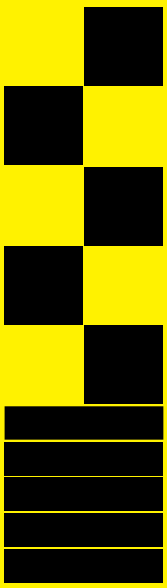
1934

Our Master's Voice: Advertising

James Rorty



a
mediastudies.press
public domain
edition

with a new
introduction by
Jefferson Pooley

James Rorty

OUR MASTER'S VOICE

ADVERTISING

A MEDIASTUDIES.PRESS PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

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Dedicated to the memory of Thorstein Veblen, and to those technicians of the word whose "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency" may yet accomplish that burial of the ad-man's pseudoculture which this book contemplates with equanimity.

About the Author

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James Rorty was born March 30, 1890 in Middletown, New York. He was educated in the public schools, served an early journalistic apprenticeship on a daily newspaper in Middletown, and was graduated from Tufts College. Mr. Rorty was a copy-writer for an advertising agency from 1913 to 1917, at which time he enlisted as a stretcher bearer in the United States Army Ambulance Service. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for service in the Argonne offensive.

Since the war Mr. Rorty has worked variously as an advertising copy-writer, publicity man, newspaper and magazine free lance. He is the author of two books of verse, "What Michael Said to the Census Taker" and "Children of the Sun", and has contributed to the *Nation*, *New Republic*, *New Masses*, *Freeman*, *New Freeman*, and *Harpers.*

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FOREWORD

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TWO BASIC definitions will perhaps assist the reader to understand the scope and intent of this book.[1]

The *advertising business* is taken to mean the total apparatus of newspaper and magazine publishing in America, plus radio broadcasting, and with important qualifications the movies; plus the advertising agency structure, car card, poster, and direct-by-mail companies, plus the services of supply: printing, lithography, engraving, etc. which are largely dependent upon the advertising business for their existence.

The *advertising technique* is taken to mean the technique of manufacturing customers by producing systematized illusions of value or desirability in the minds of the particular public at which the technique is directed.

The book is an attempt, by an advertising man and journalist, to tell how and why the traditional conception and function of journalism has lapsed in this country. It describes the progressive seizure and use, by business, of the apparatus of social communication in America. Naturally, this story has not been "covered", has not been considered fit to print, in any newspaper or magazine dependent for its existence upon advertising.

In attempting to examine the phenomenon of American advertising in the context of the culture it became necessary to examine the culture itself and even to trace its economic and ideological origins. This enlargement of scope necessitated a somewhat cursory and inadequate treatment of many detailed aspects of the subject. The writer accepted this limitation, feeling that what was chiefly important was to establish, if possible, the essential structure and functioning of the phenomena.

Since the book is presented not as sociology, but as journalism, the writer felt free to use satirical and even fictional literary techniques for whatever they might yield in the way of understanding and emphasis. The writer wishes to acknowledge gratefully the help and encouragement he has received from many friends in and out

[1] [Clarifying footnotes from the reprint editor, Jefferson Pooley, will appear in brackets]

of the advertising business. The section on "The Magazines" is almost wholly the work of Winifred Raushenbush and Hal Swanson. Thanks are due to Professor Robert Lynd for reading portions of the manuscript and for many stimulating suggestions; to Professor Sidney Hook for permission to quote from unpublished manuscripts; to F. J. Schlink and his associates on the staff of Consumers' Research for permission to use certain data; to Stuart Chase for much useful counsel and encouragement; to Dr. Meyer Schapiro for valuable criticisms of the manuscript and to Elliot E. Cohen for help in revising the proofs; to the officials of the Food and Drug Administrations for courteously and conscientiously answering questions.

PREFACE to the mediastudies.press edition

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James Rorty's *Our Master's Voice* is buried treasure. The book set off tremors when published in 1934, perhaps because its author so decisively repudiated his former profession. But after the Second World War, Rorty and his spirited takedown of advertising fell into near obscurity. The scholarly literature that coalesced around "mass communication" in the early postwar decades makes almost no mention of the book. Popular treatments of advertising—like Vance Packard's 1957 best seller *The Hidden Persuaders*—neglect the book too.[1] And when *Our Master's Voice* does surface today, there's usually a filial explanation: The book tends to appear in biographical sketches of Rorty's far more famous son, Richard.[2]

So no one reads James Rorty anymore. This is too bad, since the book remains remarkably spry eighty-five years after its first printing. In fact, Rorty's dissection of the ad business has fresh things to say to scholars of Google-style "surveillance capitalism." The good-natured urgency of Rorty's prose resonates too—maybe especially because his aim to bury the "ad-man's pseudoculture" proved a spectacular failure. We can, in 2020, pick up where Rorty left off.

Thus *Our Master's Voice* is the right book to inaugurate our Public Domain series. It is, of course, in the public domain, having lapsed out of copyright in 1962. But that copy-freedom is just the book's baseline qualification: We are, at mediastudies.press, looking to republish works that cling to relevance, even if they've long since fallen out of print. An even narrower wedge of books stands out, like *Our Master's Voice*, for their unmerited banishment from the field's memory. Such books—unheralded for no good reason—are what we have in mind for the new series.

The Public Domain project has a pair of inspirations. The first is the University of Chicago Press's long-running Heritage of Sociology series, established by Morris Janowitz in the early 1960s on his return to Chicago. The first handful of volumes were devoted to prominent figures in what was, by then, known as the "Chicago School."[3] But the series grew more catholic over time, with volumes devoted to

[1] Vance O. Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: McKay, 1957).

[2] See, for example, Neil Gross, *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), chap. 1.

[3] In his history of the Chicago department, Andrew Abbott called Janowitz

scholars—Kenneth Burke and Martin Buber—far beyond the orbit of Chicago or even sociology itself.

That ecumenical spirit also animates the second inspiration for the Public Domain series, a 2004 reader titled *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, 1919–1968*, edited by John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson.[4] The tome (and it really is one) collects almost seventy excerpts and reprints of media-related reflection. What unites a 1919 Sherwood Anderson short story and, say, the obscure 1959 study "The Social-Anatomy of the Romance-Confession Cover Girl"? These texts—and the other entries in the anthology—all offer sedimented reflections on what was a then new panoply of mass mediums. "These observers," Peters and Simonson write,

> hold unique historical positions as part of the first generations to live with commercially supported, national-scope broadcast technologies. They are at once informants, ancestors, and teachers. As informants, they tell us about experiencing and studying 'mass communication' as a generation new to it. As ancestors, they speak languages we recognize but in dialects different than our own. As teachers, their role is more complex. Often they speak with more clarity and conceptual insight than do the journals and books of our own day, and thus they teach by precept and example. At other times, they display their blind spots, weaknesses, or arrogance in such a way that we either swear never to follow their lead or perhaps see something better because of their failure.[5]

The editors sifted through their candidate texts—"blowing dust off bound volumes"—with an eye for works that have something to say to the present.[6] This is our aim too. We endorse, moreover, the view that a work's warrant for attention may take a variety of forms. A jarring anachronism may merit a reader as much as, or more than, a still apposite line of reasoning.

Peters and Simonson fault media and communication research for its "rather pinched view of the past," and position their anthology as a recovery project for the field's forgotten pluralism.[7] In the same spirit, this Public Domain series seeks to ventilate the field's memory of itself.

On the model of *Our Master's Voice*, then, we plan to re-publish works that:

1. are in the public domain;
2. promise contemporary relevance; and yet,
3. have settled into obscurity.

The first criterion constitutes an undeniable limitation, but an important one. We are committed to open access (OA) on principle, so

"the most industrious retrospective creator of the first Chicago school" and a "self-appointed prophet of the past"—all on the strength of the Heritage series. Andrew Delano Abbott, *Department & Discipline: Chicago Sociology at One Hundred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 18–19.

[4] John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson, eds., *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, 1919–1968* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

[5] Peters and Simonson, *Mass Communication and American Social Thought*, 2.

[6] Peters and Simonson, *Mass Communication and American Social Thought*, 495. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the editors included an excerpt from *Our Master's Voice*: "The Business Nobody Knows," 106–9.

[7] Peters and Simonson, *Mass Communication and American Social Thought*, 8.

charging readers to cover copyright fees isn't an option for us. Fortunately, all works published in the United States before 1924 are already in the public domain. What's less well known is that many books published between 1924 and 1963 are also owned by the public. Before the Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 made renewal automatic, copyright holders were required to file for an extension before their twenty-eight-year initial term ran out. Books published in 1964 were up for renewal when the 1992 law passed, so they (and all subsequent published works) remain intellectual property—and will stay locked for a long time.[8] The good news is that up to 80 percent of the copyright holders that published between 1924 and 1963 failed to renew—so those works are now owned by the public.[9] *Our Master's Voice* falls into that category: Rorty and/or the John Day Company, the volume's publisher, did not file for renewal, thus the copyright lapsed.

So our Public Domain books are on the open web and—crucially—they're discoverable. We assign a new ISBN for each reprint, DOIs for each chapter, and otherwise work to ensure that the volumes show up in library, OA directory, and web searches. Because they're digital, *Our Master's Voice* and other volumes in the series are easy to search and excerpt. Our underlying PubPub platform—nonprofit and open source—adds public annotation, citation formatting, and a robust array of auto-generated download options. We include a high-quality scan of the corresponding originals, in all their sepia-and-Baskerville glory. Corrections and updates are simple to make, since there's no fixed version of record.

Major advantages thus adhere to our web-based model of open publishing. Like the Heritage of Sociology series, we commission freshly written introductions to contextualize the republished work. But we sidestep the copyright muck, and the costs passed on to readers. The Peters and Simonson volume includes four dense pages of small-print permissions—and it's priced accordingly, out of reach for most readers.[10]

Rorty, back in 1934, summarized *Our Master's Voice* as "an attempt, by an advertising man and journalist, to tell how and why the traditional conception and function of journalism has lapsed in this country." The book describes "the progressive seizure and use, by business, of the apparatus of social communication in America."[11] Eighty-five years later, and we are still domiciled.

Jefferson Pooley
Bethlehem, PA

[8] The best book on the corporate enclosure of public knowledge remains James Boyle, *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), which is, fittingly, free to download.

[9] Sean Redmond, "U.S. Copyright History, 1923–1964," *New York Public Library Blog*, May 31, 2019, https://www.nypl.org/blog/2019/05/31/us-copyright-history-1923-1964.

[10] Peters and Simonson, *Mass Communication and American Social Thought*, 519–23.

[11] Rorty, *Our Master's Voice*, ix.

JAMES RORTY'S VOICE: Introduction to the mediastudies.press edition

Jefferson Pooley

doi

James Rorty announced his working knowledge of the trade in the opening paragraph of *Our Master's Voice*. Thirty years before, he reports, he had taken a job as a copywriter at an advertising agency in New York City. Though he preferred poetry and journalism, Rorty would continue to work intermittently in the ad business through the 1920s. *Our Master's Voice*, among the most penetrating critiques of advertising ever published, offers an insider's account: "I was an ad-man once," Rorty confesses.[1]

The book is Rorty's coming-to-terms with an institution he knew. But it neither chronicles his career nor gives an accounting of his impressions. Rather, it has a different, and surprising, character: Steeped in Rorty's leftist politics, *Our Master's Voice* presents advertising as the linchpin of a capitalist economy that it also helps justify.

Who dared take on the publication of *Our Master's Voice* in 1934? The John Day Company, a New York firm that had—amid a steep, Depression-era drop-off in books sales—published a series of forty-five pamphlets notable for left-wing topics and authors.[2] *Our Master's Voice* appeared in this spirit, though dense and promiscuous across twenty-six chapters and nearly four hundred pages in its original printing. It contains fictional interludes, detours through New Deal regulatory skirmishes, and a chapter devoted to Gillette's campaign against the beard.

Rorty made no apologies for the book's undisciplined format. Indeed, he disclaimed any academic purpose on the first page. *Our Master's Voice* was presented, he wrote, as journalism, "not as sociology."[3] Thus he granted himself license to code-switch, with what amounts to a short story slotted in as the fourth chapter, and

[1] Rorty, *Our Master's Voice*, ix. Page references are to the mediastudies.press edition; subsequent citations to the book are rendered as *OMV*.

[2] Rorty published his own thirty-two-page pamphlet, *Order on the Air!*, in The John Day Pamphlets series the same year. Rorty, *Order on the Air!* (New York: John Day Company, 1934). For an overview of Rorty's critique of commercial radio in particular, see Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 30–39; and Kathleen M. Newman, *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism, 1935–1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 60–63.

another devoted to composite portraits ("names, places and incidents have been disguised") of ad workers he had known. Nevertheless, the book abounds with dense and sophisticated analysis that is, by any measure, academic. One especially lengthy, chart-filled chapter, co-authored with his wife and another colleague, reports on a major empirical study of magazines. Throughout the book Rorty spars with the country's leading social scientists, quoting and then lacerating their work in what should undeniably be counted as academic debate.

[3] *OMV*, ix.

More important, and despite its pastiche quality, the book presents a coherent and original theory of advertising. Its main tenet holds that the ad business can only be understood within the totality of the country's economy and culture. The alternative—to treat the business of publicity as a "carbuncular excrescence"—misses its centrality, its foundational place in American life.[4] Rorty thus insisted on a holistic approach—in conscious contrast to the bounded inquiries of his analytic rivals in the university system.

[4] *OMV*, 9.

Rorty believed that the ad-man and his persuasive copy propped up American society—its capitalist economy, its culture of competitive emulation.[5] In effect, he makes his argument at two levels. The first is economic: All the billboards and radio spots, according to Rorty, provide the fuel that keeps people buying—the coal powering the country's merchandising juggernaut. American business would collapse without the ad-man's ventilation.

[5] I have adopted Rorty's gender-exclusive language to remain faithful to the book's historical context, but do not otherwise condone the phrasing.

The book's second, complementary point is that the system—an exploitative one, in Rorty's view—relies on advertising for its ideological warrant. This claim emerges with greater subtlety, or at least erected around a series of sub-arguments, in the book's first few chapters. But the key takeaway suggests that advertising serves to ratify the prevailing American regime of class-stratified consumption. Rorty's former coworkers are, as it were, the master's voice.

Published into the Great Depression in 1934, the book agitated an already wounded publicity industry. It generated spirited reviews in the popular press, too. But social scientists—the sociologists and psychologists taking up the study of media and their audiences in small but growing numbers—ignored *Our Master's Voice*. They paid the book no heed when it was published, and media scholars have scarcely noticed it since.

He Was an Ad-Man Once

One reason for the neglect, then and since, lies with Rorty himself. He was no academic, and he didn't write like one. He was an intellectual—a poet, an essayist, a political journalist—in the orbit of

the New York literary world. Like many of his peers, he embraced a radical worldview that, over the course of the 1920s, became more explicitly Marxist.

Rorty was born in 1890 in Middletown, New York, to an Irish immigrant, himself an aspiring poet, and his schoolteacher wife. The family ran a struggling dry goods business.[6] We know nothing much of the young Rorty's life, but in high school he apprenticed at a local newspaper before attending Tufts College. After graduating in 1913, he took a copywriting post at the New York advertising agency H. K. McCann, his first of three stints in the business. When the U.S. joined the war, Rorty enlisted in the Army ambulance corps, served in France, and earned a Distinguished Service Cross.[7] He briefly returned to New York after the war, then moved to California, where he wrote poetry and covered the San Francisco literary and artistic scene for the *Nation*. In need of funds, he soon resumed work for advertising agencies, including a stint at McCann's San Francisco office.[8] A first marriage collapsed, but Rorty soon afterward met Winifred Raushenbush, then a research assistant to the Chicago sociologist Robert E. Park.[9] Rorty and Raushenbush, the daughter of a prominent social gospel minister, fueled each other's radical politics on their return to New York in the mid-1920s.[10] Both were steeped in the city's intellectual culture of so-called little magazines, including Marxist organs like the *New Masses*.[11]

During this period, working from a rural Connecticut cabin, Rorty reluctantly picked up advertising work a third time. Daniel Pope quotes Rorty's unpublished memoir: "I returned to my advertising vomit, prodding my fair white soul up and down Madison Avenue and offering it for sale to the highest bidder."[12] Yet with the economy's collapse, Rorty was laid off in 1930.[13] Like many other intellectuals in the wake of the Depression, Rorty turned to Marxist politics with new avidity. For a short stint, he even worked on behalf of the Communist Party's 1932 presidential slate, though he soon fell out with the party, which he never joined. In the cause of the recently exiled Leon Trotsky, Rorty's politics took on a decidedly anti-Stalinist cast.[14] As Richard Rorty, Raushenbush and Rorty's only child and a future post-philosophical luminary, recounted in a memoir, "my parents had been classified by the *Daily Worker* as 'Trotskyites,' and they more or less accepted the description."[15]

The Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 stiffened Rorty's anti-Soviet posture. By then his radical ardor had also cooled, and he began to endorse, for the first time, New Deal interventions like the Tennessee Valley Authority. In the war years his freelance writing, which he assiduously continued to produce for a variety of popular and literary magazines, shifted to health, nutrition, and consumer topics.[16] By

[6] Daniel Pope, "His Master's Voice: James Rorty and the Critique of Advertising," *Maryland Historian* 19 (1988): 6. In addition to Pope's excellent account, the two other biographical sources on Rorty are Neil Gross, *Richard Rorty: The Making of an American Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), chap. 1; and John Michael Boles, "James Rorty's Social Ecology: Technology, Culture, and the Economic Base of an Environmentally Sustainable Society," *Organization & Environment* 11, no. 2 (1998): 155–79.

[7] Gross, *Richard Rorty*, 36; and Pope, "His Master's Voice," 6.

[8] Pope, "His Master's Voice," 7; and Gross, *Richard Rorty*, 36.

[9] Raushenbush trained in Chicago's famed Sociology Department and, along with other research support, assisted Robert Park in his 1922 *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Bros.). Raushenbush, a writer in her own right, worked closely with Rorty on his prose projects, including *Our Master's Voice*. Late in life she published a biography of Park, *Robert E. Park: Biography of a Sociologist* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979).

[10] In 1927 Raushenbush and Rorty, for example, were arrested in Boston for protesting the imminent executions of Nicolo Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Boles, "James Rorty's Social Ecology," 159.

[11] Rorty was a founding co-editor of the *New Masses* in 1926, though he was ousted the next year after political and editorial disputes. Pope, "His Master's Voice," 8; Gross, *Richard Rorty*, 30n4; and Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 54–55.

[12] Pope, "His Master's Voice," 8.

[13] Newman, *Radio Active*, 59–60.

[14] Gross, *Richard Rorty*, 51–52; and Boles, "James Rorty's Social Ecology," 160. For a detailed account of Rorty's early 1930s entanglements with the Communist

the 1950s he had become an aggressive Cold Warrior, penning anti-Soviet scripts for the *Voice of America* and clamoring for the American Communist Party's legal shuttering.[17] His 1954 *McCarthy and the Communists*, co-authored with Moshe Decter, faulted the Wisconsin senator for botching the anticommunist cause—for discrediting the otherwise urgent campaign to purge Reds.[18]

Rorty wrote on a range of other topics through the early 1960s, including technology, race relations, food culture, and, notably, ecological issues—the last an area he had addressed, precociously, all the way back in the early 1930s.[19] Even as Rorty drifted right, he remained a critic of the country's acquisitive culture. In an unpublished reflection—written a decade before his 1972 death—he looked back on his Depression-era critique of advertising:

> I wrote *Our Master's Voice* with the object of curing surgically what I considered a malignant degeneration of culture: Advertising. Not only did I not cure it; the disease like a cancer increased not only relatively to the total culture but absolutely so that one might well say that the American culture is dying from this malignancy.[20]

Systematized Illusions

It was Thorstein Veblen, not Marx, who supplied for Rorty the book's argumentative anchor. Rorty acknowledged his debts to the splenetic economist-cum-social critic with such regularity, and with such reverence, that the book can be read—at one register—as an extension of Veblen's scattered remarks on advertising. Though Veblen treated "salesmanship" as an important constituent of the pecuniary culture, he never devoted a treatise to the business of selling. One of just two sustained meditations on advertising appeared in a late work, the 1923 *Absentee Ownership*, and it was this chapter (on "Manufactures and Salesmanship") that animated Rorty's analysis.[21] Yet Veblen's imprint sinks deeper than that. Rorty's scabrous ironizing, for example, pays explicit homage to his onetime teacher. And the concept of emulation—the dynamic of prestige and consumption that Veblen outlined in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899)—is the real engine of *Our Master's Voice*.[22] Rorty notably refused to isolate selling from the wider "pseudoculture," opting instead for a fisheye-lens approach. In that respect *Our Master's Voice* constitutes an enlargement, even a gentle overhaul, of Veblen's critique of advertising.

Rorty was already familiar with Veblen's work when he attended the elder scholar's classes at the New School for Social Research in the early 1920s.[23] According to Rorty's unpublished memoirs, he and Veblen struck up a brief friendship while living in the same New York City boarding house. Rorty and the building's owner

Party, fast disillusion, and Trotskyite sympathies, see Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 56–62, 102–5, 271. A trio of prominent anti-Stalinist Marxist intellectuals—Sidney Hook, Elliot Cohen, and Meyer Schapiro—are thanked in *Our Master's Voice* for their help with the manuscript. *OMV*, x.

[15] Richard Rorty, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 6. James Rorty had nearly accompanied the philosopher John Dewey to Mexico for Dewey's investigation into the Moscow Trotsky show trials. As Richard Rorty remembers, the two-volume Dewey Commission report "were books that radiated redemptive truth and moral splendor" ("Trotsky and the Wild Orchids," 5).

[16] Boles, "James Rorty's Social Ecology," 162–63.

[17] Pope, "His Master's Voice," 14.

[18] James Rorty and Moshe Decter, *McCarthy and the Communists* (Boston: Beacon, 1954). Rorty's anti-communism soon took a paranoid turn, as Pope notes: "Rorty was convinced that the Communist Party had planted its agents as handymen on his Connecticut farm, had joined forces against him with Morris Fishbein of the American Medical Association, and had induced fellow-traveling bookstore clerks to hide his writings from public display." Pope, "His Master's Voice," 14n41. See also Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 272–73.

[19] Boles, "James Rorty's Social Ecology," 161.

[20] Quoted in Pope, "His Master's Voice," 14.

[21] Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), chap. 11. The other treatment, which Rorty rarely cited, appears in Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 55–60. For a superb treatment of both works in the wider context of Veblen's project, see Sidney Plotkin, "Misdirected Effort: Thorstein Veblen's Critique of Advertising," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 6, no. 4 (2014): 501–22.

[22] Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899).

[23] Veblen was among the New School's

detailed to Veblen their experiences in the ad business—testimony that, Rorty later claimed, informed Veblen's analysis in *Absentee Ownership*. Wrote Rorty: "What he got out of us was transmuted into the refined gold of the long footnote" on religion in the book's advertising chapter.[24] If Rorty was right—that Veblen's excursus on the "propagation of faith" reflected their conversations from the early 1920s—then the compliment was returned in *Our Master's Voice*. He singled out Veblen's "footnote"—really a six-page addendum to the chapter—as the key to grasping the resonance of Christianity and the "modern Church of Advertising."[25]

Rorty dedicated *Our Master's Voice* to the "memory of Thorstein Veblen," and he quoted him in one of the book's three epigraphs.[26] Veblenian lacerations—phrases like *doctrinal memoranda* and *creative psychiatry*—pockmark Rorty's pages.[27] And sentences like "Again, Veblen furnishes us with the essential clue," are typical.[28] Veblen's name appears more than three dozen times in Rorty's treatise—or once every seven pages. Thus it seems fair to conclude, at first pass, that *Our Master's Voice* is the book Veblen would have written had he devoted himself to the task.

Rorty certainly encouraged that inference. He lavished particular praise on *Absentee Ownership*. Veblen's "brief treatment of advertising" in the book, Rorty wrote, "remains today the most exact description of the nature of the advertising phenomenon which has yet appeared."[29] Late in *Our Master's Voice*, Rorty admitted that Veblen's volume, "in general, has supplied the framework of theory for this analysis."[30] Readers might thus easily get the impression that *Our Master's Voice* offers but a book-length elaboration of Veblen's penetrating, if brief, reflections on advertising.

This isn't quite right. Rorty, for all his borrowings, departed from his teacher in a handful of significant ways. He placed advertising at the center of things where Veblen, if anything, deflated its importance. For Veblen, advertising didn't change much; its main effect was to shuffle the allotment of sales among firms all vying for a fixed, zero-sum buying capacity. Yet Rorty, writing in the wake of the Gatsby-esque 1920s, realized that advertising had helped change the economy itself, expanding (together with popular credit instruments) the role of everyday consumption. Without using the phrase, *Our Master's Voice* articulated the idea of *demand stimulation*—the ad-fueled fanning of consumer desire that helped remake the country's economy and culture. Rorty's reflections on the interlaced economics of publicity and consumption were, to be sure, tempered by the brute fact of the Depression. But the blueprint of an advertising-stimulated consumption economy—an answer to overproduction and slack demand—exists in *Our Master's Voice.* The book anticipates, more

founding faculty. See Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, *New School: A History of the New School for Social Research* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 14–16.

