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World War I Propaganda and Its Effects in Arkansas

JOSEPH CARRUTH

THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRATIC IDEALS in nineteenth-century Europe and North America, accompanied by greater educational opportunities and by rapid developments in communication media, produced a mass culture and a new political force—public opinion, “the great new fact of the modern world.”¹ The shaping, or manipulation, of this force is known as propaganda.

Although propaganda—as a promotional tool—is probably as old as human society, it assumed an unprecedented official character during the Great War of 1914-1918. One historian has observed that, beginning in World War I, propaganda was “adopted officially as an indispensable adjunct of the war-government staff.”² Hence, in modern warfare three necessary “fronts” are recognized: (1) military pressure, (2) economic pressure, and (3) propaganda, the direct use of suggestion.³

The propaganda war was intense among the major combatants long before the United States entered the conflict. As a powerful neutral nation, America was a prime target in the war for the mind, with Germany and Great Britain striving to sway the opinion of the American populace. As the war

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¹Paul Johnson, *The Birth of the Modern: World Society, 1815—1830* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 530.

²James D. Squires, *British Propaganda at Home and in the United States from 1914 to 1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 12.

³Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 9.

progressed, however, it became clear that the majority of Americans favored the Allied cause. Consequently, the efforts of Germany were primarily geared toward keeping America neutral, while Britain pressured relentlessly for the United States to join the Entente as a cobelligerent. One of the prime propaganda pieces of the war was the *Bryce Commission's Evidence and Documents Laid before the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*, better known as the "Bryce Report." This British publication painted a terrifying picture of atrocities by the Germans in their occupation of neutral Belgium. Though many of its allegations were unsubstantiated, the report had a profound effect on American readers. Moreover, it served as a model for American propagandists beginning in 1917.

Even before the United States joined the allied war effort against the Central Powers, some American historians were so strongly pro-British that they began to wrestle with the thorny issue of scholarly balance in relation to patriotic duty. William Roscoe Thayer of Harvard indicated in *Germany vs. Civilization* (1916) that he was willing to relax some of the principles of historical objectivity during the war crisis. Thayer was unapologetic in his convictions: "[O]nly a moral eunuch can be neutral."⁴ Others in the field, however, warned of the danger of becoming "court historians," mindlessly promoting national policy. Nevertheless, during the war many historians wrote pamphlets, arranged speaking tours, and revised school curricula. This work was intended to be factual, but undoubtedly its popular approach tended to blur important distinctions and to oversimplify historical analysis in support of the Allied cause.

While historians debated their role, the United States Congress approved President Wilson's call for war. One of the first provisions for the new American war effort was the creation by executive order on April 14, 1917, of the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Wilson appointed George Creel, an enthusiastic Progressive journalist and supporter of the president, to head the committee, which included Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Secretary of the Army Newton Baker, and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. Every "process of stimulation" would be employed: "the printed word, the spoken word, the motion picture, the telegraph, the cable, the wireless, the poster, the sign board."⁵

⁴George T. Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront: American Propagandists for the Great War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 12.

⁵George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (1920; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972), 4-5.

CPI was to be a clearinghouse for war information. But the extended subtitle of Creel's post-war account of the committee reveals a more ambitious reach: *The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe*.⁶ This missionary zeal reflects President Wilson's concept of the war. Imbuing his pronouncements with a transcendent idealism that inspired America and nations throughout the world, the president's speeches formed the basis of the mass appeal in the war for the mind. Political scientist Harold Lasswell praised President Wilson's effectiveness: "Such matchless skill as Wilson showed in propaganda has never been equalled in the world's history."⁷

Charles Dana Gibson, one of the artists drafted by CPI, illustrated in a Liberty Bond poster the potential power of the publicity campaign to generate conformity. Gibson's well-known personification of America as "Columbia" is shown wearing a tiara labeled "Public Opinion." Striding resolutely forward, her message is unambiguous: "I AM PUBLIC OPINION / All men fear me. . . . I warn you—don't talk patriotism over here unless/your money is talking victory over there. / I AM PUBLIC OPINION! / AS I JUDGE, ALL MEN STAND OR FALL!"⁸ This poster illustrates well the seriousness of Creel's "vast enterprise in salesmanship."⁹ As for the success of the enterprise, it is estimated that nearly one-third of all Americans bought at least one Liberty Bond.¹⁰

