *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*, and David Kennedy's comprehensive *Over Here, The First World War and American Society*.² Still, Creel's, Bernays', and other propagandists' opinions on what constituted propaganda are imperative to understanding the goals and the means of the CPI. Creel maintained that his committee was devoted to educating the public. He claimed that the population needed to be informed, "not manipulated, not tricked, and not wheedled, but given every fact in the case," but this claim becomes dubious when compared to realities of history.³ Since there is no method to empirically observe the effects, successes, and failures of propaganda, the CPI's stance on propaganda must be used when comparing World War I propaganda, since it was the primary outlet.

2. Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 1980); Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War, the Rise of the War Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Kennedy, *Over Here*.

3. George Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), 161.

This study attempts to exemplify how mass media outlets played an integral role in the creation of the voluntaristic mindset that characterized the American home front during World War I by using the *Ladies' Home Journal* as a case example. While the experience of World War I facilitated an influx of power in the federal government, when America entered the war in 1917 the government was too limited to wage a campaign comprehensive enough to achieve President Wilson's dream of a fully united home front without outside assistance. The *Ladies' Home Journal* was selected as the case example for mass media outlets for a number of reasons. First, the *Ladies' Home Journal* was exceptional among periodicals during the time period, having refined an older form of journalism tailored towards middle class women. The editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal* defined the publication as a service to women, as the magazine was filled with advice on how to run the household, how to raise children, and other general concerns. Women's services publications exploded in popularity shortly after their creation, with the *Ladies' Home Journal* serving as the best example. By 1903 the publication reached a circulation of over one million and was the first magazine in the world to boast such numbers.

Secondly, while the *Ladies' Home Journal* generally avoided any topic which did not directly affect the home or family, once America officially entered the Great War in 1917, the *Journal* devoted almost all of its efforts towards helping the war effort. The *Journal* helped propagate messages from federal war agencies such as the Food Administration and the Committee on Public Information to women at home, an audience that was normally not encouraged to actively participate in such issues. However, the most important reason why the *Journal* was selected as a case example for this study is the relationship it developed with its readers prior to the outbreak of the war. The chief

editor of the *Journal*, Edward Bok, incorporated as many features as he could into the periodical to transform the simple magazine into a trusted necessity for women at home. While it is highly probable that the only reason Bok made this a goal for the *Journal* was to increase sales, this unique relationship to readers placed the *Journal* in an influential position to promote the war effort at home.

This thesis will examine the *Ladies' Home Journal* between 1914 and 1920 to demonstrate this shift in focus but will concentrate primarily on publications from 1917 to the end of 1919 to sufficiently cover the magazine's efforts in promoting volunteerism. Federal war agencies, and the individuals that headed them, will receive some attention, but are used primarily as a way to illustrate how the *Journal* enhanced Washington's efforts. A broad assessment of Americans' receptiveness of the numerous government war agencies, officials, and policies are also useful in attempting to gage the effectiveness of the *Journal's* war propaganda. The fact that the *Ladies' Home Journal's* subscription doubled to two million by the war's end in 1919 is a testament to its influence and success during the war years, even though its focus had shifted so drastically from their original topics.

The following three chapters will examine the *Ladies' Home Journal* from its origin in 1883, through its actions promoting volunteer efforts for World War I. The first chapter examines the birth of the *Journal* in 1883 and briefly summarizes how Cyrus Curtis and his wife Louisa Knapp Curtis grew the periodical from a two or three page afterthought in the *Tribune and Farmer* periodical into a magazine so popular it served as the foundation of Curtis Publishing Company. Cyrus Curtis's keen business sense on advertising, marketing, and production provided the *Journal* with almost limitless growth

potential. However, the majority of the first chapter examines the *Journal* after Louisa Curtis stepped down as editor and was replaced by Edward Bok. Edward Bok infused his personality with the *Journal*, which created a personal relationship between the magazine and its readers. This relationship placed the *Journal* in an excellent position to propagate World War I messages so effectively. Finally, chapter one will finish by analyzing the early reform attempts of Bok and the *Journal*. Once the magazine had acquired a massive circulation base and a relationship with its readers, Bok made multiple reform attempts to use the *Journal* as his pulpit. These early attempts were often unfocused and had varying levels of success, but they are worth attention because these successes and failures provided an educational experience for the *Journal* as it moved towards war propaganda in 1917.

In chapter two, the focus will be on the war propaganda in the *Journal* that went beyond the traditional spheres for women during this period. The beginning of this section will address efforts focused on creating unity for the war effort. One of the primary reasons President Wilson wished to avoid American belligerency was his reasonable fear that the war would create schisms in an already fractured populace. Once the war became unavoidable in his eyes, Wilson immediately conjured America's first official propaganda agency, the Committee on Public Information, with former muckraking journalist George Creel as its leader, to create American unity across the nation's many divisions. The efforts to unite Americans for the war by Creel's CPI will be compared to the works of the *Journal* in an attempt to demonstrate what worked for both sources, and to illustrate their differences. Finally, this chapter focuses on what may have been the most difficult aspect of the magazine's assistance to the cause, justifying

sending husbands and sons to war. Since the *Journal* had always asserted itself as a family magazine, reconciling broken families, sometimes permanently, for a war that many did not understand or support proved much more difficult than talking people into conserving food or spending spare time gardening or sewing.

Chapter three delves into the *Journal's* work on volunteer campaigns that were more easily blended into prior magazine subject material. Movements like sewing efforts, food conservation and donation, and general thrift were all significant war activities tied directly to *Journal* topics. While the federal government created independent agencies to head each campaign individually, the *Journal* reworded, or reformed, their old stance on the corresponding topic. The magazine would also directly push the cause the same way that federal agencies did, but the blending of war efforts with seemingly normal content is what made the *Journal's* propaganda campaign more unique, and debatably more efficient, than propaganda from Federal agencies. The periodical did not avoid outright advertising for the war effort, but even readers who skipped over the more blatant messages could not get around the volunteer campaigns entirely unless they never picked up an issue. Just as Edward Bok tried to fuse his personality with the *Journal*, he tried to do the same with the war volunteerism, which produced subtler messages from a source that was not an openly professed propaganda agency.

Chapter One - Reforming Women's Periodicals

On the eve of the nineteenth century, the realm of women's periodicals and newspaper pages was open for new entries into the field of competition. *Godey's Lady's Book* and other similar publications set the groundwork for women's magazines in the antebellum period, but in the decades following the Civil War, the old giants in the industry either vanished entirely or dwindled away. This allowed a number of astute individuals to capitalize on an open market. Numerous printed media outlets appeared in the late 1880's and early 1890's with various approaches on how to obtain a large base of women readers.

The most successful of these publications skillfully married targeted advertising campaigns with editorials, articles, and other original content. This method made advertisements more effective, which, in turn, provided a substantial income base to the periodicals. Without this foundation, any proposed reform efforts would be fruitless. Of all the women's journals of this period, the *Ladies' Home Journal* was the most efficacious, largely due to the combined efforts of its publisher Cyrus Curtis and editor Edward Bok. Together they helped make the *Journal* the most widely circulated periodical of the day, and placed it in an excellent position to become a highly effective tool to promote volunteerism and spread war propaganda during World War I. The story of how Curtis and Bok were able to place the *Journal* in this position is the topic of this chapter.

Godey's *Lady's Book* was the most popular publication for women during the antebellum period, obtaining a circulation of one hundred-fifty thousand in the 1860's. However, Godey's *Lady's Book* and its contemporaries were unable to obtain a larger circulation base due to limitations of the time. These magazines ran few advertisements in their pages, which made the subscription costs much higher than they needed to be.¹ Costly reproduction methods also plagued antebellum magazines. Prior to photoengraving, reproductions of artwork in publications had to be impressed by hand. The costs and time constraints of this process severely limited their overall production capabilities. The content of women's antebellum magazines also made them inaccessible to women with limited expendable income. While these periodicals included subject matter that was primarily categorized as women's topics, such as fashion trends, "they were devoid of practical advice since the targeted readers were assumed to have servants who tended to household duties."² These publications were certainly the first mass magazines directed at women readers, but were too expensive and were unable to relate to the desires of the average American woman. In just a few years, their successor publications would look completely different and would be able to accomplish more than what was previously imaginable. Only a few antebellum women's journals surpassed a circulation rate of over a hundred thousand, whereas several in the twentieth century easily obtained these numbers, a few of which had circulation rates in the millions.

1. Dustin Harp, *Desperately Seeking Women Readers, U.S. Newspapers and the Construction of a Female Readership* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), 20.

2. Mary Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 1998), 27.

Historian Mary Ellen Zuckerman wrote that, “Between 1890 and 1905 circulation of these monthly periodicals rose from 18 million to 64 million per issue.”³

Periodicals, advertisements, and other mediums directed specifically towards women were by no means a new concept in the 1880’s and 1890’s, several factors introduced during this period drastically changed the way this genre of printed media was created, advertised, and sold to a larger consumer base. Magazine production and distribution became much simpler and cost effective following the end of the Civil War. Advances in printing technology, railroads, and better roads helped reduce the overall cost of producing a mass publication.⁴ The numerous Postage Acts passed in the later half of the eighteenth century had, arguably, the most important role for the influx of periodical subscriptions. The three major shifts in postage law was the dividing of mail into classes, lower postage rates for magazines, and postage collection from the publisher end instead of from the subscriber.

While newspapers had almost always received heavy postage subsidies from the federal government, the same benefits were not paid to magazines until the later half of the eighteenth century. The division of mail into three classes changed this, once magazines were finally classified as second-class mail along with newspapers. Once publishers were required to pay postage instead of the recipient, an act was passed to lower the postage rates to stifle complaints from publishers that the new law cost them too much to turn a profit. These changes slashed shipping costs for publishers and with publishers now paying postage, the overall cost to subscribers dropped to a more

3. Ibid., 26.

4. Ibid., 3.

reasonable rate for a larger number of Americans. By the end of the nineteenth century, these periodicals could now realistically obtain the numbers of subscribers that could potentially make them incredibly influential in the average American home.⁵

Just the theoretical possibility, however, of reaching a great number of people was not enough. To actualize their dream of obtaining such a large consumer base, publishers, editors, and advertisers had to convince buyers that their products were essential for the upkeep of the home and family, not just a vanity item. One of the most effective ways for a promoter to achieve this status for their product is to attempt to reflect and represent the popular norms and values of its consumer base. This is why producers, even today, advertise their products as supportive towards causes championed by their target audiences. Producers with enough influence, however, can use their advertising campaigns to promote or change lifestyles. Nearly all advertisers have done this to some degree, some against consumers' best interest, such as pro-smoking advertisements, or for their benefit, as with the active lifestyle promotion of health based tech products such as the Fitbit. The *Journal* used its influence during America's involvement in World War I to promote the war effort at home but in its infancy, it needed to get behind a certain lifestyle to bolster its subscription base. For women's magazines forming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries like the *Ladies' Home Journal*, there was no greater cause than the progressive movement for their targeted audience of white middle class women.

5. Kevin R. Kosar, "Postage Subsidies for Periodicals: History and Recent Developments," *CRS Report for Congress R40162*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (January 22, 2009), 1-5, <https://www.tamut.edu/academics/gbugh/PoliticalScience/ChicagoGuideforPoliticalScience.htm>.

Because of this, editors, publishers, and other key figures in a women's magazine publication typically supported, and used their magazine to reinforce, progressive values and goals. While this was a smart business move, it created a fine line that editors and publishers had to walk while maintaining their magazine. They would find themselves in a persuasive position to share their outlook with their readers; however, if they strayed too far from their readers' personal views, they could lose a substantial number of subscribers, which would cut their influence and profit base. For example, when leaders of the women's publications tried to guide or persuade their readers on certain topics, such as suffrage, it exacerbated the relationship between the content providers and the readers. *Ladies' Home Journal* editor Edward Bok, discussed the disparity between his views, and hence the *Journal's* official stance, and the views of his readers over suffrage rights in 1913, explaining that it was costing potential readers. Bok admitted, "I can turn the *Journal* to-morrow in favor of woman's suffrage and probably gain 100,000 subscribers by doing it."⁶ While these women often shared in publishers, advertisers, and editors progressivism, their beliefs were habitually more conservative about the roles of women in public and private spheres than their readers were.⁷ This became increasingly evident as women's rights activists in the early twentieth century started to gain ground on their campaign for equality.

While there were a limited number of successful women's magazines at the turn of the twentieth century such as *Delineator*, *Ladies' Home Companion*, and *Good Housekeeping*, the most successful of them in terms of sheer circulation statistics was the

6. Salme Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace, Edward W. Bok and The Ladies' Home Journal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 73.

7. Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World, American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), xi-x.

Ladies' Home Journal. The *Journal* was the first of multiple successful periodicals spearheaded by Cyrus Hermann Kotschmar Curtis. Curtis began his career in publishing in 1872 when he and partner started the newspaper, the *People's Ledger*. After a fire destroyed his assets with the *Ledger*, Curtis moved to Philadelphia to capitalize on cheaper print production costs.⁸ After a few years working as the advertising managers of the newspaper, the *Philadelphia Press*, Curtis started a weekly journal for rural farmers entitled *Tribune and Farmer* in 1879. The *Ladies' Home Journal* had a simple start as a separate column in the *Tribune and Farmer*. In his column, entitled "Women and Home," Curtis tried to appeal to the wives of his rural subscribers to the *Tribune*, but quickly relinquished the creative responsibilities of the column to his wife, Louisa Knapp Curtis after criticized his efforts to connect to women readers. By 1883, what had started as a minor column had gained enough popularity under Louisa Knapp's editorship to convince Curtis to abandon the *Tribune* entirely and focus his efforts on the new monthly periodical, the *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper*.⁹

By 1889, Cyrus and Louisa Knapp Curtis had built the *Journal's* circulation to 440,000 and Cyrus Curtis wished to expand it even further. However, Curtis knew that in order do so he would need to reach out to a wider consumer base than his current clientele of rural farmer's wives. He set his sights upon urban and suburban middle class women, as they constituted a much larger group in American society. Curtis also felt that by focusing on this audience he would face minimal competition with the absence of *Godey's* and its contemporaries. Before he could start refocusing his efforts, Curtis needed a new editor for the task. Even though Louisa Knapp was skilled enough for the

8. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 1.

9. *Ibid.*, 2.

position, elevating the *Journal* to the status of a mass magazine from its humble beginnings, she wanted to relinquish her increasingly burdensome editorial responsibilities to focus on the needs of her newborn daughter.¹⁰ Curtis decided to hand the editorial position for the *Journal* over to Edward Bok, a man who later proved himself as a skilled editor for the most popular women's periodical of the time, despite having no real knowledge of women, or a desire to learn about them.¹¹ Together, Curtis and Bok would help make the *Journal* into the most widely circulated publication of the early twentieth century and heavily affect the future of women's magazines. They illustrated that if built, structured, and handled skillfully, women's magazines could be turned into a significant source of wealth. Just as important though, they also elucidated the amount of influence over readers women's magazines could provide in certain circumstances.

Cyrus Curtis and Advertising

Cyrus Curtis was born in Portland, Maine in 1850 and wasted little time asserting himself into the world of printed media. Before he had even finished high school, Curtis was already distributing a weekly paper of his creation named *Young American*. After high school, he moved to Boston where he gained experience as an advertising manager for the *Philadelphia Press*.¹² Curtis' first major experience with mass advertising came when he started *The Tribune and Farmer* in 1879 as periodicals for farmers were some of the first publications to incorporate advertisements on a grand scale.¹³ However, he

10. Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines*, 3.