[24] This account of Rorty's brief personal exposure to Veblen is drawn from Boles, "James Rorty's Social Ecology," 157. Boles cites, and quotes from, Rorty, "Unpublished Memoirs: Version 1," n.d., box 2, James Rorty Papers, Special Collections, University of Oregon. Veblen's "Note" appears in *Absentee Ownership*, 319–25. The owner of the boarding house, Alice Boughton, was research director at the J. Walter Thompson Company. Pope, "His Master's Voice," 6–7.

[25] Rorty, before quoting Veblen's first paragraph, wrote: "The close analogy between the sales publicity methods of the Christian Church and those of the modern Church of Advertising was noted in 1923 by Thorstein Veblen, who missed little, if any, of the comedy of the American scene. Veblen's long foot-note (p. 319, *Absentee Ownership*) should be read in its entirety in this connection." *OMV*, 208.

[26] *OMV*, v, 2.

[27] *OMV*, 13, 176, 182, 185, 201, 274, 278, 285.

[28] *OMV*, 152.

[29] *OMV*, 173.

[30] *OMV*, 223.

than Veblen's work, the fuller postwar articulation of advertising's Keynesianism-through-desire.[31]

Crucially, Veblen embeds his treatment of the "business of publicity" in his broader analysis of the U.S. economy.[32] The core idea, from *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904) onward, is that businesses deliberately scale back production to protect their profits—to prevent prices from falling below costs. Veblen called this "sabotage," with profit-hoarding "business" hollowing out "industry." Since the "market is not to be overstocked to an unprofitable extent," the captains of business turn to the "strategic withholding of productive efficiency."[33] Veblen regarded the slackening as deeply offensive—an affront to the country's productive capacity and a deplorable and selfish waste, one that underwrote a parasitic leisure class.

Veblen applied this sabotage framework, including its Norwegian asceticism and producerist ethic, to advertising itself—resulting in a strikingly autarkic analysis. Spending on "salesmanship," Veblen's preferred term, was growing rapidly, leading to higher prices for consumers. Yet all those advertising outlays merely reshuffled a deck of, ultimately, capped size: "The total volume of sales at any given time is fixed within a narrow margin." Salesmanship is all about winning customers from competitors—"the art of taking over a disproportionate share of this run of sales."[34]

Yes, Veblen concluded, advertising matters; after all, it's taking a growing share of the economy and running up production costs (and therefore prices). Yet he ultimately considered it waste, professionalized waste, since what's at stake is market share among big profit-protecting firms. To Veblen, the proportion of the economy given over to consumption was a zero-sum game.[35] Salesmanship resembled trench warfare, with small, meaningless gains made at great expense. The whole sector, then, was irrational, if also explainable: Firms ramp up publicity spending as a competitive necessity, since otherwise their competitors will drive them out of business with their own campaigns.[36] This arms race generates a sprawling, even routinized advertising industry—staffed by "publicity engineers" trained (to Veblen's disgust) at the country's most august universities.[37]

Thus salesmanship, to Veblen, constituted a wasteful cog in a system characterized, even defined, by business sabotage. Modern capitalism was the story of business deliberately holding back the country's productive capacity. This claim served as the bedrock of Veblen's economics, and he erected his analysis of advertising on its foundation. Advertising, in fact, was just another layer of business sabotage in Veblen's terms—indeed a symptom rather than a cause. He called it "salesmanlike sabotage."[38]

The closest Veblen got to conceding advertising's broader stirring

[31] The classic statements of publicity-driven demand stimulation vis-a-vis the wider U.S. economy are John Kenneth Galbraith, *American Capitalism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 98–102; and Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1958), chap. 10. My interpretation of Veblen's economics of advertising differs from those of Sidney Plotkin, Georgios Patsiaouras, and James Fitchett, who draw a more direct line from Veblen to analyses like Galbraith's. See Plotkin, "Misdirected Effort," 502; and Georgios Patsiaouras and James A. Fitchett, "The Evolution of Conspicuous Consumption," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4, no. 1 (2012): 164–65.

[32] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 300.

[33] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 285.

[34] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 287. Only in a footnote did Veblen make a qualified concession to the stimulative potential, or at least diversion from savings, of advertising—and even then there's only a "little something" at stake: "There is the qualification . . . that the current, very urgent, sales-publicity may be presumed to divert a little something from savings to consumptive expenditures, and so may add that much of a margin for funds to the volume or purchasing-power currently available for expenditure on advertised goods" (309n14).

[35] Veblen made the point repeatedly, without ambiguity: "The total volume of purchasing funds available at any given time [is] fixed within a relatively narrow margin of fluctuation. So that each of these competitive sellers can gain only at a corresponding loss to the rest." Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 299. Advertising operates in a "closed market," one in which "one seller's gain is another's loss" (299–300).

[36] The competitive inter-firm emulation—the advertising arms race—leads to "a continued increase of sell-costs and a continually more diligent application to salesmanship."

of desire—its stimulus to an emerging consumer culture—is in passing reference to the production of *customers*. If salesmen make anything, he claimed, it's the buyers for their clients' products. Advertisers may write copy, design billboards, and the rest, but they're really all about the "fabrication of customers," the manufacture of consumers.[39] This is, indeed, in the territory of demand stimulation—and it's a claim, however fleeting, that Rorty ran with in *Our Master's Voice*. Veblen himself pulled back from the full implications of the production of desire, on the same autarkic grounds that animate his wider analysis. "There is, of course, no actual fabrications of persons endowed with purchasing-power *ad hoc*"—even if ad agencies liked to claim otherwise. The reason? The economy is a closed system, with a fixed customer base. "Viewed in the large, what actually is effected is only a diversion of customers from one to an other of the competing sellers, of course."[40] So salesmen manufacture customers, but only within the economy's existing enclosure.

Rorty's claims notwithstanding, the debts that *Our Master's Voice* owes to Veblen are more protean. There is the cutting moralism itself. Salesmanship, to both men, was tragic *and* farcical—the practice (in Veblen's words) of getting "a margin of something for nothing, and the wider the margin the more perfect the salesman's work."[41] Rorty adopted Veblen's caustic comedy as his own prose style too. Phrases like the "blandishments of the huckstering salesman" could appear in the paragraphs of either writer.[42] A handful of the Veblenian witticisms indeed appear repeatedly in *Our Master's Voice*, and these mark the real register of the senior scholar's influence. Such arguments-in-a-phrase, moreover, are often rescued from Veblen's footnotes—mined and polished by Rorty, then expanded into chapter-length meditations.

Consider a single, high-density footnote in *Absentee Ownership*:

> The production of customers by sales-publicity is evidently the same thing as a production of systematised illusions organized into serviceable 'action patterns'—serviceable, that is, for the use of the seller on whose account and for whose profit the customer is being produced. It follows therefore that the technicians in charge of this work, as also the skilled personnel of the working-force, are by way of being experts and experimenters in applied psychology, with a workmanlike bent in the direction of what may be called creative psychiatry. Their day's work will necessarily run on the creative guidance of habits and bias, by recourse to shock effects, tropismatic reactions, animal orientation, forced movements, fixation of ideas, verbal intoxication. It is a trading on that range of human infirmities which blossom in devout observances and bear fruit in the psychopathic wards.[43]

Our Master's Voice, to a remarkable extent, offers a four hundred–page meditation on this single passage from the small-type depths

Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 288. Advertising, once one company starts spending, imposes a "necessity to all the rest, on pain of extinction." The result is a "competitive multiplication" of the "ways and means of salesmanship"; firms have no choice but to ramp up their expenditures as a defensive maneuver, on "penalty of failure" (303–4).

[37] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 296. Veblen devoted an acidic, footnoted paragraph to the emergence of business, marketing, and advertising degree programs. Universities, he wrote, are "turning out a rapidly swelling volume of graduates in this art of 'putting it over.'" This "scholastic propagation of salesmen" is both a contributor to, and a reflection of, the ad profession's formalization—its "standardised" processes and output (306n12).

[38] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 296.

[39] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 306. Veblen: "Judicious and continued expenditures on publicity and the like expedients of salesmanship will result in what may fairly be called a quantity-production of customers for the purchase of goods or services in question" (305).

[40] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 305n11.

[41] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 291. Veblen contrasted salesmanship with "workmanship" as "two habits of thought"—the latter defined as the "old order of industry, under the regime of husbandry, handicraft and neighborhood workmanship." Publicity and the art of the sale are gaining on workmanship, which however survives as a "slow-dying prejudice" in pockets of the culture (291–92).

[42] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 290.

[43] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 306–7n12. The footnote's first paragraph, on the uptake of advertising in higher education, is not quoted here.

of Veblen's tome. The paired-word phrases—*systematized illusions*, *action patterns*, and *creative psychiatry*—for Rorty supplied the key insight. He invoked the terms, quoted them with reverence, and then unspooled them with a sustained concentration that exceeded (or delivered on) Veblen's fleeting mentions. Even the footnote's last sentence, with its "human infirmities" and "psychopathic wards," registers in an outsized manner in *Our Master's Voice*, featured as one of the book's three epigraphs.[44]

Veblen's footnote, and the other bits of *Absentee Ownership* that drew Rorty's attention, center on the psychology of advertising's appeal. The business of publicity, in Veblen's phrase, is "applied psychology," the calculated exploitation of human irrationality. Veblen's treatment of the theme remained, again, brief: This footnote and two additional, probing pages.[45] The advertiser's "raw material," to Veblen, was "human credulity," his product, "profitable fixed ideas." The main strategy preyed on fear in general, and on fear of losing prestige in particular.[46] The prospect of embarrassment, the shame at falling behind one's peers, marks the target of the ad-man's "intoxicating verbiage."[47]

Here Veblen had re-entered the territory of his earlier and most famous work on competitive emulation, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). It's *this* Veblen that animates Rorty's book, more than the later works' economics of business sabotage. To Rorty, advertising's fundamental mechanism exploited the emulative yearnings of consumers. Publicity, indeed, serves as the main prop to a wholesale *culture* of acquisitive emulation—in the thick, pervasive sense of "culture." For Rorty, more than for his teacher, advertising cut deep.

He was quick, for example, to grant some autonomy to advertisers themselves—to their aesthetic pretensions and professional self-regard. As "advertising craftsman," we (Rorty included himself) are motivated not just by money but also by "an obsessed delight in the materials of our craft." Thus business may indeed sabotage industry in the broad sense. "True," Rorty wrote. But as creative workers, "we were and are parasites and unconscious saboteurs too." The ad-man's artistic self-image comes in for relentless mockery, but at the same time Rorty carved out a certain space—and considerable sympathy—for his peers in the ranks of copywriters and graphic artists. He even went so far as to suggest that capitalism's "exploitative functionaries," in their craft-driven sabotage, may yet bring the system down from within.[48] This, at least, is the implication of the book's first-page encomium to Veblen:

[44] Rorty's quoted version, "A trading on that range of human infirmities that blossoms in devout observances and bears fruit in the psychopathic wards," is slightly different. *OMV*, 2.

[45] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 310–11.

[46] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 310.

[47] Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 311n17.

[48] *OMV*, 153. See also *OMV*, 242–43.

> Dedicated to the memory of Thorstein Veblen, and to those technicians of the word whose 'conscientious withdrawal of efficiency' may yet accomplish that burial of the ad-man's pseudoculture which this book contemplates with equanimity.

The quoted phrase, the "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency," had been invoked by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical union, as a tactic of sabotage. Beginning in 1922, Veblen had repurposed the expression as an arch shorthand for his theory of business sabotage.[49] And so it appears fitting that Rorty restored the phrase's IWW meaning in the book's dedication, calling on his fellow ad workers ("technicians of the word") to sabotage their own cultural machinery.

The broader point: Rorty took advertising far more seriously than his teacher. He conceded to Veblen that salesmanship constituted a form of "economic parasitism."[50] But for Rorty, the institution of publicity extended far beyond the economy, to the "culture considered as a system of values and motivations by which people live."[51] Thus when he brushed up against Veblen's portrait of advertising—as a closed system of allocative waste—Rorty gently pushed back. He noted that in the early 1920s, when Veblen was writing, the salesman was still an "upstart and a parvenu"—a mere cog in the businessman's self-sabotaging gear-works. "But times have changed," Rorty insisted. Advertising had since become an industry "no less essential than coal or steel." It was now no longer merely an appendage to business: in the decade since *Absentee Ownership*, the ad-man had become the "first lieutenant of the new Caesars of America's commercial imperium not merely on the economic front but also on the cultural front."[52] By culture Rorty meant the whole American belief system, one increasingly fixed on status competition—on emulation and one-upmanship, fueled by advertising's appeal to human infirmity.

The Theory of the Leisure Economy

Our Master's Voice was published at the Depression's nadir, so it's surprising that Rorty focused his attention elsewhere. The book does occasionally nod to the economy's free fall, often in service to the claim that capitalism would soon collapse. There are other moments of note, including five phantasmagoric pages on advertising as a giant machine—a "coldly whirring turbine" that emits life-draining "jabberwocky," even as its human fuel runs down in the Depression's fourth punishing year.[53] But to a remarkable extent, the book remains focused on the fulsome 1920s and the decade's "endless chain of selling."[54] The Depression itself comes off as a late-arriving

[49] See Veblen, *Engineers and the Price System* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1921), 1, 8–23, 166; and Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 217–21, 285–86, 394–403.

[50] See, for example, Rorty: "In the *Theory of Business Enterprise* and elsewhere in the whole body of his work, Veblen notes that advertising is one element of the 'conscientious sabotage' by which business keeps the endlessly procreative force of science-in-industry from breaking the chains of the profit system." *OMV*, 152–53. See also 54–55.

[51] *OMV*, 79.

[52] *OMV*, 233–34. Even Veblen's meditation on the twinned propagandas of religion and advertising—a point that Rorty, apparently, had helped inform in the course of the two men's brief friendship in the early 1920s—struck Rorty, by the 1930s, as obsolete. Veblen's "ironic patronage of the emerging priesthood of advertising," Rorty wrote, "sounds astonishingly inept and dated." Religion proper had lost its hold since Veblen's book, while the "religion of the ad-man is everywhere dominant both as to prestige and in the matter of administrative control" (209).

[53] Wrote Rorty: "After four depression years the jabberwocky is hungry. It has devoured large sections of the lower and lower middle classes and expelled

character, granted a few short lines. The spotlight, instead, shines on advertising's success—via emulation and "style-terror"—at manufacturing new desire.[55]

Rorty claimed that the economy, weighed down by surplus production, required an artificial stimulus of demand. The problem, in the "'surplus economy' phase of industrial capitalism," is overproduction.[56] The solution is advertising. On this point Rorty was blunt and repetitive: The engine of the economy needs the "ad-man's foot on the throttle, speeding up consumption, preaching emulative expenditure, 'styling' clothes, kitchens, automobiles—everything in the interest of more rapid obsolescence and replacement."[57] The economist's account of supply and demand in natural harmony, in self-regulating equilibrium, was itself obsolete. The crucial function of publicity, then, was to rescue capitalism—to animate, or even to create whole cloth, customers to consume the system's excess capacity. Any lingering "puritanism in consumption" in the populace proved "intolerable," and had to be snuffed out.[58] Here is Rorty's key departure from Veblen: Where the teacher saw deliberate slackening of supply—sabotage—the pupil saw ventilation of demand.

This was advertising's indispensable role, and it served as the basis for Rorty's otherwise startling claim that newspapers, magazines, radio, and the cinema were, at their core, "advertising media."[59] All the column-inches of newsprint, the radio dramas, the latest Hollywood releases amounted to "filler," intended merely to entice readers or moviegoers to consume the ads.[60] If the commercial media had an overriding objective, it was to "nourish and stimulate the buying motive."[61] The point of the media's editorial or narrative trappings, in other words, was to package and deliver audiences to advertisers.[62] It makes for a striking argument, partly because it anticipates, by a half century, the claims of scholars like Sut Jhally and Dallas Smythe that the "audience commodity" constitutes the real product of commercial mass media.[63]

For Rorty, the mechanism for making buyers out of citizens came in the form of induced emulation. In the spirit of Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, advertising preyed on the anxieties of comparative social worth to spur consumption. If advertising at core was the "competitive manufacture of consumption habits," its technique (in Rorty's favorite Veblenism) was "creative psychiatry."[64] The populace is driven to buy so as to forestall social slippage: this is the governing logic of a consuming culture fanned by the agencies and the media businesses they underwrite. "Advertising," Rorty wrote, in one of many equally vigorous summations, "is a doctrine of material emulation, keeping up with the Joneses, conspicuous waste."[65] Rorty's shorthand for all this, the ad-man's "pseudoculture," is also

their dry bones, burned clean of their buying power, into the out darkness. There the electric breath of the jabberwocky still plays on them, but they are ash and slag. They cannot burn, they cannot feed the machine" (*OMV*, 54).

[54] *OMV*, 31.

[55] *OMV*, 157.

[56] *OMV*, 211.

[57] *OMV*, 8–9.

[58] *OMV*, 176.

[59] *OMV*, 115.

[60] *OMV*, 66. "To the magazine editor and the ad-man the magazine consists of two parts: advertisement and filler," wrote Rory. "The filler is designed to carry the advertisements. With rare exceptions, no way has so far been discovered of getting the public to pay for advertisements presented without filler. Hence the filler."

[61] *OMV*, 56.

[62] *OMV*, 115.

[63] See Dallas W. Smythe, *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1981); and Sut Jhally, "Probing the Blindspot: The Audience Commodity," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 6, no. 1–2 (1982): 204–10.

[64] *OMV*, 274.

[65] *OMV*, 14. See also *OMV*, 24, 56–57, 157–58, 179, 196, 211, and 224.

the book's key term, its indictment by neologism.

Ironically to Rorty, advertisers turned to an older, "organic" culture for their source material, one they were at the same time busily dislodging.[66] In other words, the acquisitive social psychology demanded by the economy fed off the country's past—its pastoral humanism and small-town craftsmanship, creating a parasitic relationship between advertising and the country's organic culture. Yet problematically for advertisers, the pseudoculture held only a shallow appeal, since the population "wistfully desire[d]" the "older more human culture."[67] As a result, the editorial recipe for the advertising-dependent media needed—if it wanted Americans to watch, read, and listen—to include ingredients from the country's half-displaced organic past.

Rorty develops the argument in the book's remarkable sixth chapter, a sprawling, chart-filled report on a study of thirteen mass-circulation magazines that, by the author's own account, was "almost wholly" the work of his wife, Winifred Raushenbush, and a colleague.[68] The chapter offers a self-contained, empirically rich treatment of the country's stratified magazine market, one tailored to specific "class cultures."[69] Only those titles targeting the wealthy, like *Harper's Bazaar*, bathed readers in undiluted snobbism. In the rest—those outlets aimed at the poor and the middle class—the acquisitive culture "battles" with an "older tradition and culture." Many titles leaned emulative, in other words, while the remainder favored the "organic." Either way, they presented a "considerable admixture" of the new and old—and by necessity. "One may say, in summary, that the acquisitive culture cannot stand on its own feet," the authors wrote; "it does not satisfy."[70] Hence the need for parasitism.

Rorty and his coauthors found a measure of hope in the population's implicit rejection of raw emulation: "The American people do not like this pseudoculture, cannot live by it, and, indeed, never have lived by it." Here and elsewhere in the book, a residue of romantic nostalgia emerges, a plaintive register of displacement—despite the work's many professions of forward-facing radicalism.[71] For example, the authors claim that the Depression-ravaged country yearns to "discover by what virtues, by what pattern of life, the Americans of earlier days succeeded in being admirable people, and in sustaining a life, which, if it did not have ease and luxury, did seem to have dignity and charm." If that sounds like an endorsement, the Rorty and his colleagues quickly pivoted to more radical prospects. Yes, the organic past was the population's "main drift of desire," but "other drifts" existed too: "Some editors and readers even envision revolution"—a substitution of a "new culture" for the organic and acquisitive alternatives.[72] This last point, however, is delivered in haste.

[66] Wrote Rorty, for example: "The advertising-manufactured substitute for these organic cultures is a national, standardized, more or less automatic mechanism, galvanized chiefly by pecuniary motivations and applying emulative pressures to all classes of the population." *OMV*, 50. In a prescient aside on the rise of the advertising-mocking magazine *Balyhoo* in the early 1930s, Rorty observed how easily advertisers adapted to its fang-less satire. *Balyhoo* is an enterprise in "tertiary parasitism": advertising is a parasite on business, and the magazine, in turn, "parasites on the grotesque, bloated body of advertising" (278).

[67] *OMV*, 57. Interestingly, Rorty identified sexual frankness with the older organic culture (60, 79–80). In the "field of sex," the "mature artist exhibits neither timidity nor shame," he wrote, citing D. H. Lawrence and Walt Whitman (the latter of whom Rorty's poetry was often compared). The "commercial sex fictioneer," by contrast, must make his prudish surrender to "Puritan conviction" (87–88). There is an unmistakeable Freudian undercurrent to the book's treatment of sex, which seems unsurprising given Rorty's intellectual milieu. As he wrote in the chapter devoted to the theme, "The enterprise of turning people, with their normal sexual desires and human affections, into gold, is greatly helped by the fact that our Puritan cultural heritage is peculiarly rich in the psychopathology of sex" (162, chap. 12). Rorty's aversion to the "residual Puritanism" informed his extended, and vituperative, dismissal of the early 1930s Payne Fund studies of movies and children (188–94). "Although the investigators made much pother about the 'objective' 'scientific' nature of this fact-finding study, they could scarcely escape value judgments, and Mr. Forman [in the summary volume] frankly applies such judgments in his popularization. They are middle-class value judgments, derived from the conventional mores of the middle-class community, and applied to an industry which is organized to serve not the classes, but the masses" (192–93). The Payne Fund actually asked Rorty to review the studies' popular summary

It appears limp and convictionless—a forced incantation of radical faith that the book's authors, in the end, seem to doubt.

It Could Happen Here

The ad-man's pseudoculture resembles a living thing, but it is, to Rorty, devoid of all life—inorganic and artificial. His prose turns purple on this point. The pseudoculture

> is a robot contraption, strung together with the tinsel of material emulation, galvanized with fear, and perfumed with fake sex. It exhibits a definite glandular imbalance, being hyperthyroid as to snobbism, but with a deficiency of sex, economics, politics, religion, science, art and sentiment. It is ugly, nobody loves it, and nobody really wants it except the business men who make money out of it. It has a low brow, a long emulative nose, thin, bloodless, asexual lips, and the receding chin of the will-less, day-dreaming fantast. The stomach is distended either by the abnormal things-obsessed appetite of the middle-class and the rich, or by the starved flatulence of the poor. Finally it is visibly dying for lack of blood and brains.[73]

It's the last line's claim—that the publicity regime would soon collapse under its own diseased weight—that Rorty had trouble sustaining in the balance of the book. In Rorty's holistic terms, the demise of advertising amounted to the end of capitalism, as the two share a fate. The publicity industry may be an effect of, an emanation from, the market economy, but it remained indispensable all the same. Behind the ad-man lay the "whole pressure of the capitalist organism," Rorty proclaimed, "which must sell or perish."[74]

So the question of when, or whether, advertising and its enfolding economy would, in fact, perish haunts *Our Master's Voice*. One thread in the book seems hopeful: The system is edging, inevitably and soon, over the cliffs of history. American capitalism cannot maintain itself for long, because its "underlying economic and social premises are obsolete in the modern world."[75] So too with advertising: "One needs but little knowledge of history, or of the movement of contemporary economic and social forces, to know that it can't last." Its tower, Rorty added, is tottering.[76]

Is it possible to rehabilitate the ad-man's pseudoculture? The answer, to Rorty, is the "same answer which must be given to the question: 'Is it possible to rehabilitate the capitalist economy?' " No. Both the economy and its acquisitive culture are caught in late-stage decadence—"very frail and ephemeral," primed for revolutionary toppling. And so, in this thread of the book, Rorty dismissed efforts at reform, relentlessly pummeling liberal social critics, some of them social scientists. Their carefully targeted interventions—their calls

volume before its publication; Rorty excoriated the book so savagely that the Fund considered stopping publication. See Garth Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, and Kathryn H. Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 107–8.

[68] *OMV*, x. The chapter's third author is named as Hal Swanson, without further identification.

[69] "The United States," the authors wrote, "does not have one homogenous culture; it has class cultures" (*OMV*, 60).

[70] *OMV*, 61.

[71] In his memoir the philosopher Sidney Hook captured some of his friend's yearning for an authentic past, including its ecological dimension: "James Rorty was at heart a poet, sickened by the commercialism of capitalist life and culture and up in arms at the cruelties and injustices of the depression. He made his political choices on the basis of his moral empathy and his sense for the integrity and authenticity of the persons with whom he associated. He had a love for the soil and the natural life, and long before the environmental movement was born, he held forth against the evils of pollution and the dangers of the use of chemicals and preservatives in the nation's food supply." Hook, *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 182. As Daniel Pope observes, Rorty's putative Marxism coexisted with a longing—shared by many other Depression-era intellectuals—for "community and authenticity in a fragmented and baffling society." Pope, "His Master's Voice," 10.

[72] *OMV*, 79.

[73] *OMV*, 85.

[74] *OMV*, 34.

[75] *OMV*, 9. For an interesting discussion of Rorty's perch between hope and disillusion, see Dan Schiller, *Theorizing Communication: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 69–71.