Columbia representing public opinion as the ultimate judge reveals the inevitable wartime mentality, the pressure to homogenize the attitudes of the nation. The propaganda effort seemed to take on a life of its own. Although Creel began his work with the stated goal of providing accurate information with no taint of "censorship . . . concealment, or repression," the momentum of events carried the work of CPI beyond his good intentions, however sincere.¹¹ For example, *Saturday Evening Post* ran ads urging readers to report to the Justice Department the man who "belittles" our effort to win the

⁶Ibid.

⁷Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique*, 217.

⁸Walter Rawls, *Wake Up, America!: World War I and the American Poster* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 61–62.

⁹Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 4.

¹⁰Rawls, *Wake Up, America!* 196–197.

¹¹Ibid.

war.¹² And Wilson himself, even as early as his first war message to Congress, had warned of stern measures: “[I]f there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of repression.”¹³ Congress sanctioned Wilson’s threat with the Espionage Act of 1917 barring anti-war activities, and the Sedition Act of 1918 penalizing disloyal speech.

In reaching “every corner” of the nation, Creel created an ingenious program, the Four-Minute Man project, to help “weld the people of the United States into one white-hot mass instinct with . . . deathless determination.”¹⁴ Local participants, endorsed by community leaders, were to make brief addresses based on regular dispatches from Washington in support of the war effort. These patriotic “pep talks” were presented to practically any type of assembly—church, school, lodge, club, even an impromptu gathering—but the four-minute time span was especially suited to fill the interval between the reels at the well-attended movie theaters. At the end of the war Creel estimated that his “Stentorian Guard” of seventy-five thousand speakers gave 7,555,190 speeches to 13,454,514 American citizens.¹⁵ CPI produced, in addition to the Four-Minute speeches, a daily *Official Bulletin*, pamphlets, patriotic films, posters, and war exhibitions. Moreover, the committee assisted other wartime agencies by promoting Liberty Loan subscriptions, draft registration, and food conservation.

The effect in Arkansas of the national promotion of the war effort was considerable, as the following examples will show. With a few exceptions (indicated in the notes), the incidents and advertisements cited here were drawn from the *Arkansas Gazette* during the period of America’s involvement in the war, April 1917 through November 1918. But it is important to bear in mind that, given the policy of CPI to foster a sense of national unity in support of the war effort, some degree of pressure was exerted on newspapers to de-emphasize evidence of internal dissent.¹⁶

Arkansas newspapers of the period featured large, often full-page, advertisements for Liberty Loans or war savings stamps, which were official government releases paid for by local merchants. An example of this type of ad is seen in the weekly *DeQueen Bee*. The inflammatory rhetoric is

¹²David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 61–62.

¹³Quoted in *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴Creel, *How We Advertised America*, 5.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 84–85.

¹⁶Judith Anne Sealander, “Draft Evasion in the South during the First World War” (M.A. thesis, University of Arkansas, 1971), 7.

characteristic: "Slacker! Thousands of you who read this page have been filled with loathing and contempt for those shirkers and cowards to whom we apply the epithet, 'SLACKER.' But there are others, in addition to those who are too cowardly to shoulder a gun, to whom that term of black disgrace applies. Any man or woman in this town, who does not take all the Liberty Bonds that he or she possibly can buy, is in exactly the same class with those wretched creatures of feeble brain and feeble spine, those cowards we call 'SLACKERS.'"¹⁷ A less strident appeal, though equally demanding, is this one from the *Arkansas Gazette*, headed "On to Berlin We're In to Win": "You Must Do Your Part! . . . Money will win this war: it would be lost without it. . . . See if you could not eliminate something from your daily list of expenditures not merely luxuries or pleasures, but set aside a portion of your salary or income UNTIL IT HURTS."¹⁸