11. Edward Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 120.

12. Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines*, 5.

13. *Ibid.*, 6.

would soon be able to refocus his expertise in advertising in a rapidly expanding market when his wife pushed the *Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper* far past the boundaries of Curtis's previous publications.

When Louise Knapp Curtis decided to retire from the *Journal* in 1889, it had already obtained close to half a million subscribers. Cyrus Curtis quickly realized the potential of the *Journal* and decided that if he was going to expand its influence further, he needed it to appeal to a broader customer base. With recent technological advances allowing for production and distribution on a much grander scale, Curtis decided to reach out to middle class women in primarily urban centers instead of his original customer base of rural farming women. Curtis hired a new editor in order to help him maintain his audience, but first Curtis had to sell his product to a female clientele, which was facing more competition. In the end, Curtis and his new editor, Edward Bok, working in tandem, were able to establish the *Journal* as the premier women's magazine of their day.

Cyrus Curtis managed the publishing and advertising aspects of the *Journal* and other periodicals published by the Philadelphia based Curtis Publishing Company, such as *The Saturday Evening Post*. Popular magazines during this period developed numerous advertising and publishing practices that persist today. These policies played an integral role in gaining a substantial number of readers, as it provided the financial stability required to produce a mass publication relatively cheaply. This allowed publishers to charge a lower subscription rate, thereby making it affordable to a larger customer base. Also, if the advertisements proved to be consistently trustworthy, which was a goal Curtis constantly pursued in his publications, advertisements could effectively help foster the readers' faith in the content found in other sections of the magazine. The strength of

Curtis's abilities at these tasks is evident from the rapid expansion of the *Journal* that firmly placed the periodical as the leader in mass magazines of the time.¹⁴

His competitors shared some of the practices utilized by Curtis in advertising, but he set the *Journal* apart by being meticulous over the details that his contemporaries typically overlooked. For example, since the resurgence of women's magazines and other major publications in the 1890s, most publishers had rethought the placement of advertisements in their magazines. In earlier periods, advertisements were grouped together in specifically designated sections, typically in the back pages, where readers could easily ignore them. Publishers began pairing advertisements with the actual content of the publication.¹⁵ Marrying advertisements with content not only gave advertisements more visibility, it allowed publishers to pair them with relevant materials within the magazine to increase the effectiveness of the advertisements. Curtis quickly assessed the increasing role of advertisements in the success of magazines, and he made it a personal goal to ensure the quality of the products and services advertised in any publication managed by the Curtis Publishing Company.

Edward Bok, the editor for the *Journal* from 1889 to 1919, accurately noted that Curtis viewed advertising "not as an expense but as an investment: it creates an asset in the business in name and goodwill, and as such cannot be charged as an expense."¹⁶ While many publishers strove to obtain the best advertisements to promote their periodical and to place in the magazine, few went to the extent Curtis did. He personally endorsed any product or service advertised in the *Journal* and wanted to instill a genuine

14. *Ibid.*, 21.

15. Harp, *Desperately Seeking Women Readers*, 20.

16. Edward Bok, *A Man from Maine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 85.

trust towards these products to the readers.¹⁷ In one instance, the *Journal* ran an advertisement for a twenty-five cent trial of the magazine *Farm and Home*, but one woman had a poor experience afterwards. Subsequently after her purchase, *Farm and Home* continuously harassed her to get her to pay the full subscription fee. The woman wrote and complained about the incident to Curtis who immediately contacted the publishers of *Farm and Home* warning that he would make the incident public unless they remedied their business practices.¹⁸

During this period, the magazine industry as a whole started a trend in periodicals still used today: targeted advertising. Technically, this was not necessarily a new trend in mass media; however, with advertisements removed from their segregated spaces in magazines, advertising became more specifically tailored towards the target audience. Increasingly through this period, publishers tried to pair certain advertisements with editorials or other original content that contained similar subject matter. The *Journal* excelled at this partially due to the sheer number of advertising options it had available to it and because the Curtis Publishing Company utilized extensive market research to understand the desires of their subscribers. What started as basic research into where the majority of *Journal* readers were located eventually blossomed into a full research department within the publishing company.¹⁹ Considering that Curtis' company owned and ran two of the biggest periodicals of the first few decades of the twentieth century, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Saturday Evening Post*, he required detailed information about his customers for his advertising agencies. This information allowed Curtis and his

17. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 20.

18. *Ibid.*, 23.

19. Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines*, 68-69.

advertisers to make their postings more focused and targeted than competitors. The specificity and reliability of the data also gave the *Journal* the advantage of charging advertising agencies more for space. By 1914, the *Journal* charged six thousand dollars per page of advertisements, a higher rate than any other magazine of the time.²⁰

It is important to note that while Edward Bok might have ideally wanted to use the *Journal* to share his progressivism with the American public, Curtis' goals were not as altruistic. Curtis was a keen executive who realized the market potential of middle class women for his *Journal* and his advertisers. He explained this realization to advertisers when he said:

Do you know why we publish the *Ladies' Home Journal*? The editor thinks it is for the benefit of the American woman. That is an illusion, but a very proper one for him to have. But I will tell you; the real reason, the publisher's reason, is to give you people who manufacture things that American women want and buy a chance to tell them about your products.²¹

Regardless of his true motivations, Curtis' strict business practices towards advertising gave the *Journal*'s claim of being a necessary and trustworthy magazine more validity to its readers.

While Curtis was successful at engineering the *Journal*'s advertising in such a way that it could instill trust in its readers, he also adopted several innovations to increase its circulation and utilized new technologies that made it stand out from its competitors. Knowing that limits to production capabilities also limited profits, Curtis' printing plant in Philadelphia was quick to incorporate advances in printing technologies. The *Journal*

20. *Ibid.*, 61.

21. *Ibid.*, 7.

was the first magazine to use color printing in its pages and was one of the first to utilize the multicolor rotary press.²² Modern technology alongside the new production practices following the Gilded Age, such as assembly lines, gave the *Journal* a production capacity of over 20,000 copies daily.²³ Curtis placed tremendous efforts on getting readers to subscribe to the *Journal* but he did not neglect the market value of single purchase venues. With transportation made more readily available with railways, women's magazines had more venues at hotels, railroad stations, and convenience shops.

The best venue for all individual magazine sales at this time was the newsstand. Curtis saw the advertising value of having the *Journal* available at newsstands, but he disliked selling them there since the distributor costs were so high he actually lost money on each copy sold.²⁴ Magazine publishers found a way around this problem by sending their products directly to the vendors themselves. Curtis quickly took up this practice with his publications but also went a step further to ensure maximum profit potential. He refused to buy back unsold copies of the publication and in 1910 he drafted contracts with several dealers who granted him permission to approve or to deny other periodicals to be sold at their location. Curtis would often block the *Journal's* competitors from being sold at these locations when possible. It only took seven years for the Federal Trade Commission to invalidate these deals; however, within that time Curtis had already firmly established the *Journal's* market share at individual retailers.²⁵

22. *Ibid.*, 27.

23. *Ibid.*, 27-29.

24. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 11.

25. *Ibid.*, 10-12.

Edward Bok

When Cyrus Curtis looked to expand his current customer base in 1889, he was also looking for a replacement editor, as his wife Louise Knapp Curtis had decided to step down from the demanding responsibilities as editor of this rapidly growing publication. Curtis found exactly the person he needed in Edward Bok. Bok had only a limited experience with publications tailored towards women, and was the first to admit his lack of understanding regarding women's wants and needs. Regardless of this, he proved to be just the person Curtis and the *Journal* needed to become the forefront of women's journals in the early twentieth century. What Bok lacked in familiarity with women, he easily made up for in other areas. His abilities were largely the result of his unique life experiences leading up to his time with the *Journal*. Having emigrated from the Netherlands as a young boy, he soon developed a strong work ethic, and quickly worked his way up any field he pursued.

Edward William Bok was born into a wealthy family October 9, 1863, in Helder, Netherlands. While Bok would constantly refer back to his Dutch ancestry as part of the reason for his self-acclaimed exceptionalism, the young Bok would find himself half a world away, in Brooklyn, New York, not even a month before his seventh birthday. Bok explained that the reason his family left the Netherlands was that while his father William Jan Hidde was, "a man bearing one of the most respected names in the Netherlands, had acquired wealth and position for himself; unwise investments, however, had swept away

the family fortune.” Bok’s father decided to give the family a fresh start in the perceived land of opportunity.²⁶

He was an incredibly meticulous man, which, he claimed, allowed him to prosper in his pursuits at a much faster rate than any of his peers. Bok professed to have a more intimate knowledge of what his readers wanted or needed than they did themselves.²⁷ His experiences leading up to his editorship of the *Journal* played a crucial role in the publication’s development, as Bok would make it his goal to infuse his progressive views into the *Journal*. Bok’s progressive views, his belief in American dream, and idealized aspirations for American homes and communities, all found their way into the core of the *Journal* during his time as editor and helped make it stand out from its competition.

Initially, the experiences in this new land were challenging for everyone in the Bok family. Bok’s father and his mother, Sieke Gertrud van Herwerden, were never able to build back up the fortune they had lost in the Netherlands. For the first time, Bok’s mother had to take care of the household duties without the aid of hired help. Both Edward Bok and his older brother William struggled in an American public school system and had to learn English while overcoming the difficult obstacle of prejudice from nativist classmates. To help support his family, the young Edward Bok began looking for ways to bring in extra income. Bok got his first job at ten, working at a bakery for fifty cents a week. In less than three years, he found employment at the Western Union Telegraphic Company working as an office boy. Bok continued his advancements to

26. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 1.

27. *Ibid.*, 118.

higher positions and explained his success in a way that only a true believer in the American dream could.

In his youth, Bok fostered a belief that he would later preach to his readers: that success was nearly inevitable if the right person, with the right skills, worked hard enough towards the goals he or she wished to achieve. He started this process at a young age when he turned his attention towards successful Americans. He began to wonder what made them so exceptional compared to average person. His father told him that if he really wanted to know, he should just ask them himself. The young Bok soon began writing famous and influential people to understand the minds of these larger than life figures. No one could have anticipated the incredible number of responses Bok received, especially considering this was before the typewriter was commonplace and correspondence typically was handwritten. Bok received detailed and heartfelt responses from an impressive list of people such as Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Rutherford Hayes, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, just to name a few.²⁸ As Bok advanced himself in his early career and continued building his connections to famous individuals, he decided upon a philosophy that would guide him through the rest of his life. “He soon learned that the hardest kind of work was back of every success; that nothing in the world of business just happened, but that everything was brought about, and only in one way – by a willingness of spirit and a determination

28. Edward Bok, *Twice Thirty, Some Short and Simple Annals of the Road* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 86-130.

to carry through.”²⁹ As one writer correctly noted, Bok saw himself as a Dutch Horatio Alger, a true embodiment of the American Dream.³⁰

While Bok went through several jobs before becoming fully devoted to publishing and editing written works, one particular experience stuck out in particular. In his part time job as a stenographer for the Western Union Telegraphic Company, Bok got close to one of American history’s most infamous individuals, the little wizard of Wall Street, Jason “Jay” Gould. Over time, Bok picked up some valuable tips and tricks for making money through the stock market and before long, he “took his first plunge in Wall Street.”³¹ Most new people to the stock market do not have the knowledge or experience to capitalize on their investments, but Bok’s personal connection to Gould allowed him to mirror the buying and selling patterns of Gould, which gave Bok an unfair advantage. In one instance, the market’s focus was on a speculated merger of Gould’s company, the Western Union, and a competing telegraphic company. Gould dispelled any rumors of a merger, which discouraged other buyers. Perhaps earning his title as a robber baron, Gould knew the merger was taking place and used the inside information to turn a huge profit, which also helped the young Bok. “It so happened that Edward [Bok] knew the rumor *was* true, because Mr. Gould, sometime before, had personally given him the contract of consolidation to copy,” so when the stock prices dropped, Gould became a “heavy buyer” and “so became Edward – as heavy as he could.” Once the merger was finalized, stock for Western Union skyrocketed and both Gould and Bok sold out for a large profit. In a morally questionable move, Bok shared this insider information with

29. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 125.

30. Michael Hummel, “The Attitudes of Edward Bok and The Ladies' Home Journal Toward Women's Role in Society, 1889-1919” (PhD diss., North Texas State University, 1982), 2.

31. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 70.

close associates and friends who were trying their hand in the stock market. However, even though his advice helped many of them turn a profit, he realized how damaging the stock market could be for people risking everything on a gamble. “He had seen enough of its manipulations; and, although on ‘the inside,’ he decided that the combination of his teacher and his customers was a responsibility too great for him to carry.”³²

It was at this point that Edward Bok decided to pursue editing and publishing full time. When Gould found out about Bok’s desire to leave the company, he personally confronted Bok, inquiring where he intended to go. “The publishing of books,” was Bok’s simple reply. “You are making a great mistake,” Gould tried to explain; “Books are a luxury. The public spends its largest money on necessities: on what it can’t do without.” This advice might explain why in the future, Bok tried his hardest to turn the *Ladies’ Home Journal* into a necessity instead of a luxury for its readers. Reminiscing on his decision years later, Bok claimed with pride that his “instinct never failed him. He felt that his path lay far apart from that of Jay Gould – and the farther the better!”³³ Bok’s instincts proved correct, as he would make a substantial living from editing and writing through the rest of his life. Even though he always claimed he was “not a literary man in any sense,” Bok became tremendously influential in the literary world of his time.³⁴

Not long after his break with Jay Gould and the Western Union Telegraphic Company, Edward Bok, with his brother William, formed the Bok Syndicate Press after making enough money from writing and editing pieces for Henry Beecher. Proving himself as an insightful businessman, Bok “became interested in the fact that the

32. Ibid., 71-72.

33. Ibid., 76.

34. Edward Bok, *Twice Thirty*, 7.

American woman was not a newspaper reader,” which he interpreted as an untapped resource. Bok believed that, as a group, white, middle class women represented a major purchasing power in America and “it would benefit the newspaper enormously in its advertising if it could offer a feminine clientele” and he immediately began trying to capitalize on what he considered to be an “open field.”³⁵ Interestingly, Bok continuously professed that he had little to no understanding of the feminine psyche; however, he felt he was still in the perfect position to serve as a woman’s page editor and author. Bok’s assessment of his understanding of women is most likely correct. His busy childhood and early adult years left little room for romantic relationships of any sort. He had no sisters, and even though he credits much of his feelings on women to his mother, his relationship with the female sex was limited at best. However, Bok had faith in the Victorian ideals that women were superior morally while men were both stronger and smarter. This led him to believe that although “it is absolutely essential in the conduct of a magazine with a feminine or home appeal to have on the editorial staff women who are experts in their line; and the truth is that women will work infinitely better under the direction of a man than of a woman.”³⁶

While Bok’s views on gender were skewed, his women’s pages were instantly successful. While his woman’s page was not the first, Bok believed there were none in existence that realized the potential of the genre. Bok stated his page capitalized on an opening that was “crying out to be filled.” Bok was extremely meticulous about who could write pieces for this section. His reasoning for this became the fundamental

35. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 105.