[76] *OMV*, 25.

for ethics and standards in the profession, for example—appear like the snake oil ads they aim to eradicate. The competitive pressures of advertising *required* mendacity; codes and reforms, "under our existing institutional setup," would either deprive stockholders or inflate consumer costs. The alternative to bad advertising wasn't good advertising; it was "no advertising."[77]

To Rorty, the effort to isolate the trade from its economic enclosure, then to rub away its most appalling stains, constitutes an act of self-congratulatory futility. He deemed criticism of advertising's corruption of journalism, for example, "beside the point," since its roots sank so deep: "the objective forces of the competitive capitalist economy."[78] Likewise, draft New Deal legislation to stymie the publicity industry's most egregious charlatans would leave the machinery of advertising whirring: "Congress can and probably will legislate itself blue in the face, without changing an iota of the basic economic and cultural determinants."[79] The industry's mendacity could not be burned off; it proved elemental, impervious to the starchy meliorism of liberal do-gooders.

Rorty took the anti-reformist position to its logical conclusion, refusing the commonplace distinction between propaganda and education. For post–World War I critics of propaganda, education stood as the salutary other—an antidote to manipulation and inoculation in the classroom.[80] Rorty would have none of that. He lumped in schools and universities with the most shameless propaganda factories: the "purpose and effect of these combined institutions" was "rule"—by which he meant "their shaping and control of the economic, social and psychological patterns of the population in the interests of a profit-motivated dominant class, the business class."[81] To Rorty, the defenders of education themselves engaged in acts of propaganda, in contrast to the advertising man, who was at least unblinkered about his art's pervasive reach.[82] In their way, schools and colleges proved more insidious than the overt persuasion industries, since educators cloaked their fealty to the "interest and prejudices of the ruling class."[83] At any rate, Rorty saw nothing redemptive about schooling in a capitalist order:

> Advertising is propaganda, advertising is education, propaganda is advertising, education is propaganda, educational institutions use and are used by advertising and propaganda. Shuffle the terms any way you like . . . all three, each in itself, or in combination, are *instruments of rule*.[84]

The reformist road to social change, for Rorty, equaled an accommodationist dead end. Reporters' codes of ethics and truth-in-advertising regulations made things worse by applying a patina of legitimacy to a corrupt order. That position, of course, presumed

[77] *OMV*, 12.

[78] *OMV*, 115.

[79] *OMV*, 139. The book's last three chapters (23–25), before the brief conclusion, offer a meticulously detailed chronicle of then-pending advertising legislation. For a history of these debates, and their complicated denouement, see Inger L. Stole, *Advertising on Trial: Consumer Activism and Corporate Public Relations in the 1930s* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), chap. 3. Though Rorty repeated his arguments against reform—downplaying the legislation's merits and even the nascent consumer movement behind the push—he also, half-grudgingly, admitted that the laws were worth passing anyway. Even the most robust bill would "still leave untouched the major contradictions of capitalism." The fight is "none the less important and fruitful," in part because the agitation itself has "brought to light serious cleavages between the vested interests affected" (*OMV*, 283).

[80] On propaganda critics and education in the interwar years, see J. Michael Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[81] *OMV*, 114.

[82] Rorty took sustained aim at the sociologist Frederick Lumley and his recently published *The Propaganda Menace* (New York: The Century Co., 1933). Lumley hinged his critique on the education/propaganda contrast, Rorty noted. "And it is precisely there that his definition falls down" (*OMV*, 116). Rorty was especially irritated by Lumley's apparent indifference to the

that revolution was possible, even likely. And in his dismissal of evolutionary, stepwise change, Rorty—no doubt knowingly—joined a debate among Marxists as old as the movement itself. If the system's collapse is imminent, and guaranteed by its own contradictions, aren't reformist palliatives just delaying the desired inevitable? It's a view fueled by the confidence that the revolution is coming—with good results.

A second strand of *Our Master's Voice*, sometimes awkwardly juxtaposed to the first, questions both postulates. Much of the book's thrust suggests the resilience of American capitalism—and that the system's staying power is grounded, to a large extent, in advertising itself. That's the premise of the volume's title. The ad-man's systematized illusions and creative psychiatry are what saves an exploitative system from those it exploits. This ideological role proves no less important than its economic priming: advertising is the "shaping of the economic, social, moral and ethical patterns of the community into serviceable conformity with the profit-making interests."[85] This is nothing less than "American rule-by-advertising."[86] By promoting a culture of acquisitive emulation, the New York firms proffer a service to the "real rulers" in business and finance.[87] They, and the media they underwrite, are the master's voice:

> The point of view adhered to in this book is that of regarding the instruments of social communication as *instruments of rule, of government*. In this view the people who control and manage our daily and periodical press, radio, etc., become a sort of administrative bureaucracy acting in behalf of the vested interests of business.[88]

Here Rorty tapped into another, more pessimistic current in Marxist thought. Forced to confront the thwarted European revolutions after World War I—and anomalous success in Russia—a number of Marxist intellectuals sought to explain capitalism's durability. Theirs was the problem of consent: Why do the working classes accept, even tighten, their own chains? Figures like Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács, in a tradition often labeled "Western" Marxism, tended to respond that the masses took on the system's values and internalized its principles as common sense.[89] Many such accounts view organs of mass communication as the principal means of cultural reinforcement. *Our Master's Voice* is an installment in that Western Marxist project, seeking to explain—like the others—why the revolution is always deferred.

There's a third, and final, thread in the book, an unholy mix of the first two: fear that radical social change, all too imminent, will bring fascism rather than socialism. The Weimar collapse, and the sudden visibility of homegrown fascists, weighs on the manuscript, tempering its optimism. Casual references to the average American's

underlying economics, which "is itself a kind of propaganda" (117).

[83] *OMV*, 118.

[84] *OMV*, 125.

[85] *OMV*, 13.

[86] *OMV*, 16.

[87] *OMV*, 19.

[88] *OMV*, 107.

[89] The best overview of Western Marxism remains Martin Jay's magisterial *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

susceptibility to demagoguery appear with surprising, and discordant, frequency. In the magazine chapter, the authors observed that "it is clear that the typical *American Magazine* reader would go fascist." Whether another magazine's readers would "go fascist or communist" remained, they added, an open question.[90] The chapter's conclusion announces that the "democratic dogma is dying if not already dead." The poor are "oriented toward crime, and potentially at least toward revolution," while the middle classes are "oriented toward fascism."[91] The book elsewhere deploys "Italy" and "Germany" (and "Russia" too) as shorthand for the possible American future.[92]

[90] *OMV*, 95, 96.

[91] *OMV*, 98–99.

[92] *OMV*, 98–99.

Even before the publication of *Our Master's Voice*, Rorty had set out on a seven-month road trip around the United States, writing magazine dispatches and a chronicle of his trip. Appearing in 1936 as *Where Life Is Better*, this second volume registered Rorty's dissipating confidence in the country's workers—their failure to recognize capitalism's fundamental flaws.[93] He fretted about Americans' likely embrace of fascism instead—a theme foreshadowed in the haunting conclusion to *Our Master's Voice*, whose last page recounts a conversation with a "very eminent advertising man." He was, as Rorty realized with a "sudden chill," praising the new Nazi regime. "I venture to predict," Rorty wrote in the book's closing sentence, "that when a formidable Fascist movement develops in America, the ad-man will be right up front; that the American version of Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment Goebels [*sic*] . . . will be both numerous and powerful."[94]

[93] James Rorty, *Where Life Is Better: An Unsentimental American Journey* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936). In keeping with *Our Master's Voice*, Rorty blamed the media industry: "Hollywood specializes in the manufacture of the soothing, narcotic dreams of love," while "in New York, NBC and Columbia [CBS] specialize in the manufacture of cheerio radio optimism, pre-barbaric dance rhythms, and commodity fetishism intoned by unctuous announcers" (107, quoted in Gross, *Richard Rorty*, 48; see also 47–50).

[94] *OMV*, 286.

A Master's Voice

Despite its unrepentant leftism and fretting over fascism, *Our Master's Voice* received good press. Newspaper and magazine reviews were generally positive, and occasionally rhapsodic. By telling contrast, academics ignored the book. Not a single review appeared in any social science journal, and the first citation to the book, in the journal literature at least, came *fourteen years later*, in a law review article published in the late 1940s.[95] A thorough but non-exhaustive search of 1930s scholarly books on media uncovered a smattering of references. Rorty's tome did warrant a listing in a 1935 bibliographic project by the political scientist Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda and Promotional Activities*. Yet *Our Master's Voice*, one among hundreds of references, was annotated with a single line: "Criticism of advertising as a handmaiden of American 'pseudo-culture.' "[96] Only a handful of additional mentions occurred in the book literature, some dismissive and none of them substantial.[97]

[95] Ralph S. Brown, "Advertising and the Public Interest: Legal Protection of Trade Symbols," *Yale Law Journal* 57, no. 7 (1948): 1167. The reference appears in a footnote listing advertising's "detractors": "Noteworthy among general attacks on the institution was Rorty, *Our Master's Voice* (1934)."

[96] Harold D. Lasswell, Ralph D. Casey, and Bruce Lannes Smith, *Propaganda and Promotional Activities: An Annotated Bibliography* (Minneapolis: University of

The popular and literary press proved far more attentive. The *New York Times* granted the book a full-page review, including a respectful summary registering Veblen's influence alongside Rorty's indictment of the media industry at large.[98] *North American Review*, a literary magazine, called *Our Master's Voice* a "fiery discussion of the advertising racket"—"superb" on the "debunking," but hobbled by the author's revolutionary politics.[99] *The New Yorker* described the book as a "vigorous, athletic, witty, and in parts profound analysis of and attack upon the advertising game in its broadest aspect. . . . Highly recommended."[100] Syndicated treatments in the country's newspapers were at least grudgingly favorable. Rorty "takes advertising for a good humored but rather rough ride," read one. Another noted Rorty's "Socialist tendencies," but admitted that the "author has worked hard with his material" and praised the book's "mass of facts." A third syndicated review, after a taut summary, concluded:

> If all that sounds like quite a mouthful, you will find it worth your while to read Mr. Rorty's book . . . all in all, this is a serious and instructive book. Some advertising men will denounce it; others, I suspect, will welcome it. And the general reader will find it exceedingly informative.[101]

The popular reviews—some of them flattering, none dismissive—proffer ironic testimony, perhaps, to the limits of Rorty's monovocal theory of the press. Regardless, they stand in striking counterpose to the silence from academics, then and since.

In retrospect, it's not hard to explain media scholars' neglect of *Our Master's Voice*—and its subsequent disappearance from the field's collective memory. After all, they ignored Rorty's fusillade in its own time. The book's peculiar form weighed it down from the beginning—its manic eclecticism and rhetorical overspillage, page by relentless page. There was, too, its author's radicalism, out of step (unblushingly so) with the performance of detachment demanded by the reigning academic norms.[102] Reformist commitments, when tempered by professions of value freedom, were permissible—but not the Marx-quoting pyrotechnics of the book's prose. Rorty's status as a journalist created its own reception liability, made worse by the itinerant, topically promiscuous, fiction-tainted character of his other work. Since the 1920s, American social scientists had been avidly professionalizing, and the campaign had only gathered momentum. So mere journalism, or, worse still, social criticism, was primed for spurning by scholars who had only just won a fragile legitimacy.

And of course we shouldn't neglect the book's venom-tipped attack on social science itself. In the spirit of Veblen's 1918 polemic *The Higher Learning*, Rorty castigated social scientists for abdicating their assigned role as free-thinking analysts.[103] He lit into the "dozens of

Minnesota Press, 1935), 136. The book was dropped in Lasswell's 1946 sequel, *Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion*, a reflection, perhaps, of the twin volumes' unblushing fixation on successful propaganda. Bruce Lannes Smith, Harold D. Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey, *Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univeristy Press, 1946).

[97] The sociologist Alfred McClung Lee, for example, included the book in a listing of "recent attacks on advertised products and advertising." Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 332. Likewise, the journalism scholar Robert Desmond footnoted *Our Master's Voice* among four other critical books in support of the statement that newspaper "owners take every step to protect their investments and, while this is natural, the public often suffers." Desmond, *The Press and World Affairs* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1937), 374. Hadley Cantril and Gordon Allport's *The Psychology of Radio* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1935), perhaps the decade's most celebrated book-length academic treatment of media, buries Rorty's book in a footnote on censorship. They do briefly summarize Rorty's radio-oriented pamphlet *Order on the Air* (1934), but only to solicit and republish in full a two-page rebuttal from the National Association of Broadcasters—"since the impartial observer must learn the other side of the story" (46, 57–59). The final mention appears in the sociologist William Albig's *Public Opinion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939). Citing the journalist Stuart Chase alongside *Our Master's Voice*, Albig wrote that a "number of intellectuals, evidencing that they felt the appeals and wiles of the advertising man to be a personal insult, have indicated their revulsion in no uncertain terms"—before mounting a qualified defense of the industry (306–9).

[98] The review, by the *Times* star reviewer R. L. Duffus, recommends the "suggestive" book, but faults Rorty for exaggerating the press's fealty to advertisers. The review carries the subhead: "There Is Truth in His Picture, but What He Shows Is by No Means the Whole Picture." Duffus, "Mr Rorty's Biased View of Modern Advertising," *New York Times*, May 20, 1934, 4, 14.

Greek-porticoed" business schools, staffed by a "new priesthood of 'business economists' " who translated the "techniques of mass prevarication into suitable academic euphemisms."[104] The whole discipline of economics, meanwhile, "stood aside" while advertising proceeded to "play jackstraws" with "orthodox economic doctrine."[105] Rorty in fact devoted an entire chapter to psychology's prostitution to advertising, citing the for-profit Psychological Corporation and behaviorist John B. Watson's move to a big-time ad agency.[106] The "prestige of business dominates the American psychology," Rorty wrote, "not excepting the psychology of American psychologists."[107] And all the disciplines come in for repeated reprimand for claiming objectivity while propping up the status quo.[108]

Given the upbraiding, social scientists had plenty of reason to look away.[109] The result, though, was the premature burial of a trenchant volume. In re-publication, *Our Master's Voice* joins a well-established literature on consumer culture, some of it critical—though nothing as vigorous, athletic, and witty as Rorty's forgotten study. A book about advertising, he reminded us, is inevitably a critique of the surrounding society. His example is worth emulating.

[99] "[I]f communism came," continued the reviewer, "we should have all our advertising and publicity agencies turning out propaganda for the Reds, and it wouldn't be a bit more fundamentally honest than the tripe for which they are responsible today." Herschel Brickell, "The Literary Landscape," *The North American Review* 238, no. 1 (1934): 89–90.

[100] The quote is from the capsule in the regular "Reader's Reminder List," *New Yorker*, June 2, 1934, 92. The original review is equally fawning: "The neatest, the most amusing, and at the same time the most thoughtful piece of fundamental muckraking of the last season or so is to be found in James Rorty's new book." Cliffton Fadiman, "Books: Three Reports on the State of the Nation," *New Yorker*, May 19, 1934, 102.

[101] John Shelby, "Scanning New Books," *Sarasota Herald*, May 14, 1934, 8; Allen Smith, "Bound to Be Read," *Piqua Daily Call*, May 16, 1934, 4; and Bruce Catton, "A Book a Day," *Sandusky Star Journal*, May 28, 1934, 6.

[102] Rorty soon had an inauspicious brush with the team of researchers who, in the subsequent decade, would help establish communication research as an interdisciplinary field. It is a remarkable fact that in 1937 Rorty was recruited to work for Paul Lazarsfeld's Princeton Radio Research Project, the Rockefeller Foundation–funded institute that would become, in the 1940s, the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia. Rorty was commissioned to conduct a study for the Project on "Radio Commentators," including listener reactions. Lazarsfeld and one of his associate directors, the psychologist Hadley Cantril, soured on Rorty for a variety of reasons, including work style and the draft itself. Cantril was assigned to resurrect the manuscript, but the "Radio Commentators" monograph was never published and Rorty was, in effect, jettisoned from the Project. The secondary accounts of Rorty's stint do not cite politics as the main site of conflict, though Lazarsfeld—in a memo mounting a qualified defense of the Frankfurt School refugee Theodor Adorno's quixotic (and now-notorious) contribution to the Project—used Rorty as a point of contrast: "It is true that I still have some difficulty in getting W [Adorno] down to earth but there can be no doubt of his originality and the fruitfulness of his approach. With R

[Rorty], I do not even know whether he has produced a new aspect although Had [Cantril] might correct me on this point." Christian Fleck, *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich, and the Invention of Empirical Social Research* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 183–84. The whole episode deserves more study, especially since Rorty could be the third major leftist figure—after the well-documented cases of Adorno and the sociologist C. Wright Mills in the mid-1940s—sidelined by the Princeton Radio Research Project/Bureau of Applied Social Research, with all its many radio industry links in this period.

[103] Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1918). Advertising, Rorty wrote in the opening chapter, is the "business nobody knows." He continued: "As evidence of this general ignorance, one has only to cite a few of the misapprehensions which have confused the very few contemporary economists, sociologists and publicists who have attempted to treat the subject" (*OMV*, 11).

[104] *OMV*, 233.

[105] *OMV*, 173–74. Some of Rorty's special disdain for orthodox economics can be explained by the Veblen counterexample. There is, too, a familial touchstone: Rorty's brother Malcolm, fifteen years his senior, was a prominent economist, AT&T executive, and defender of laissez-faire. See Gross, *Richard Rorty*, 44.

[106] *OMV*, chap. 15.

[107] *OMV*, 179.

[108] The objectivity critique is an extension of Rorty's broader assault on the professed neutrality of education: "Many teachers, even of the social sciences, are quite unconscious of these [economic] determinants and preserve the confident illusion of 'scientific objectivity' in the very act of asserting creedal absolutes which are obviously a product of social and economic class conditioning" (*OMV*, 118). See also 174–75, including a long quote from an unpublished Sidney Hook manuscript attacking objectivity.

[109] There was, importantly, no such thing as communication research in the United States when Rorty published *Our Master's Voice*—no organized discipline, not even a label. Yes, the *study* of communication was already well underway. Indeed, American social science, since its emergence in the late nineteenth century, had fixed the organs of mass communication as objects of study—as tokens of modern social upheaval. In the wake of the Great War—fought, in part, through publicity—scholars and journalists alike took up the question of propaganda and its implications for politics and social life. By the early 1930s a large social-scientific literature had formed, with important studies published in and around Rorty's own 1934 contribution. Still, there was no recognized category called "communication researcher." There were, instead, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, a handful of economists and others drawn from what were unevenly differentiated disciplines. Only in the subsequent decade—roughly by the end of World War II—did "communication" cohere as an academic formation. Thus the field arrived late, and in a moment of generational turnover. The fight against the Axis powers, and then the new Soviet enemy, yoked the proto-discipline's intellectual agenda to questions of successful persuasion—that is, how to get it working well. By the 1950s and '60s, communication scholars had finally established a home in journalism schools. In their struggle for legitimacy, they drafted histories of media study that, in the cocksure spirit of the times, cast *all* pre-war scholarship as naive and impressionistic. One result was amnesia on a field-wide scale: Almost nothing was read or remembered from the 1920s or '30s. Even today students of communication learn that there's nothing worth reading before 1945. So *Our Master's Voice* was destined to be forgotten, even had its social science contemporaries paid it real heed. The book was ignored twice over, in other words—once in the 1930s and then ever since.

OUR MASTER'S VOICE

ADVERTISING

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"I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him."
—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"A trading on that range of human infirmities that blossoms in devout observances and bears fruit in the psychopathic wards."
—THORSTEIN VEBLEN

"Business succeeds rather better than the state in imposing its restraints upon individuals, because its imperatives are disguised as choices."
—WALTON HAMILTON

PREFACE: I Was an Ad-man Once

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IMAGINE, if you can, the New York of 1913. In that year a young man just out of college was laying siege to the city desks of the metropolitan papers. He had good legs, but his past record included nothing more substantial than having been fired out of college, and having worked before college, and during vacations, on a small-city paper upstate; also on a Munsey-owned Boston paper. It was the last count that did for him. He couldn't laugh that off anywhere, and funds were getting low.

Finally, a relative got the young man a job as a copy writer in an advertising agency, housed near the Battery in an ancient loft building which has since been torn down. Perhaps it is time to drop the third person. The young man was myself. I remember him well, although at this distance both the person and his actions seem a little unreal.

The young man didn't know anybody, or anything much. At that time he hadn't even read H. G. Wells' *Tono-Bungay*. But he was full of fervor. His father was an Irish Fenian who believed to the end of his days that the world was just on the point of becoming decent and sensible, and the young man, to tell the truth, has had trouble in overcoming that paternal misapprehension.

In those days business had pretty well beaten the muckraking magazines by the painless process of seizing them through the business office. But the old *Masses* was going full blast, and the blond beasts of the *New Republic* were about to launch their forays upon the sheepfolds of the Faithful.

The young man was a Socialist already, in sympathy at least, although in the matter of fundamental economics and sociology he was as illiterate as most of his contemporaries. He was literary; that is to say, he knew Ibsen, and Hauptman [*sic*], and Shaw, and Jack London, and Samuel Butler—even a little Nietzsche. Not until some years later did he come to know Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen.

But life was real and landladies were earnest. The young man was hungry. He had a job now and he was taking no chances. He was

assured that at the end of the month he would be paid sixty dollars for his services, in negotiable currency. It was up to him to earn that sixty dollars. He was young and energetic. During the economy wave under which Mr. Munsey extinguished the *Boston Journal*, he, a cub reporter, had covered as many as three supposedly important assignments in one day, being obliged, of course, to steal or fake most of his facts.

The young man was given his first advertising-copy assignment: to write some forty advertisements commending a certain brand of agricultural machinery about which he knew nothing whatever. The young man took off his coat.

I wrote those forty advertisements in three days, with my eye on the clock. Three days is ten per cent of thirty days. Ten per cent of sixty dollars is six dollars. Were those forty advertisements a big enough stint to earn those six dollars? Trembling, I turned in my copy . . . it was enough for a year.

The copy was fully up to current standards, too, as advertising copy, although of course it went through endless meaningless revisions. As news and information it didn't, at the time, seem to me to be worth the price. I still don't think so. But in those three days I learned all that any bright young man needed to know about the mysteries of advertising copy-writing in order to earn, in 1929, not sixty dollars a month, but a hundred and sixty dollars a week. I say this in the teeth of the Harvard School of Business Administration, the apprentice courses of all the agencies, Dr. John B. Watson, and the old sea lion in the Aquarium to whom, in my dazed and shaken condition, I turned for comfort and understanding.

The Aquarium was close at hand. During the noon hour I would sit on a bench in Battery Park, eating my necessarily frugal lunch of peanuts and chocolate, and then spend the remaining half-hour wandering among the glass cases and peering at the fishes, who peered back at me with their flat eyes and said nothing. Sometimes one of them would turn on his side, his gills waving faintly. Nothing to do, nowhere to go. We cried our eyes out over each other, I and the other poor fishes.

Then I discovered the sea lion, who occupied a big pool in the center of the main floor. The sea lion, I soon became convinced, had some kind of an idea. There was a slanting float at one end of the pool. He would start at the other end, dive, emerge halfway up the float with a tremendous rush, and whoosh! he would blow water on the mob of children and adults who crowded around the tank. Always they would shriek, giggle, and retreat. Then, gradually, they would come back; the sea lion would then repeat the performance with precisely the same effect.

It has taken me years to understand that sea lion. I know now that he was an advertising man. Recently, I became acquainted with his human reincarnation, one of the ablest, most philosophical, and best paid advertising men in New York. If there is a "science" of advertising, he has mastered it. Yet his formula is very simple. It is this: "Figure out what they want, promise 'em everything, and blow hard."

This philosophical ancient is greatly valued as an instructor of the young. His students are very promising, although some of them are not wholly literate. He is, however, indulgent of their cultural limitations, remarking kindly: "What are a few split infinitives between morons?"

In the annex to the Aquarium where I served my advertising apprenticeship there were many mansions, housing as varied a collection of the human species as I have ever encountered together in one place. Through a stroke of luck, the agency had started with a nucleus of important accounts and expanded rapidly. Its owner, a quiet Swede who never, to my knowledge while I was in his employ, wrote a single piece of advertising copy himself, became a millionaire in a few years. He was, then, an economist, a commercial engineer, an executive of tremendous driving power? Not so that anybody could notice it. His success is quite unexplainable in terms of logic or common sense. I think he was just a "natural." Also, he played golf well, but not too well. Puzzling over this phenomenon, I remembered hearing the Socialists tell me there is no sense in trying to make sense out of the people and institutions of our chaotic capitalist civilization.

Nevertheless, the boss was a natural. Either by shrewdness or by accident, he gathered into his organization a considerable number of able and interesting people. They didn't know much about advertising. Nobody did in those days. Six months after my initiation, the company moved to a neighboring skyscraper, and the expanded copy staff soon numbered eight people. We all sat in one large room. By right of priority, I had a desk next the window where I could look out and watch the ferry boats swimming about like water beetles, and the tugs pushing liners out to sea, as ants push big crumbs. They seemed so earnest, so determined. . . . Every now and then an office boy would stroll by and deposit in one of the desk baskets a yellow printed form with here and there a little typing on it. The form called for one, two, six or twelve advertisements about a certain product, to fit specified spaces in certain scheduled publications. Usually the form was destitute of other information or instruction.