A frequent theme in the Liberty Bond drive portrayed the war effort as a moral crusade. In this example, the concept of the noble cause is wedded to reassurances of the financial security of these investments: "The United States Government bonds of the Second Liberty Loan of 1917 . . . are in the highest possible sense a security of the people, by the people for the people. . . . They are today the safest possible investment in the world. Buy them, as the mainspring of our holy endeavor. As your duty to the cradle and your fealty to the tomb, buy them."¹⁹ The crusade is rendered highly sympathetic in the following "last letter" written by a Canadian officer shortly before his death at the battle of Vimy Ridge:

My Dear Father—I am writing one of these "in case" letters for the first time, and, of course, I hope you will never have to read it. If you are reading it now, you will know that your youngest son "went under" as proud as Punch in the most glorious day of his life. I am taking my company "over the top" for a mile in the biggest push that has ever been launched in the world, and I trust that it is going to be the greatest factor toward peace.²⁰

"He gave his life on that April day, without a murmur, for the sake of peace and freedom. . . . What a contrast between a hero like that and the man

¹⁷*DeQueen Bee*, May 3, 1918.

¹⁸*Arkansas Gazette*, October 16, 1917.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, October 26, 1917.

²⁰*Ibid.*, April 12, 1918.

or woman with warped and shrunken soul who *doesn't even buy a Liberty Bond* to help the same great cause!"²¹

The urgency of the crusade was reinforced by the threat of a German conquest of the world in this promotion of the Third Liberty Loans: "If the peoples of the earth are not to become toiling millions for the Prussian Junkers and the Prussian Krupps, if they are not to be terror-ridden slaves at the mercy of a German Kaiser's will, Prussianism must be driven back within its own borders and kept there. . . . Our own cherished institutions, our free government, all that our fathers fought for, all that free people prize, is threatened by an enemy that would impose his own hateful Kultur on every free institution in every liberty-loving land. . . . You are not asked to give a cent—just *loan* your money to our *Government* at a good rate of interest and on the best security in the world."²²

Food conservation received continual emphasis during the war years. In this ad, "Cheerfully Contributed in the Cause of Humanity by Arkadelphia Milling Company," food conservation is linked with the purchase of war savings stamps: "The full weight of seriousness of this history-making, blundered, monarch-bossed war in Europe, into which we were innocently dragged, has not yet fully dawned on all of us. . . . Observe Wheatless Days and Wheatless Meals. . . . A saving of two cents per meal each day by every man, woman and child in the U.S.A. totals a saving of Two Billion Dollars, the amount our Government has asked us to invest in War Savings Stamps. . . . [A]nybody that doesn't save serves the kaiser as effectively as if he were carrying a gun in the German army."²³

The sober visage of Food Administrator Herbert Hoover broods over this more restrained appeal: "Food will Win the War! True American spirit has been distinctly shown in quick subscription to Liberty Bonds, contributions to Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. necessities. But there is another more vital necessity, THE CONSERVATION OF FOOD. . . . Use a fraction of an ounce or so less of food a day. . . . to keep the allied armies and our own soldiers in fine fighting fettle."²⁴ As if in response to Mr. Hoover's call, Gus Blass Company in Little Rock advertised a "meatless menu day" at their Balcony Tea Room: "In a patriotic endeavor to substantiate informal notifications that have gone out from the Food Commission at Washington

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., April 6, 1918.

²³Ibid., February 24, 1918.