36. *Ibid.*, 161.

ideology of the *Ladies' Home Journal* when he would become editor in just a few short years. Bok claimed,

He [Bok] looked over the field and reasoned that if such magazines as did exist could be fairly successful, if women were ready to buy such, how much greater response would there be to a magazine of higher standards, of larger initiative – a magazine that would be authoritative clearing-house for all the problems confronting women in the home, that brought itself closely into contact with those problems and tried to solve them in an entertaining and efficient way; and yet a magazine of uplift and inspiration: a magazine, in other words, that would give light and leading in the woman's world.³⁷

This mentality towards what the ideal women's journal should be made Bok a perfect fit for the direction Curtis wanted to take the *Journal* in 1889.

Bok and the *Journal*

Once he was officially editor of the *Journal*, Bok applied his ideals of self-improvement, progressive morality, and a vision of a women's magazine of the highest caliber to the magazine. Even though Bok later attempted to separate himself from his editorial past in his autobiographies and other publications, going so far as to claim that he continuously had to suppress his true self and let his separate editor personality take control, Bok did impart his own personal values onto the *Journal*.³⁸ Reviewing how Bok wrote about his experiences as an editor one biographer stated that “The man underestimated the editor; indeed, he judged him too severely. The editor accomplished most of what the man endorsed.”³⁹ Even though Bok would have fought against this perception of him, there is a layer of truth to the statement. He was very proud of his

37. Ibid., 162.

38. Ibid., 271.

39. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 50.

status as a self-made man and he tried to instill these characteristics into his readers by teaching and guiding them on pertinent issues, and by offering tools to help people help themselves. Part of the reason why the *Journal* became so influential was the result of Bok's ability to connect to his readers on an almost personal level. He seemed to provide readers the tools they needed to succeed. This does not mean Bok was trying to promote the modern definition of sexual equality. Bok was a firm believer that a woman's role was in the household and he never truly altered his stance. Even though he occasionally used the *Journal* to tackle issues that went beyond the home, he always started by focusing on the home, as he felt this was the root of most problems and start to their cures.

According to his autobiographies, Bok was a textbook example of a progressive in his personal life. He lived by the principles of social progressivism, such as temperance and rigid gender roles. As editor of the *Journal*, he worked to instill these same values upon its readers. Like most devoted progressives, Bok would occasionally wage moral crusades to support progressive views. In many of these battles, he would utilize the *Journal's* large following and influence as his own siege weapon. While he was in the perfect position to wage these campaigns, he had to be careful not to go too far and risk losing a large number of subscribers. For over twenty years before America's entrance into World War I, Bok had gained experience walking a fine line between reflecting and supporting the common opinion of the day to keep the *Journal's* readers, while occasionally championing causes that he saw fit to support. This experience placed him in a valuable position when the *Journal* was to be used to its full potential to gain support for the war in 1917.

As editor of the *Journal*, Bok applied many tactics that increased the overall circulation of the magazine, while also trying to bestow readers with the feeling that the content within its pages could be useful to improve oneself. The first step he took in this direction involved building a quasi-personal relationship between the readers and the magazine. To build this connection, he worked to infuse himself within its pages. One thing Bok had learned from growing up in the United States was that “the American public loved a personality: that it was always ready to recognize and follow a leader, provided, of course, that the qualities of leadership were demonstrated.”⁴⁰ Bok felt that no editor had provided such a personality to a magazine audience before, but he intended to remedy this situation with the *Journal*.

While Bok was always had a didactic method of writing, whether it was in the *Journal* or his other published works, he understood the necessity of not coming across as overly pompous when he tried to impart his wisdom to the masses. He described this situation in his autobiography:

He [Bok] saw, too, that the average popular magazine of 1889 failed of large success because it wrote down to the public – a grievous mistake that so many editors have made and still make. No one wants to be told, either directly or indirectly, that he knows less than he does, or even that he knows as little as he does: every one [sic] is benefited by the leader who comprehends this bit of psychology. There is always a happy medium between shooting over the public's head and shooting too far under it. ... It is the rare editor who rightly gauges his public psychology. ... The average editor is obsessed with the idea of “giving the public what it wants,” whereas, in fact, the public, while it knows what it wants when it sees it, cannot clearly express its wants, and never wants the thing that it does ask for, although it thinks it does at the time. But woe to the editor and his periodical if he heeds that siren voice!⁴¹

40. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 117.

41. *Ibid.*

He understood that even though he felt himself to be “‘a huckleberry or two’ ahead of his readers,” he could not stray too far from their wishes and beliefs. However, in order to connect with the readers of the *Journal*, he needed to interact with them on a more personal level.⁴²

Arguably, the most direct contact the *Journal* had with customers was the correspondence it held with readers who contacted Bok and his staff. His initial attempt at this involved feedback from readers on the *Journal*'s content. In the early issues, Bok included a section asking readers what they did or did not like from that month's issue and even requested that they write him with suggestions for new types of materials or recommendations for improving what was already there. Bok rarely followed their input to the letter; instead, he favored taking the propositions and took them to a “slightly higher plane.”⁴³ True to his character, he believed that a successful editor should always listen to what the audience wanted, and deliver a better-finished product than they had requested. Even though the result might have looked much different from what readers had proposed, it still provided them with a sense of connection to their magazine since they were able to provide input into their periodical.

Taking this a step further, Bok implemented a policy where readers could write the *Journal* over any issue that concerned them and they would receive a direct, individual response providing suggestions. Since Bok openly admitted that he knew nothing about women's wants and needs, and had no interest in learning, he needed an adequate staff to understand the concerns *Journal* readers were sending him and provide

42. Ibid., 118.

43. Ibid., 118.

the promised useful feedback. He eventually had approximately thirty-five staff members to assist with the responses.⁴⁴

The correspondence campaign was one of the most successful ventures Bok helped establish on his mission to create a deeper connection between the magazine and its readers. When America officially entered World War I in 1917, he froze the service so he and his staff could focus their efforts, but Bok claimed that the average number of correspondence letters received by the *Journal* had reached nearly one million annually.⁴⁵ This program succeeded because Bok was incredibly meticulous about the quality of answers delivered by his staff. Periodically he would write a fake inquiry under a pseudonym to every individual on his team to measure the quality of his or her responses. He was quite particular about the level of work he expected from each, praising those that met his standards and cracking down on those who did not. After reviewing the works of one editor, Bok wrote him saying that, “Your letters to me have shown rather careless typewriting and two of them have gone unsigned. These are points which I do not like.” Even though he was certainly strict towards his own staff, he had reasons for being so. Bok felt that if the *Journal* could consistently maintain an outstanding level of service it would give the magazine yet another quality that put the *Journal* at the front of its class. Bok used the same method of writing fake questions under false names to other women’s magazines that offered the same sort of correspondence service, yet always found the quality of their work was subpar to the *Journal* standard.⁴⁶

44. Ibid., 124.

45. Ibid.

46. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 56

In order to fully imbue the idea that the *Journal* was a necessity to middle class women, Bok had to go beyond making sure the magazine provided more services than a question and answer forum, regardless of its quality. Taking the advice of some of his closer acquaintances, Bok devised two very successful programs that gave his audience a more substantial benefit for following the *Journal*. The first program was a plan devised to exponentially increase the number of subscribers to the publication while simultaneously giving middle class women tools they need to advance their hopes and dreams. His model was simple and easily recognizable to most people familiar with subscription programs today. Similar to what might be known today as a referral program, Bok conceived an arrangement where if a woman secured enough subscriptions to the *Journal*, their education expenses would be paid for by the magazine. Bok wrote that the “complete offer” was “a year’s free tuition, with free room, free board, free piano in her own room, and all traveling expenses paid.” Initially the program was limited to certain colleges, but over time, it was expanded to include any institution. By the time Bok had retired as editor, nearly one and a half thousand scholarships were awarded through this program alone.⁴⁷

Bok’s idealization of the American dream, hard work ethic, and self-realized success certainly played into the *Journal*’s subscriptions for education formula, but there was a quality Bok desired to instill even more into *Journal* readers, homemaking. He was a true believer in the Victorian era beliefs about gender and the roles both sexes should play in society. As such, Bok held firm convictions that a woman’s true place, and the one to best serve humankind, was at home. He also believed that it was the *Journal*’s

47. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 125.

duty to help guide women on how to fulfill this role. One of the most effective programs undertaken by the *Journal* towards this task was essentially an open forum for mothers concerned about the well-being of their children. Bok initially took the advice from Doctor Emelyn L. Coolidge, who felt that the periodical was in the ideal position to help educate new young mothers who frequently knew very little about child rearing.⁴⁸

At its inception, this service functioned similarly to the normal correspondence letters the *Journal* replied to but with a more specific focus. It became so popular in such a short period of time and Bok decided to expand the program. Through this service, mothers could opt in for monthly advice until the child reached the age of two. Bok hired a small number of physicians specialized in childcare who would send out monthly questionnaires regarding the wellbeing of their children, and depending on the responses, would give out personalized advice on how to handle certain issues or concerns that arose.

This program was easily one of the most successful and influential campaigns during the *Journal's* early years under Bok's editorship. Writing after his retirement, Bok noted that nearly eighty-thousand children had been raised with the assistance of this program, ninety-five percent staying on for at least a full year and eighty-five percent staying for the entire two-year schedule.⁴⁹ This perfectly fit Bok's editorship paradigm where a truly successful program not only brought in money but also instilled a sense of faith in the magazine.

It was this comprehensive personal serve, built up back of the magazine from the start, that gave the periodical so firm and unique a hold on its

48. Ibid., 126.

49. Ibid., 127.

clientele. It was not the printed word that was its chief power: scores of editors who have tried to study and diagnose the appeal of the magazine from the printed page, have remained baffled at the remarkable confidence elected from its readers. They never looked back of the magazine, and therefore failed to discover its secret. ... Thousands of women had been directly helped by the magazine; it had not remained an inanimate printed thing, but had become a vital need in the personal lives of its readers.

So intimate had become this relation, so efficient was the service rendered, that its readers could not be pried loose from it; where women were willing and ready, when the domestic pinch came, to let go of other reading matter, they explained to their husbands or fathers that *The Ladies' Home Journal* was a necessity – they did not feel they could do without it. The very quality for which the magazine had been held up to ridicule by the unknowing and unthinking had become, with hundreds of thousands of women, its source of power and the bulwark of its success.⁵⁰

Through these business models, Bok not only helped amass a large circulation base for the *Journal* but also forged a personal connection between the magazine and its readers.

Reform Efforts

Once this connection was firmly established, Bok decided that the *Journal* could try its hand at reforms on a more grandiose scale. He approached a wide range of issues and had varied success rates but these attempts would serve as training for when it was used to promote volunteerism in World War I. Bok's early attempts reflected topics on which many progressives were concerned. Some areas were as trivial as beautifying various aspects of America such as middle class houses, Pullman cars, and scenic locations across the country. Other pursuits, including those over women's suffrage, patent medicines, and sex education, were much more controversial and pertinent to society. His successes and failures in these endeavors demonstrated the way the

50. *Ibid.*, 128.

publication could help mold and direct public opinion, while also elucidating its limitations.

The *Journal's* attempts towards improving the aesthetics of America seem, on the surface, the most trivial of the magazine's reform attempts. However, Bok's strategies in this field were largely effective. This was partially because it was a subject many felt was in the *Journal's* subject range, but it was also the result of the methods utilized. The poor design and structure of most middle class homes appalled Bok but at the same time, he recognized that people building such house were far too financially restricted to afford an architect. To counter this, Bok hired a number of architects to provide house plans, with a price range from one and half to five thousand dollars, featured within the *Journal*. Anyone interested in a particular design could directly purchase the full comprehensive design plan from the *Journal* for five dollars. Bok claimed that these plans "were so complete in every detail that any builder could build the house from them."⁵¹ These plans almost instantly produced a score of *Journal* houses across the nation. In fact, these plans were so successful that Stanford White, one of the leading architects during what historians now call the American Renaissance, wrote that, "I firmly believe that Edward Bok has more completely influenced American domestic architecture for the better than any man in this generation."⁵² While changing the architecture style of middle class homes may not seem like much of a reform, Bok was able to address a situation he deemed as a problem by using his readers' trust in the magazine. When reforms were marketed as an affordable self-improvement tool provided by the *Journal*, readers were willing to conform as long as it did not go too far against their own judgments.

51. Ibid., 173.

52. Ibid., 174.

Reforms outside the home had more mixed results. For example, Bok tried to improve the overall look of America by attempting to eliminate several billboards and other features in cities he found displeasing to the eye. He urged readers to submit photos displaying any unappealing scenes to run in his magazine. Though he succeeded in cleaning up a few areas in a handful of cities and halted advertisement agencies' incentives to place massive billboards at sites such as the Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon, this reform attempt was not as successful overall as the housing campaign. People were not as supportive when Bok attacked their city's more unattractive places, especially if they were proud of their community. This also showed that reform attempts were much more likely to succeed if the *Journal* worked with the interests of advertisers instead of against them.

Attempts at addressing situations outside the home worked much better when the *Journal* was able to guide a pre-existing public sentiment than when it had to create one itself. When electric companies wished to expand on their plants harnessing Niagara Falls, Bok approached President Roosevelt with concerns about the future of one of the most well known landmarks in North America. While Roosevelt agreed with Bok's sentiments, he claimed that his powers were limited without public support. He told Bok, "I can do nothing unless there is an awakened public sentiment that compels action... I'm from Missouri on this point. Show me that the American people want their Falls preserved, and I'll do the rest. But I've got to be shown."⁵³

So in the next issue of the *Journal* Bok ran two images side by side. The first was the Niagara Falls as they were at the moment, while the second depicted a desolate

53. Ibid., 254.

wasteland, clearly ravaged by the electric companies. Below the images the *Journal* inquired to readers if they were going to allow this to happen, and that if they wanted to prevent this outcome, they should write the President of the United States or the Governor-General of Canada, depending on their location, to voice their opinions. The letters poured in at such a rate that the President's secretary wrote Bok asking, "Is there any way to turn this spigot off? We are really being inundated."⁵⁴ Even senators received a plethora of letters from *Journal* readers. The surge of public voices eventually resulted in the passing of the Burton Bill on June 29, 1906, which placed limits on the use of water from Niagara Falls for power. The real test of the *Journal's* influence came when Bok decided to tackle issues a touch more controversial than just appearances. The magazine's attacks on patent medicines and endorsements on sex education had mixed results but provided keen insights into what methods would and would not work in the years to come.

Patent medicines were a massive industry for a significant period of American history to the mid-twentieth century. Physicians and other modern healthcare practices were gaining popularity by the 1900's but a few older practices, such as patent medicines, still lingered on. The name patent medicine is a misnomer, as almost none of the concoctions sold to consumers were shown to have actual medical benefits and were not patented, legally. In fact, prior to the *Journal's* campaign against them, patent medicines, or nostrums, were not required by law to list their ingredients. This raised concerns over their potential dangers, as many of them contained harmful substances such as alcohol, opiates, cocaine, and morphine. In 1892, the *Journal* refused to run any advertisements

54. Ibid., 255.

for patent medicines since Curtis would not run advertisements that were potentially faulty or misleading to his customers.⁵⁵ The *Journal* started this policy long before most other publications. Though the dangers of these medicines were already causing concern, patent medicines were the forerunners in a myriad of advertising techniques and produced a significant source of advertising revenue that a great number of popular magazines took advantage of prior to the twentieth century.⁵⁶

The *Journal's* campaign against patent medicines reached far beyond an advertising boycott however. Bok knew that the mothers and wives buying these so-called medicines were trying to maintain the well-being of their home and family, but at the same time, he was frustrated that these women were not adequately researching the products they were giving their children and husbands. Staying true to his didactic editorship style, Bok made it the *Journal's* mission to educate women about the dangers of these products.⁵⁷ It is important to note that Bok merely wanted to inform his readers about these issues, instead of attacking them directly.⁵⁸ He almost always took a strict educational only approach to reform in the *Journal*, believing that any manifestations of reform had to be initiated by the people themselves.⁵⁹ This was one of the major reasons as to why he seldom touched on other issues demonized by most progressives such as drinking.