I think, although I am not sure, that those forms were the bequest of an efficiency expert who functioned briefly during the early months of my employment. He was a tall, gangling man, with a high

white brow, a drooping forelock and a rapt and questing eye. He dictated inspirational talks to his stenographer. While so engaged, he would pace up and down his office and quite literally beat his breast. In fact, he had all the equipment of a medicine man except the buffalo horns and the rattlesnake belt. It was he, I think, who started the idea of timing and systematizing the copy production of the office. Years after he had left, unfortunate copy writers were still digging the splinters of that system out of their pants.

You got a yellow form, then, which required that you write so many pieces of copy and turn them in by a certain date. What kind of copy? The form was silent. The headline goes at the top, the slug at the bottom and what goes in between you rewrite from a booklet or make up out of your head. Sometimes an illustration was called for. In such cases you conferred with the art director, who was of the opinion that you, your words, and especially your ideas about pictures were a damned nuisance and so informed you.

I felt it necessary to resent such acerbities, but I could never do so with any great conviction. Privately, I suspected that he was right. Sometimes I was tempted to put my hands on my hips and retort stoutly, "You're another." But I never did so. That would have been to widen the field of discussion intolerably. And there were always closing dates to meet.

Feeling as I did about it, it frequently seemed to me that one advertisement would do exactly as well as six. But I always wrote six. Anything to keep busy. There were never enough yellow forms.

Sometimes, unable to control my restlessness, I would wander upstairs, knock on the door of the account executive's office, and ask mildly if anybody knew anything about that product and what it was supposed to be used for. I knew that many heavy conferences had preceded the planning of that campaign. But the decisions reached in those conferences never seemed to get typed on that yellow form. Usually I got nothing out of such interviews except the suggestion that I do some more like last year's, or that an ad was an ad, wasn't it, and I was to have six done by Friday. Such admonitions were heartbreaking. The ads were already done. Nothing to do now except to stew miserably in the juice of my frustrated energies.

In time, merciful nature came to my aid. I, who was normally facile, as even a cub reporter has to be, found that writing even a six-line tradepaper advertisement cost me intolerable effort. My brain wouldn't function. My fingers were paralyzed. I was fighting the cold wind of absurdity blowing off the waste lands of our American commercial chaos. The workman in me had been insulted. Very well, then, he would strike. I dawdled. I covered reams of paper with idiotic pencilings. I missed closing dates and didn't care. My

fellow copy writers, suffering the same tortures, would go out and get drunk. One of them, in fact, who had genuine literary talent, ultimately drank himself to death.

Since I was still a virtuous youth, I had no such escapes. Even my health, which had been excellent, was shaken. I began mumbling to myself on the street. Once, for three weeks, an office associate converted me to Christian Science.

The Truth and the Light, he said, were in Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*, which I accordingly undertook to read for several evenings. I do not think I ever got beyond page 38, although I tried very hard. The difficulty was that it didn't make sense at first reading, so that on resuming the book I was always obliged to start over again from the beginning. It was like driving a model T Ford uphill through sand. At the end of three weeks I was utterly exhausted, and sleeping soundly, but unable to bear another word of Mary Baker Eddy.

I cite the episode merely to indicate how acute was my condition. If my friend had been a Holy Roller, I think I would have rolled for him cheerfully.

The workman in me was paralyzed. Even when, outside the office, I tried to write poetry and plays the words and ideas stared coldly at me from the page.

But the reformer in me still lived and was shortly to have his inning. The house acquired as a client a company manufacturing a proprietary remedy. As it happened, it was an excellent product, which, minus its proprietary name, was much used and recommended by the medical profession. There was my chance. I would make the advertising of that product honest. I did make it honest, for a while. I had every word of my copy censored by representative medical men. I fought everybody in the office, singly and in groups. I was obsessed, invincible and absurd.

But the client became impatient—sales weren't growing as fast as he thought they should. He hired as advertising manager an experienced and entirely unscrupulous patent-medicine salesman—a leather-hided saurian who scrapped all my carefully censored copy and furnished as a model for future advertising an illiterate screed recommending the product, directly or by implication, as a cure for everything from tuberculosis to athlete's foot.

I threw him out of my office. I rushed over to the client and talked very crudely to a very eminent gentleman. Even that wasn't enough. I considered blowing the works to the organized medical profession, although I never actually did so. Instead, I wrote a furious and entirely unactable play about a patent medicine wage-slave who went straight and took a correspondence course in burglary.

I wasn't fired, although logically I should have been. The President

of the United States had just declared war, and in the confusion I escaped into the army as a buck private. Even the war, I thought, was more rational than the advertising business. I was wrong, but that is another story.

I was an ad-man once. Indeed, I am, in a small way, an ad-man still, although I no longer carry a spear in the monotonously hilarious spectacles which the orthodox priests continue sweatingly to produce in the Byzantine, Chino-Spanish and Dada-Gothic temples of advertising which crowd the Grand Central district of New York.

I still practice, however, after my fashion. My motto, "The Less Advertising the Better," appeals poignantly to certain eminent industrialists to whom I have talked. My sales argument goes something like this:

"Mr. Hoffschnagel, you and I are practical men. I don't need to tell you that advertising is not an end in itself. Neither is selling. The end, Mr. Hoffschnagel, the true objective of the manufacturer and dispenser of products and services, should be the efficient and economical delivery to the consumer of precisely what the consumer wants and needs: what the consumer needs to buy, I repeat, not what the manufacturer needs to sell him. In any functional relationship between producer and consumer, advertising and sales expenditures are just so much frictional loss; in the ideal setup, which of course we can't even approximate under present conditions, released buying energy would be substituted entirely for the selling energy which you now spend in breaking down 'sales resistance.' My task, therefore, is to redefine and reinterpret your relationship with your customers; not to pile up sales and advertising expenses"—Mr. Hoffschnagel nods energetically—"but to cut them. What do your customers want from you? Service! What do you want to give them? Service! Not advertising—the less advertising the better—that's just so much friction and loss. But service! The end, Mr. Hoffschnagel, the end is service!"

Mr. Hoffschnagel meditates, while as if unconsciously his hand strays to the right-hand drawer of his desk.

"Have a drink," says Mr. Hoffschnagel.

It is possible to get a good deal of hospitality in this way, and even some business. Sometimes, as I listen to myself talk, I sound like one of these newly spawned capitalist economic planners. I am not. I know, or think I know, that the advertising business, with all of its wastes and chicaneries intact, is woven into the very fabric of our competitive economic system; that the only equilibrium possible for such a system is the unstable equilibrium of accelerating change, with the ad-man's foot on the throttle, speeding up consumption, preaching emulative expenditure, "styling" clothes,

kitchens, automobiles—everything, in the interest of more rapid obsolescence and replacement. Up to a certain point it is possible to build, and after the inevitable crash, to rebuild such a system always with a progressive and cumulative intensification of wastes and conflicts. It is not possible to operate such a system sanely and permanently, because its underlying economic and social premises are obsolete in the modern world.

If this is so—even some advertising men apprehend that it may be so—then it would be, perhaps, not a bad idea, if ad-men removed their tongues from their long-swollen cheeks and tried talking approximate sense for a change. It wouldn't do much if any immediate good, of course, but it might provide a desirable mental discipline, a kind of intellectual preparation for the severer disciplines which the future may hold in store for the profession.

As a matter of fact, the abler people in advertising are becoming increasingly mature, realistic, and cynical. They don't believe in the racket themselves. But they insist that the guinea pigs, not merely the consumers outside the office, but the minor employees inside the office, *must* believe in it. The rôle of the advertising agency guinea pig—the minor copy writer, layout man, forwarding clerk or other carrier of messages to Garcia—is hard indeed. The outside guinea pig, the consumer, can't be fired. But the inside guinea pig can be and is fired unless he is utterly and sincerely credulous and faithful. A good, loyal guinea pig is a pearl without price in any agency. I am even told that in some of the larger agencies, eugenic experiments are being conducted with the idea ultimately of breeding advertising guinea pigs, or pearls—I admit the metaphor is hopelessly mixed—who will come into the world crying "It Pays To Advertise".

To SUCH HEIGHTS of fantasy are we lifted by an attempt to examine the phenomenon of contemporary advertising in America. It is not, as contemporary liberal historians and social critics have tended to regard it, a superficial phenomenon: a carbuncular excrescence of our acquisitive society, curable by appropriate reformist treatment, or perhaps by a minor operation.

A book about advertising therefore becomes inevitably a critique of the society.

Much of the data presented in this book I have gathered in my personal experience as an employee of various advertising agencies. If some of this material seems absurd, even incredible to the lay reader, I can only reply, helplessly, that I did not make the advertising business; nobody made it; that is why it is so absurd. Whether one regards the advertising business as farce or as tragedy, one is convinced that the play is badly made; there are no heroes and the

villains have a way of turning into victims under one's eyes; none of them is consistently bad, consistently sad or even consistently funny.

As I shall try to show in a later section entitled "The Natural History of Advertising," the advertising business just grew. It is the economic and cultural causes, the economic and cultural consequences of this growth that I shall try to describe in this book.

1 THE BUSINESS NOBODY KNOWS

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THE title of this chapter was chosen, not so much to parody the title of Mr. Bruce Barton's widely-read volume of New Testament exegesis,[1] as to suggest that, in the lack of serious critical study, we really know very little about advertising: how the phenomenon happened to achieve its uniquely huge and grotesque dimensions in America; how it has affected our individual and social psychology as a people; what its rôle is likely to be in the present rapidly changing pattern of social and economic forces.

The advertising business is quite literally the business nobody knows; nobody, including, or perhaps more especially, advertising men. As evidence of this general ignorance, one has only to cite a few of the misapprehensions which have confused the very few contemporary economists, sociologists and publicists who have attempted to treat the subject.

Perhaps the chief of these misapprehensions is that of regarding advertising as merely the business of preparing and placing advertisements in the various advertising media: the daily and periodical press, the mails, the radio, motion picture, car cards, posters, etc. The error here is that of mistaking a function of the thing for the thing itself. It would be much more accurate to say that our daily and periodical press, plus the radio and other lesser media, *are* the advertising business. The commercial press is supported primarily by advertising—roughly the ratio as between advertising income and subscription and news-stand sales income averages about two to one. It is quite natural, therefore, that the publishers of newspapers and magazines should regard their enterprises as *advertising businesses*. As a matter of fact, every advertising man knows that they do so regard them and so conduct them. These publishers are business men, responsible to their stockholders, and their proper and necessary concern is to make a maximum of profit out of these business properties. They do this by using our major instruments of social communication, whose free and disinterested functioning is embodied in the concept of a democracy, to serve the profit interests of the advertis-

[1] [Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1924).]

ers who employ and pay them. Within certain limits they give their readers and listeners the sort of editorial content which experience proves to be effective in building circulations and audiences, these to be sold in turn at so much a head to advertisers. The limits are that regardless of the readers' or listeners' true interests, nothing can be given them which seriously conflicts with the profit-interests of the advertisers, or of the vested industrial and financial powers back of these; also nothing can be given them which seriously conflicts with the use and wont, embodied in law and custom, of the competitive capitalist economy and culture.

In defining the advertising business it must be remembered also that newspapers and magazines use paper and ink: a huge bulk of materials, a ramified complex of services by printers, lithographers, photographers, etc. Radio uses other categories of materials and services—the whole art of radio was originally conceived of as a sales device to market radio transmitters and receiving sets. All these services are necessary to advertising and advertising is necessary to them. These are also the advertising business. Surely it is only by examining this business as a whole that we can expect to understand anything about it.

The second misapprehension is that invidious moral value judgments are useful in appraising the phenomena. Advertising is merely an instrument of sales promotion. Good advertising is efficient advertising—advertising which promotes a maximum of sales for a minimum of expenditure. Bad advertising is inefficient advertising, advertising which accomplishes its purpose wastefully or not at all. All advertising is obviously special pleading. Why should it be considered pertinent or useful to express surprise and indignation because special pleading, whether in a court of law, or in the public prints, is habitually disingenuous, and frequently unscrupulous and deceptive? Yet liberal social critics, economists and sociologists, have wasted much time complaining that advertising has "elevated mendacity to the status of a profession." The pressure of competition forces advertisers and the advertising agencies who serve them to become more efficient; to advertise more efficiently frequently means to advertise more mendaciously. Do these liberal critics want advertising to be less efficient? Do they want advertisers to observe standards of ethics, morals and taste which would, under our existing institutional setup, result either in depriving stockholders of dividends, or in loading still heavier costs on the consumer?

There is, of course, a third alternative, which is neither good advertising nor bad advertising, but no advertising. But that is outside the present institutional setup. It should be obvious that in the present (surplus economy) phase of American capitalism, advertising

is an industry no less essential than steel, coal, or electric power. If one defines advertising as the total apparatus of American publishing and broadcasting, it is in fact among the twelve greatest industries in the country. It is, moreover, one of the most strategically placed industries. Realization of this fact should restrain us from loose talk about "deflating the advertising business." How would one go about organizing "public opinion" for such an enterprise when the instruments of social communication by which public opinion must be shaped and organized are themselves the advertising business?

As should be apparent from the foregoing, the writer has only a qualified interest in "reforming" advertising. Obviously it cannot be reformed without transforming the whole institutional context of our civilization. The bias of the writer is frankly in favor of such a transformation. But the immediate task in this book is one of description and analysis. Although advertising is forever in the public's eye—and in its ear too, now that we have radio—the average layman confines himself either to applauding the tricks of the ad-man, or to railing at what he considers to be more or less of a public nuisance. In neither case does he bother to understand what is being done to him, who is doing it, and why.

The typical view of an advertisement is that it is a selling presentation of a product or service, to be judged as "good" or "bad" depending upon whether the presentation is accurate or inaccurate, fair or deceptive. But to an advertising man, this seems a very shallow view of the matter.

Advertising has to do with the shaping of the economic, social, moral and ethical patterns of the community into serviceable conformity with the profit-making interests of advertisers and of the advertising business. Advertising thus becomes a body of doctrine. Veblen defined advertisements as "doctrinal memoranda," and the phrase is none the less precise because of its content of irony. It is particularly applicable to that steadily increasing proportion of advertising classified as "inter-industrial advertising": that is to say, advertising competition between industries for the consumer's dollar. What such advertising boils down to is special pleading, directed at the consumer by vested property interests, concerning the material, moral and spiritual content of the Good Life. In this special pleading the editorial contents of the daily and periodical press, and the sustaining programs of the broadcasters, are called upon to do their bit, no less manfully, though less directly than the advertising columns or the sponsor's sales talk. Such advertising, as Veblen pointed out, is a lineal descendant of the "Propaganda of the Faith." It is a less unified effort, and less efficient because of the conflicting pressure groups involved; also because of the disruptive stresses of the under-

lying economic forces of our time. Yet it is very similar in purpose and method.[2]

An important point which the writer develops in detail in later chapters is that advertising is an effect resulting from the unfolding of the economic processes of modern capitalism, but becomes in turn a cause of sequential economic and social phenomena. The earlier causal chain is of course apparent. Mass production necessitated mass distribution which necessitated mass literacy, mass communication and mass advertising. But the achieved result, mass advertising, becomes in turn a generating cause of another sequence. Mass advertising perverts the integrity of the editor-reader relationship essential to the concept of a democracy. Advertising doctrine—always remembering that the separation of the editorial and advertising contents of a modern publication is for the most part formal rather than actual—is a doctrine of material emulation, keeping up with the Joneses, conspicuous waste. Mass advertising plus, of course, the government mail subsidy, makes possible the five-cent price for national weeklies, the ten- to thirty-five-cent price for national monthlies. Because of this low price and because of the large appropriations for circulation-promotion made possible by advertising income, the number of mass publications and the volume of their circulation has hugely increased. These huge circulations are maintained by editorial policies dictated by the requirements of the advertisers. Such policies vary widely but have certain elements in common. Articles, fiction, verse, etc., are conceived of as "entertainment." This means that controversial subjects are avoided. The contemporary social fact is not adequately reported, interpreted, or criticized; in fact the run of commercial magazines and newspapers are extraordinarily empty of social content. On the positive side, their content, whether fiction, articles or criticism, is definitely shaped toward the promotion and fixation of mental and emotional patterns which predispose the reader to an acceptance of the advertiser's doctrinal message.

This secondary causal chain therefore runs as follows: Mass advertising entails the perversion of the editor-reader relationship; it entails reader-exploitation, cultural malnutrition and stultification.

This situation came to fruition during the period just before, during and after the war; a period of rapid technical, economic and social change culminating in the depression of 1929. At precisely the moment in our history when we needed a maximum of open-minded mobility in public opinion, we found a maximum of inertia embodied in our instruments of social communication. Since these have become advertising businesses, and competition is the life of advertising, they have a vested interest in maintaining and promoting the competitive acquisitive economy and the competitive acquisitive social psychol-

[2] [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), 300, 319–25.]

ogy. Both are essential to advertising, but both are becoming obsolete in the modern world. In contemporary sociological writing we find only vague and passing reference to this crucial fact, which is of incalculable influence in determining the present and future movement of social forces in America.

In later chapters the writer will be found dealing coincidentally with advertising, propaganda and education. Contemporary liberal criticism tends to regard these as separate categories, to be separately studied and evaluated. But in the realm of contemporary fact, no such separation exists. All three are *instruments of rule*. Our ruling class, representing the vested interests of business and finance, has primary access to and control over all these instruments. One supplements the other and they are frequently used coordinately. Liberal sociologists would attempt to set up the concept of education, defined as a disinterested objective effort to release capacity, as a contrasting opposite to propaganda and advertising. In practice no such clear apposition obtains, or can obtain, as is in fact acknowledged by some of our most distinguished contemporary educators.

There is nothing unique, isolate or adventitious about the contemporary phenomena of advertising. Your ad-man is merely the particular kind of eccentric cog which the machinery of a competitive acquisitive society required at a particular moment of its evolution. He is, on the average, much more intelligent than the average business man, much more sophisticated, even much more socially minded. But in moving day after day the little cams and gears that he has to move, he inevitably empties himself of human qualities. His daily traffic in half-truths and outright deceptions is subtly and cumulatively degrading. No man can give his days to barbarous frivolity and live. And ad-men don't live. They become dull, resigned, hopeless. Or they become dæmonic fantasts and sadists. They are, in a sense, the intellectuals, the male hetæræ of our American commercial culture. Merciful nature makes some of them into hale, pink-fleshed, speech-making morons. Others become gray-faced cynics and are burned out at forty. Some "unlearn hope" and jump out of high windows. Others become extreme political and social radicals, either secretly while they are in the business, or openly, after they have left it.

This, then, is the advertising business. The present volume is merely a reconnaissance study. In addition to what is indicated by the foregoing, some technical material is included on the organization and practices of the various branches of the business. Some attempt is made to answer the questions: how did it happen that America offered a uniquely favorable culture-bed for the development of the phenomena described? What are the foreign equivalents

of our American rule-by-advertising? How will advertising be affected by the present trend toward state capitalism, organized in the corporative forms of fascism, and how will the social inertias nourished and defended by advertising condition that trend?

The writer also attempts tentative measurements of the mental levels of various sections of the American population, using the criteria provided by our mass and class publications. Advertising men are obliged to make such measurements as a part of their business; they are frequently wrong, but since their conclusions are the basis of more or less successful business practice they are worthy of consideration.

The one conclusion which the writer offers in all seriousness is that the advertising business is in fact the Business Nobody Knows. The trails marked out in this volume are brief and crude. It is hoped that some of our contemporary sociologists may be tempted to clear them a little further. Although, of course, there is always the chance that the swift movement of events may eliminate or rather transform that particular social dilemma, making all such studies academic, even archaic. In that case it might happen that ad-men would be preserved chiefly as museum specimens, to an appreciation of which this book might then serve as a moderately useful guide.

Advertising has, of course, a very ancient history. But since the modern American phenomenon represents not merely a change in degree but a change in kind, the chronological tracing of its evolution would be only confusing. It has seemed better first to survey the contemporary phenomena in their totality and then present in a later chapter the limited amount of historical data that seemed necessary and pertinent.

2 THE APPARATUS OF ADVERTISING

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When we come to describe and measure the apparatus of advertising, some more or less arbitrary breakdown is necessary. Let us therefore start with the advertising agency, which is the hub of the advertising business proper, where all the lines converge. We shall then draw concentric circles, representing increasingly remote but genuinely related institutions, people and activities.

In *Advertising Agency Compensation* Professor James A. Young, of the University of Chicago, estimates that in 1932 there were 2,000 recognized national and local advertising agencies engaged in the preparation and placing of newspaper, magazine, direct-by-mail, carcard, poster, radio and all miscellaneous advertising.[1] These 2,000 agencies served 16,573 advertisers. Advertisers served by agencies having recognition by individual publishers only are excluded from this estimate.

[1] [James A. Young, *Advertising Agency Compensation in Relation to the Total Cost of Advertising* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).]

Prof. Young estimates the 1930 volume of advertising placed through 440 recognized agencies at $600,000,000. An additional 370 agencies placed $37,000,000 in that year. The trend during the post-war decade was steadily toward the concentration of the business in the larger agencies with a further concentration brought about by mergers of some of these already large units.

In 1930 there were six agencies doing an annual business of $20,000,000 or over, and fourteen with an annual volume of from $5,000,000 to $20,000,000. A further indication of the trend is contained in the figures showing the advertising income of *American Magazine*, *Colliers*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Delineator*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCalls* and *Woman's Home Companion*. In 1922, 57.8 per cent of the combined advertising income of these publications came from the ten leading agencies. In 1931 this proportion had risen to 68.3 per cent.

A similar trend toward concentration in the sources of advertising revenue is apparent. Advertisers spending between $10,000 and $100,000 annually dropped from 43.8 per cent of the total volume in 1921 to 21.1 per cent of the total volume in 1930. Advertisers spend-

ing between $100,000 and $1,000,000 annually increased from 51.3 per cent of the total volume in 1921 to 55.9 per cent in 1930. Finally, advertisers spending over a million a year increased their percentage of the total volume from 4.9 per cent in 1921 to 23 per cent in 1930.

The agency employee, whether he writes advertising copy, draws advertising pictures or is concerned with one of many routine, mechanical and clerical processes of the agency traffic, must be listed as an advertising person; he makes his living directly out of the advertising business.

The manufacturer's or merchant's advertising staff is also clearly to be listed as a part of the personnel of the advertising business.

A publisher's representative, or "space salesman", is also clearly an advertising man; so is the circulation promotion manager and his staff—his budget is an advertising budget. But how about the editorial department of the newspaper or magazine? Here we are on debatable ground. If the newspaper or magazine is primarily an advertising business, since most of its income is derived from advertisers, and all of its activities, editorial and otherwise, are finally evaluated according to the degree of their utility in making the publication an effective and profitable advertising medium, then the total staff of the publication is an advertising staff; they too make their livings out of the advertising business.

Without attempting to settle the question, let us first consider certain statistical trends which show clearly enough the progressive transformation of our daily and periodical press into advertising businesses.

In 1909, 63 per cent of newspaper income and 51.6 per cent of magazine income was from advertising. By 1929 the proportion of advertising income had moved sharply upward to 74.1 per cent for newspapers and 63.4 per cent for periodicals. Approximately three-quarters of the newspaper's dollar and two-thirds of the periodical's dollar came from advertisers.

To correspond with this trend we should expect to find a certain re-orientation of the function of the newspaper and periodical press, and that is precisely what we do find. The reader is asked to follow a digression at this point, since it is important to the general argument.

Increasingly over the past thirty years we find the newspaper asserting its freedom—*in political terms*. Coincidentally, of course, it has come more and more under the hegemony of business exercised through advertising contracts to be either given or withheld. In 1900, 732 dailies acknowledged themselves to be "democratic" and 801, "republican." By 1930, papers labeled "independent democrat" and "independent republican" had increased fivefold, while papers pretending to be "independent" politically jumped from 377 in 1900 to

792 in 1930, when such papers constituted the largest single category. In commenting on this trend Messrs. Willey and Rice remark, in *Recent Social Trends*:

> This increase in claimed political independence may indicate that the newspaper is becoming less important as an adjunct of the political party, that it seeks greater editorial freedom, or that *it desires to include various political adherents within its circulation and advertising clientele.*[2]

[2] [Malcolm M. Willey and Stuart A. Rice, "The Agencies of Communication," in *Recent Social Trends*, vol. 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), 205.]

The italics are the writer's. What this statistical trend would appear to show, especially when coupled with the coordinate increase of the newspaper's dependence upon advertising income, is that the newspapers have realistically adapted themselves to the exigencies of a changing social and economic situation. This holds almost equally true of the periodicals. Politics as a means of government was definitely recessive during this period, and public interest in politics correspondingly declined. The powers of government were shifting to business. Hence the press became more and more "free." It freed itself from involvement with the nominal rulers, the political parties, in order that it might be free to court the patronage of the real rulers, the vested interests of business, industry, finance; in return for this patronage, the press became increasingly an instrument of rule operated in behalf of business. The press, being itself a profit-motivated business was in fact obliged to achieve this transition; to orient itself to the emerging focus of power, and to become in fact though not in name, an advertising business. In essence, what happened was that both major political parties had become, in respect to the class interests which they represented, one party, the party of business; the press, as an advertising medium, tended to represent that party.