²⁴Ibid., March 3, 1918.

indicating that conservation of meat be practiced, we have designated Every Friday Will Be 'Meatless Day.'"²⁵

Melodramatic effects were sometimes used in the drive for food conservation, as seen in this piece titled "God Bless the Household that Boils Potatoes with the Skins On": "Suppose that a lot of selfish, careless, thoughtless people throughout the nation so conduct themselves that you cannot get enough food for your family, so that your wife fails and grows weak and shaken before your eyes, so that your children weaken, sicken and die. Suppose Starvation looks at you through the hollow eyes of all you love best in the world. Wouldn't you be filled with loathing and contempt and bitter hatred for the careless, thoughtless people whose fault it was? Then do not commit that fault yourself."²⁶ American women were explicitly targeted in the following ad, "Bread First! Will You Save It for Him?": "Women of America, will you help save this flour? The President of the United States has asked every household, every individual, to conserve the food supply and stop the waste. Bread is first. The most important food in our homes, the food our soldiers must have, is BREAD. . . . If you have eliminated waste, then *save one more slice* of bread. . . . Never before have the women of our country truly and more gravely held in their hands the power to influence the destinies of our Nation."²⁷ Not surprisingly, this notice was sponsored by five Little Rock bakeries.

Jefferson County was lauded for prohibiting the sale of wheat flour as of April 1, 1918. Moreover, the entire current supply (ten thousand barrels) was to be "placed at the disposal of the government to be sent to Europe." This decision, reached at a meeting of the Jefferson County Council of Defense in Pine Bluff, was described by a federal representative as "the biggest thing that has come to the attention of the United States Food Administration since the war started."²⁸ A similar measure was taken in Little Rock later that month by the Hotel and Restaurant Committee of the State Food Administration—that Arkansas hotels and restaurants would be "wheatless" after April 14, 1918. The motion included a "request for all families in Arkansas to eliminate wheat flour until the next harvest and put the entire state on a cornmeal diet." Exceptions were made for "invalids and those on a diet."²⁹ Later, in June 1918, the *Gazette* reported that the "flour

²⁵Ibid., August 8, 1917.

²⁶Ibid., June 13, 1917.

²⁷Ibid., March 15, 1918.

²⁸Ibid., April 2, 1918.

²⁹Ibid., April 10, 1918.

situation” had become so serious in Van Buren that closure was a threat to several bakeries because they exceeded their flour allowances. Only because of the intervention by the “captain of the bakery section of the Food Administration for the western part of the state” were they “permitted to remain in business.”³⁰ Thus, the Food Administration’s entreaties for conservation evidently carried the power of enforcement.

Official publications were relentless in their demand for unanimous support of the war. Not only did they draw positively on patriotic feelings, but they also incited animosity toward all who did not agree with the war aims. One manifestation of this ill will was a nationwide distrust of German language instruction in public and private schools. The Little Rock school board, for example, eliminated the teaching of German in the middle of the term on April 13, 1918, because “the sentiment against anything German [had] become so keen.” The subject, which had been taught in all four years of the high school to about one hundred students, was to be replaced by courses “of such a nature as to fit the students for better serving during the war.”³¹ Stuttgart public schools banned German instruction on April 16.³² And on April 20 it was reported that the Catholic Board of Education for Johnson County issued an order in Clarksville banning the teaching of German in the parochial schools and preaching in the German language in the Catholic Churches of that county.³³

German language newspapers were another cause of concern. The National Security League, which had been founded in 1915 to promote military preparedness, issued in 1917 a letter to 450 editors of German-American newspapers asking them to subscribe to a “confession of faith” that included the following articles: “I believe that the objects of America in this war are noble, unselfish and that they square with the highest aims of morality and religion. . . . that the aims of Germany in this war are sordid, selfish and opposed to the principles of human liberty. . . . that the statement of the German monarch and of his prime minister as to German aims and purposes in the war have been false and hypocritical. . . . that the methods sanctioned by the German government and rulers in this war are brutal, barbarous and revolting to civilized thought. . . . that the preservation of human liberties, of the ideals of civilization and of morality depend upon

³⁰Ibid., June 22, 1918.

³¹Ibid., April 13, 1918.

³²Ibid., April 17, 1918.