The *Journal's* major contribution to reform came when it educated the public, raised awareness of an issue, or helped guide pre-existing desires to change an aspect of

55. *Ibid.*, 246.

56. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 99.

57. Edward Bok, "A Diabolical 'Patent-Medicine' Story," *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1905, 20.

58. Edward Bok, "Why 'Patent Medicines' Are Dangerous," *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1905,

18.

59. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 100.

society; only in rare and specific circumstances did Bok attempt all three simultaneously. For many of the most popular nostrums of the time, the *Journal* ran as detailed of an ingredients list as it could. This was an eye opening moment for many readers, especially for devoted members of the temperance movement. Members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union were appalled when they found out they had been endorsing or even using products containing more alcohol than the drinks they vehemently vilified. Curtis fully endorsed this campaign, allowing Bok to pursue his goals even after the *Journal* mistakenly ran an older version of one nostrum's formula, resulting in a \$200,000 lawsuit.⁶⁰ Even though the *Journal's* efforts were largely forgotten in later years, its educational campaign on patent medicines made thousands of people aware of the issue. Not long after the magazine brought the issue to light, the Pure Food and Drug act passed in 1906 that made it illegal for patent medicines to keep their ingredients so ambiguous.

The dangers of patent medicines may have been unknown to most *Journal* readers, but it was not a taboo subject. When Bok decided to educate his readers on the importance of sex education, he was taking the periodical into a realm that would not be publicly approachable for several years to come. Again, he successfully raised awareness of an issue that needed addressing, but this campaign illuminated the limitations of the *Journal's* influence when it strayed too far from the beliefs of its readers. Bok did not want the magazine to replace parents when it came to sex education. All he hoped to achieve with this campaign was to show parents how important it was for them to properly educate children on all the issues so they did not make mistakes out of ignorance.

60. Ibid., 102.

According to Bok, this movement started when clergyman Lyman Abbott asked Bok to use the *Journal* to bring attention to the problem of venereal diseases. Initially, Bok understood this was a taboo subject and felt it was out of the magazine's scope to address such issues. However, Abbott encouraged Bok to research the issue further and he would soon change his mind. Abbott proved correct in the matter. As one biographer of Bok noted, "the problem was in the *Journal's* province because it affected the basis of the magazine's existence – women and the home."⁶¹ Immediately after the magazine mentioned the issue directly, Bok's office was bombarded with letters voicing concern, confusion, and anger. Again, Curtis held on to his faith in Bok as editor and encouraged him to continue to do what he felt was right. As the magazine began focusing on the issue more, Bok recruited outside help to sway public opinion. Prominent figures such as Jane Addams and Hellen Keller offered their pens to the cause, begging American mothers to address sexual issues at the root, instead of waiting for an avoidable accident. Soon, inquiries from readers began pouring in, asking for advice instead of showing disgust. Even the *Delineator*, one of the *Journal's* competitors, took up the issue. In the end, Bok had drawn attention, however limited, to the need for proper sex education to deal with the influx of venereal infections. Bok's efforts cost the *Journal* approximately 75,000 subscribers, and while he never regretted taking up this crusade, it became evident that too many similar reform attempts could lose the *Journal* its readers, and thereby, its influence.

The Ladies' Home Journal, born from the ambitions of an astute businessman Cyrus Curtis, nurtured by Louisa Knapp Curtis, and molded by the unique and personable

61. Ibid., 109.

Edward Bok had become one of the most widely read and influential pieces of media in the early twentieth century. Curtis had managed to meld modern printing mechanisms with astute advertising techniques, which placed the *Journal* ahead of the pack in the surge of women's magazines of the time. Bok's background, character, and vision for the magazine transformed it into more than just a novelty publication. It became a tool for the American housewife. The *Journal* was so trusted that it had even proven successful in some reform attempts, although not without some hiccups along the way.

By 1917, Edward Bok was ready to retire from his position as editor but there was a last minute change of plans. In January, President Wilson met with Edward Bok and when Bok mentioned his hopes of retiring, Wilson interjected. Wilson told Bok:

You will be wanted where you are. You have the ear of the American woman by the millions, and there will be much for you to tell her. The War, so far as America is concerned, won't be fought in France. It will be fought right here, -in the homes and in the factories. And the women are going to loom large in the picture. So, no resigning. This is no time to think of that.⁶²

America's entrance into World War I appeared inevitable by this point and Wilson needed both Bok and the *Journal* to gain as much support for the war as possible. Bok pushed his retirement back to pursue this goal. The Great War gave the *Journal* a much more focused reform agenda than it had in previous years. When Bok returned from his vacation south and met with Wilson, Bok explained the disadvantages of devoting the *Journal* towards the war, considering the magazine required a two to three month time lapse between writing and publishing. Wilson replied, "You said you wanted to be guided so that you can teach your big elephant to dance. Well tackle the navy first," and told Bok

62. Bok, *Twice Thirty*, 344.

to “get mothers into a frame of mind to let their boys enlist in the navy.” Once finished with the needs of the navy, Bok was to turn the *Journal*’s focus towards the Red Cross. Wilson also made Bok aware of the coming of the Food Department and the magazine’s role in assisting it.⁶³ With a specific plan of attack provided by President Wilson, the *Journal* utilized the experiences acquired from its earlier years made to become one of the most effective propaganda tools for the home front in America.

63. Ibid., 345-346.

Chapter Two – Assisting Uncle Sam

E Pluribus Unum. Out of many, one. While not as famous as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, this motto embodies one of America's most prominent qualities. Nearly every success story for America as a nation illustrates how the diversity in the United States can be its most powerful asset if its people can be unified under a common cause. However, when President Wilson realized America could no longer sit on the sidelines of Europe's war, forming one out of the many seemed a daunting, if not an impossible, task. America was the home of the largest number of German immigrants in the world. America also housed a plethora of Irish and Scottish Americans who were typically anti-British, and migrants from Eastern Europe who had divided allegiances to Europe's old powers. There were also several groups who adamantly opposed the war, regardless of which side the United States favored. Pacifist groups such as the Mennonites strongly stood against any form of violence. Disenfranchised groups, such as women and African Americans, felt that if America entered the war, hard earned ground would be lost once the nation's attention shifted towards winning the war.

Throughout America's history, many marginalized peoples become zealous during war, such as women during both world wars and African Americans in nearly every military conflict from the Civil War through Vietnam, eager to prove their worthiness. These groups also realize that it is much more difficult to make substantial gains during wartime, since winning the war becomes top priority; a fact that convinces many individuals that serving is wasted effort. Finally, and arguably the most difficult to

convince to aid Uncle Sam in the war, were labor unions. Even today, historians debate over the reasons why World War I occurred, and, its causation seemed even more enigmatic as it was unfolding. One prevalent argument over the war's origin, which rose in popularity during the 1930's and has persisted since, was that economic interests fueled World War I since several wealthy individuals and corporations were assured to profit from the conflict. This was the fundamental argument against the war used by labor unions, which had grown exponentially in size and power due to the mistreatment of labor during the Gilded Age in America. All of these problems were at the forefront of President Wilson's mind as he guided America through the final pre-war months into belligerency. America was deeply divided along cultural, racial, and economic lines during this period, but nothing short of complete unity would suffice if the country were to help the entente alliance achieve victory.¹

Historians such as David Kennedy, Paul Koistinen, and Ronald Schaffer have argued that the methods used by President Wilson and his administration resulted in the exponential growth of the federal government, in terms of size and power. Historians such as William Leuchtenburg exhibit that America's response to World War I at home provided the framework for Franklin Roosevelt's reliance on the federal government to combat the Great Depression and to prepare the nation for World War II.² While World War I certainly promoted an expansion of Federal power and provided the framework for further economic growth, when America officially entered the conflict in the spring of 1917 it was woefully unprepared to meet the demands required for war. Since the

1. Schaffer, *America in the Great War*, 3-17.

2. William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York: Harper & Row, 2009), 33.

American government was too weak to achieve its war goals single handedly, it relied on aid from the private sector and from individuals to propagate certain agendas and programs.

The previous chapter examined how the *Ladies' Home Journal* became one of the most prominent magazines in the country and covered the *Journal's* early attempts at social reform. When President Wilson asked Edward Bok to postpone his retirement so the *Journal* and Bok's personal connection to American middle-class women could be utilized towards the upcoming war, both Bok and Wilson understood the limitations of magazine. While the *Ladies' Home Journal* was the biggest magazine of its day, its size made it impossible to cover certain topics adequately. Typically, material for the *Journal* had to be written and prepared over a month in advance of actual publication to meet their deadlines because it was difficult to print enough copies to match the enormous demand. As a result, Bok and Wilson agreed that the *Journal* needed to focus on the war effort, but it could not successfully cover current events of the war itself. They concluded that the magazine would be much more effective at winning the minds of the American public as a whole. Promoting the war effort, organizing and assisting volunteer groups, and assisting the war agencies such as the Committee on Public Information, the Food Administration, the Red Cross, and advocating for the Liberty Bonds and selective service became the *Ladies' Home Journal* primary concerns from the summer of 1917 until the end of the war.

Winning the Minds of the People

Wilson and his administration utilized a myriad of techniques to address the problem of American unity, but debatably the most controversial was the Committee on Public Information headed by the muckraking journalist, George Creel. The Committee on Public Information (CPI) was the first official government agency of propaganda in America. The CPI was unique compared to the standard government agency. It was born via an executive order on April 14, 1917, less than two weeks after America entered the conflict. It grew and evolved so rapidly that it seemed to have materialized overnight. Individual departments within the CPI were formed as needed but could be merged with another or disposed of as quickly as they came about. The Creel committee, as it was commonly called during the period, was efficient and effective, despite the fact that it seemed to be mostly improvised over time.³

Exacerbating the problems of recounting the history of the Creel Committee is the minimal amount of documents. As rapidly as branches of the CPI came into being and disappeared, record keeping was often sloppy, if it existed at all. Also, hoping to rid itself of the negative stigma Creel's committee had brought to it, Congress attempted to dispose of official documentation of its experiment in the world of propaganda. Writer Alan Axelrod claims that approximately three fourths of the CPI's records were lost or destroyed when Congress decided to eliminate the program immediately following the armistice. Because of this, Axelrod writes that "any attempt to chronicle the evolution of the CPI is doomed..."⁴ While there is some truth to this statement, most of their published

3. Creel, *Rebel at Large*, 162-164.

4. Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War, The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 90.

pieces are still accessible and there are a few statements of policy in existence which can be compared with similar propaganda efforts by the private sector. Through this comparison, the similarities and differences of the propaganda campaigns by the government and the *Ladies' Home Journal* can be accurately assessed by broadly examining the effectiveness of certain techniques utilized by both parties. Their similarities raise the question of why the Committee on Public Information had been practically demonized by the American people, while the *Ladies' Home Journal* experienced significant growth in circulation, even though they occasionally utilized similar tactics in their efforts.

As it became increasingly likely that America would be pushed into the war, President Wilson and his cabinet planned the steps they needed to take in preparation. One step was the creation of committee whose sole responsibility would be to manage and disseminate information about the war in order to foster American unity. When America entered the conflict and Wilson made the committee a reality with his executive order, George Creel was selected to head the program. Creel was born in rural Missouri in 1876 where the aftermath of the Civil War still played an influential role on the state and Creel's informal education. His father was an alcoholic, so he was raised primarily by his mother who helped create his strong sense of morality as well as his interest in history and classic literature such as the *Iliad*.⁵

Before his time as head of the Committee on Public Information, Creel was widely known for his time as a muckraking journalist. When he was twenty-three years old, Creel owned and ran a newspaper called the *Kansas City Independent*. Creel used the

5. Creel, *Rebel at Large*, 5-18.

paper as a podium to preach on subjects such as women's suffrage and public ownership of utilities.⁶ His reform efforts became more polished in 1911 when he joined the *Rocky Mountain News* as an editorial writer and started multiple moralistic campaigns. The most controversial of these was his campaign against prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases. Like Edward Bok, Creel felt that the root of the problems of venereal diseases was a general lack of education on the topic and widespread misinformation. Creel's attempts to elucidate the problems on a taboo subject were met with resistance, but similar to Bok, Creel experienced limited success by illustrating how "the social good and the individual good were one and the same."⁷

One of the most important things to keep in mind when analyzing the propaganda techniques used by the CPI was how Creel and other key members of the committee, such as Edward Bernays, interpreted propaganda. Creel and his committee defined propaganda using its original context from the College of Propaganda in Rome, which was created by Pope Urban VIII in 1627 to propagate Catholic orthodoxy.⁸ Essentially, Creel shared Edward Bok's belief that reforms could be achieved when the population was correctly educated on a specific topic. However, it is significant to note that when a group or populace is being educated on a topic, if their teachers only provide them significant information from one viewpoint, it will often shape most listeners' opinions towards the favored explanation.

Edward Bernays, nephew of famous psychologist Sigmund Freud, and a leading member of the CPI, later utilized the committee's techniques in the private sector after

6. Axelrod, *Selling the Great War*, 20-24.

7. *Ibid.*, 30.

8. Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, 2005), 48.

the war and provides a more accurate and honest representation of propaganda tactics in his book, *Propaganda*. Regarding government propaganda as education, Bernays writes,

Ours must be a leadership democracy administered by the intelligent minority who know how to regiment and guide the masses. Is this government by propaganda? Call it, if you prefer, government by education. But education, in the academic sense of the word, is not sufficient. It must be enlightened expert propaganda through the creation of circumstances, through the high-spotting of significant events, and the dramatization of important issues. The statesman of the future will thus be enabled to focus the public mind on crucial points of policy and regiment a vast, heterogeneous mass of voters to clear understanding and intelligent action.⁹

So while Creel tried to argue away the negative aspects of their propaganda crusade with his propagation of the truth argument, Bernays illustrates that the information they selected to share, what they chose to ignore, and how they disseminated this knowledge helped produce a specific mindset towards anyone now portrayed as opposition to the cause.

Interestingly enough, Creel made the connection between the work of the Committee on Public Information and advertising and sales methods utilized by the private industry when he later summarized the CPI's work during the war as a "vast enterprise in salesmanship."¹⁰ Creel was correct in making this connection, but, as was examined in the last chapter, the usage of new marketing and advertising techniques for propaganda and reform efforts had been in place before the CPI took form. Another good example of this, aside from the *Journal*, is Edgar Sisson. Sisson was recruited to work with the CPI in 1917 but he was previously the editor of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, which,

9. Ibid., 128.

10. George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 4.

like the *Journal*, was a reform periodical tailored towards a primarily female audience. Sisson had caught the attention of the CPI because of his reform efforts at the *Cosmopolitan*, headed by William Randolph Hearst. Hearst had already proven himself as a master at conjuring war mentality through yellow journalism during the Spanish-American War. With his newspaper, the *New York Morning Journal*, and the infamous yellow journalism techniques he developed during his rivalry with the *New York World*, Hearst helped create American animosity against Spain. Even though Creel and Bok claimed to use the truth to propagate and educate the masses, there are similarities between the techniques they utilized and the mostly fabricated tales used by Hearst during the Spanish-American War.¹¹ It would be an exaggeration to claim that propaganda efforts in the First World War were directly the result of Hearst's campaign, however, his advancements made in utilizing mass media for war propaganda certainly have to be kept in mind to understand the efforts made by Bok, Creel, and others.