Taking 1909 to 1929 as representing the crucial period of this transition we find that in 1909 the volume of newspaper advertising was $149,000,000 and of periodical advertising $54,000,000. By 1929 the figures were $792,000,000 for newspaper advertising and $320,000,000 for periodical advertising. Except for the movies, the automobile, and the radio, no other major American industry has rivaled the swift expansion of the advertising business.

We have then a combined total of $1,112,000,000 as the contribution of newspaper and magazine advertisers to the advertising "pot." In computing the total contents of this pot we must duly add at least $75,000,000 for time on the air bought by advertisers from commercial broadcasters. The radio, since all its income is derived from advertisers, must be rated as essentially an advertising business. We must add $400,000,000 for direct-by-mail advertising, $75,000,000 for outdoor advertising, $20,000,000 for street-car advertising, $75,000,000 for business papers, and $25,000,000 for premiums, programs, directories, etc. The foregoing are 1927 figures cited by Copeland in

Recent Economic Changes.[3] Advertising volume in all categories went up in 1928 and 1929 and radio volume continued to go up during the first three years of the depression. Also in these figures no allowance is made for radio talent bought and paid for by the advertiser, and none for art and mechanical costs of printed advertising, billed by the agency to the advertiser with a 15-per-cent commission added. Hence Copeland's grand total of $1,782,000,000 for all advertising must be taken as a very conservative estimate of the peak volume of the business. Two billion would probably be closer. As to the number of workers engaged in the various branches of the business, detailed estimates are difficult to get, chiefly because of the confusion of categories.

The General Report on Occupations of the 15th Census gives figures of 5,453 men and 400 women as the personnel of advertising agencies, but under *Advertising Agents and Other Pursuits in the Trade* the figures are 43,364 men and 5,656 women. Printing, publishing and engraving must be considered as in large part services of supply for the advertising business as above defined, and the personnel of these trades, including printers, compositors, linotypers, typesetters, electrotypers, stereotypers, lithographers and engravers totals 269,030 men and 33,333 women. In 1927 printing, publishing and allied industries ranked as the fifth industry in the United States with a total volume of $2,094,000,000.

The question, who is or is not connected with the advertising business is indeed baffling. Is the printer, who makes all or most of his living out of the advertising business, an advertising man? How about the engraver, the lithographer, the matmaker, the makers and sellers of paper and ink—all the hordes of people who as producers, service technicians, salesmen, clerks operate back of the lines as advertising's Service of Supplies? Many of these people, especially the salesmen, certainly think of themselves as advertising people. They are members in good standing of Advertising Clubs. Toss a chocolate eclair into the air at any Thursday noon luncheon of the Advertising Club of Kenosha, Wisconsin, or Muncie, Indiana, and the chances are three to one it will land on a printer or on an engraver. They are there strictly on business, of course, and their dues are carried as part of the firm's overhead. But how they believe in advertising!

Spread the net a little more widely and all kinds of strange fish flop and writhe in the meshes of advertising. The Alumni Secretary of dear Old Siwash—is he an advertising man? No? Then why is he a member of the local advertising club? And how about the football squad, their trainer, coach, waterboy, cheer-leaders, etc. are they advertising men? Well, the team advertises the college, and, by general

[3] [Morris A. Copeland, "The National Income and its Distribution," in *Recent Economic Changes in the United States*, vol. 2 (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1929).]

agreement, is maintained chiefly for that purpose. Why, then, isn't the personnel involved an advertising personnel?

Then there are the advertising departments of our numerous university-sanctioned Schools of Business Administration. Are these fellows advertising men or educators? Dr. Abraham Flexner maintains that they are not educators, while practical agency heads insist with equal energy that they are not advertising men. But they can't belong to nobody and the writer's guess is that they must, however reluctantly, be categoried as part of the personnel of the advertising business.

Hastening back to firm ground, we can agree that advertising copy-writers employed by agencies or advertisers are unmistakably advertising men. So are the fellows who sell space in publications. But how about the staffs of the various institutes, bureaus, etc., such as Good Housekeeping Institute, whose job is to test and pass on the products and appliances advertised in the publication? The raison d'etre of such departments is that they nourish the confidence of the reader and thus increase the value of the publication to the advertiser. Are these fellows scientists, engineers or advertising men?

Without attempting to answer this embarrassing question, let us go across the hall or upstairs to the editorial department of a modern publication. The "travel editor" is busy computing the current and prospective lineage bought by various steamship and railroad lines. On the result of this computation will depend whether next month she will praise the joys of California's sun-kist climate or the more de luxe attractions of the Riviera. Is the young woman an editor, a literary person or an advertising woman?

The fiction editor has on his desk a very suitable manuscript. It has neither literary nor other distinction, but the subject matter and treatment are excellent from a pragmatic point of view. The story tells how a young man was nobody and got nowhere until he bought some well-tailored clothes; with the aid of these clothes and other items of conspicuous waste, he established his social status and shrewdly used his newly-won acquaintances to promote his business career. He ends up as partner in the firm where he was formerly a despised bookkeeper. Moral: it pays to wear smart clothes, even if you have to go in debt to buy them. The story is in effect an excellent institutional advertisement for the men's clothing industry, and will be so regarded by present and prospective clothing advertisers. Is its author a literary man or an advertising man? Is the editor who chose this story, for the reasons indicated above, an editor and critic or an advertising man? The story will be illustrated by an artist who specializes in his knowledge of styles in men's clothing. When he makes his illustrations he will have before him as "scrap" the latest

catalogues of the clothing houses. Is he an artist, an illustrator or an advertising man?

It may seem unkind to press the point, but we have barely begun to list the peripheral personnel of the advertising business. The electrician who repairs the neon signs on Broadway—is he an electrician or an advertising man? The truck driver who delivers huge rolls of paper to the press rooms of the newspapers—where would he be, but for the advertising business that keeps those presses busy dirtying that paper? And the bargemen who floated that newsprint across the Hudson? And the train crew that freighted it down from Maine? And the loggers in the Maine woods that supply the pulp mills? And the writers for the "pulps" who go to Maine for their vacations?

It is not necessary to project this unbroken continuity into the realm of fantasy. Both in respect to the number of persons employed and the total value of manufactured products, advertising is, or was in 1929, one of the twelve major industries of the country. We are living in a fantastic ad-man's civilization, quite as truly as we are living in what historians are pleased to call a machine age, and a very cursory examination of the underlying economic trends will be sufficient to show how we got there.

The essential dynamic of course is the emergence of our "surplus economy" predicament, generated by the application of our highly developed technology to production for profit. Advertising played a more or less functional though barbaric and wasteful role during the whole expansionist era of American capitalism. The obsolescence, the reductio ad absurdum of advertising is betrayed by the exaggerations, the grotesqueries, which accompanied its period of greatest expansion during the postwar decade. Like many another social institution, it flowered most impressively at the very moment when its roots had been cut by the shift of the underlying economic forces.

Between 1870 and 1930 several millions of people were squeezed out of production. Where did they go? The statistical evidence is plain. In 1870 about 75 per cent of the gainfully employed people of the United States were engaged in the production of physical goods in agriculture, mining, manufacture and construction. In 1930 only about 50 per cent of the labor supply was so required. In 1870, ten per cent of the employed population was engaged in transportation and distribution. In 1930, 20 per cent was engaged in transportation and distribution. What caused this shift was chiefly the increase in man-hour productivity made possible by improvements in machine technology and in the technique of management. The chapter on "Trends in Economic Organization" by Edwin F. Gay and Leo Wolman in *Recent Social Trends* documents this increase as follows:

> The combined physical production of agriculture and of the manufacturing, mining and construction industries increased 34 per cent from 1922 to 1929.... The advance in output was steady throughout the period and even in the recession years, 1924 and 1927, the decline was surprisingly small. Much more important, however, is the comparison between the rate of increase in physical output in the prewar and postwar periods. Per capita output, reflecting retardation in the rate of population growth, as well as the rise in production, advanced twice as fast in the later years as in the earlier, as is indicated by the average annual rate of increase.[4]

[4] [Edwin F. Gay and Leo Wolfman, "The Agencies of Communication," in *Recent Social Trends*, vol. 1 (York, PA: Maple Press Company, 1933), 232.]

Period	*Volume of production per cent*	*Population per cent*	*Per capita production per cent*
1901–1913	+3.1	+2.1	+1.1
1922–1929	+3.8	+1.4	+2.4

Although real wage levels rose slightly during this period they did not rise proportionately to the increase in man-hour productivity, the increase in profits, the increase in plant investment, and the increase in capital claims upon the product of industry. The result of these conflicting trends was to place an increasing burden upon the machinery of selling. This is reflected in the rising curve of sales overhead, the increase in small loan credit and installment selling and the meteoric rise of advertising expenditure during the post-war period. According to the estimate of Robert Lynd in *Recent Social Trends* the total volume of retail installment sales in 1910 was probably under a billion dollars. By 1929 it had increased to seven billion dollars.[5]

[5] [Robert S. Lynd, "The People as Consumers," in *Recent Social Trends*, vol. 2 (York, PA: Maple Press Company, 1933).]

Undoubtedly this six-billion-dollar shot in the arm postponed the crisis, intensified its severity and contributed importantly to the Happy Days of advertising during the New Era. After the crash it was of course the ad-men who were urged to put Humpty-Dumpty back on the wall. They tried manfully, but since it is impossible to advertise a defunct buying power back into existence, they didn't succeed. And now, after four years of depression it would appear that the ad-man has learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

That two-billion-dollar advertising budget is a lot of money. In 1929 it represented about two per cent of the national income for that year, or $15 per capita. It might well be alleged that the bill was high, would have been high even for a competently administered service of information. And, as already indicated, advertising is scarcely that. What that two billion represented, what the present billion and a half advertising volume represents, is in considerable part the tax which business levies on the consumer to support the machinery of its super-government—the daily and periodical press, the radio,

the apparatus of advertising as we have described it. By this supergovernment the economic, social, ethical and cultural patterns of the population are shaped and controlled into serviceable conformity to the profit motivated interests of business.

Our notoriously extravagant official government is really much more modest, considering that it gives us in return such tangible values as roads, sewers, water, schools, police and fire departments, and such grandiose luxuries as the army and navy. The combined tax bill of the nation, Federal, State, and local, amounted to only $10,077,000,000 in 1930 or roughly about $75 per capita.

It will be argued, of course, that even if advertising is thrown out of court as a service of information, since that is neither its intent nor its effect, nevertheless this two-billion dollar industry does net us something. But for advertising, we should not be able to enjoy the radio free, or read the *Saturday Evening Post* at five cents a copy, or Mr. Hearst's *American Weekly*, which is thrown in free with his Sunday newspapers. In other words, it will be argued that advertising is justifiable as an indirect subsidy of our daily and periodical press and the radio; that for this two billion dollars, which has to be charged ultimately to the consumer, we get a tremendous quantity of news, information, criticism, culture, pretty pictures, education and entertainment. We do, indeed, and as taxpayers we value this contribution to our welfare so highly that our Post Office Department also heavily subsidizes our daily and periodical press. Also we pay the Federal Radio Commission's annual million-dollar budget, consumed chiefly in adjusting commercial dog-fights over wave lengths.

But the actual quality and usefulness of what we get is another matter. In exchange for these official and unofficial subsidies we get a daily and periodical press which has practically ceased to function as a creative instrument of democratic government: which does, however, function effectively as an instrument of obscuration, suppression and cultural stultification, used by business in behalf of business; which levels all cultural values to the common denominator of emulative acquisition and social snobbism, which draws its daily and weekly millions to feast on the still-born work of hamstrung reporters, escape-formula fictioneers, and slick-empty artists; which, having stupefied its readers with this sour-sweet stew of nothingness, can be counted on to be faithful to them in all issues which don't particularly matter and to betray them systematically and thoroughly whenever their interests run counter to the vested interests of business.

In this indictment it is not denied that we have in America many honest newspapers and honest magazines, honest editors, honest reporters and honest advertising men. They are honest and blameless

within the limits of the pattern prescribed for them by the economic determinants of the institutions which they serve. Some of them even struggle at great peril and sacrifice to break through and transcend these limits. It is inevitable that they should do so, since not only their readers but themselves are violated by the compulsions of the system in which both are caught.

But the system itself is substantially as described. The American apparatus of advertising is something unique in history and unique in the modern world; unique, fantastic and fragile. One needs but little knowledge of history, or of the movement of contemporary economic and social forces, to know that it can't last. It is like a grotesque, smirking gargoyle set at the very top of America's skyscraping adventure in acquisition *ad infinitum*. The tower is tottering, but it probably will be some time before it falls. And so long as the tower stands the gargoyle will remain there to mock us.

The gargoyle's mouth is a loud speaker, powered by the vested interest of a two-billion-dollar industry, and back of that the vested interests of business as a whole, of industry, of finance. It is never silent, it drowns out all other voices, and it suffers no rebuke, for is it not the Voice of America? That is its claim and to a degree it is a just claim. For at least two generations of Americans—the generations that grew up during the war and after—have listened to that voice as to an oracle. It has taught them how to live, what things to be afraid of, what to be proud of, how to be beautiful, how to be loved, how to be envied, how to be successful. In the most tactful manner, and without offending either the law or the moralities, it has discussed the most intimate facts of life. It has counselled with equal gravity the virtue of thrift and the virtue of spending. It has uttered the most beautiful sentiments concerning the American Home, the Glory of Motherhood, the little rosebud fingers that clutch at our heartstrings, the many things that must be done, and the many, many things that must be bought, so that the little ones may have their chance. It has spoken, too, of the mystery of death, and the conspicuous reverence to be duly bought and paid for when Father passes away.

So that today, when one hears a good American speak, it is almost like listening to the Oracle herself. One hears the same rasping, over-amplified, whisky-contralto voice, expressing the same ideas, declaring allegiance to the same values.

So that when somebody like the writer rises to say that the Oracle is a cheat and a lie: that he himself was the oracle, for it was he who cooed and cajoled and bellowed into the microphone off stage; that he did it for money and that all the other priests of the Advertising Oracle were and are similarly motivated: that the Gargoyle-oracle never under any circumstances tells the truth, the whole truth and

nothing but the truth, for the truth is not in her: that she corrupts everything she touches—art, letters, science, workmanship, love, honor, manhood....

Why, then, your American is not in the least abashed. He knows the answer. It was pretty smart, wasn't it? It certainly does pay to advertise! You know, I've always thought I'd like to write advertisements! How does one get into the Advertising Business?

3 HOW IT WORKS: The Endless Chain of Salesmanship

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The apparatus of advertising, conceived of as the total apparatus of daily and periodical publishing, the radio, and, in somewhat different quality and degree, the movie and formal education, is ramified interlocking and collusive, but *not unified*. This distinction must be kept carefully in mind. Most of the residual and fortuitous mercies and benefits that the public at large derives from the system are traceable to the fact that the apparatus of advertising is not unified; it exhibits all the typical conflicts of competitive business under capitalism plus certain strains and stresses peculiar to itself.

With the system operating at the theoretical maximum of its efficiency, the sucker, that is to say the consumer, would never get a break. In practice, of course, he gets a good many breaks: a percentage of excellent and reasonably priced products, a somewhat higher percentage of unbiased news, a still higher percentage of good entertainment both on the air and in the daily and periodical press. He even gets a modicum of genuine and salutary education—more, or less, depending on his ability to separate the wheat from the chaff.

No system is perfect and the apparatus of advertising suffers not merely from human frailty and fallibility but from the lag, leak, and friction inherent in its design.

The apparatus of advertising is designed to sell products for the advertiser, and to condition the reflexes of the individual and group mind favorably with respect to the interests of the advertiser. The desired end result of the operation of the apparatus is a maximum of profitable sales in the mass or class market at which the advertising effort is directed.

But the apparatus itself is made up of a series of selling operations as between the constituent parts of the system. Each of these parts is manned by rugged individuals, all bargaining sharply, not merely

for their respective organizations but for themselves. In attempting to trace this endless chain of selling one wonders where to begin. Perhaps the advertising agency is as good a starting point as any.

THE ADVERTISING AGENCY.

The advertising agent was originally a space broker dealing in the white space that newspapers and periodicals had for sale. He bought space wholesale from the publishers as cheaply as possible and retailed it for as much as he could get from advertisers. In the early days he frequently made a handsome profit—so handsome that the more powerful publishers attempted to stabilize the system by appointing recognized agents and granting them a commission on such space as they sold to advertisers. The amount of the commission varied. For the compensation they delivered a service consisting of selling, credit and collection. The advertiser planned and wrote his own advertisements and had them set up and plated; he did his own research, merchandising, and so forth.

But more and more the agent tended to take over these functions. He dealt with many advertisers and hence was in an excellent position to become a clearing house of experience. From a seller of white space he became a producer of advertising. In a comparatively short period of years the larger national advertisers were placing their advertising through agents whose functions were the following: planning and preparing the advertisement in consultation with the sales or advertising manager of the advertiser; attending to all details of art purchase, mechanical production, etc.; selection of publication media in which the advertising campaign would appear; checking the insertions in these media. "Research," "Merchandizing," etc., were later functions of the agency, which in the larger agencies today are handled by well-established departments.

The advertising agency is thus in the somewhat ambiguous position of being responsible to the advertiser whom he is serving but being paid by the advertising, publication or other advertising medium, his commission being based on the volume of the advertiser's expenditure. Objection to this commission method of agency compensation has been chronic for years. There are today a few relatively small agencies that operate on a service fee basis. But the commission method of compensation has persisted and is a factor in the endless chain of selling that links the whole advertising apparatus.

Before the agent is entitled to receive commissions from the various advertising media—magazines, newspapers, radio broadcasters, carcard and outdoor advertising companies—he must first be "recognized." To secure recognition he therefore presents to each of these

media groups, which maintain appropriate trade committees for this purpose, evidence that he is financially responsible and controls the placing of a certain minimum of advertising business. The first selling job is therefore that of the agent in "selling" his competence and responsibility to the organized media.

When recognition is once granted, however, the agent steps into the buyer's position in respect to the media. His duty is then to his clients, the advertisers. In return for the commission paid by the media which has been more or less stabilized at 15 per cent less a two per cent discount for cash, which is passed on to the client, the agent is expected to prepare effective advertising, properly coordinated with manufacturing and sales tactics, and place it in the media most effective for the purpose.

Walk into the lobby of any large advertising agency and you will see about a dozen bright young men with brief cases waiting to see agency account executives or media department heads. They are space salesmen. The brief cases contain lavishly printed and illustrated promotion booklets which serve as reference texts for the salesmen. Many thousands of dollars go into the compilation of the data printed in one of these booklets. In it the publication's advertising manager proves that his "book" has so many subscribers and is bought at newsstands by so many people, as attested by the impartial Audit Bureau of Circulations. These readers are concentrated in such and such areas. They represent an average annual unit buying power of so much as evidenced by the property ownership of houses, automobiles, etc., etc. Their devotion to the publication is evidenced by such and such a turnover of subscribers and such and such a curve of circulation increase. Their confidence and response to advertising placed in the publication is evidenced by the success of advertisers A, B and C, whose campaigns last year proved that advertising in the *Universal Weekly* brings inquiries for only so much per inquiry; furthermore such and such a percentage of these inquiries were materialized into sales. The *Universal Weekly* also exercises an important influence upon dealers. The broadside reproducing his campaign with which advertiser A circularized the trade, resulted in stocking so and so many new dealers. The advertising department of the *Universal Weekly* also co-operates earnestly with advertisers; in fact staff representatives of the publication delivered so and so many of these broadsides, and are even responsible for the addition to the advertiser's list of so and so many new outlets.

The editorial department of the *Universal Weekly* is also warmly co-operative. During the year 1932 the *Universal Weekly* applied the editorial pulmotor to its readers' flagging will-to-buy with measurable success. Note also the "constructive" quality of the articles

printed in the *Universal Weekly*, that it gives also abundant quality in its fiction did it not pay Pete Muldoon the highest price ever paid a fictioneer for a serial?

These promotion booklets constitute an important and greatly neglected source of economic and sociological data. Moreover, some of them are honest from start to finish. They had better be, on the whole. The agency's space buyer is hardboiled. He sees *all* the promotion booklets. Moreover, he has access to the advertising and sales records of a variety of clients. He can and does construct his own private pie charts; he can and occasionally does send his own crew of college-bred doorbell ringers into the field to find out what sort of people read what. On the basis of this calculus he says yes or no to the publisher's representative.... Well, not quite that. The publisher's representative has also seen the advertiser's advertising manager. And the publisher himself played golf last week with the Chairman of the Advertiser's Board. And the wife of the publisher's advertising manager gave a tea yesterday to the wife of the agency's vice-president who would like to get into the Colony Club. Also, the space salesman and the agency's space buyer are both enthusiastic members of the Zeta chapter of Epsilon Sigma Rho—remember that time we smuggled Prexy's prize pig into the choir loft?

There are certain other considerations. Agencies select media subject to the approval of the client. But publishers' representatives are also in a position to recommend agencies to manufacturers who are about to make their debut as advertisers or to regular advertisers who are thinking of changing agencies. Also agency space buyers sometimes change jobs. They may go to other agencies or become space salesmen themselves. And space salesmen frequently graduate into agency account executives.

What with one thing and another the agency space buyer is likely to say yes *and* no—until *all* the data of his calculus is in hand.

It is necessary to sketch this background of intrigue because it is unquestionably a factor in the traffic of advertising where the stakes are large and a decision one way or another can readily be justified on entirely ethical grounds. It is a minor factor. Curiously enough there is probably less of it in the advertising business than in most other businesses; much less, for instance than in the movie industry, or in the field of investment banking. It is indeed puzzling that the ad-man, whose stock-in-trade in his relations with the public, is pretty much bunk, should exhibit, in the internal traffic of the business, a relatively high standard of personal integrity. Yet the writer is convinced that this is so, and in later chapters will offer tentative explanations why this should be so.

The agency-publication-advertiser relation is of course only one

loop of the endless chain of selling. To complete the circuit in detail would scarcely be useful at this point. The major sequences may be summarized briefly as follows:

SERVICES OF SUPPLY.

The raw material of advertising consists of ink, paper, paint, photographic materials and talk. The techniques involved are too numerous to list, especially since new techniques are constantly emerging. In the lobby of the agency swapping cigarettes and gossip with the space salesmen are regularly to be seen the salesmen representing advertising's services of supply. They are all there in person or represented by their salesmen. The printer, the lithographer, the photographer, the carcard and outdoor advertising companies, the direct-by-mail house, which is a printing house with much of the production personnel and equipment of the agency; the advertising "novelty" house, a "public relations" expert, a couple of broadcasting companies and three specimens of radio talent. Also the de luxe young woman who serves as go-between in the testimonial racket; also half a dozen people of both sexes who are looking for jobs. They have heard that the agency has just captured the Primrose Cheese account.

All told it makes quite a mob. The reception clerk is either gray-haired and dignified, or young, pretty and amiable. She is busy continuously on the telephone, glibly translating the account executive's "Nothing doing" into "Mr. Blotz is *so* sorry. Couldn't you come tomorrow at about this time?" Eventually most of these salesmen are seen by somebody. The agency is in the selling business too and can't afford to upstage anybody. While they are waiting they improve their time by selling each other. The printer sells the direct-by-mail house executive; the engraver sells the printer; the lithographer sells the outdoor advertising representative; the radio talent sells the broadcaster. Only the testimonial racketeer remains uninterested. Deciding that there isn't a profitable date in a carload of these people, she gives it up and goes home.

INTRA-MURAL SELLING.

It must be understood that an advertising agency is a loose aggregation of rugged individuals each of whom is very busy carving out his or her professional career. This occasions more or less continuous conflict and confusion. The technique of combat is salesmanship. The movement is the circular movement of the dance, with alter-

nating tempos of dreamy waltz and frantic fox-trot. There is much cutting-in and swapping of partners. Everybody is busy selling everybody else; this entails much weaving from desk to desk; many prolonged luncheon conferences; many convivial midnight parties in Bronxville, Great Neck and Montclair. The mulberry bush around which this dance revolves is known in the trade jargon as the Billing, that is to say, the total volume of advertising on which the agency gets commissions. Everybody knows the amount of the commission and everybody knows or can guess approximately the amount of the Billing. Hence everybody is constantly doing mental calculations in which the opposing factors are "How much do I do?" and "How much am I paid?" The answer never comes out right for anybody. The copy-writer notes that he writes all the copy on three accounts the total annual billing on which averages say a million dollars. Fifteen per cent of a million dollars is $150,000. The copy-writer's salary is $5,000 and this year no bonus was paid at Christmas time. The discrepancy is obvious. The copy-writer considers that all the other processes of the agency, such as art production for which a separate added commission is charged, media selection, client contact, new business getting, forwarding, billing and other routine tasks, are just as much overhead and that there is too damned much of it; also too damned much profit going into the salaries and dividends received by the heads of the agency. All the other members of the "creative" staff entertain similar views differing only in the focus of the particular grievance; whereas the lowly clerical and mechanical workers are convinced that the agency wouldn't get paid unless the advertisements got into the newspapers and magazines. They too have their grievances. The way out for all these people is salesmanship. Hence everybody sells everybody else; the copy writer and the art director sell the account executives on the relative importance of copy *versus* art or art *versus* copy; the research director sends memoranda up to the top pointing out that it is impossible to sell shoes without an adequate economic and anatomical study of feet; the new-business-getter inquires with some acerbity, who brought this account into the house?