³³Ibid., April 21, 1918.

our victory in this war.”³⁴ The “confession” appeared in the *Gazette* in August 1917, just two days after the arrest of Curtis Ackerman, editor and publisher of the *Staats Zeitung*, a German weekly published in Little Rock. Ackerman was charged with “obstructing enlistments and encouraging disloyalty.” Allegedly he told a prosecution witness (“a long-time friend of Ackerman”) that he could give him a “powder” that would cause him to appear “sickly” when he appeared before the exemption board. In addition, his paper printed a “violent attack” on the president of Union Trust Company, who had taken advertising space to welcome to Little Rock a visiting Belgian commission. Ackerman’s editorial in the *Staats Zeitung* declared that “the Belgians are a brutal people and that the Germans are not.”³⁵ Ackerman was interned at a federal prison in Georgia “for the period of the war.”³⁶

An important weapon in the arsenal of the “war for the mind” was the Four-Minute Men organization. As early as June 11, 1917, Four-Minute speakers were holding forth at Little Rock and Argenta motion-picture theaters and vaudeville houses, urging that liberty bonds be purchased by private rather than corporate funds. By July a statewide organization was underway. The “Arkansas Branch of Four Minute Men” was to consist of local chairmen “in every town in Arkansas where there [was] a moving picture theater.” The local chairmen were then to select men who could deliver four-minute addresses at the theaters “on short notice on any subjects . . . assigned to them.” Two hundred motion-picture theaters were said to be located in the state.³⁷

A front-page article in the *Gazette* was devoted to Miss Betty Brooks, a “Little Rock girl singer who [had] won fame in opera, musical comedy and vaudeville in Chicago and New York,” who would be a “pinch hitter” for the scheduled Four-Minute speaker at the Royal Theater. Brooks would *sing* a “four-minute speech.” Her song, written by Carl J. Baer, a local “publicist,” was titled “We Will Make the Kaiser Wiser.” The lyrics were intended to be sung to the melody of “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” but Brooks insisted on a tune with more “pep,” so “Yankee Doodle” was substituted.³⁸ It should be noted that women were used not only as pinch hitters. Mrs. Florence Brown Cotnam of Little Rock, who was active in Arkansas (and nationally)

³⁴Ibid., August 11, 1917.

³⁵Ibid., August 9, 1917.

³⁶Ibid., September 12, 1917.

³⁷Ibid., July 9, 1917.

³⁸Ibid., July 27, 1917.

in the women's suffrage movement, was a regular Four-Minute speaker during World War I.³⁹

In December 1917 a public rally was held in Little Rock in conjunction with a conference of the State Council of Defense, the Four-Minute Men, and other related organizations. It was described as "one of the most enthusiastically patriotic meetings of the war in this state." A message to President Wilson was drafted and endorsed. The conference pledged to the president its "combined and individual support" and gave "most emphatic unanimous approval to your every utterance and act in this great crisis."⁴⁰

However, support for America's involvement in the European war was not unanimous in Arkansas. The day after the president signed the war resolution, a Helena resident was thrown in jail for having "uttered sentiments disloyal to the United States." The man was accused of saying that he hoped "Germany would whip the entire world, and especially the United States." Local officials received instructions from the Department of Justice in Washington "to be on the lookout for suspicious persons of any nationality."⁴¹ A few days later, near Harrison "some Germans" were reported to have raised a German flag, but "it was immediately riddled with bullets by the natives."⁴² About the same time, in eastern Columbia County near Magnolia, a man was charged with "attempting to incite negroes to seditious outbreaks and with spreading pro German propaganda."⁴³ In Earle, in eastern Arkansas, Earl Beal, alias "Thin Rind," was arrested and put in jail: "It is alleged that when he was offered a small flag to wear on his collar he threw the emblem down and cursed the government."⁴⁴

As the war progressed, patriotic citizens responded with more hostility to disloyal statements. In Newport in March 1918 a man was arrested for the following "unpatriotic remarks": "[M]en volunteered in the army and bought war savings stamps because they were forced to do so and [for] selfish motives, rather than from patriotism." As a result of these comments, "[f]eeling was high, but before any violence was attempted . . . he was locked in jail on charges of disturbing the peace."⁴⁵ An incident in Hot

³⁹Florence Brown Cotnam Papers, Special Collections Division, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

⁴⁰*Arkansas Gazette*, December 21, 1917.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, April 8, 1917.

⁴²*Ibid.*, April 19, 1917.