President Wilson had, in a sense, alerted Edward Bok to the possibility of American intervention in the war when he asked Bok to postpone his retirement; so the editor was aware that he would likely be shifting the *Journal's* focus in the near future. While he waited until the news was official before he helped turn the magazine into a war propaganda machine, the *Journal* took steps towards preparedness. One of the biggest steps it took towards this was that it tried to create a sense of connection from its readers to the American government. Starting in February 1916 the *Journal* started a monthly feature that would continue through the war, slowly evolving as needed, called "My Government and I." Edited by Dudley Harmon from the *Ladies' Home Journal* branch in

11. Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines*, 26.

Washington D.C., this section was originally set up similarly to other successful advice columns the magazine ran previously, such as its section on child care.¹² The section claimed that it “aims to keep the American woman in touch with her government,” by providing advice or insight on various topics, and included a list of contacts for more specific questions.¹³

Closer to the start of the war for America, “My Government and I” evolved into “Keeping Up with the Times” in May of 1917, and its subheadings became more directed towards American involvement. Specifically, the short pieces titled “Domestic Science” and “Do You Want to Serve Your Country” were doing more than subtly hinting at the possible role for women during the war.¹⁴ However, it would be incorrect to claim that the *Journal* was fully devoted to the war, since some of its other articles in the months prior were more ambiguous. Even as late as the April, 1917 edition there was evidence of an impartial attitude towards the war in Europe. At the end of that month’s issue, on the page he set aside every issue for his own personal messages, called “The Office Dog,” Edward Bok wrote a short piece praising the ingenuity of the German race as a whole entitled, “They were efficient in Germany Even in 1544.”¹⁵ Many American readers were perplexed about this piece, since America officially joined the war by April 6, but since the *Journal* had to be ready for print nearly six weeks before actual publication, Bok could not react quickly enough.

Although it is noteworthy that even though the *Journal* actively participated in spreading war propaganda, it generally avoided images or stories with the goal of

12. Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, 116.

13. Dudley Harmon, “My Government and I,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1917, 24.

14. Dudley Harmon, “Keeping Up with the Times,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, May 1917, 3.

15. Edward Bok, “The Office Dog,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1917, 128.

demonizing the “Hun” which was a focal point for most other propaganda agencies, especially the CPI. Bok may have had a personal respect for the German people, or it may have just been part of the magazine’s strategy to avoid war topics and focus on the home, but ultimately it is not clear why the *Journal* typically steered away from this approach. While the magazine may not have actively participated in dehumanizing the enemy, neither did they condemn groups who did. The *Journal* ran regular sections to inform readers about the war and these segments frequently advertised CPI propaganda. In March 1918, the *Journal* told its readers that if they wanted to understand what the war truly meant, they should understand how the Germans themselves felt about the conflict, and the source material they advertised to gain this insight was the CPI’s infamous war propaganda piece, “Conquest and Kultur.”

This book, which demonstrated “The aims of the Germans in their own words,” took carefully chosen quotes to portray the Germans as barbaric as possible, which went against the *Journal*’s typical approach to the war.¹⁶ “Conquest and Kultur” was part five of the CPI’s Red, White, and Blue Series and was broken into seventeen chapters across nearly two hundred pages. Excerpts from German speeches and texts were arranged into topical chapters to illustrate why it was essential for America to give everything in the fight against Germany. Guy Stanton Ford outlines the aim of “Conquest and Kultur” in the opening sentences in the forward, which mirrors President Wilson’s claim that “The World must be Made Safe for Democracy.”¹⁷ Ford claims that the Allied Powers

16. Anna Shaw, “The Woman’s Committee of the United States Council of National Defense, An Official Department Reflecting Its Interests and Needs,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1918.

17. Wallace Notestein and Elmer E. Stoll, comps. *Conquest and Kultur*. Red, White, and Blue Series. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917. Accessed September 17, 2015. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t8tb1zk5w;view=1up;seq=3>.

demonstrate "... faith in themselves and in each other and in the ordered ways of law and justice by which they have sought in the past to regulate both their domestic and their international relations," whereas the Central Powers "... are those whose ideals have been fixed for them by dynastic aims and ambitions which could only be translated into reality through subservience to authority and by the unrestricted use of force."¹⁸

For Ford and the CPI, the war was a battle for the future of the Western World between the forces for democracy and the "medievally-minded" Central Power between which "there can be no compromise."¹⁹ Though today most of the quotes contained in "Conquest and Kultur" seem to demonstrate the Germans' desire to push their emerging nation into a major world power in an imperialistic global culture, the CPI used their arguments to show Americans that Germany's true intention was the ruthless conquest of the Allied Powers. So while it was not the *Ladies' Home Journal's* normal policy to portray the Central Powers in a demeaning way, there are still references and suggestions towards several war propaganda pieces that did. It is important to note that the *Journal's* reasons behind avoiding or including such pieces are difficult to ascertain. Certainly, it was nearly impossible for such a popular periodical to completely ignore the CPI's numerous pamphlets and advertisements, regardless of their contents, and the *Journal's* lack of anti-German propaganda may merely have stemmed from their focus on war efforts at home, instead of at the front.

The *Ladies' Home Journal's* strict time schedule made it impossible to cover war topics in the May issue, but by June the *Journal* picked up the tone it would carry until

18. Ibid., 3.

19. Ibid., 3 – 5.

the end of the war. While the *Journal* was a few months late to the war, it made up for its timing with the sheer volume of war related topics it pushed out once it began. Earlier reform attempts by the *Journal* had a specific approach, but the June edition's approach at promoting the war was the opposite of specialized. It is not clear if Bok was unsure about what tactic to take in this regard or if he actually thought that a broad-spectrum approach was the best method to achieve these goals. The first page featured a short essay called "The Greatest Gunners in the World" that proudly described the accuracy and skill of the American Navy. President Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address was given a full page, in attempts to connect the new military campaign with the sense of duty, patriotism and sacrifice invoked by the memory of the Civil War. "When Lincoln Spoke" featured a full print of the actual address, with an additional note which claimed that "Not since that memorable day has there been a more auspicious time to recall those 'appropriate remarks' than now."²⁰ President Wilson also received a full-page story titled "The Man." This article attempted to recapture the moments briefly before Wilson asked for the declaration of war against Germany. Readers are shown that while Wilson was distraught about America entering a bloody conflict, the actions of Germany had forced America's hand. The retelling of President Wilson's struggle was a counterargument to antiwar proponents and a declaration that America would now illustrate its absolute resolve towards victory.²¹

This style of total patriotism was commonplace in most mediums in the first few months of American belligerency. Although the *Journal* used this method intermittently in a show of patriotism, it typically relied on a more targeted approach. One example of

20. "When Lincoln Spoke," *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1917, 3.

21. "The Man," *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1917, 14.

the magazine's preferred tactic to foster support for the war was story in the August edition entitled "When I Opened the Shutter; What I Saw and What I Want Every Girl to See." Bok and the *Journal* frequently used short stories portrayed as simple entertainment, but were embedded with didactic messages to convey a lesson to their readers. In this story, the protagonist, a twenty-one year old girl from an upper middle class family, initially struggles to see why her family and friends were so supportive of war efforts but eventually "wakes up." Usually when the *Journal* used a short story to impart a message to its readers, it used a protagonist who either embodied its target audience or was a character they could relate to, and "When I Opened the Shutter" is no exception. The young girl in the story sees her brothers volunteering for military service and her parents doing everything in their power to support the home front, but did not understand why. At the end of the tale she finally sees why the war was so important; it determined the future of the entire free world. Her sudden revelation almost perfectly mirrors President Wilson's explanation that the war was being fought to "make the world safe for democracy," but it also carried a specific message to all who were in her position.

We are no longer children. We are women - women, yes thank God! – common proprietors with our brothers in the beautiful America. It is not a responsibility we can evade. We cannot, if we would, relinquish that which is our own to base uses. We cannot avert our eyes from those things which hitherto we have not felt to be our own, but which now, with the shutters blown open, we suddenly see as our own. Thank God, I woke up! But how about you?²²

This closing statement for story is essentially a call to arms for women volunteerism.

22. "When I Opened the Shutter," *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1917, 1.

One significant point to this, and other war propaganda from both the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the Committee on Public Information is the dangerous side effect of their propagation methods. While both Creel and Bok claimed that their reform efforts were rooted in teaching the public the truth about various issues, both emphasized that their way was the absolute truth, leaving little or no room for different interpretations or opinions. While this approach worked well with President Wilson's dream of complete unity on the home front, it created an ominous atmosphere for those who opposed the war for various reasons. Ideas and actions which did not fit the mold were seen as threatening, and people who refused to conform would become "slackers" or enemies of the state.²³ This dark side to World War I propaganda has become the major focus for numerous histories of the Committee on Public Information and other organizations. While the CPI rightfully holds a great amount of the blame, all sources that helped create the climate on the American home front during the war must be taken into account for a more complete understanding.

Supporting Selective Service

One of the most important legacies of the First World War in American society was selective service. Republicans and others who advocated for military preparedness in case the war in Europe managed to spread to the Americas. However, their preparedness attempts were met with great resistance from pacifists and other anti-war groups, so when America officially entered the war it was woefully unprepared in regards to military strength. In order to establish a significant military force as quickly as possible, a plan for

23. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You, World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8-20.

a military draft was erected immediately. Unlike the infamous draft attempts during Vietnam, which became a focal point for the anti-war movement in the 1960s, the selective service movement during the First World War was fundamentally a success. “More than thirteen million American men made themselves known to the state... reporting their birth dates, marital status, next of kin, and other vital statistics to local draft boards,” by September 12, 1918.²⁴ However, this victory was not accomplished easily. The strength of government and private industry propaganda such as the CPI and the *Journal*, at creating widespread support for the war can be directly measured by the positive turnout for selective service.

Supporting the draft and military service was one of the most important, yet convoluted, portions of the *Ladies' Home Journal's* role in the war effort. The *Journal* had long strived to establish itself as a guidebook to strengthen the family with a particular emphasis on the roles of women. However, with the periodical now turning its full attention to the war effort, it was forced to find a way to argue for the separation of the family. The *Journal* tried several methods to rationalize that sending your husband or son off to war was not only the right and noble thing to do, but was also something ultimately beneficial for your country and family. The sheer variety of approaches utilized by the *Ladies' Home Journal* towards this agenda defended the preposterous notion that sending husbands and sons to possibly die in battle was good for the family and the home. It approached the issue by illustrating how beneficial military service was for the character of a young man, claiming that a husband or son unwilling to fight for his country was equally unfit to provide for his family, and by demonstrating that a good

24. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 21.

woman always supports, and sometimes pushes, their men to better themselves and to do their duty. Essentially, the *Journal's* statements made it seem that any man or woman who shirked their obligation to the state were unfit to fulfill their duties at home.

Advocating for the draft and military service is where the *Journal* worked hardest to prove it was a publication for the entire family, because it carried messages for the men of the household as well as for the wives, daughters, and sisters they would be leaving behind. In March of 1917, before the magazine had redirected its aims towards the war, military service was given some respect, when it was mentioned at all, but it did not receive the hagiographic praise it later received, such as in the editorial "Different and Yet the Same." In this short piece, the author compares military service in World War I to alcoholism, in that both things have a likely chance of resulting in death for the participants. Here, becoming a soldier is given the more prestigious status since he is dying for his country rather than drowning himself in his own sinful desires, but the mere comparison of the two demeans the cause of the former.²⁵

The intrinsic value of military service became more pronounced in imagery used in later months. The *Journal*, since the beginning of Bok's tenure as head editor, featured full-page artwork throughout the magazine in an attempt to bring higher culture to the American home, but even these pages became war propaganda tools. The *Journal* mainstreamed art that touched upon various elements of the war, but, like its war goals as a whole, tried to only highlight topics related to the home and family, not the battlefield. Works by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, an American artist famous for his series on

25. Edward Bok, "Different and Yet the Same," *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1917, 7.

American history, *The Pageant of a Nation*, and other popular painters' works, were utilized to illustrate the difficulties and the honors of war service.

The most common theme in these illustrations is the division of the home that comes with every war. Sending husbands, sons, and lovers off to battle, divided homes and families, sometimes permanently, was the antithesis of Bok and the *Journal's* mission as whole, but was still one of the main points the periodical had to push on its readers. J.L.G. Ferris's artwork showing a young American man walking away from his home and lover, leaving for the War of 1812 with the caption "The Girl I Left Behind Me" encapsulates the difficulty and the necessity of answering Uncle Sam's call to war.²⁶ The *Journal* chose this image for the cover to send a message to men thinking about leaving for war as it focuses more on the call of service than it does on the what he is leaving behind, but the magazine also had similar images directed at their women readers and the home. One example is another of Ferris's works with the caption, "Letting Him Go; The Hardest Thing that a Woman is Asked to Do." The piece depicts what appears to be a man and his wife at the end of a difficult talk over the man volunteering for service in the Civil War. The wife is clearly distraught, with a handkerchief in hand, but is holding her head up and looking forward at the viewer with strength and resolve. While the wife and husband are the main characters in the painting, it is noteworthy that their home is adorned with patriotic images and statues, the most impressive of which is a massive portrait of George Washington draped in an American flag hanging above their mantelpiece.²⁷

26. "The Girl I Left Behind Me," *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1917.

27. "Letting Him Go: The Hardest Thing That a Woman is Asked to Do," *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1917, 13.

Impressing upon women the need to convince their husbands and sons to fight was a theme that went far beyond artwork. In regards to husbands, the *Journal* continued to impress that it was the patriotic obligation of the man to serve when called upon, and the role of the woman to support them in this decision, and to coerce them if necessary. Doing one's "bit" became common terminology for what women should do to aid the war effort within the *Journal* and several other media sources, including the CPI. The June 1917 edition of the *Journal* included an editorial entitled "How Can I do my 'Bit'" and focused most of its attention at getting husbands and sons of military age to serve.²⁸

Ladies' Home Journal also used outside experts on select topics in order to give its messages more credibility. Bok had relied on this method several times in the past, using popular women's activists such as Jane Addams when discussing the suffragist movement and Doctor Emelyn L. Coolidge when addressing the medical needs of children. In the story entitled "Should the Christian Man Go to War?" Bok utilized the esteemed Reverend Russell H. Conwell D.D., who was primarily known as a skilled orator and the founder and first president of Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to illustrate why serving in the war did not contradict Christian dogma. Conwell argued that serving in the war also meant serving Christianity because the Great War was not just a fight to make the world safe for democracy but also to protect devout Christian nations from their barbaric invaders.²⁹ Methods such as this seem to be effective since they were utilized by numerous other propagandists of the time, including George Creel and the Committee on Public Information. While popular and effective, this

28. "How Can I do my 'Bit'," *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1917, 26.