Observing this disorder in the ranks, the heads of the agency are puzzled and heartsick. They work hard—yes, many of them do work preposterously hard. Few of them make large fortunes out of the agency business directly. They give more or less secure employment to hundreds of people. And in return they get an amount of grouching, chiseling and intrigue that is positively appalling.

The dance around the mulberry bush grows dreamier and dreamier, or wilder and wilder. Since the generated energy is centrifugal in nature, it happens at more or less regular intervals that one of the

dancers furtively leaves the floor and runs across the street with a sprig of the mulberry bush in his teeth. Panic ensues. A chosen few of the apostate's intimates follow their leader across the street. If the mulberry sprig roots and flowers, a new agency is established, the music strikes up, and a new dance begins around the new mulberry bush.

Meanwhile, in the parent agency a period of stricter discipline is inaugurated. Disaffected staff members are scared or flattered back into line. New management devices are introduced, which have as their objective an improved agency morale. They are selling devices primarily. The staff is sold on the integrity and fairness of the directing heads; they are sold on the honor and dignity of the advertising profession; they are assured that the way to the top is always open; that copy writers, junior executives, etc., who work hard and keep their eyes off the clock will be given higher responsibilities, with commensurate increases in salary. The virtues of the ad-man are industry, alertness and loyalty, and the greatest of these is loyalty. On the anniversary of his employment with the agency each employee finds on his desk a white rose. All are urged to take a greater interest in the business. Monday morning staff conferences are instituted. A frequent subject of discussion at such conferences is the obligation, falling on every ad-man, to believe in what he is selling. How can he sell the public until he has first sold himself? This would seem a somewhat harsh requirement, but the reader is asked to believe that a percentage of ad-men fulfill it quite literally. By a process of self-hypnosis they become deliriously enthusiastic about whatever they are obliged to sell at the moment.

Their homes are museums of advertised toothpastes, soaps, antiseptics and gadgets. From themselves, their wives and their children, they exact the last full measure of devotion. They are alternately constipated with new condiments and purged with new laxatives, while their lives are forever being complicated with new gadgets.

Since accounts change hands frequently, a certain openmindedness of judgment, and a certain emotional flexibility are parts of the necessary equipment of the ad-man. He must be prepared at a moment's notice to forswear toothpaste A and announce undying devotion to toothpaste B; to rip out a whole line of bathroom equipment and install a new line; to turn in his McKinley Six for a Hoover Eight, whether he can afford it or not. His ability to do all these things without any outward evidence of insincerity is little short of miraculous.

The ad-man is indeed a kind of Candide. His world is the best of all possible worlds, as the Russians say, every change is good, even for the worse. For instance, he may work for a small agency and pas-

sionately proclaim the efficiency of the smaller service organization as against that of the half-dozen mammoths of the business. But let his agency be merged with one of these mammoths and he will make speech at the ensuing convention of the joined staffs, in which he declares with tears in his eyes that this marriage was made in heaven. If, as sometimes happens, the merger was in fact a shotgun marriage consummated more or less at the behest of the sheriff, his fervor will be heightened only by this circumstance, which he will stoutly deny to all and sundry. He is not consciously lying. He literally believes what he is saying. His is indeed the faith that passes understanding.

In puzzling over such phenomena, it has occurred to the writer that there is something feminine about the makeup of your died-in-the-wool ad-man. This is probably an acquired characteristic, a sort of industrial hazard, or occupational disease peculiar to the business. The point will become more clear when it is remembered that the advertising agency is the scene of frequent accouchements—this is indeed the business-as-usual of the agency. Your ad-man is continuously either *enceinte* with big ideas, or nursing their infant helplessness. In this delicate condition he can scarcely be held intellectually or morally responsible for his opinions and acts. Behind him is the whole pressure of the capitalist organism, which must sell or perish.

Hence the ad-man's morning sickness, his tell-tale fits of dizziness after lunch, his periods of lachrymose sentimentality, his sleepless vigils after hours, his indifference to considerations of elementary logic—the charming hysteria, in general, of his high-strung temperament. Hence his trepidation as he approaches the ultimate ordeal to be described in the next chapter—the Presentation to the Client.

4 PRIMROSE CHEESE: An Advertising Accouchement

1. Prelude

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From his window close to the top of one of the minor skyscrapers of the Grand Central district, Eddie Butts, for two months now, has been watching the spectral towers of Radio City climb into the western sky.

Eddie Butts sighs. It is after hours, and Eddie is tired. The sigh flies out the window, wreathes itself jocosely around the topmost tower, and returns as an ironic, incomprehensible whisper in Eddie's ear.

Eddie Butts shakes his head like a blind horse troubled by flies. He must get down to business. He must get out his work-sheet for the next day. Eddie turns to the dictaphone.

"Follow Schmalz on XYZ schedule stop Have Chapin phone Universal on LHJ extension stop Call up Hank Prentice stop Ask him how the hell he is stop Follow Chris on revises BDB layouts stop Call Gene at the Club [Gene is getting drunk with a client tonight strictly in line of duty, and it is standard practice to wake him up at noon of the next day] Revise plan for Primrose Cheese stop Lather Lulu a little stop [Lulu is the radio prima donna who got miffed at the last Cheery Oats broadcast] Organize Vita-pep research stop Follow Mac on Spermentine publicity stop Tell him to damn well watch his step stop Follow stop Follow stop—err Stop."

A telephone is ringing persistently at the other end of the floor. Probably nothing important—some girl friend calling one of the boys in the checking room. But you can never tell. Eddie's sense of duty is strong. He decides not to take a chance.

"Hello ... Hello ... Who? Oh, hello, Bob. This is Eddie. What's the matter? Are you in trouble? ... Oh, so I'm in trouble am I? ... Go on, you're drunk ... What's that? Sure, that's right. We're all ready to shoot. Old Himmelschlussel himself will be on here from Racine, day after tomorrow, and we give him the works, see? What? Oh, swell. Swell slant. Swell art. Thought I told you about it. Cheese and beer,

cheese and cigarettes. Cheese for dessert. The continental idea, you know. Put cheese on the map. Himmelschlussel? No, I've never met him. What? Who says so? Who's Oscar? Yes? Well, is he sure about that? What? Say, how soon can you get over here? Sure, bring Oscar. Step on it. I'll wait for you."

Eddie Butts' shoulders sag slightly as he stumbles along the half-lit corridor back to his office. This might be just a space salesman's wise crack. On the other hand, it might be a real one—another fire alarm. In which case—

Eddie went to the bookcase and took down the three elaborately bound volumes that represented the agency's submission on the Primrose Cheese account.

Vol. I. Section 1. Market analysis, plan, and consumer, copy, (the layouts are already tacked up on the wall in the conference room) Section 2. Report of the domestic science Bureau. Section 3. Merchandizing plan, trade copy, dealer helps.

Vol. II. Report of the Research department.

Volume III. Media analysis and estimates. (This is an oversize volume composed of charts and hand-lettered captions.)

For the layman, a word of explanation is perhaps required at this point. The submission as listed above involves an investment by the agency of approximately $10,000. It is a gambling investment, even though in this instance the client has signed a contract appointing the XYZ company as his advertising agent, and certain frail safeguards to the agent are embodied in this contract. It is a gambling investment because all this work has been done subject to the client's approval, and most of it be paid for only when and if the client o.k.'s the campaign and the advertising begins to appear.

In some cases such presentations are sheerly speculative, since they are made *before* the agent is appointed, as a means of selling the client and securing the account. Such speculative selling by the agency is frowned upon by the organized profession and is prohibited in the NRA agency code of fair competition. There are, of course, many ways of evading this prohibition, and since the agency field is highly competitive, such evasions will probably continue, much as in the past.

It may be asked: why this extraordinary and costly elaborateness of selling? The explanation resides chiefly in the commission method of compensation. To the client that 15% commission looks like a lot of money—*is* a lot of money when applied to a total annual expenditure by the client of, say, $12,000,000 for advertising a single brand of cigarette.

The economic logic of the situation induces two opposing points of view. From the agency's point of view, the client is the squirming, re-

calcitrant fly in the otherwise pure ointment of that 15% commission. All clients are unreasonable in theory and frequently so in fact. In justice to the agency it should be said that the majority of reputable agencies strive earnestly to earn their commissions. They work hard and even in the best of all possible worlds they make big money only by a lucky break, to be discounted by a succession of bad breaks next year. But the client either doesn't know this or doesn't care. On the principle of caveat emptor, the client has to be shown.

To put it crudely, the agent, from the advertiser's point of view, is a bunk-shooter, a hi-jacker, with whom he is obliged to deal merely because he has to pay that 15% commission anyway. In its relations to clients, the agency may be neither a bunk-shooter nor a hi-jacker, but it is guilty as charged until it proves itself innocent. When possible the client forces the agency to split the commission; or the advertiser may finance his own "house agency." There are arguments against both these devices. When they seem plausible, recourse is had to other forms of chiseling. The agency is perhaps asked to pay the salary of the client's advertising or sales manager. In any event the client insists on "service" and lots of it. He demands free research and merchandizing service, for which the agency would like to charge, and sometimes does charge an additional fee. He insists on dealing with the principals of the agency, whether his account is large or small, and irrespective of the competence of the staff workers assigned to the account. The advertising manager expects the agency's art department to design his Christmas cards and forget to bill him. The advertisers' statistician expects the agency's copy department to find a publisher for the verse of the Wunkerkind spawned by his sister-in-law. When the advertiser's advertising manager, or sales manager, or vice president of the Company, their wives, cousins, etc., come to New York, they are duly entertained in more or less Babylonian fashion, depending upon their estimated importance, and their previously ascertained habits and tastes. The bill for this entertainment is duly applied to the agency's overhead on that particular account.

But the necessitated elements of conspicuous waste are most apparent in the Presentation to the Client which our friend Eddie Butts, in the nocturnal solitude of his skyscraper eyrie, is now somewhat morosely examining.

The service embodied in that presentation must look as if it were worth at least twice what the client is asked to pay for it, as determined by 15% of the net recommended expenditure for publication, radio, car-card, poster, direct, and other miscellaneous advertising. In this respect it is like the presentation of any advertised product to the consumer. The jar of cold cream worth 8 cents must look as if it

were worth the $2.00 that is charged for it. The cheap car must look like an expensive car. The $1.98 dress must look like a million dollars. All this is what is known as "psychological" selling, and the principle operates in unbroken continuity through the whole fabric of the advertising business.

Eddie Butts conducts his examination of the agency's highly styled and psychologized product from back to front. The client, when the presentation is made to him, will proceed similarly, since the nub of the argument lies in the recommended net expenditure, a figure which appears inconspicuously at the end of Volume III.

In this case, the figure is only moderate—about $500,000—and as Eddie Butts, reading from right to left, weaves through the maze of charts, tables, graphs, copy and merchandizing these, etc., etc., he reflects ruefully that this presentation not only looks like a million dollars, but as a matter of fact, it has already cost the agency a good deal more than it should have cost.

There has been a lot of grief on this account. In the beginning it dropped into the house more or less out of the blue. Old Hanson came back from a trip through the Middle West with the contract in his pocket. Everybody was considerably surprised, since Hanson's function in the agency had come to be regarded as almost wholly ornamental. A rather handsome, gray-haired, middle-aged person, his appearance and manner suggested extreme probity, conservatism, and a certain wise and sophisticated benignity. Copy writers, art directors and other "creative" workers occasionally testified to each other that Hanson was stupid, and produced more or less convincing evidence to this effect. But the heads of the agency, being a shade more sophisticated than either Hanson or his critics, were aware that certain varieties of handsomely packaged stupidity are not without their uses in the advertising business. So that Hanson's position was secure.

But he certainly had pulled a boner on this account. Eddie recalled the preliminary conference called to consider the problem of Primrose Cheese and to devise appropriate solutions. The stenographer's record listed as among those present Hanson, Butts, (Eddie was the group director having supervisory responsibility for the account) McNear, the art director and Appleton, his young assistant; Blashfield, the brilliant copy-art-plan man, the outstanding advertising genius of the Kidd, Kirby & Dougherty Agency; Shean, the copy man, whose strictly disinterested facility made him a useful understudy for Blashfield and others; Mrs. Betts, the head of the Domestic Science Bureau, a rather grandiose, gray-haired personality, full of sex antagonism and quite without a sense of humor; Harmsworth and Billings, the last-named being merely a couple of obscure copy hacks.

The day previous to the conference, all these people had received, along with notice of their mobilization, a sample of Primrose Cheese, with strict injunction to eat it that evening. It was a large sample, and Eddie recalled that some of the conferees looked a little the worse for wear that morning.

In opening the meeting, Eddie made the usual preliminary pep talk, duly deposited the problem on the long mahogany table, and called for solutions.

Mr. Hanson: Since I am more or less responsible for bringing this account into the house, perhaps I should tell you some of the circumstances. Mr. Outerbridge, the advertising manager of the Primrose Cheese Company, is a college classmate of mine, and it is through him that the account was secured. The Primrose Cheese Company is one of the four largest manufacturers of cheese in America. Yet hitherto it has never advertised its products, except in the grocery trade press. The reputation of Primrose Cheese with the trade is unexcelled. It is sold from Coast to Coast and from Maine to Florida. Recently sales have been declining. The competition of advertised packaged brands has been steadily eating into their business. They've got to advertise. Mr. Outerbridge is convinced of this. His principal, Mr.—Mr. Himmelschlussel, President of the Primrose Cheese Company, whom I did not have the privilege of meeting, is I understand still reluctant. But he realizes that something has to be done, and he has consented to the appointment of this agency subject to his approval of our recommendations. We've got a tough selling job on all fronts, gentlemen. We've got the whole job to do: packaging, merchandizing, branding, pricing, merchandizing the whole works. It's an old conservative firm and their credit is A1. Mrs. Betts is experimenting with Primrose Cheese and the Research department has already started its work. What we want today, I take it, is some first class advertising ideas. I have an idea myself, but I shan't spring it until I've heard from some of the rest of you.

Mr. Shean: What kind of cheese is it?

Mr. Hanson: Just good, one hundred per cent American cheese. You ought to know. You ate some of it, didn't you?

Mr. Shean: Yeah, I did. Will you excuse me a moment. I'll be right back.

(Silence)

Mr. Butts: Charley, why don't you start the ball rolling yourself. You said you had an idea.

Mr. Hanson: Very well. I have here, gentlemen, an option signed by the originator of Mickey and Minnie Mouse. By the terms of this option, it is understood that in consideration of a payment of one thousand dollars, which I took the liberty of making on my own re-

sponsibility, both Mickey and Minnie Mouse will positively refrain from writing testimonials for any other cheese for the next three months. My recommendation, gentlemen, is that our campaign be based on the testimonials of Mickey and Minnie Mouse. When anybody says cheese, what's the first thing you think of? Mice. Who's the world's most famous mouse? Mickey Mouse. Gentlemen, it's never been done before, and it's a natural. What do you think?

(Silence)

Mrs. Betts: What do we need Mickey for? It's Minnie that runs the kitchen, isn't it? Excuse me for a moment, please. I'll be right back.

(Silence)

Mr. Billings: (Who has recently escaped from the copy desk of a tabloid) Ha!

Mr. Butts: Billings, will you stop that obscene cackle?

The stenographer's record became defective at this point. Eddie's memory supplied the details. Harmsworth, Princeton, 1928, who had recently graduated from the apprentice course of the agency, had also elected that moment to be brought to bed with a big idea of some sort. Harmsworth was typical of the class of Unhappy Rich Boys for whom advertising agencies have been required increasingly to serve as dumping grounds. He was the nephew of the chairman of the board of Planetary Founders Corporation. It was rumored that on attaining his majority, he had inherited three million dollars from his mother. He didn't have to work. He played polo rather well, but not well enough to rate any great distinction in his set. And being a serious minded youth with no vices and no talents, it was necessary for him to have some occupation, some rôle in life, to which he could refer in his conversations with Junior League debutantes. Advertising, a romantic, more or less literary profession, filled the bill admirably.

Harmsworth got in at nine o'clock every morning and frequently stayed until six. With the other apprentices, he did his bit on research, which meant days of hot and heavy footwork in the wilds of Queens and the Oranges, ringing doorbells, and asking impertinent questions of stolidly uncooperative housewives.

This was Harmsworth's first agency conference and his first Big Idea. Its delivery was complicated by the fact that in moments of great excitement, Harmsworth stuttered painfully.

Mr. Harmsworth: C-c-can't we t-t-tie this c-campaign up to the n-n-to the n-n-news? How about hooking it up with relativity? There's so much f-f- so much food value in ch-ch-cheese. Relatively, you know. More f-f food value than meat. More than eggs. Maybe we could g-g-g-g-maybe we could get Einstein!

Mr. Billings (who is frantically waving two fingers): Excuse me, please.

Mr. Butts: All right, Billings.

Mr. Harmsworth: Of course, it may be a b-b- a bum hunch. I just thought—

(Silence)

By this time the conference was pretty well mired. Something had to be done, and as usual, Blashfield did it. Blashfield's salary was thirty thousand dollars a year, plus his participation as a stockholder in the agency's profits. Blashfield didn't think that was enough. Every day, in every possible way, he proved it wasn't enough. Cruelly, sadistically, he exposed the incompetence, the muddleheadedness of his associates. He had a string of copy writers and layout men working under him, all of whom hated him cordially. Their work was rarely used, except as a foil to exhibit the superior brilliance of the agency's star copy-art-plan performer. At the last moment, in a day or two days, he would knock out the copy, rough layouts, plan and marketing strategy for a whole campaign. Artists, printers, engravers, the mechanical production staff of the agency, would be called upon to work nights and Sundays to complete the job. Blashfield's overtime bills were notorious.

Then, with the plan memorandum snatched from the stenographer and flanked by two or three subordinates carrying unwieldy art and other exhibits, he would lope out of his office, pile into a taxi, and catch the train for Baltimore just as it was moving out of the station. The next morning he would lope back into the office, like a half-back completing an end run, and deposit the okayed plan, copy, layout and appropriation on Eddie Butts' desk.

Blashfield had done it again: *his* plan, *his* copy, *his* layouts, *his* sale. Alone in Baltimore he had dazzled the client with the coruscations of his wit, the machine gun rattle of his logic, the facile improvisations of genius answering every objection with pungent phrase or graphic line. O.K. Now Eddie, it's up to you to follow it.

From sad experience, Eddie had learned what to do on such occasions. The first thing to do was to take the train to Baltimore himself and pick up the pieces. Eddie knew what he would find. He would find a group of business men experiencing a perfectly dreadful morning after hangover, and indulging in the usual orgy of remorse and mutual recrimination.

Blashfield had been, shone and conquered. Blashfield was a brilliant fellow—an advertising genius. Sure, and they hoped to God they never saw him again. Now about this damned contract they had signed....

Eddie was no genius. As an advertising man he was only mediocre. But as a fixer he was an expert. Even so, he would be lucky if, after two weeks of hard work, he emerged with a modified appropriation

and a revised campaign, in which some remnants of Blashfield's initial performance might or might not be discernible. The campaign as carried out might be better or worse than Blashfield's original. Usually it was worse, for Blashfield's competence was genuine enough. But for better or worse it was duly billed and commissioned, which was the sort of thing the agency's treasurer was forever grousing about. So that Eddie Butts' salary was thirty-five thousand dollars a year, a fact that forever festered like a thorn in the Achilles' heel of the agency genius.

Because of the repetition of such experience, the heads of the agency had increasingly restricted Blashfield's pyrotechnics to the home grounds, where he could be carefully watched and protected against himself. No let-up of the Blashfield drive had resulted, but his hobbled ego required more and more bloody human sacrifices. His performance at the Primrose Cheese conference had been sanguinary in the extreme.

Beginning suavely, he had made some incisive remarks about the standards of agency practice, the nature and purpose of agency conferences. Abruptly he swung into a disquisition on the natural history and personal habits of mice; mice that live in old houses but are never housebroken; old mice, young mice; the love life of the mouse; mother mice and their pink and squirming progeny; mice and elephants, and the tactlessness of both as dinner guests; mice that creep out from under sinks and leer up at horrified housewives; (at this point Mrs. Betts lifted her skirts and barely suppressed a shriek.) Mice and cheese. The kind of cheese mice eat, and the obscene sounds they make while eating; the dumbness of mice and the dumbness of men.

By this time old Hanson was purple with rage. But before he could interrupt Blashfield, whom the stenographer had given up trying to follow, was well launched upon a burlesque of relativity, which rapidly took form as a convention of mouse domestic science experts, presided over by Minnie Mouse, and discussing the relative dietetic merits of meat, cheese, caviar, etc. Even Harmsworth laughed, partly to cover his confusion.

Then abruptly the wizard's mood changed. Come on fellows. Let's be serious. What's the best way to sell cheese? Primrose Cheese?

With rapid logic he outlined the campaign that could, should and must be conducted. The consumption of cheese in America was negligible compared to its consumption in France, England, Germany, Switzerland—throughout the world. The dietetic habits of America must be transformed. An institutional campaign, then? No, a selling campaign, hard-boiled selling copy that would boost the sales of Primrose Cheese from week to week and from month to

month. But the copy would be educational too. It would show the things that Americans do eat and drink, and dovetail cheese into the menu; Primrose Cheese for the cocktail party. Cheese for dessert the continental idea. That's what all the best people are doing and the rest of America must be shamed into imitating the Best People. Style. Style in the copy. Style in the art. Jean Mazarin for the art—he'll be in New York in two weeks and he'll love it.

Now, as to the trademark that some of you have been worrying about. What is it? A primrose, crossed with a key. It looks a little like a swastika, and a little like a Jewish candlestick. But look at it now.

Blashfield executed a few swift strokes on his sketching pad.

There's your solution. It's still a little like a swastika, and all the patriotic Germans will notice it. It's also a little like a Jewish candlestick, and all the Jews will notice that. But a second look will convince anybody that it's neither one nor the other—and that's just fine for everybody.

As usual, Blashfield had swept all before him. The conference broke up after an assignment of preliminary tasks, all to be executed under his supervision. The other Big Ideas, of course, were never removed from the appropriate receptacle into which Blashfield, with surgical dispatch, had consigned them.

Harmsworth had played polo all the next week, and when he returned was assigned to a bank account. Hanson had groused for a while. His first idea in twenty years. And on investigation it proved not to be his idea after all. It was his secretary's idea, and for several weeks thereafter the gossip of the women's room was enlivened by the lady's complaints about how hard it was for a girl to get ahead in a big agency.

The campaign had consumed the time of eight or ten people for three months. In the end, Blashfield had scrapped their efforts and done the whole job himself in a last minute orgy of nerve-racking and expensive nightwork by all and sundry.

Eddie Butts winced as he read a memorandum from the Treasurer, protesting against so huge a bill for preliminary work on what was after all, not a major account.

Well, there it was. And now if Bob Niemyer's steer was right, there would be hell to pay tomorrow.

Eddie sighed, pushed his dictaphone into the corner, and helped himself to a shot of the house liquor.

2. THE FIRE ALARM

It was close to midnight, and Eddie Butts was in the middle of his third pipe before Bob Niemyer, the space salesman, and his German

friend, stumbled through the darkened outer office and banged on his door.

They were not drunk; merely very formal and very, very earnest.

"Eddie, meet my friend Oscar Schleiermacher... Thanks, I guess I can stand another... Eddie, I'm afraid this is serious. Oscar knows what he's talking about, and he tells me that the big shot of the Primrose Cheese Company, Hakenschmidt—

"Himmelschlussel, August B. Himmelschussel," prompted Oscar.

"All right, Himmelschlussel. Well, as I was saying, I was telling Oscar about the swell presentation you'd worked up for Primrose Cheese—naturally he wants a piece of it for his friends on the Vortschrift—and when I got to the big idea, cheese and beer, cheese and cigarettes, cheese for the cocktail party, why I'm telling you Oscar almost passed out. Didn't you, Oscar?"

Oscar made an eloquent gesture, hitched his chair forward, and drained a large glass of Scotch at a swallow.

"You see, Eddie, this bird Himmelschlussel runs his own business. And how! He's got the o.k. on everything, see? What he says goes. And what he's going to say when he sees this campaign of yours won't even be funny."

Mr. Schleiermacher nodded solemnly.

"Er ist ein Herrenhuter [*sic*]. Sein Frau auch."

"There," said Bob. "What did I tell you? He's a Herrenhuter. What's a Herrenhuter? That's what you're going to find out when old Himmelschlussel gets an eyeful of that French night club art moderne Blashfield has cooked up for him. A Herrenhuter is a Fundamentalist, only worse. Let's be serious, Eddie. This Himmelschlussel is religious as all hell. He's a prohibitionist. Some of his coin goes to the Anti-Saloon League. What's more, Mrs. Himmelschlussel is one of the big shots in the Anti-Cigarette League. Nobody that works for Primrose Cheese can drink, smoke or forget to say his prayers. Isn't that right, Oscar?"

"Ach, ja," said Oscar. "Er ist ein Herrenhuter. Sein Frau auch."

"His wife too," said Mr. Niemyer. "So when Oscar gives me the lowdown, I says to him: 'Eddie Butts has got to know about this. Eddie Butts is a friend of mine. Eddie and I are just like this'. Y' get me, Eddie? What makes it worse, this Himmelschlussel has a bad case of shell shock on advertising anyway. Ain't that right, Oscar?