⁴³*Ibid.*, April 22, 1917.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, April 24, 1917.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, March 25, 1918.

Springs in the same month reveals further the volatile atmosphere of wartime. "Fake war reports" were being circulated over "a private wire controlled by a firm of well known stock brokers." One report told of the capture of one hundred fifty-thousand Germans, including the crown prince. When a man doubted the account, "his patriotism was immediately questioned and he was publicly insulted." The prosecuting attorney, suspecting that the reports were intended to "stimulate gambling in futures," handed the matter over to the State Council of Defense for investigation.⁴⁶

A number of incidents were reported that indicate the increasing intolerance of Arkansas citizens for opposition to the war effort. For example, a Hartford man accused of making unpatriotic remarks was "forced to get on his knees, apologize and to kiss the flag several times." He was then escorted to Fort Smith for investigation. When three other men "made adverse comment[s] on the action," they were forced "to follow in the footsteps of 'their comrade'" and were also taken to Fort Smith. "The people" in Hartford warned: "[T]he next unpatriotic men found here will not escape as easily as the four sent to Fort Smith."⁴⁷ A German-born resident of Jamestown, near Clarksville, refused to display an American flag on his store and to buy war savings stamps. Consequently, "about 25 to 30 residents . . . severely beat" the man and "threw his goods into the street and ordered him to leave town."⁴⁸ And when an umbrella peddler in Malvern was arrested for "making disloyal utterances," a crowd of "nearly 100 masked men" induced the sheriff to remove the man from jail "to take him away." The man reportedly "broke and ran," was caught by the crowd, and was "whipped, tarred and feathered." He was also "forced to kiss the flag."⁴⁹

Religious beliefs motivated dissent in the case of the Russellites—disciples of Pastor Charles Taze Russell, many of whose followers later came to be known as Jehovah's Witnesses. Four members of this group were "tarred and feathered and literally 'run' out of town" by a mob at Walnut Ridge. Their offense was distributing the literature of their sect, which condemned war and military service.⁵⁰ Two months later the "Cleburne County draft war" erupted, in which two hundred volunteers and regular soldiers with two machine guns attempted to subdue eight Russellites near Heber Springs. After a tense week, during which one member of the

⁴⁶Ibid., March 26, 1918.

⁴⁷Ibid., March 28, 1918.

⁴⁸Ibid., March 29, 1918.

⁴⁹Ibid., April 1, 1918.

⁵⁰Ibid., April 30, 1918.

posse was killed, the last of the resisters surrendered—paradoxically having defended their belief in pacifism with a rigid defiance. James F. Willis gives a detailed account of this standoff in the Spring 1967 *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*.⁵¹

An ironic ethnic reversal occurred in the button factory at Pocahontas, where Fred Gebhardt, a German-American, was offended by Joe Claire's assertion that "he hoped the Germans would whip the whole world." When Gebhardt ascertained that Claire "meant exactly what he said," he ran to the sheriff's office and asked permission "to beat the stuffing out of a blamed traitor." After hearing the story, the lawman told Gebhardt "to go to it." Gebhardt returned to the factory and attacked Claire, whose "face is said to have resembled jelly when the young German finished with him." Gebhardt then forced Claire "to kiss a Wilson button several times" and compelled him "to salute the Stars and Stripes."⁵²

Swift justice, though hardly according to due process, was administered in Jonesboro in May 1918. A mass meeting was convened in the public square "to consider the charges" of disloyal remarks made by a night watchman at a spoke factory. The man admitted "making some of the remarks against the government, the Red Cross and other war activities." A public whipping was ordered, "a soldier who had lost both legs in the United States army [being] one of the first to apply the whip." Unlike some vigilante efforts, presumably "[t]he proceedings were orderly."⁵³ A week later in Trumann, twenty miles away, "an angry mob took possession" of the town to conduct "a thorough cleaning out of all loafers, gamblers, propagandists and immoral women." It was reported that "[t]hrong[s] of men all day long scoured the town searching for slackers of any kind." Two sawmill hands who would not donate to the Red Cross "were rushed to the public square and whipped." The same fate apparently awaited a local merchant who earlier had "steadfastly refused to donate," but a last-minute contribution of one hundred dollars saved him.⁵⁴

Even the clergy were not exempt. Rev. P. Shepherd, a Baptist minister in Sheridan, was arrested on a charge of violating "section 3 of the espionage act." In a sermon Shepherd had upbraided his congregation for "devoting too much of their time to the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. work," and it was

⁵¹James F. Willis, "The Cleburne County Draft War," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 36 (Spring 1967): 24–39.