29. Russell Conwell, "Should the Christian Man Go to War?," *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1917, 54.

sort of propaganda further solidified the dichotomy between military service and certain sects within Christianity such as the Mennonites, who rejected the idea of war.

Convincing husbands to serve in the war did not receive as much attention in the *Journal* as supporting sons. Even though the husband was likely the primary or only source of income, women who were not willing to let them serve were viewed as selfish, and as has been noted earlier, being viewed as antagonistic to the cause could be dangerous. Conversely, the relationship between mother and son was seen as more sacred to the family, thus harder to justify when the *Journal* had to encourage breaking it. The *Ladies' Home Journal* used short fictional stories to demonstrate how military service would not break this bond. "The Whistling Mother: She Thought Her Son a Brick, He Thought His Mother a Whole Brickyard" was a new story series that ran throughout the course of the war. Started in August, 1917, written by Grace Richmond, a writer for the *Journal*, this story depicts a fictional son and mother's correspondence as he is patriotically serving his country on the battlefields in Europe. Similar to the artwork used to demonstrate the strength of a woman who let her husband go to fight, these stories were used to illustrate how a good mother can be compassionate and caring about her son, and yet still be strong enough to symbolize "a whole brickyard."³⁰ While the strength of this mother is intended to be the key feature to this story, the fact that the bond between the mother and son is continued and strengthened through the son's military service is paramount. Mothers who knew that military service could very likely result in the death of their sons needed this relationship to stay alive, even if it was represented in fictional stories.

30. Grace Richmond, "The Whistling Mother," *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1917, 8.

Maintaining the mother-son relationship and praising mothers strong enough to allow their sons to serve was key to *Journal* war propaganda, but the most complex argument used by the periodical to justify sending sons to battle was that fighting overseas was not just what was right for the country, but it was personally better for the child than staying at home. In cooperation between the *Journal* and Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “What the Navy Can Do For Your Boy,” demonstrates this specific point. The first half of this two-page section shows a group photo of the U.S.S. Pennsylvania with the caption, “Your Boy Would Not be Lonely on a Battleship,” demonstrating the camaraderie provided by the military.³¹

The next page features Roosevelt’s address to the readers of the *Journal* explaining the intricacies of government and military work. He argues that this type of service is required for young men to be the sort of citizen America needs. Roosevelt challenges mothers at home to assess the physical and mental character of their children. “If you have at home a boy of eighteen or twenty, ask yourself whether he measures up in alertness and physical health, not to the best of these men on the battleship, but to the average; ask yourself if he is fitting himself so well to as they to be a useful American citizen.” Roosevelt provides an illustration of the transformation that occurs when an impressionable young man spends time in the armed forces, with a picture of ten boys the day of enlistment, contrasted with another image of the same ten people just ten days after. The caption of the earlier images reads: “Study these ten boys closely. Note their expressions. Observe their attitudes.” Similar to before and after product endorsement photos, the second image is Roosevelt’s selling point: “Here are the same ten boys ten

31. Franklin Roosevelt, “Your Boy Will Not be Alone on a Battleship” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1917, 24-25.

days after their enlistment in the Navy at Newport. Contrast their expressions and attitudes. Ten boys made over in ten days. That's the answer."³²

World War I was not the first, and would not be the last, time where people advocating for war connected active military service with being a good American citizen, but the way the *Journal* attempted to show how military service was more beneficial to a young man's personal growth than living at home was a less common feature in future war propaganda. Edward Bok professed himself a true believer in this idea in multiple editorials during the war period, one of the most interesting being "The American Boy Comes Into His Own" in the August 1917 edition. For several years Bok included an editorial segment directed at the men of the household called "Men; In Answer to the Oft-Answered Question: 'Why Do You Not Have Just One Page for Men in the Home Journal,'" and while it probably needed a catchier title, it was Bok's main attempt at making the *Journal* something for the entire household instead of just women readers. This particular entry into the series preaches on the plethora of temptations present in modern America, the pitfalls of allowing a child to be raised solely in the home, and, of course, the obvious remedy to this situation was having your son enlist in the army or navy. Bok ends the section by writing that "Personally, I don't want my boy to live if he is not going to live in the right way."³³ One of Bok's sons did indeed serve in the military for a time, but his brash statement of correct living or not living at all seems heavy-handed, especially considering the number of young men who never made it home from the battlefield.

32. Ibid.

33. Edward Bok, "Men; In Answer to the Oft-Answered Question: 'Why do You Not Have Just One Page for Men in The Home Journal?', The American Boy Comes Into His Own," *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1917, 75.

For the men beyond the age of military service, Bok and the *Journal* recommended other possibilities for the war effort. In the editorial, “The Man Beyond the Military Age, What can he do?” the *Journal* advocates for the type of service it pushed on women, such as gardening and gathering clothes and supplies.³⁴ Even children were targeted in their media campaign. Working towards including the whole family in the *Journal*, it included a section called “Betty Bonnet” that included cut-out paper dolls, a boy and a girl typically, with cut-out clothes and accessories that could be folded onto the dolls. These were almost always light-hearted, playful outfits that would fit the a theme given for the month, such as “Betty Bonnet’s College Cousins” or “Betty Bonnet Goes to a Wedding,” but during the war they could have more serious overtones.³⁵

In the September 1918 edition of the *Journal* the “Betty Bonnet” section provided typical war roles for both genders. The girl doll had the usual dress-up clothes but also included a full Red-Cross uniform equipped with a knitting kit, sewing a garment for the soldiers overseas. The boy’s accessory and outfit choices were almost entirely war themed. The outfits included an army uniform and a navy outfit equipped with a rifle.³⁶ It is important to not overstate the significance of these interesting children play choices, as it would be perfectly reasonable to assume that these were purely light-hearted toys that were merely borrowing from the popular war culture of the time. Children have played with army toys and dolls for generations and it would be more than over presumptuous to assume that these toys were an attempt to create an army of child soldiers. However, it is equally important to not ignore the subtle implications of these in the *Journal*. Just by

34. Edward Bok, “The Man Beyond the Military Age, What can he do?” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1917, 78.

35. Shelia Young, “Betty Bonnet’s College Cousins,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1917, 33.

36. Shelia Young, “Betty Bonnet goes to a Wedding: The Page and the Flower Girl,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1918, 24.

including such toys in the magazine for children, introduced children to war culture and there is some merit to the argument that portraying military culture as a plaything downplays the seriousness of war.

The *Ladies' Home Journal* included children in the war effort in more direct ways as well. The cover of the September 1918 issue featured a painting of a Boy Scout in full uniform giving a salute to the readers. Below the image is a brief message by Woodrow Wilson that reads, "I desire to entrust the Boy Scouts of America with a new and important commission, to make them the Government dispatch bearers in carrying to the homes of their communities the pamphlets on the war."³⁷ Even though Germany would officially surrender a month after this issue reached any readers, the message from President Wilson is just one more demonstration that the President and many others completely believed that America's involvement in the war required participation by the entirety of Americans at home, regardless of sex, age, religion, or nation of origin.

From June 1917 to the end of 1918 the *Journal* worked to create and maintain general support for the war while also doing all that it could to ensure the whole family was doing its part. Interestingly enough, even though the Committee on Public Information and the *Ladies' Home Journal* used comparable tactics towards gaining support for the war, the CPI was strongly criticized for its actions, while the *Journal* experienced a massive expansion in its circulation base. While this fact is curious enough to draw attention, the possible reasons are pure speculation. One could argue that the less than honorable methods used by the Creel and his committee created animosity towards the CPI, and while this holds merit, these types of methods were used by several

37. Woodrow Wilson, *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1918.

propaganda agencies and not all of them were deplored by the public to this level. When comparing the successes of the *Journal* with the failures of the CPI, it would be closer to the truth to also take into account the fact that from the start, the CPI was deemed a propaganda agency. Essentially, even though private sector sources like the *Journal* may have used comparable propaganda tactics, they would usually be interpreted as more credible than agencies such as the CPI, whose clearly stated purpose was the manipulation of public opinion.

Chapter Three – Reforming the Home

Most of the European belligerents had severe misconceptions of the demands of a widespread war with modern technology prior to July 1914. Advancements in weaponry paired with seemingly simple defensive tactics and maneuvers such as trenches and barbed wire completely transformed the nature of warfare. Rivers of ink have already been spilled outlining how World War I became a war of attrition, with few major advancements on either side for the entirety of the conflict.¹ While the specifics of military history are not relevant to this study, the consequences of a war of attrition of this magnitude on noncombatants are paramount to understanding the propaganda campaigns in America. Europe's hopes of a quick, splendid little war were quickly extinguished and the world discovered the realities of the world's first major modern war. When outlasting the opponent became the only way to achieve victory, bread became nearly as important as bullets.

Since the actions of the home front were believed to directly affect the abilities of armies of the battlefield, massive propaganda campaigns were used to control citizens of the countries involved. Many of the belligerents adopted a policy of enforced rationing and other forms of governmental control, but American policy makers believed that a strictly volunteer method was the best approach on American soil. Policy makers were

1. For overview of some of World War I's biggest battles, see Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The Somme* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Robert H. Ferrell, *America's Deadliest Battle, Meuse-Argonne, 1918* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007). For information on how the war became a war of attrition and the effects it had post-war world, see Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring, The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000); Bryon Farwell, *Over There, The United States in the Great War, 1917 – 1918* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

probably correct in thinking that obligatory conservation and assistance for the war would not have been well received, considering that the average American did not have the face-to-face horrors of the war to motivate them into action. However, this purely voluntaristic approach required adequate persuasion techniques to be effective, since the realities of the war were thousands of miles away from America's shores.

While the last chapter examined propaganda attempts aimed outside the traditionally accepted gender roles for women of the period, this section will focus on the war propaganda directed at the *Journal's* typical clientele, white middle-class women. Since the war appeared to require the effort of the whole nation, American homes had to be transformed to meet the task. Since its inception, the *Journal* worked to reshape the middle-class American home, but its efforts here would go against many things it previously endorsed. The *Journal* was the first to acknowledge its internal paradigm shift. In the June, 1917 edition, Bok clearly stated this change in focus with what might best be described as a call to arms for women in American homes. He addressed *Journal* readers directly, telling them that, "Our dolls and playthings must be set aside. We have had our time for the dance and the dinner and the petty frock. But that time is over. It is an hour for serious thought: for well-doing, for thoughts of others: for service."² In a shortened company history of the *Journal* during the war years, one employee noted that the magazine "submerged its own personality, built up over a period of many years, in its desire to do its share."³ Some of the changes implemented by the *Journal* were merely older themes redirected towards the war efforts, such as proper kitchen and nutrition

2. Edward Bok, Editorial, *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1917, 7.

3. Alan Collins, *Something About the Ladies' Home Journal* (Philadelphia: Curtis Publishing Company, 1927), 35.

management, while others challenged key concepts like the possibility of women working outside the home.

Herbert Hoover and the Kitchen Warriors

A great example of the *Journal* changing its tune during wartime is the way it addressed the relationship between women and the kitchen. This relationship went far beyond basic meal preparation and was a major focus for reformers before the war through domestic science. The domestic science movement essentially dictated that modern advances in the kitchen, paired with sound moral judgments from the women home maker, could protect and enhance the family and American society as a whole. Often times, any ills in the home or the community were perceived as the failure of women to maintain the home, with domestic science at the heart of the debate.⁴

The belief that an unqualified wife at home was the primary cause for divorce, delinquent men, and other issues in society preceded domestic science, they originated from the Victorian period, but domestic science defined the supposed correct role of women with much greater precision. Domestic science also paved the way for Herbert Hoover and his food conservation campaign during the war period, since the proper way to manage a family's food supply and kitchen could be calculated and planned with precision. Hoover and the Food Administration asked that Americans cut back on important food stuffs, such as meat, sugar, wheat, and fat, which meant that alternative foods needed to be suggested for the program to be effective. The Food Administration

4. Celia Kingsbury, *For Home and Country, World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 31.

would use the *Journal* to promote food conservation as well as substitute, war friendly meal plans.

Conserving food was not a topic mentioned with any frequency in the *Journal* prior to the war. Both Curtis and Bok felt that the ideal audience for the magazine was upper-middle class women, and they never wanted to introduce anything to the publication that would lower the class of the magazine, stressing the importance of conserving food gives the impression of readers not having enough to provide for the family. Before the war, the *Journal* belabored the opposite of food conservation. An example of this is the article, “How I Use My Emergency Shelf” in the January 1917 edition by Anna B. Scott. The entire point of this segment was to illustrate how a good housewife should have an appropriate stockpile of extra food because one could never know when it might be necessary. It is not surprising that the *Journal* did not endorse conservation before the war, as there are relatively few times in American history where having an excess of anything was not seen in a positive light. The importance of this is that in the decades preceding the war, the *Journal* had seemingly chiseled in stone the guidelines for women who wanted to do all they could to improve their households, but these rules were almost completely reversed when the war became the focus a few months after the “Emergency Shelf” piece was premiered.⁵

“Food will win the war” became one of the most popular mantras of the war period, and it was also one of the biggest reoccurring themes throughout the *Journal*’s war efforts. The magazine provided tips on gardening, canning, and drying food, while also demonstrating the right way to use or donate their yields. It also fought for the

5. Anna Scott, “How I Use My Emergency Shelf,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1917, 37.

psychology of food conservation, giving counter arguments to people who felt that conserving food was wasted effort and motivation for the ones already faithful but who needed positive reinforcement to hold the lines. For Hoover and the Food Administration, maximizing agricultural production was as vital for the war effort as correct conservation in the American household. Hoover had initial difficulties with traditional American farmers, as he relied on assistance from groups of individuals such as bankers, lawyers, and career politicians, who had a precedent of working against most farmers' values and political aspirations.⁶ Convincing individuals who made their living farming was a critically important aspect of the Food Administration's plans, but they also took actions towards promoting food production in the homes of the average American citizen. The *Journal* had long since changed its customer base from rural farmer wives, so it contributed little towards coercing professional farmers to do their "bit," but the promotion of small scale farming and gardening was an appropriate task for the magazine.

Working with the Food Administration, the *Journal* ran dozens of detailed articles, authorized or written by the Food Administration that outlined specific instructions for maximizing garden output. Pieces such as "Let Uncle Same Help with Your Garden" included specific tips for beginners in horticulture and even featured a list of required materials and a recommendation for a plot layout.⁷ It is important to note that the expected yields from efforts such as this would have been very low. It would be illogical to believe that Hoover expected an army of untrained gardeners to significantly boost the country's agricultural output. Hoover may have been the most adamant believer

6. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 120.

7. Dudley Harmon, "Let Uncle Sam Help with Your Garden," *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1917.

in the volunteer system, as is seen during his services in World War I and his presidency, but it was clear from the start that gardening efforts, even if done on a massive scale, were implemented to reduce the amount of produce purchased from grocers. The *Journal's* claim that "EVERY boy or girl who works in a vegetable garden or on a farm is in fact a 'Soldier of the Commissary'" seems to be an over exaggeration to the point of mockery when taken in full context.⁸

Still, cutting back on household expenditures meant freeing up income that could potentially be used for war bonds. Also, if more Americans become closer to being self-sufficient, produce that would normally be purchased and consumed by the household could be sent overseas. So while these efforts may seem very limited, the Food Administration strongly believed they were important enough to continually invest in. "This Year's Garden and Last Year's Mistakes," which ran in the March 1918 edition of the *Journal* explain that the failures in the first year of gardening efforts were to be expected, but American citizens needed to correct these errors moving forward. The article covered common mistakes many newcomers to horticulture had made in the previous growing season. The section concluded with a map of the United States broken up into seven zones and a corresponding table that specifically labeled the correct time period for twenty different plants for all zones.⁹

Regardless of the actual results from the gardening campaign, the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the United States Food Administration's primary concern for the average American household was food conservation, not production. However, convincing

8. "Marketing Your Garden," *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1917, 32.