"Schrecklich," confirmed Oscar with an expansive gesture.

"The story goes like this," continued Mr. Niemyer. "The local team of the League wins the pennant, see? And Himmelschlussel, he's a fan. Sure, baseball, that's his only vice. It seems he has a nephew playing shortstop on the team. That was eight years ago. Well, Old Himmelschlussel, he's the proud uncle, and he's got to do some-

thing about it, see? So what does he do? A big dinner for the team, see? Hell with expense. Sauerbraten, Kartofelkloss, leberknudel, hasenpfeffer [*sic*], the whole works. No beer, no hard liquor. No cigarettes. Cheese. Boy, was there cheese! Big camembert in the middle of the table. Four feet high, weighs eighty pounds. Mottoes. Clock works. Imitation dugout. Birdie pops out of dugout. Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo—counts the score, see? Fine. Swell. Cost a lot of money. Only thing is, you know camembert. Eighty pounds of camembert. Ripe. Not so good. And those bush leaguers thirsty as camels, and no beer. So they get tough. Bean the birdie with pop bottles. Raise hell, see? That's bad enough, but next day the papers get funny. Himmelschlussel don't advertise, see? They keep it up for days. Himmelschlussel sore. Feelings hurt. You tell him, Oscar. "Were his feelings hurt?

"Vom herz, Herr Butts. Vom herz. Ach, schrecklich." Oscar held his head and rocked in remembered sympathy.

"So Himmelschlussel goes Herrenhuter again, worse than ever. Ten thousand simoleons that year to the Anti-Saloon League. And no more advertising stunts. That contract of yours—how his sales manager got that out of the old man I just can't imagine, unless they're in trouble... What's that, Eddie. Don't want to rub it in. Just trying to do you a favor, see? You and me are pals. As I says to Oscar, I says—what d'you say, Eddie?"

"I said, Jesus H. Christ!"

Eddie Butts wasn't listening. The fire alarm had rung. He was busy hunting numbers in the office telephone directory. Blashfield first. Damn Blashfield. Damn Hanson. Why hadn't they found out about this big shot?

"Thanks, Bob," said Eddie, as he led his visitors to the elevator. "I'll let you know what happens. We got a day and a half. Maybe we can pull out. Good-night. Good-night, Mr. Schleiermacher, and thanks for the steer."

3. RESCUE PARTY

After hours. The genius of advertising burns brightest after hours. When the noise of traffic is stilled, when the stream of office time-servers has flowed north into the Bronx, east and west under and over the rivers to be blotted up by the vast and formless spaces of Long Island and Jersey, light still lingers in the sky-scrapers of the mid-town district.

Light and vision. Not money alone could buy the devotion of these weary-eyed night workers. It is something else, something strange, incredible, miraculous—perhaps a little mad. Is it for beauty

that they burn themselves? For truth? For some great cause? No, it is none of these. It is like a perverse and blinding discharge of human electricity, like athletes battling on the gridiron, or soldiers going over the top.

In the Sargasso pool of quiet, high above the night-stricken city, what toils, what genuine heart-breaks, what farcical triumphs are consummated!

From the moment that Eddie Butts turned in the fire alarm, the wheels of the Kidd, Kirby & Dougherty agency never stopped turning. Blashfield swooped in from Westchester, worked all night, and when his secretary came in the next morning, turned over a basketful of new copy for typing. Eddie Butts' dictaphone whirred continuously. Tense voices barked into telephones. Printers, appalled by impossible demands, wailed in anguish, achieved the impossible, and viciously pyramided the overtime charges. Layout men never left their drawing boards. Typists worked in relays. What had taken three months to do must be done again, but this time in thirty-six hours.

It was done. Miraculously, it was done. Blashfield again. Blashfield the magnificent. Never was the man so dangerous as when, with his back against the wall, he was challenged by the impossible. A new Big Idea had been conceived and was well on the way to birth before he reached the office. Cheese and pie. New England stuff. Native American. Simple, homey. The New England grandma. The Southern mammy. To hell with Mazarin. Tell him, sorry, pay his bill or part of it, and charge it up to profit and loss. Forsythe is our man. Forsythe, the best buck-eye artist in America. He's busy? What of it? I said, get him.

Forsythe performed. Blashfield performed. Clerks, messengers, typists—everybody performed.

By noon of the scheduled day for the presentation the miracle was accomplished. Or almost. Typewriters still rattled and savage-lipped production clerks still yapped into the telephone. One o'clock. No lunch for anybody. Two o'clock, and the final pages of the revised plan were bound into the portfolio. Three o'clock, and Himmelschlussel was expected. Three-fifteen, and no Himmelschlussel. Had something gone wrong?

Only Colonel Kidd himself—Calvin Kidd, author, editor and advertising man—only Colonel Kidd remained calm. Back of his desk a framed motto proclaimed the solid premise on which his professional imperturbability was based: "There is somebody wiser than anybody. That somebody is everybody." It doesn't make sense, does it? Sure, that's just the point. Calvin Kidd was a mystic. He remained calm. But his associates, some of whom may have felt that their jobs were at stake, were less philosophic. At the telephone switchboard, the bat-

tery of skilled operators grew querulous striving to release the tide of out-going calls. Himmelschlussel. Himmelschlussel! Where in hell is Himmelschlussel?

4. THE DELIVERY

It wasn't Dorothy's fault. Afterwards, since it didn't matter—anyway nothing mattered—everybody acknowledged that you couldn't fairly pin it on Dorothy.

Dorothy was the reception clerk, stationed in the lobby of the offices of Kidd, Kirby & Dougherty, with a pad of forms before her and a telephone receiver clasped over her lovely blonde hair. Dorothy knew her rôle, which was to make quick and accurate judgments and translate them into action.

So that when the little old man with the umbrella stepped out of the elevator, she knew instantly what to do. The Primrose Cheese account was in a jam. A messenger was expected from the printer, bringing revised proofs. She had been warned to rush him through without delay to Mac in the mechanical production department. Dorothy spotted him instantly and beckoned him to the desk. The little old man advanced somewhat diffidently.

"I am Mr. Himmelschlussel. I—

"From Hazenfuss, yes. You're just in time. Go right through the side door and ask for Mac."

Hazenfuss Brothers was the printing shop which at the stern behest of Blashfield had performed the current typographical miracle.

The little old man hesitated, but Dorothy, gracious but imperative, motioned him to the side door.

He vanished into a welter of comptometers, typewriters and proof presses. Dorothy had just an instant to reflect that she hadn't seen this particular messenger before. Also, wasn't it Hazenfuss that dolled up their messengers in naval uniforms, so that they all looked like musical comedy Commodores? This must be a new one. Come to think of it, he did wear a kind of uniform, too—certainly was a funny old geezer. Maybe Hazenfuss had thought up a new advertising dodge.

Meanwhile, Mr. Himmelschlussel was still trying to find Mac. Successively, he was shunted to the shipping room, to the store room clerk, to the purchasing clerk. Early in the ordeal, Mr. Himmelschlussel began to lose things. First he lost his umbrella. Then he lost his hat. Coincidentally with this second disaster, he completely lost his English.

Alarmed by the clamor of what he took to be a minor riot in the mechanical production department, Pfeiffer, the office manager,

emerged from his cubicle to see an elderly German-American gesticulating wildly in the middle of a circle of bewildered clerks. At intervals, his gray pompadour bristling, he would make a determined break for one of the innumerable doors, only to be hauled back by an expostulating clerk.

Fortunately, Pfeiffer spoke German, for by this time Mr. Himmelschlussel could speak nothing else....

When the perspiring Pfeiffer finally persuaded the long awaited client to permit himself to be led into the presence of Colonel Kidd himself, a strange quiet had descended upon the agency. Mr. Himmelschlussel himself was quiet. He would speak neither English nor German. In response to Colonel Kidd's urbanities he merely grunted. Blashfield's irresistible wisecracks died unborn upon the desolate air.

Silently, the procession wended to the conference room. In silence, Mr. Himmelschlussel listened to the reading of the plan. Upon the lavish exhibit of layouts, charts, proofs, etc., he turned a cold Prussian eye. Silence.

At last, Mr. Himmelschlussel spoke.

"Gentlemen, I haf joost come from de bank. Business is bad. We haf an offer from de Universal Foods Corporation to buy Primrose Cheese. It is a good offer. It is a very good offer. We have accepted that offer.

"Dese"—he gestured indifferently at the decorated walls of the conference room—"dese iss very pooty pictures. De Universal Foods people, maybe dey like to look at dem. I am sorry. I got to go now. My wife and I, we have friends in Brooklyn. Good day, gentlemen."

In the far corner of the lobby an elderly woman was waiting. She had been waiting a long time. Dorothy thought she was perhaps a cleaning woman, or the mother of one of the shipping room boys. She said nothing and politely resisted Dorothy's gracious solicitudes. She had the corner to herself now, and Dorothy noticed that the space salesmen had put out their cigarettes.

Eventually Mr. Himmelschlussel emerged, escorted by Colonel Kidd. She put her hand under his arm. They got into the elevator. They went to Brooklyn...

Again that evening Eddie Butts worked late. He was tired, very tired. He had missed lunch entirely and it was after seven. Eddie was hungry. There, on the corner of the desk, was a left-over sample. Cheese. Primrose Cheese.

Holding the package at arm's length, Eddie went to the open window. It took a long time falling. You couldn't hear it strike, but you could just barely see the yellow splotch it made on the pavement.

Eddie lingered at the window. Thirty-two stories. Every now and then an advertising man jumps out of one of those high windows in

the Grand Central district. Usually, it is the follow-up man, the old reliable. Usually, it is Eddie Butts.

5 AS ADVERTISED: The Product of Advertising

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THE foregoing fictionized account of what happens in a large advertising agency will doubtless strike the lay reader as exaggerated. It will be denounced, more or less sincerely, by advertising men who have lived and toiled so long on the other side of the Advertising Looking Glass that the barbarous farce-as-usual of advertising practice has become for them the only reality, the only "sanity" with which their minds are equipped to deal.

The account is nevertheless true in every essential respect. The fiction is no stranger than many of the sober facts set forth elsewhere in this volume.

We have now to consider what sort of product this advertising mill turns out. Again, the writer's inclusions may seem at first thought too sweeping.

The advertisement itself is the least significant part of this product. The advertisement is an instrument, a tool, and the ad-man is a toolmaker. In using these tools the newspapers, magazines and radio broadcasters become something other than what they are commonly supposed to be; that is one result. By operating as they must operate, not as they are supposed to operate, these major instruments of social communication in turn manufacture products, and these products are the true end products of the advertising industry.

The most significant product, or result, is the effective dissolution of practically all local or regional, autonomous or semi-autonomous cultures based economically on functional processes of production and exchange and culturally on the ethical, moral and aesthetic content of such processes. The advertising-manufactured substitute for these organic cultures is a national, standardized, more or less automatic mechanism, galvanized chiefly by pecuniary motivations and applying emulative pressures to all classes of the population.

In England, where the organic culture was older, richer and more resistant, publicists and educators are more keenly aware of the significance and potency of advertising, although there the business is still relatively embryonic, lacking either the scale or the intensity of

the American phenomenon. *Culture and Environment*, by F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, best exhibits the 1933 English awareness of what is happening, and this excellent book, representing the collaboration of a literary critic and a schoolmaster will be referred to again in later chapters.[1] Among English creative writers, D. H. Lawrence seems to have grasped intuitively almost from the beginning, the nature and causes of the disintegrative process.

[1] [F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933).]

In America, the most impressive testimony, both conscious and unconscious, to the progressive disintegration of the organic American culture is contained in the work of Sherwood Anderson. Anderson grew up in a small Middle Western town during the period when the organic relation between agriculture and small town craft-industry was being shattered by the emergent forces of mass production, mass distribution, and by the pseudoculture which the rapidly expanding apparatus of advertising manufacture as a mechanical substitute for what it destroyed. First as a manufacturer and later as an advertising man, Anderson participated unwillingly in this dual process of destruction and substitution.

This experience, in the view of the writer, provides the essential clue to an understanding of Anderson's verse, short stories and novels. Much of the brilliant early work was written on the marginal time of an advertising copy writer employed by a large Chicago agency. It has a single theme: the passionate rejection of the ad-man's pseudoculture and the nostalgic search for the organic culture that was already dead or dying. Anderson saw that the disintegration and sterilization of the culture is reflected in the fragmentation and neutering of the individual. In novel after novel, story after story, we see him separating the quick from the dead and driving first backward, then forward, into some terrain more habitable for the human spirit.

The reader will perhaps have been struck by the inhuman, hysterical, phantasmagoric quality of advertising agency practice as described in the preceding chapter. This is inevitable. The prime mover of the advertising mill, the drive for profits, has no concern whatever for human life. Without organic life itself, the advertising mill is fueled by the organic cultural life which it disintegrates and consumes, but does not restore or replace. On cultural as well as on economic grounds it may be said that this organic social heritage is not inexhaustible. Hence the advertising mill not only disintegrates and destroys all the humanity that comes within the sphere of its influence but is ultimately, like the modern capitalist economy of which it is a part, self-destructive.

One sees this advertising mill as a coldly whirring turbine whose hum is so loud, so continuous, so omnipresent that we no longer hear it. Its force is centrifugal: all warm human life is expelled into

the peripheral darkness where it continues to revolve although the machine can no longer use this nebula of burned-out dead and dying matter.

At the heart of the machine we see dim figures moving: the sort of people whom the writer has tried to make real and credible in the preceding chapter. They rush here and there, fiddling with levers, filling the grease cups.... They are dead men. Against the blue light their hands are lifted in queer, stylized gestures. They speak, but what they say is without human meaning. It is the machine speaking through them and the sound comes to us like the sound of a phonograph playing a cracked record, hugely and hoarsely amplified. The lips of the robots move and we hear: ... "Advertising is the new world force lustily breeding progress. It is the clarion note of business principle. It is the bugle call to prosperity. But great force as it is, advertising must seek all aid from literature and art in order that it may assume that dignity which is its rightful heritage. Advertising is ... oom-pah! oom-pah! Under the New Deal good advertising will become more essential than ever. It will be in a position to help the business executive to avoid those wasteful and excessive practices in selling which so often add needless costs to needed products. Good advertising is opposed to senseless price cutting and to unfair competition. Constructive sell ... oom-pah! oom-pah! No sales policy is permanently beneficial that has its roots in deception ... oom-pah! oompah! It costs a lot of money when a community is to be attacked ... oom-pah! oom-pah! Remember that while a shot-gun makes a lot more noise than a rifle it just messes things up. Aim the rifle well and you get a nice clean hole ... oom-pah! oom-pah! The most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem ... oom-pah! oom-pah! Every occupation has its special satisfactions. The architect and the builder see the product of their planning take shape in steel and stone. The surgeon snatches life from the jaws of death. The teacher and the minister give conviction and power to the things that are unseen. Our calling is not less significant. We build of imperishable materials, we who work with words.... All things perish, but the word remains ... oom-pah! oompah! oom-pah! oom-pah! oom-pah! ..."

They are dead men. Their bones are bakelite. Their blood is water, their flesh is pallid—yes, prick them and they do not bleed. Their eyes are veiled and sad or staring and a little mad. From them comes an acrid odor—they do not notice it, it may be only the ozone discharge of the machine itself. When you ask them to tell you what they are doing, they do not know, or at least they cannot tell you. They are voiceless, indeed, self-less only the machine speaks through them.... Dead men tell no tales.

Most are like that. But here and there among those dim wraiths is one who still keeps some semblance of life. An artist, or perhaps one who would have been a scholar or a scientist but that he has suffered the spleen of an ill fate. Art and science are strong passions. Most of these exceptional ones become in time like the others. But they are the stronger spirits and now and then one of them escapes. They do not like to talk of what they have seen and done there at the heart of the machine. They like to pretend that it never happened; that it was a kind of nightmare, as indeed it was. But when tales are told it is they who tell them. From time to time Sherwood Anderson has told such tales. Recently he has begun to tell more of them. They are quite horrible tales. Artists find it difficult to use this material. The advertising business is harder to write about than the war. It would perhaps bring some of the dead back to life if more of such tales were told.

But the machine tenders are not the only dead. Great waves of force shudder outward from the machine, and more and more this cold electric force substitutes for the life-force of the people whom the waves surround and penetrate. They too seem to lose the color and movement of natural human life. They twitch with little fears and itch with little greeds. They become nervous, jittery, mechanical. They can no longer weep with spontaneous tears or rock with spontaneous laughter. They too become in a sense self-less so that one cannot expect them to be true to themselves or true to others. The waves which increasingly substitute for their flagging organic will-to-live—the waves have indeed not heard of this truth. For the prime mover from which the waves come is beyond good and evil, truth and untruth, and the waves are everywhere. They speak, these creatures, their lips move, but again it is the machine speaking through them:

... "He invented the foods shot from guns at the skin you love to touch but your best friends won't tell you for three out of five are facing calendar fear another day of suspense learn to be charming the smart point of view without cost grandpa said I'll let you know my health to Quaker Oats I owe upon my face came long ago the smile that won't come off for skin eruptions need not worry you guard your dresses spare your friends perspiration may cost you both who'd believe they called me skinny 4 months ago I should think she'd notice it herself in closeups you can trust Blick's Velvasheen a better mouthwash at a big saving isn't it wonderful how Mary Ellen won the $ 5,000 beauty contest and Mrs. Jones wins her husband back at the foot of my baby's crib I made a solemn promise the girl of his dreams but she almost lost him in a month she didn't have a trace of constipation reports Dr. David of Paris what color nails

at Newport all shades I'll lose my job if this keeps up can't make a sale can't even get people to see me I'd better ask the sales manager what's holding me back couldn't take on that man you just sent me seemed competent but careless about B. O. what a fool she is takes pains washing a sweater gives no care to her teeth and gums and she has pink toothbrush Mae West and the big hat she wore in "She Done Him Wrong" who will be the first to wear it in Chicago if Mona Lisa could have used these 4 Rosaleen eye beauty aids let's take a look at the record toasting frees Lucky Strike cigarettes from throat irritation William T. Tilden II steady smokers turn to Camels William T. Tilden II did you hear the French nation decorates Campbell's soup chef for sending the finest cooking throughout the civilized world Yeow! let's run away to sea travel has its niceties...."

This sub-human or un-human jabberwocky saturates the terrestrial atmosphere. It pours out of hundreds of thousands of loud speakers from eight o'clock in the morning until midnight. Doubtless the biologists will shortly inform us that this transformation of the auditory environment has caused definite degeneration and malformation of the average American ear. Certainly the eyes must have been affected, for the same jabberwocky in print glares from the pages of billions of copies of magazines and newspapers and other billions of posters, carcards and mail communications. Is it any wonder that the American population tends increasingly to speak, think, feel in terms of this jabberwocky? That the stimuli of art, science, religion are progressively expelled to the periphery of American life to become marginal values, cultivated by marginal people on marginal time? That these marginal people are prevented from exercising their proper and necessary social functions except by permission of the jabberwock? That many of them indeed compromise fatally with the creature and translate what they have to say into its obscene jabberwocky?

Let us not forget that the jabberwock feeds on what it destroys and that it restores and replaces nothing. It is fueled by the organic will-to-live of the population, which it calls "buying power." This buying power is progressively exhausted—advertising as Veblen pointed out, is a form of sabotage on production—just as our inorganic resources of coal, oil and minerals are progressively exhausted. After four depression years the jabberwock is hungry. It has devoured large sections of the lower and lower middle classes and expelled their dry bones, burned clean of their buying power, into the outer darkness. There the electric breath of the jabberwock still plays on them, but they are ash and slag. They cannot burn, they cannot feed the machine. Fifteen million of them are dependent upon relief. Another thirty million are so lean that they can fuel the jabberwock scarcely at all. You see them dumped like mail sacks on park benches. You

see them fluttering like autumn leaves, magnetized into thin wavering lines job lines, bread lines. They sit in chilly rooms listening as before to the voice of the jabberwock, unwilling to believe that they have been consumed, discarded. The waves still pulsate and the ash of the great radio audience still glows a little—there is so little other food. What is the jabberwock saying now? ... "I will share.... Don't sell America short.... Forward, America...."

6 THE MAGAZINES

I. The Command to Buy

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"FORWARD America"; "I have shared"; "We do our part."

The depression slogans of both the Hoover and the Roosevelt administrations seem to imply a national unity, a culture. The people are to be "sold" on this culture as a part of the task of rehabilitating it. It is therefore proper to examine the content of this culture, slightly down at the heels, as it is, in this fifth year of the depression.

For this purpose the evidence provided by the editorial, article, fictional and advertising contents of the contemporary mass and class magazines is extraordinarily revealing. We have seen that the press, including the magazine press, is used as an instrument of rule. The rulers are the manufacturers, advertisers, distributors, financiers, etc., who use not merely the magazine advertisements but the total apparatus of this periodical press to enforce "the command to buy." This rule is exercised both by direct injunction to buy and by the promotion and stimulus of emulative and snob motivations, which in our society must be largely satisfied through the purchase and display of things.

With the motivations and technique of this rule clearly in mind, we should expect to find a treatment of sex, economics, morals, philosophy, science, etc.—designed to nourish and stimulate the buying motif. We find all of this and more. We find what amounts to a conspiracy of silence regarding all those aspects of the individual and social life that do not contribute to the objective of the advertiser, which is practically identical with that of the magazine itself. That objective is to promote sales and to extend, complicate and consolidate sheer emulative materialism as a way of life. We venture to say that no one who has not attentively examined these magazines inch by inch can conceive the astounding, sterile vacuity of these enormously expensive and enormously read "culture-bearers."

The question that immediately arises is: do these magazines accurately reflect the culture or are they merely trying to inflict a pseu-

doculture on their readers? In a curious way both things are true. It would seem that both the culture as lived and the culture as reflected by the magazines are pseudocultures. Neither in life nor even in the make-believe of the magazine fictioneer does this pseudoculture satisfy anybody. It does not even satisfy the wealthy, who can afford to live according to the snob, acquisitive, emulative pattern. The reductio ad absurdum of the theory of a self-sufficient acquisitive culture is found in *Arts & Decoration* which bullies and cajoles the rich into the discharge of their function as the ideal human representatives of a culture which has no content or meaning outside of acquisition and display. In arguing for this way of life a writer in *Arts & Decoration* is reduced to the following remarkable bit of philosophic yea-saying: "Chromium is more expensive than no chromium."

These magazines are designed and edited with a view to making the readers content with this acquisitive culture, but even a commercial fictioneer has to put up a human "front." He has to use models. He has to exhibit, however superficially and shabbily the kind of people who work in American offices and factories and on farms, and who walk the streets of American cities and towns. In so doing he inadvertently and inevitably gives the whole show away. He proves that these robots galvanized by pure emulation are fragile puppets of glass. Mostly the characters are faked. When they are at all convincing they are definitely dissatisfied and unhappy.

This pseudoculture which is both reflected and promoted by the magazines is evidently in a process of conflict and change. In fact it may be said that there are two cultures: the older, more organic American culture, and the new, hard, arid culture of acquisitive emulation pure and simple. These cultures are in perpetual conflict. The emulative culture is what the magazine lives by; the older more human culture is what the reader wistfully desires. However, the magazines can afford to give the reader only a modicum of these warm humanities.

The problem of the editor is essentially similar to that of the advertising copy writer. The purpose of the advertisement is to produce consumers by suitable devices of cajolement and psychological manipulation, in which truth is used only in so far as it is profitable to use truth. But the advertisement must be plausible. It must not destroy the reader-confidence which the copy writer is exploiting.

In the same way the magazine editor may be thought of as producing, in the total editorial and fiction content of the magazine, a kind of advertisement. In this view the advertisement—say in issue of *The Woman's Home Companion*—must have some human plausibility; it must contain some truth, some reality, otherwise the magazine would lose circulation, i.e., reader-confidence. But the editor must

never forget that the serious business of the magazine is the production of customers just as the writer of the individual advertisement must not use either more or less truth and decency than will produce a maximum of sales for his client.

We examined single issues of thirteen representative and large circulation magazines in an attempt to determine the following facts:

1. Does the magazine promote buying, not only in the advertisements, but in the editorial, article, feature and fiction section of the magazine?
2. To what extent do the magazines permit criticism of the acquisitive culture?
3. Since literature, even popular literature, is supposed to reflect a culture, what kind of a culture, judged by the contents of these thirteen magazines, have we got?

The thirteen magazines were chosen with the idea of having as many different types of magazines represented as possible. The attempt was also made to select magazines going to readers who belong to different income classes. Eight of the magazines analyzed have over one million circulation, and constitute over a third of the twenty-one magazines in the United States having circulations of this size. The list of magazines studied is as follows:

MAGAZINE STUDY[1]

Name of Magazine	*Circulation*	*Income Level*	*Type*
American Weekly	5,581,000	Low	Illustrated Hearst Sunday supplement.
True Story	1,597,000	Low	Confession magazine.
Household	1,664,000	Low	Woman's magazine; rural type.
Liberty	1,378,000	Medium	White-collar class.
Photoplay	518,000	Medium	Largest circulation movie magazine.
American Magazine	2,162,000	Medium	Small town, small-city magazine.
Woman's Home Companion	2,235,000	Medium	Woman's magazine: urban type.
Cosmopolitan	1,636,000	Medium	Urban magazine: much sex fiction.