⁵²*Ibid.*, April 2, 1918.

⁵³*Ibid.*, May 18, 1918.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, May 27, 1918.

alleged that he said that the Red Cross “originated in hell.” When asked by a member of the Grant County Council of Defense “if he did not know that President Wilson was the head of the Red Cross,” Shepherd replied “that he didn’t care who was the head of it and that he would say what he pleased.” Afterward, he was “held to the federal Grand Jury and released on \$1,000 bond.”⁵⁵

The conflicts arising from the demand for national loyalty sometimes brought bloodshed. A dispute near Grannis, in Polk County, resulted in the death of A. D. Boatner, the director of the rural school district there. Boatner, at the request of government authorities, was calling on the farmers in his district to sign a food pledge card, promising “to raise all the food and feedstuffs that he can, consistent with good farming.” Henry Dafforn, said to be German-born, asserted that Boatner “called him a vile name,” after which he “shot the visitor.” Dafforn surrendered to the authorities in Grannis and was brought to the county seat at Mena but later removed to Texarkana to avoid “serious trouble.”⁵⁶ A month later Dafforn was convicted of first-degree murder.⁵⁷

Resistance to the draft was a continuing concern for the government. In Arkansas, as in other states, vigorous efforts were exerted to bring the “slackers” to justice. A “pitched battle,” fought at Hatton’s Gap in Polk County in May 1918 claimed the lives of an alleged draft resister and a deputy sheriff. Seven men and boys were arrested and jailed at Mena. One of the resisters revealed that the group was divided into two organizations—one known as the “Red Flag” and the other as the “Jones Family,” which had ties to a well-known Oklahoma group of draft resisters.⁵⁸ Another group—the Working Class Union (WCU), with headquarters in Van Buren—figured prominently in sedition cases in the region. An “internal agent for Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas,” whose work of apprehending moonshiners frequently led him into WCU strongholds, declared that the organization had “spread its German propaganda with much force.” The group’s main objective, according to the *Gazette* report, was to promote resistance to the draft and to protect army deserters.⁵⁹

Despite numerous expressions of resistance to America’s participation in the Great War, the government program to arouse American public

⁵⁵Ibid., September 11, 1918.

⁵⁶Ibid., April 30, 1918.

⁵⁷Ibid., May 26, 1918.

⁵⁸Ibid., May 27, 1918.

⁵⁹Ibid., June 22, 1918.

opinion was highly successful. Propaganda in the newly emerging mass society of the early twentieth century was used effectively to channel patriotic sentiment in America to overcome a century of aversion to “entanglement” in European conflicts. Indeed, it accomplished to a considerable degree the goal of CPI director George Creel to orchestrate a unified national support of the war effort. This need to mobilize the home front explains the intensity of an address to the teachers of Arkansas delivered in May 1918 by Gen. Richmond P. Davis, commander of the 162nd Brigade Field Artillery at Camp Pike, near Little Rock. General Davis “enlisted” the teachers to do their part in conveying the seriousness of the national peril: “We say we are fighting the terrible kaiser and his henchmen. It is not true. We are fighting the German people as they are following the lead of the emperor. They looked on the ‘alliance between the kaiser and God’ as their religion and we will have to vanquish them before victory can come. But we must win with a minimum of losses and that can come only with a united and solid people. Every man, woman and child in America is in the army just as I am.”⁶⁰ Thus, Arkansas—and virtually all America—went “over the top.”

⁶⁰Ibid., April 6, 1918.