9. "This Year's Garden and Last Year's Mistakes," *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1918, 129.

families to cut back on foods they were used to consuming proved more difficult than promoting extra work in the garden. As it had before with gardening, the *Journal* worked with the Food Administration to provide advice for women willing to conserve food. Along with short segments on canning and drying tips, the *Journal* also helped promote the food conservation movies the Food Administration made throughout the war. In “Food-Saving Movies,” a monthly piece in the periodical in the later part of the war, the *Journal* would promote individual films demonstrating some the specific techniques utilized in the films.

Conservation tips and tricks were only useful if they were shown to a receptive audience. Any campaign that is reliant upon volunteerism must be able to convincingly convey a message of necessity. Arguing that soldiers overseas, and European countries devastated by war needed food was not a difficult sell initially. The problem arose when individuals began to point fingers at people not obeying the requests of the Food Administration or when they questioned if Hoover and the American army were being as resourceful as regular citizens were asked to be. The *Journal* ran articles such as “Dining With the Hoovers” and “What’s the Use of My Saving Food When the Army Wastes It? But, Does It?” to silence critics.¹⁰

In “Dining With the Hoovers” the *Journal* claims it was preposterous to believe that the Hoover family does not hold up to the standards set by the Food Administration. Mrs. Hoover is portrayed as the quintessential housewife who perfectly combined domestic science with the conservation needs of the war economy. The article contended

10. Dudley Harmon, “What’s the Use of My Saving Food When the Army Wastes It? But, Does It?,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1918, 47.

that while some families take part in the meatless days promoted by the Food Administration, Mrs. Hoover almost never served red meat at meals. The portrayal of the Hoover family is completely hagiographic, as one of major goals of the story is to portray the Hoovers as the model family. However, they retain enough shortcomings to remain relatable to the readers. The Hoover boys supposedly have a horrible sweet tooth, and Mrs. Hoover loved spoiling herself and her family in the kitchen from time to time before the war. However, these shortcomings were overcome when Uncle Sam requested their assistance, serving as a model for every American family.

The most interesting point of the entire story is the way it addressed the issue of community surveillance. Supposedly, the inspiration for this piece occurred when one of Hoover's neighbors was asked to sign the pledge for the Food Administration, she obstinately refused, claiming she personally witnessed a whole barrel full of sugar being carried into his home, while he preached for the conservation of sugar to the American people. The article made a joke of the essence of this argument, claiming that,

It needs no lawyer, nor yet a preacher, to demonstrate that whether Mr. Hoover has a barrel of sugar in his house or a ton of sugar – whether he takes three lumps in his coffee or none at all – has no real relation whatsoever to the question confronting every individual American, namely: “Shall I patriotically respond to my country’s call to conserve food?” Nor that we are not trying to save food to please Mr. Hoover, but to win the war.¹¹

From this statement it would seem as if the *Journal* is condemning the lookout for “slackers” and the self-policing that plagued the American home front during the war, but

11. Dudley Harmon, “Dining With the Hoovers: What a Guest Eats at the Table of the Food Administrator,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1918.

that would not be the whole picture. The same article addresses complaints about less devoted neighbors, asserting that this sort of comparison is innate in American nature, reading, “we in America are trained to believe that not only statutory law but moral law and social obligation should be as binding on one man as on another.” This statement more accurately represented the way most Americans viewed volunteerism for the war, and this mentality had dire consequences when normal citizens took it upon themselves to enforce the “moral law and social obligations” of the day. So while the *Journal* appeared to mock such criticism, it recognized the reality of American civil obligations. The *Journal* was cautious to point out that the barrel witnessed by Hoover’s neighbor contained apples, not sugar.¹²

The *Ladies’ Home Journal’s* ambiguous stance on “slackers” will be addressed in more detail later in this section, but the periodical was much clearer on the woman’s role of policing slackers at home. The magazine frequently pointed out the while women seemed to be upholding their civil duty for Uncle Sam and the Food Administration, their husbands often shirked their responsibilities. Men working all day were often not willing to cut back on dietary staples such as meat and white bread, and many felt that several of the “war dishes” presented by the Food Administration looked unappetizing at best. Such complaints seem fair when reading headings for proposed meals such as “chicken head and feet help to make delicious bouillon” but the *Journal* upheld its belief from before the war that it was the duty of the woman at home to uphold the proper dietary habits, civil obligations, and morality at home.¹³

12. Ibid.

13. Annie Meyer, “Food-Saving Movies,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1918, 33.

The *Journal* provided nutritional and civil obligation arguments for wives wanting to convince their husbands to do their duty, in hopes that either logic or emotion would convert their husbands over to the cause. The nutritional side of the debate focused on the assertion that Americans consumed too much meat and sugar anyway, so the conservations of those foods would increase the overall health of the entire family. This argument perfectly echoed previous attempts by the *Journal* to implement new findings in domestic science to win various arguments. Still, the logical side of the debate placed the job of convincing families to do their parts on the woman running the home. Conversely, the emotional argument attacked men directly. Hinting at the idea of the “slacker” without addressing it directly, *Journal* articles would assert that men who would not curb their own appetites and desires for the men fighting overseas were akin to children, in that they did not understand the gravity of their bad decisions. The magazine argued that considering sons, friends, family, and countrymen were dying in Europe it was absurd that men refused to do their part at home. “The day is here for every man who has a spark of red American blood in him to come ‘over the top.’ He’s got to curb his appetite for the sake of the boys ‘over there.’ He’s got to play the game!”¹⁴

Knit Your Bit

Food was an important aspect of women’s volunteering during World War I, but the United States government and the *Ladies’ Home Journal* needed women to go beyond the kitchen and small gardens to win the war. During America’s involvement in the war, Uncle Sam asked female citizens to devote their time and energy towards knitting war materials for the soldiers. Armies in Europe required everything from basic

14. “I Don’t Care What Hoover Says,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1918, 33.

clothing items such as sweaters and socks, to bandages and other medical necessities. This campaign saw a massive influx of volunteers, from individuals who could afford to donate extra time and money, and for devoted women's clubs who would chip in any way they could. Similar to other avenues of volunteerism, such as registering for selective service, the knitting campaign experienced relative success in terms of sheer numbers. Volunteers for the Red Cross alone knitted and donated several million outfits and medical supplies for the war effort.¹⁵

While the famous knitting campaign had certain similarities with the numerous other volunteer programs Uncle Sam asked his citizens to partake in, the *Journal* adopted a slightly different approach than it had in the other campaigns it championed. It continued the practice of giving the federal government a pulpit to preach from, while simultaneously providing additional reinforcements to these promotions with unique stories, editorials, and other original content. One new approach the *Journal* took with knitting was the way it helped shape volunteer efforts within women's clubs. Several of the myriad of women's clubs across America had already taken up some form of relief effort for the European countries ravaged by war, such as Belgium and France, before America officially entered the conflict. For women's clubs that had so eagerly taken up arms, promoting the actual cause was not nearly as important as making sure their good intentions were properly guided into something substantial. The *Ladies' Home Journal* had already established itself as somewhat of a guiding force for the women's clubs across America, so it was in an excellent place to help the government direct the clubs' efforts towards the most effective goals.

15. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 83.

The second difference was the magazine's approach with individual knitters. Historians writing on the subject, such as Christopher Capozzola, are correct in their criticism that Uncle Sam frequently asked too much from individual women volunteers.¹⁶ Most did not have the luxury to devote any time or money to ambiguously assist a war a world way, and often times, even when women could afford to dedicate themselves to the cause, they lacked the knowledge and skills to provide any worthwhile assistance. However, with the *Journal's* specific clientele of white, middle to upper-middle class women, it attempted to create a niche of women who used knitting as a way to support the war effort, while staying up with current fashion trends with thrift. This may not have directly taught women how to knit, but it did make the skill more appealing to learn for women who wanted to look their best. Similar to campaigns with domestic science and food conservation, merging knitting for the war with the more fashionable applications of the trade made the knitting campaign appear like an extension of a preexisting element within the *Journal* rather than an intrusive and demanding component of the war.

Women's groups and clubs were a staple in middle class communities in the progressive era and they continued to be popular throughout the war years. The purpose behind these groups varied greatly. They ranged from average social club to groups devoted to making money on the side. Editor Edward Bok had mixed feelings about women's clubs before the war, but the *Journal* worked with them, serving as a bulletin board where larger clubs could make announcements. This facet of the *Journal* provided Uncle Sam a useful tool when he needed to address clubwomen about a specific issue. For example, from its early years, the *Journal* supported a group it called "The Girls'

16. Ibid., 85.

Club,” which was not a women’s club in the traditional sense, as the members did not actually meet up or hold meetings, but it was sponsored by the magazine and gave women advice to make money on the side. Even though the club’s motto from its inception was “The Girls’ Club; With One Idea: To Make Money,” the *Journal* was able to redirect the club’s focus occasionally during war time, with one example being a major Red Cross ambulance fundraiser in September, 1917.¹⁷

Since most women’s clubs were quick to join the knitting war effort at home, there were fewer advertising campaigns run by the *Journal* and the federal government to win them to the cause. Instead, the major focus was channeling peoples’ desire to volunteer into something of sustenance. The *Journal*’s monthly section entitled “My Government and I,” which started before America entered the war, gave the United States government a direct link to the magazine’s readers for any message of importance. This page evolved numerous times in the first few months of American belligerency, but it eventually settled as “The Woman’s Committee of the United States Council of National Defense” and was edited by Dr. Anna Howard Shaw who served as chairwoman of the council. All facets of women’s war service were possible source material for this section, but some of the most common were statements towards knitters. These addresses told both women’s clubs and individuals which goods were needed or should be avoided. In February of 1918, the series presented “A Warning to Knitters” calling for a halt in sweater production. “The Woman’s Committee believes that in this emergency, possession of more than one woolen sweater by any woman should be cause for shame

17. “The Girls’ Club,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1917, 62.

rather than pride.”¹⁸ Regular pages such as this had influence directing knitting volunteer efforts, but their efforts were superseded by the American National Red Cross.

The American Red Cross was provided at least one full page per issue in the *Journal* during the war. Former United States President William Howard Taft, chairman of the Red Cross at the time, provided all of the organization’s articles for the *Journal*. When knitting became a common volunteer method for women who were able, publications from the Red Cross did everything within their power to guide volunteer efforts. The Red Cross ran dozens of pages describing the exact garment or dressing needed for the war effort, with pictorial representations to portray precisely what they needed from volunteers. Similar to previous programs, the *Journal* ran full-length questionnaire pages accompanied with direct correspondence from the officials in Washington to address any concerns from readers.

The *Journal*’s approach with individual knitters was similar to its food campaign in that it fused volunteerism for the war with its previous stance on the subject. Sewing and knitting were not popular vocations compared to cooking and gardening, but they were within the sphere of women’s roles according to the opinions of the time and were thus fair subject material for the magazine. Prior to the war, the *Journal* occasionally ran short articles over fashion tips and tricks targeted at women who had a basic knowledge of knitting. However, actual knitting advice was limited, and the focus of such stories was on the fashion design rather than trade secrets. This is evident from the way the *Journal* portrayed the profession separated from the realm of fashion. Articles such as “Sewing in other Women’s Homes: What it Means to be a Seamstress at 1.50 a Day”

18. Anna Shaw, “The Woman’s Committee,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1918.

illuminated the profession from the perspective of women who really understood the trade, instead of those who had tried it once or twice in their spare time. These types of articles portrayed women working outside the home in a positive light, but their mere existence delineates the average *Journal* reader's lack of understanding regarding the seamstress profession.¹⁹

For the war efforts the *Journal* and its editors disregarded the knowledge that the majority of their readers possessed a rudimentary knowledge of knitting and sewing. Akin to how domestic science was repurposed for the war in Europe, the *Journal* attempted to fuse its coverage of fashion trends with the volunteer knitting and thrift campaign. The number of articles featuring fashion tips was increased, but they now had more focus directed towards women sewing their clothes instead of purchasing premade ones. However, the usefulness of this approach for the war is somewhat opaque. It could be argued that by illustrating how sewing and knitting offered practical means to stay current with fashion trends, it gave women a convincing reason to learn the trade. Conversely, if women spent a decent portion their time making clothes for themselves, only the wealthiest women who could hire aid for housework and other duties would be able to devote more time to making clothes and bandages for the war. Considering that many women who pledged to pick up a sewing needle for Uncle Sam spent the majority, if not the entirety, of the war simply learning how to use it effectively, the argument of the *Journal* providing additional incentives to learn has more credibility.²⁰ Regardless of

19. Margaretta Tuttle, "Sowing in other Women's Homes: What it Means to be a Seamstress at 1.50 a Day," *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1917, 20.

20. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 83.

the knitting campaign's effectiveness, the *Journal's* endorsement of homemade clothing fits perfectly into America's most overarching World War I home front campaign, thrift.

Liberty Bonds, Thrift, and the Woman Slacker

Liberty Bonds, like food conservation, knitting, and nearly every other major volunteerism campaign during the First World War were, at least in part, united under a common theme of thrift. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the war of attrition in Europe had already exhausted most of the belligerents' resources. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the victory of either the Entente Powers or Central Powers would not be decided by a conclusive battle but by whoever could take the most punches and still stand. A conflict centered on outlasting the opponent was diametrically opposed to the majority of Europe's previous wars, which were decided by quick and decisive offensive maneuvers. So while the inundation of fresh American soldiers was indeed crucial to the Entente's victory against the exhausted German front, economic support was equally critical. Because of this crucial aspect the United States government pushed strongly for total compliance towards the war effort. The problem with cultivating thriftiness on a massive scale is that it conflicted with the essence of the American dream, which, if nothing else, promotes everyone's right to work hard and live as extravagantly as they can afford. However, thrift did not mean a complete cutback in all sectors, American citizens and industry were asked to conserve in specific ways that would not compromise economic growth. Eventually, this pivotal shift in goals and values sparked a change within American homes.

The *Ladies' Home Journal* was marginally more familiar with the idea of thrift, since limiting habits of excessive living was part of the progressive platform the magazine and Edward Bok embraced. While thrift was repurposed for the war like most other topics the *Journal* featured before 1917, it was unlike other war topics, in that it became a multifaceted agenda. General conservation initially meant that more goods could be used for the war machine, as seen with the parsimony of wheat, sugar, coal, wool, and numerous other raw materials and finished goods. However, if civilians practiced frugality it also meant that households would have a greater capacity to fund one of America's most famous war ventures, the Liberty Bond program.

Secretary of the Treasury Williams Gibbs McAdoo forged the Liberty Bond campaign. McAdoo's plans for the war were centered on lending the Allies as much money as possible to lower the number of American soldiers in Europe. McAdoo's Liberty Bond program incorporated volunteerism into funding for the war. Liberty Bonds were set a very low interest rate, and had a long maturity period, with the hopes that they would not divert investors from other sectors. In essence, Liberty Bonds were designed "to attract lenders who would not siphon funds from other investments but would instead decrease their current consumption to buy war bonds."²¹ This plan eventually backfired, since additional incentives added to increase bond sales, such as making the interest accrued on them exempt from income tax, were more attractive to large scale investors. Regardless, McAdoo's intentions are still important enough to examine further.

Marketing bonds to non-traditional investors required yet another coercive voluntaristic crusade targeted at the middle-class American families. However, the

21. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 101.

Liberty Bond campaign did not merge into the pages of the *Ladies' Home Journal* as easily as prior volunteer efforts. While middle class women were one of the most powerful market forces in America, earning them the full attention of advertisers everywhere, the *Journal* did not have experience directly recommending purchases for its readers. Pairing lifestyle trends with advertising campaigns was the *Journal's* true marketing strength, before, during, and after the war, but it had almost always left any actual sales pitch to advertising agencies, or the government during the war. The magazine resumed this practice sporadically, placing official excerpts on the Liberty Bonds written by McAdoo into the various pages of the magazine.

A great example of this was in the October 1917 edition where Mrs. William Gibbs McAdoo, who was Chairman of the Woman's Liberty Loan Committee and the daughter of President Wilson, was featured in one of the *Journal's* popular question and answer pages for women concerning the Liberty Bonds. This specific article also featured a snippet from the magazine's editors, called "Back Your Belief With a Bond" that told readers:

Do you not realize that this war is your war and your children's war; your neighbor's war and your country's war – a war for your freedom and your God? If you do not "believe" in this war, then you do not believe in yourself or your children, in your neighbor or in your country; you do not believe in the righteousness of Freedom or in your God. But if you *do* believe in all these, back your belief with a bond! Buy one of the new bonds when they are offered.²²

22. "What a Liberty Bond Means: Questions That are Asked About United States War Bonds," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1917, 1.

Though the magazine used similar tactics in other war propaganda, Liberty Bonds were not given anywhere near the same amount of attention as other volunteer campaigns. The primary focus was on the element of thrift, and women were encouraged to suggest spending the saved money on bonds to their husbands.

While thrift may have been the most commonly reoccurring theme in volunteerism during the war years, the most infamous legacy of the American home front during the Great War was the rigidly drawn definition of citizenship. In this conflict, those who would not, or could not, devote themselves to winning the war were dubbed “slackers,” using the vernacular of the period. Although the term sounds almost comical by modern standards, it quickly became an insidious implication when a significant percentage of the populace became zealots for the war. At its most pure connotation, slackers encompassed young men of military age who shirked their Uncle Sam’s call to arms against Germany and the Central Powers. This definition has lingered on throughout American history, the most famous of which were the draft dodgers of the 1960’s and 1970’s during the Vietnam War. However, the degree of volunteerism supposedly required by the rest of Uncle Sam’s family quickly broadened the definition of slackers.²³

As examined in detail earlier, the requests for citizens to participate in selective service, food conservation, and the other voluntaristic crusades were not quite as voluntary as they claimed to be. The *Journal* made the distinction between patriotic volunteers and slackers clear when it wrote “It is for each woman to solve intelligently the problem of her own home... The woman who does is a help to her country; the woman who does not is a detriment.” Any individual who abstained from theoretical

23. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 39, 83 - 116, 205.

volunteer war activities were branded as a slacker if they drew attention. Some groups were easier targets than others, such as immigrants from hostile nations. Organizations that had previously been labeled as detrimental to American progress, such as labor unions, were also targeted. Occasionally, individuals who fell under one or more of these categories became fervent supporters of the war in an effort to dispel the slacker label.

Ardent attempts to dispel these labels come as no surprise considering that the voluntaristic language of the day helped create a dichotomy within American society and it was imperative to be on the right side of the schism. Prominent Socialist, labor union leader, and four-time presidential candidate Eugene Debs' experience demonstrated that even trying to stay mostly neutral was not an option in such a divided political environment. According to historian David Kennedy, "Debs had neither spoken exclusively to potential draftees, nor had he explicitly urged violation of the draft laws," and openly supported President Wilson's fourteen points address stating that the fourteen points "deserve the unqualified approval of everyone believing in the rule of the people, Socialists included."²⁴ However, Debs made enough comments during a speech in Ohio in 1918 to be tried and convicted under the Sedition Act of 1918. Individuals on United States soil were defined as either citizens or slackers, and there were very few extenuating circumstances for a middle ground.

The topic of slackers was not a particularly common topic with the *Ladies' Home Journal*, but neither was it completely ignored. In one editorial, the *Journal* defined the woman slacker as "a woman who cannot take anything seriously... who cannot put aside her little dolls and playthings." This editorial makes such women appear like an

24. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 85-86, 354.

impairment to her home, family, and country. In addition, the magazine was not open to criticism about their war propaganda. One reader who took advantage of the open correspondence policy of the *Journal* complained that war materials had become incorporated into every facet of their life, and asked if the *Journal* could merely cut down on their coverage to give brief reprieve to readers, but her request was immediately denied. An editorial in September 1918 brought attention to the woman's request and stated that to not do everything they could do for the war would go against their duty as a patriotic magazine. Bok concluded his response by simply saying, "The *Ladies' Home Journal* is not a slacker magazine," further solidifying the divide between citizens and slackers.²⁵

The effectiveness of the volunteer campaigns endorsed by the *Journal* is impossible to quantify. According to Bok in his autobiography, one call for food, written by the Queen of Belgium and published in the *Journal*, produced "two hundred and forty-eight thousand cans of condensed milk, seventy-two thousand cans of pork and beans, five thousands cans of infants' prepared food, eighty thousand cans of beef soup, and nearly four thousand bushels of wheat, purchased with the money donated by the magazine readers" within a six month time frame.²⁶ It would seem that the *Journal's* attempts did help produce a remarkable result, but since the data is limited, the magazine's propaganda effectiveness cannot be accurately measured. In addition, when examining the efficacy of the *Journal's* war message one must also consider the effects war propaganda had on transforming the household and gender roles. Domestic science fit with the progressive belief that women held a very influential role, but these practices

25. Edward Bok, "Editorial," *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1918.

26. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 392.

were confined to the household in essence. Throughout the war, women were repeatedly told that their actions in the home greatly impacted America and the war, which elevated the significance of their traditional gender roles. Despite any successes or failures of voluntarism during the Great War, the inflated sense of importance of work on the home front helped propagate a push for women's equality. The argument that women could not handle the responsibility of voting or work outside the home was difficult to reinstate after they had proven themselves more than capable of handling additional obligations during the war.

Compared to building guns, making ammunition, and raising an army, actions such as gardening, knitting, and cutting back in the kitchen may seem trivial in regards to conducting a world war. However, with the mindset of American volunteerism during the war, these endeavors were taken very seriously, as can be seen from the response to criticisms. When George W. Freerks mocked the knitting campaign, claiming, "No soldier ever sees these socks," he was convicted of sedition for his transgressions against the state.²⁷ The plethora of volunteer crusades during World War I had a far greater impact than helping defeat Germany and the other Central Powers. American experiences in the First World War forever changed the dynamic relationships between the federal government, mass media, and American citizens.

27. Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 85.

Conclusion

After the dust settled on the battlefield and the Treaty of Versailles was signed, the world had to come to terms with consequences of the past five years of war. President Wilson may have failed to achieve the great majority of his end war goals, but America was not spared from the massive changes that resulted from war. The federal government's power had grown immensely and the complex relationship between the government, citizens, and the private sector had been transformed forever. While mass volunteerism would not be used by America during wartime because of its inefficiencies and other shortcomings, utilizing mass media and other outlets of the private sector has become a common practice to influence opinion.

As for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Edward Bok, and Cyrus Curtis, the war served as an apex of circulation rates for several years. Bok's refusal to adapt to the rapidly changing gender norms of the times became increasingly taxing for Cyrus Curtis, who saw profits from the magazine more important than outdated morals. Bok's views on gender roles had helped him forge a relationship with readers at the start of his career, but the war had helped facilitate a growth in women's rights, which culminated in women's suffrage. Forever a true believer in his ideals, Bok neither changed his own mind, nor changed the message he preached to his readers. However, since Bok previously considered retirement from editorship before President Wilson asked him to reconsider, Curtis felt it was in the *Journal's* best interest for Bok to leave the periodical. Although Bok's views were dated by this time, the *Journal* quickly realized just how much it relied on a personality who could effectively connect with readers. The magazine's circulation rates consistently fell as Curtis struggled to find an adequate replacement for Bok, and

the *Journal* soon lost its place at the head of women's periodicals. Like all non-essential goods, women's magazines lost sales through the Great Depression, but without Bok's guidance, the *Journal* steadily fell behind its competitors and by 1935 its advertising revenue had dropped behind *Good Housekeeping* and *Women's Home Companion*.¹ The magazine would not climb back up the ranks until after the end of the Second World War.

Bok's departure from the *Journal* undoubtedly hindered the publication's sales, but both Bok and Curtis felt it was time for Bok to retire from the *Journal*. Even though Curtis was likely correct about Bok's views on numerous social issues were too outdated for postwar America, it is improbable that anyone other than Bok could have led the *Journal* through the Great War as effectively as he did. The strong relationship Bok built between the periodical and its readers prior to the war did more than maintain a large customer base, it provided the *Journal* a unique vantage point to propagate war messages that many other propaganda sources, such as the CPI, did not share. It is tempting to hypothesize about the *Journal's* level of involvement in World War I propaganda if Bok had retired in 1917. Like nearly all outlets of mass media in the war years, it is highly probable that the magazine would have contributed to the war effort. However, considering the *Journal's* difficulties maintaining subscribers after Bok's retirement, it is logical to assume that the periodical's propaganda attempts would have been less effective, leading to a more passive approach to war contributions. Though it is impossible to ascertain how much difference Bok's presence truly made, the fact that the *Journal* was able to completely devote itself to the war, rescinding numerous previously

1. Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines*, 102.

held beliefs about the home and family, while simultaneously increasing its readership base despite this change, gives credibility to Bok's ability to lead the *Journal* throughout the War.

Though Bok left the *Journal* shortly after the end of the war, it is difficult to ascertain if his support for the war played a part in his decision to leave, or if he ever regretted this shift later. In his numerous writings after retirement, Bok frequently claims that while he served as the editor of the *Journal*, his true self was submerged. A second personality, whom he refers to as Edward Bok, he drops his middle initial when referring to his editor alter ego, and not the true Bok led the *Journal*. This is why he feels comfortable writing about himself entirely in the third person in his autobiography, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, and why he devotes an entire chapter, "twice born in twice thirty," to his true self's reemergence, in one of his later books, *Twice Thirty*. Did the focus on pro-war propaganda help create this second personality and ultimately drive him from the *Journal*?

Bok rarely addressed the Great War in his writings, and when he does, he spoke primarily of his fondness of President Wilson and of the experiences Bok had during his visit to the warfront meeting the young men fighting in the war. However, from the brief sections he does devote to the topic, it would be incorrect to say that he truly regretted shifting the *Journal*'s focus towards the war effort. Bok had faith in Wilson's dreams for America, during and after the war, and criticized those who claim that Wilson "failed in his great vision." Bok writes, "Is it not more likely that time will prove that is not he [Wilson], but the American people who failed? ... They could not see the vision which he

saw and which will become visible to other eyes and then come to a realization.”² As for his editorship during the war period causing a personality split, Bok specifically denies this possibility, writing

I was constantly aware during the last two or three years of my editorship that the personality of Edward Bok was slowly being submerged, and that, particularly during the period of the Great War, he was very little in evidence in the editorship of the magazine. It was with this growing sense upon me, and a correspondingly increasing desire to work in other fields, that I felt my time of editorship was over.³

It is impossible to tell if Bok ever personally doubted or rethought his opinions on the *Journal's* role in America's war propaganda machine but it is clear that he was still confident in his choices nearly a decade after the war ended.

Although the Committee on Public Information was demonized immediately following Versailles, both propaganda and volunteerism would continue to influence American citizens and policy makers. Creel's committee tarnished the idea of propaganda in 1919, though it regained popularity briefly following the war in the private sector until the start of the great depression in 1929.⁴ It had another resurgence prior to the outbreak of World War II thanks to revisionist histories of the CPI.⁵ However, propaganda became forever tarnished once people realized Hitler and the Nazi regime utilized Creel's and Bernays' tactics to justify the Second World War to the German people which resulted in

2. Bok, *Twice Thirty*, 358.

3. *Ibid.*, 380.

4. Mark Crispin Miller, introduction to *Propaganda* by Edward Bernays (Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, 2005).

5. James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War, How the Creel Committee on Public Information Mobilized American Opinion Toward Winning the World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939).

history's most infamous genocide.⁶ While the idea of volunteerism never achieved the general derision obtained by propaganda, its effectiveness as a policy was increasingly brought into question, with one of the best examples being President Herbert Hoover. Hoover's phenomenal success using volunteerism as a tool to conserve food for the war as head of the Food Administration provided him the political experience to work up to the presidency. He never stopped championing the voluntarist cause but when the worst economic crash in American history began during the end of his presidency, his old methods proved incapable of reacting fast enough. Volunteerism is still used sporadically in American culture, but it is no longer a relied upon strategy in times of necessity, as it was in World War I.

In the end, it is impossible to quantify the effectiveness of any propaganda sources, whether they are produced by government agencies or by the private sector. Generally, the conclusion is that propaganda must have some degree of efficiency because it is otherwise much more difficult to explain how and why groups of people have been convinced to believe ideas previously unacceptable, or to commit atrocities which would have been shunned. Again, much of this stigma surrounding propaganda practices stems from Joseph Goebbels' use of propaganda to ensnare the opinions of Germans during World War II, but ultimately, while it would be erroneous to argue that propaganda has no effect, its influence is immeasurable. Because of this, it is pertinent to recognize all the various forms of propaganda while attempting to ascertain any strengths or weaknesses. Official government propaganda agencies such as the ones led by George

6. Larry Tye, *The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations* (New York: Owl Books, 1998), 111; Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999) 176-178.

Creel and Joseph Goebbels have received attention from scholars since their inception, but it is time to examine official propaganda sources in comparison with sources from the private sector and from individuals. Historical texts such as Celia Kingsbury's, *For Home and Country, World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* have also demonstrated this necessity by illustrating the numerous ways private sector stories and other mediums propagated the war mentality.⁷

While the *Ladies' Home Journal* was only active for a brief period during the war, it proved how efficiently private sector sources could be repurposed if the situation required. Bok and the *Journal* were able to skillfully incorporate numerous facets of war volunteerism such as food conservation, conscription, sewing, and others into preexisting magazine features. Again, while it never could be proven indefinitely, the *Journal's* propaganda techniques had the potential to be much more successful than similar techniques from official propaganda sources such as the CPI. People are almost always more receptive to messages and opinions when the message is propagated from a source the target already trusts.⁸ Portrayed as nothing but a private endeavor whose sole purpose is to turn a profit, the private sector pushed the same propaganda as official sources but in a more subliminal manner.

Ultimately, the experiences of World War I, volunteerism, and propaganda again pose the question of what Uncle Sam can ask of its citizens but it also raises concern about how it does so. Certainly the relationship between a government and its citizens is dynamic in nature, but in a society like America, it is crucial to remember the influence

7. Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*.

8. Bernays, *Propaganda*, 54.

possessed by the private sector. Most studies over any period of American history focus on the relationship between two of these components, but all three must be compared in light of each other to gain a fuller understanding of our nation's history and the development of American society.

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