[1] American Weekly, issue of Jan. 7, 1934; True Story, Dec. 1933; Household, Nov. 1933; Liberty, Dec. 23, 1933; Photoplay, Jan. 1934; American Magazine, Dec. 1933; Woman's Home Companion, Jan. 1934; Cosmopolitan, Dec. 1933; Saturday Evening Post, Dec. 16, 1933; Harper's Bazaar, Dec. 1933; Harper's Magazine, Jan. 1934; Nation's Business, Nov. 1933; Arts & Decoration, Nov. 1933. Publisher's estimate

Name of Magazine	*Circulation*	*Income Level*	*Type*
Saturday Evening Post	2,295,000	Medium	Greatest advertising medium in the world.
Harper's Bazaar	100,000	High	High style fashions.
Harper's Magazine	111,000	High	High-brow and sophisticated.
Nation's Business	214,000	High	Organ of the Chamber of Commerce of the U.S.
Arts & Decoration	23,000	High	Interior decoration for the rich.

FINDINGS:

Our analysis shows that buying is promoted not only in the advertisements but in the fiction, articles, features, and editorials. A *Woman's Home Companion* story mentions a Rolls-Royce eighteen times. *Harper's Bazaar* gives free publicity in its article section to 532 stores and products. The snob appeal, essentially a buying appeal, since successful snobbism depends in the main on the possession of things, appears in 68 per cent of the subject matter of one magazine. To summarize: We find when the percentages for the thirteen magazines are averaged, that 30 per cent of the total space of the magazines is devoted to advertisements, and 13 per cent is devoted to editorial promotion of buying. Hence 43 per cent of the space in these magazines is devoted to commercial advertisements, and what may be called editorial advertisements, combined. We find also that snobbism is a major or minor appeal in 22 per cent of the subject matter of the magazines.

There is a very striking correlation between the amount of space devoted to promoting buying and the amount of space devoted to criticism of the acquisitive culture. The more space a magazine devotes to promoting buying the less space it devotes to instruction, comment or criticism concerning economic and political affairs. Four of the thirteen magazines do not mention depression or recovery at all. Only two magazines, *True Story* and *Liberty*, question the desirability of the capitalist economy. Only two magazines, the *American* and *Nation's Business*, question whether it can be permanently maintained. In summary we find that: (1) No criticism of business appears in any editorial. (2) Some criticism of the acquisitive culture appears in the fiction. (3) Most of the criticism of existing conditions appears in articles and readers' letters. (4) The thirteen magazines devote, on the average, 24 per cent of their editorial and article space to sup-

plying the reader with information about economics, politics, and international affairs. (5) The women's magazines, which rank highest among the thirteen magazines in respect to the editorial promotion of buying, rank very low in regard to comment on economics, politics, and international affairs. They devote, on the average, 27 per cent of their space to editorial promotion of buying, and only 5 per cent of their space to comment on affairs.

The following conclusions about the culture reflected in these magazines may be drawn:

(1) This culture displays a surplus of snobbism, and a deficiency of interest in sex, economics, politics, religion, art, and science.

(2) The United States does not have one homogeneous culture; it has class cultures. Summarizing the findings of this study in relation to class cultures, one may say that the culture of the poor shows a strong bias in the direction of fear and sex, that the culture of the middle-class displays less sense of reality than the culture of the poor or the rich, and a higher degree of sexual frigidity, and that the culture of the rich tends to be emulative and mercenary.

An analysis of 58 fiction heroines in 45 sex fiction stories in the ten magazines containing fiction shows the following differences between the heroines who appear in the magazines of the poor, the middle class, and the rich. In the magazines of the rich, 5 per cent of the heroines are mercenary. In the magazines of the middle class, 56 per cent of the heroines are unawakened or unresponsive women. In the magazines of the poor, 45 per cent of the women can be classified as being sexually responsive. The number of babies appertaining to these fiction heroines also throws interesting light on our class cultures. In magazine fiction as in life the poor women have the largest number of babies. While the 41 fiction heroines of the middle-class magazines produce only three children, the eleven fiction heroines of the magazines of the poor produce nine.

Further distinctions between the classes appear in the statistics on emulation. Emulation is the dominant appeal in the ads of six magazines which go to readers on the upper income levels. In the remaining seven magazines—the magazines of the lower income levels—fear is the dominant appeal. Emulation is also much stronger in the fiction and subject matter of the magazines of the upper income levels; it is, in fact, almost twice as strong as in the magazines of the poor. In the lower income group magazines, 17 per cent of the subject matter has emulation as a major or minor appeal; in the upper income magazines, 31 per cent of the subject matter features emulation.

(3) The acquisitive culture, that is the culture which emphasizes things and snobbism, battles, in the pages of these magazines, with

an older tradition and culture, in which sex, economics, politics, and sentiment play major rôles. The acquisitive culture is dominant in five magazines, the older culture in four magazines, while in the remaining four magazines, the two cultures co-exist side by side. One may say, in summary, that the acquisitive culture cannot stand on its own feet. It does not satisfy. Except in the fashion magazines, and in some of the women's magazines, it has to be offered to the reader with a considerable admixture of the older traditional humanities.

(4) Correlating our various statistical findings, we note that the acquisitive culture is not accessible to the majority of Americans; also that it is not popular with the majority of Americans. The American population apparently has a sturdy realism which the magazine editors are forced to recognize. They do not want to spend their time reading fairy tales about the lives of the rich. What they prefer, is to read about heroes and heroines who are exactly one rung above them on the economic and social ladder, a rung of the ladder to which they themselves, by dint of luck, accident, or hard work, may hope to climb to.

It would appear that the acquisitive culture reflected in these magazines is a luxury product designed for women and the rich. The focus upon women is because of their position as buyers for the family. The success of the emulative sales promoting technique as applied to middle-class women would appear to rest upon the fact that these women are restless, that they suffer from unsatisfied romanticism, and that, in many cases, they probably suffer also from unhappiness in their marital relations. This is perhaps the most significant finding of the study and we believe the reader will find it amply supported by the detailed evidence adduced in the succeeding chapters.

II. Chromium is More Expensive

Culture is, by definition, the sum total of the human environment to which any individual is exposed and the test of a culture, or civilization, in terms of values is what kind of a life it affords, not for a few but for all of its citizens.

The term culture, as used by anthropologists, ethnologists, and social scientists generally, does not, of course, coincide with the use of the word among the American working-classes, for whom it constitutes a description of the middle-class culture to which they so devoutly aspire. *True Story Magazine*, the favorite magazine of the proletariat, circulation 1,597,000, has a story about a poor boy, who marries a banker's daughter and makes good. On first being introduced into the banker's house he says: "It was my first experience in a home, where *culture*, ease and breeding were a part of everyday

life." *Household Magazine*, circulation 2,006,000, which is read by farm and small town women, has a page of advice to girls, conducted by Gladys Carrol Hastings, author of *As the Earth Turns*. Miss Hastings describes how a daughter of the rich is forced because of the depression to live on a farm and to do her own work. Miss Hastings says: "I choose not to stress how tired she was each night ... how she longed for the ease and *culture* of other associations, how little her few neighbors satisfied her."

Class Cultures

The popular and proletarian use of the word "culture" points to a significant fact; the fact that, contrary to popular pre-war conceptions, we do have classes in the United States, and that any examination of our present American culture will, of necessity, break up into an examination of a number of class cultures.

Two problems face the would-be examiner of contemporary American culture. The first is to ascertain how many classes there are and the second is to find a measuring stick for the culture of each of these different classes. Both are nice problems.

It is noteworthy that there are no names, used in ordinary speech to characterize social classes, unless "racketeer" and "sucker" can be considered to be in this category. In which case we have not the Marxian antithesis of the workers *versus* the bosses, but the strictly American antithesis of suckers *versus* racketeers, complicated by the fact that most Americans are racketeers and suckers at one and the same time. Workers refer to themselves as "the working-class of people," executives discuss the white-collar class, ad-men refer to mass and class publications, fashion analysts study the high, medium, popular, and low style woman. Common speech is of little help in differentiating such social classes as we have, nor are the professional social scientists very useful. With the exception of Veblen's books and of the magnificent study *Middletown* made by the Lynds in 1927, which describes minutely the culture of the working and business classes of a typical American city, the social scientists have added very little of any importance to what we know about the stratification of the American population and about American culture.[2]

The most valuable sources of information we have about the economic and cultural levels of the American population are such government statistics as the Army intelligence tests and income-tax returns, and the unpublished studies of consumer behavior on file in magazine offices and in advertising agencies. One of the best of these studies is the work of Daniel Starch. This study divides American families into income groups, computed in multiples of one-thousand

[2] [Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929).]

dollars. Since this chapter expects to lean somewhat on Mr. Starch's researches, it will for the sake of brevity divide Americans into three economic classes, each of which proves on examination to have a fairly distinct cultural pattern. Without bothering about exact names for these classes, since no idiomatic or exact names exist, we may refer to them briefly as the rich, the middle class and the poor.

The poor, those having incomes of less than $2,000 a year, constituted in 1925, seventy-seven per cent of the population. Most of them live below the minimum comfort level. The richest members of this class can afford a minimum health and decency standard of living; the poorer members of this class cannot. During our most prosperous years, from 1922 to 1929, the majority of Americans were living on less than 70 per cent of the minimum health and decency budgets worked out by the United States Government bureaus. Lifelong economic security is rare. This class is not of much interest to advertisers or editors. The Daniel Starch studies show that only 34 per cent of the circulation of twenty women's magazines goes to this group.

The middle class, those having incomes between $2,000 and $5,000 a year can afford comforts. Severe ill-health or prolonged depression periods, to mention only two of the most important causes, can ruin the economic security of middle-class families. Nevertheless, it may be said that lifelong economic security is within the grasp of some of the more fortunate and thrifty members of this class.

The rich, those having incomes of over $5,000 a year, are the class that pays income taxes. Even the poorest enjoy comforts and a few luxuries. With the richer members of this class, economic security becomes a possibility, and is, in a considerable percentage of cases, attained.

There remains the problem of finding a measuring stick with which to measure the culture of these three classes; the poor, the middle class, and the rich. Culture has many aspects; it is necessary within the space of this book to select one of these aspects. Clark Wissler, the well-known anthropologist, says in his book *Man and Culture*: "The study of culture has come to be regarded more and more, in recent decades, as the study of modes of thought, and of tradition, as well as of modes of action or customs."[3] It is the modes of thought that concern us in this chapter. It is more difficult to find out what people are thinking than to discover what they are doing, but it is also more fascinating.

[3] [Clark Wissler, *Man and Culture* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1923), chap. 1.]

The Magazine Measuring-Stick

The public's response to an art offers, perhaps, the best clue as to what is going on in people's minds. There are, as it happens, three

popular arts in the United States, which are enjoyed to some extent by all classes; they are the press, the talkies and the radio. The talkies probably have most influence, but the press is for obvious reasons easier to examine and measure; it is a better statistical foil. Moreover, in our magazine-press, in which each magazine is to some extent aimed at a particular class of readers, our class culture is more accurately reflected than in either the talkies or in radio programs.

The only serious drawback to using the magazine-press as a measuring stick for the culture of our three arbitrarily selected classes is that a considerable section of the wage-earning class, who constitute over 75 per cent of the population, do not read magazines very much because they cannot afford them. Mr. Starch's studies show that the most popular magazine of the rich, *The Saturday Evening Post*, is read by 67 per cent of all the families having over $5,000 a year, while *True Story*, the most popular magazine among the proletariat, is read by only 14 per cent of all the families having under $2,000 a year. Of the 14 per cent who read *True Story*, over two-thirds have incomes of $1,000 to $2,000 a year, while approximately one-third have incomes of $1,000 a year, or less.

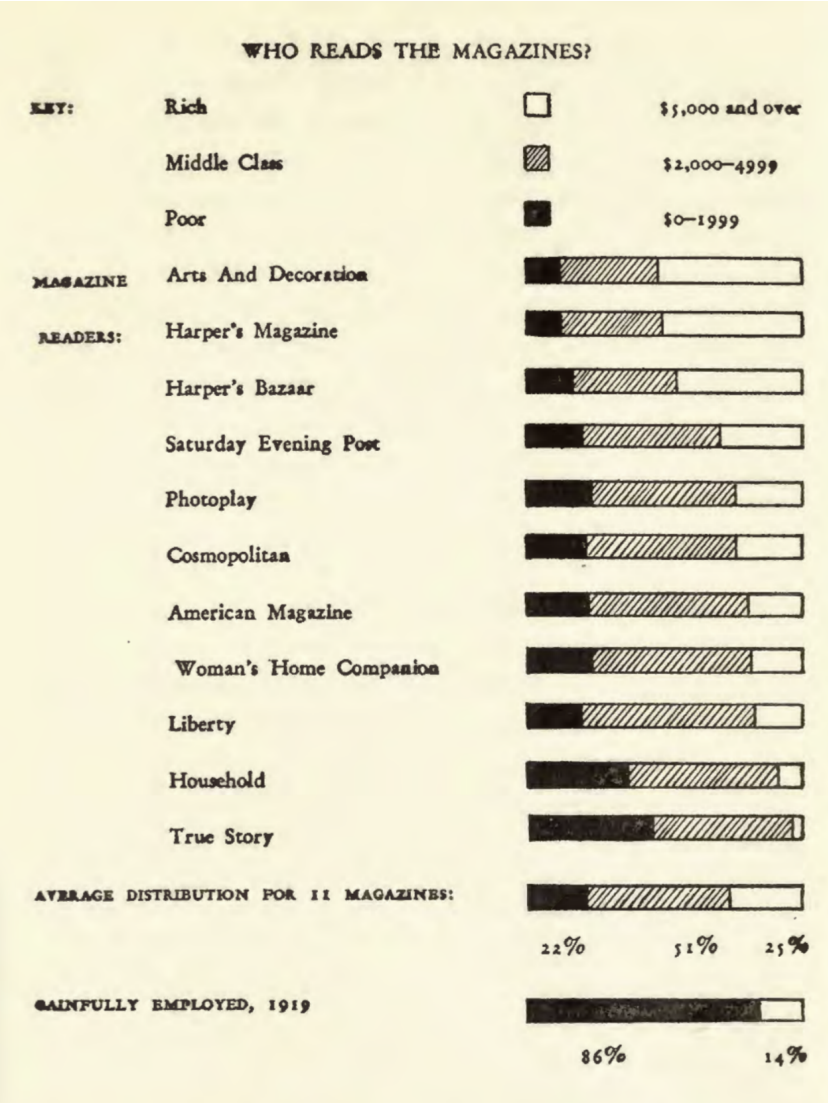
The extent to which the magazines do and do not reflect the culture of any specific economic class is shown in the following chart, based on Mr. Starch's figures. The reader will observe that all of the magazines cited have circulations in all three economic classes, and that most of the circulation lies in the middle-class group. To find magazines which represent the rich as *versus* the middle class, it is necessary to seek examples among the so-called class magazines. On this chart, three magazines; *Harper's Bazaar*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *Arts & Decoration*, belong to the class magazine group. Each of these magazines has over 45 per cent of its circulation among the rich. In order to strengthen our sample of magazines catering to the rich, another class magazine, *Nation's Business*, has been added to the list of magazines to be studied.

Who Reads the Magazines?

The number of magazines which might be said to appeal in the main to the poor, and which also have large circulations, is disappointingly small. Only two magazines, *True Story*, which is proletarian in flavor, and *Household*, which is not, have over one-third of their readers among the poor. In seeking to fortify the number of magazines which might be expected to reflect the culture of the poor, two magazines were added to the list; *The American Weekly*, the illustrated Hearst Sunday supplement, which has one of the largest circulations of any periodical in the country, and *Photoplay*, the largest circulation movie

magazine. Examination proved however that *Photoplay* is probably to be considered as a middle-class magazine.

It might be noted in passing that, in the main, the poor have no press. We have discovered no large circulation magazine which has over 45 per cent of its circulation among the poor. One suspects that magazines like *True Story* cater to the one-tenth of the working-class consisting of organized and skilled workers who can afford some comforts. One suspects further that the other nine-tenths of the wage as *versus* salary earners, although they may read the magazines, have, strictly speaking, no large circulation press at all.



The Editor-Reader Relation

The advertising business has frequently been defined in this book as consisting of the newspaper and magazine press, the radio, the advertising agencies, and a considerable section of the talkie, paper, and printing industries. To the magazine editor and the ad-man a magazine consists of two parts: advertisements and filler. The filler is designed to carry the advertisements. With rare exceptions, no way has so far been discovered of getting the public to pay for advertisements presented without filler. Hence the filler.

This strictly commercial point of view of the magazine editor, the circulation manager, and the ad-man is not the reader's point of view. The reader thinks of a magazine in terms of fiction, articles, features, editorials, and advertisements. While he seldom buys the magazine for the ads, he may enjoy certain ads even more than he enjoys the contents of the periodical. In addition to hunting out the particular things in the magazine which appeal to him as an individual, or which he hopes to find tolerably palatable, he is more or (less aware of the personality of the magazine. Its slant on things is as well known to him as the slant of a family friend, and although he may not agree with the slant, he enjoys savoring of it. From the reader's point of view, therefore, one can add at least one more category to the commercial categories of the editor and ad-man. One can say that the magazine consists not only of advertisements and filler, but that it also has an editorial element, that there is in fact, in most cases, a certain editor-reader relation, which the reader is quite cognizant of.

That the editor-reader relation, just referred to, exists not only in the mind of the reader, but in the mind of the editor as well, is shown by the following statement made by Gertrude B. Lane, assistant editor of *Woman's Home Companion*. In a memorandum stating her objections to the Tugwell Bill, Miss Lane says:

> "I admit quite frankly that my selfish interests are involved. I have spent thirty years of my life building up a magazine which I have tried to make *of real service to the women of America*, and I have invested all my savings in the company which publishes this magazine. The magazine business and the newspapers, rightly or wrongly, have been made possible through national advertising. Great industries have been developed and millions of people employed."

Miss Lane's angle is interesting. Is advertising perhaps the culture, the swamp-muck, if you will, that exists to nourish this lily of service? If Miss Lane is correct, the question that will interest the magazine reader is not how thick is the muck, but how tall and fragrant is the lily? An examination of the January, 1934, issue of *Woman's Home Companion* will perhaps answer this question.

Service Versus Selling

In looking for the service-angle suggested by Miss Lane, the writers felt that a correct estimate of the amount of service rendered the reader could perhaps best be found in editorials and articles, rather than in the fiction. Fiction was also considered in relation to service, and the results will be referred to later in this chapter. The concentration on editorials and articles proved, however, to offer the most useful index of service. The issue of the *Woman's Home Companion* examined contained in its editorials and articles three items which could be listed under this head.

> Item I. Article "What Mothers Want To Know" (5.5 inches). The writer, a physician, starts out by saying: "I wonder if we city doctors write about the things that mothers want to know. At least sixty per cent of the mothers' letters received by *Woman's Home Companion* come from small cities, towns, or rural communities, which have practically no modern facilities, no hospitals or clinics for babies, well or sick, no pediatrists. Many of the letters are pathetic."
>
> Item II. Editorial "The Mighty Effort" (8 inches). This editorial urges Americans to support President Roosevelt's program. The dangers of this program can, in the opinion of the editors be avoided, "if the true American spirit prevails." The true American spirit consists in moderation. Owen D. Young is quoted as saying: "We must watch them that threaten us, both from inaction and over-action, not that we may punish them, but that we may prevent them from ruining us and themselves as well. It is unnecessary for producers to unite into a trust ... it is unnecessary for labor to unite in unions ... it is unnecessary for consumers to unite in such a way as to threaten savings and labor employed in production."
>
> Item III. Letter. Signed, C. R. J., Oregon, entitled by the editors, "Sensible Protest Against Frills" (8.5 inches). Criticizes the home economics classes attended by country and small town children, in which the pupils are taught: "How to give orders to a maid and butler ... to put fancy frills on a chop bone, and to cook steaks." The writer notes that most of the parents of these children afford steaks and chops very rarely, and makes sensible suggestions as to what a home economics course for country children should contain.

Of the 1,404 inches devoted to editorials and articles, 22 inches, or about two-thirds of a page, is devoted to service. But the lily of service which raises its pure head in a naughty world should not be measured in inches or percentages alone. What does the two-thirds of a page devoted to service in the *Woman's Home Companion* net the reader? A reader makes a sensible statement, so sensible that one concludes that it might be an excellent thing for editors to turn over their editorial space to their shrewder readers. As far as the editors are concerned they have only two things to say to the reader.

First: In a general editorial about recovery, they point out to their readers, who are consumers, that "it is unnecessary for consumers to unite in such a way as to threaten savings and labor employed in production." In suggesting that its readers do not become politically active as consumers, the *Companion* would seem to be serving its own interests rather than those of its readers. Second: They promise in the future to help the women living in small towns with their maternity problems. Excellent as this is, a promise of service does not constitute a service. If the *Woman's Home Companion* fulfills its promise, this fulfillment will constitute a genuine service to the reader.

Examination of the other twelve magazines selected for study is somewhat more reassuring than examination of the *Woman's Home Companion.* The service element of the other magazines as measured by the editorials and articles ranges as high as 88 or 79 per cent in contrast with the *Woman's Home Companion*'s 1.5 per cent. The complete list of space devoted to service is as follows: *Saturday Evening Post*, 88 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 79 per cent; *American Magazine*, 41 per cent; *Harper's Magazine*, 37 per cent; *Cosmopolitan*, 28 per cent; *Liberty*, 24 per cent; *True Story*, 16 per cent; *Household Magazine*, 11 per cent; *Harper's Bazaar*, 2 per cent; *Woman's Home Companion*, 1.5 per cent; *American Weekly*, .7 per cent; *Photoplay*, 0; *Arts & Decoration*, 0.

Service as Sophistication

To make sure that we are doing justice to the *Woman's Home Companion*, it might be well to state at this point what items the writers have considered to have a service angle. An examination of the thirteen selected magazines caused the writers to re-define service as sophistication, and specifically sophistication about economic and political affairs. Four kinds of items were included under Sophistication:

1. Any reference to recovery or depression was considered to constitute sophistication, since it may be considered an index of interest in reality as opposed to fantasy.
2. Any recognition that an economic or political situation was complex rather than simple was also considered to constitute sophistication. A mention of three or four factors in a situation rather than one or two was considered to be complex as opposed to simple.
3. Any facts which did not bear directly on the financial or emulative interest of the specific class of readers to whom the magazine is addressed, were considered to constitute sophistication. Note: Only two or three examples were found.
4. Any criticism or satire of our contemporary culture and society which might be considered to apply not to a specific institution but to the society as a whole.

The standards set up as sophistication are not high. Any truly sophisticated presentation of an economic or political situation would usually have to cover more than three or four factors in the situation. Many of the articles in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Nation's Business*, and in such magazines as the *Nation*, *New Republic*, and *Fortune*, rate well above this three-or-four-factors-in-a-situation level. It has been the effort of the writers to include under sophistication everything which could possibly be included under this category. Most if not all of the rays of hope, inspiration or comfort extended to the readers by the editors it has been possible to pick up under one of the four categories used.

When the results of the sophistication survey are averaged, it is found that the average magazine devotes 24.4 per cent of its editorial and article space to making the contemporary economic and political world which so notably affects the destinies of its readers somewhat comprehensible. The amount of sophistication is clearly one of the important elements in the editor-reader relation of the magazine. The extent to which the sophistication element in each of the magazines studied has vitality or sincerity, will be considered when the contents of individual magazines are described.

The sophistication survey shows one notable fact; that magazines specifically for women are low in respect to sophistication. Remembering that 24.4 per cent is the sophistication average for thirteen magazines, consider the degree of sophistication of the following magazines catering mainly to women: *Household Magazine*, 11 per cent; *Harper's Bazaar*, 2 per cent; *Woman's Home Companion*, 1.5 per cent; *Photoplay*, 0; and *Arts & Decoration*, 0. *Harper's Bazaar*, a fashion magazine; *Photoplay*, a movie magazine; and *Arts & Decoration*, an interior decoration magazine, are, of course, specialized magazines, with no interest in economics or politics. Nevertheless, the line-up seems to have some significance. Contrast the women's magazine sophistication record, for example, with the sophistication record of the magazines which have an exclusive or heavy male readership; *Saturday Evening Post*, 88 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 79 per cent; and the *American Magazine*, 41 per cent. The claim that the contents of women's magazines reflect the provincialism and low intellectual status of women was made in an article in the December, 13, 1933, issue of the *New Republic*. This article provoked a spirited rebuttal from no less a person than Carolyn B. Ulrich, Chief of the Periodicals Division of the New York Public Library, New York City. Miss Ulrich says, among other things:

> "Who are the owners and editors of women's magazines? You will find that men predominate in the executive offices and on their editorial staffs. Would it not appear that we are still bound to what men think desirable? Is that what most women want? And are not these magazines really mediums for salesmanship, almost trade journals? Of the first importance in these magazines is the advertising. The subject matter comes second. The advertisements pay for the producing of the magazine. The subject matter, aside from a few sentimental stories, covers those interests that belong to woman's sphere. *There, also, the purpose is to foster buying* for the home and child. The entire plan of these magazines is based on the man's interest in its commercial success."

Perversion of Editor-reader Relation

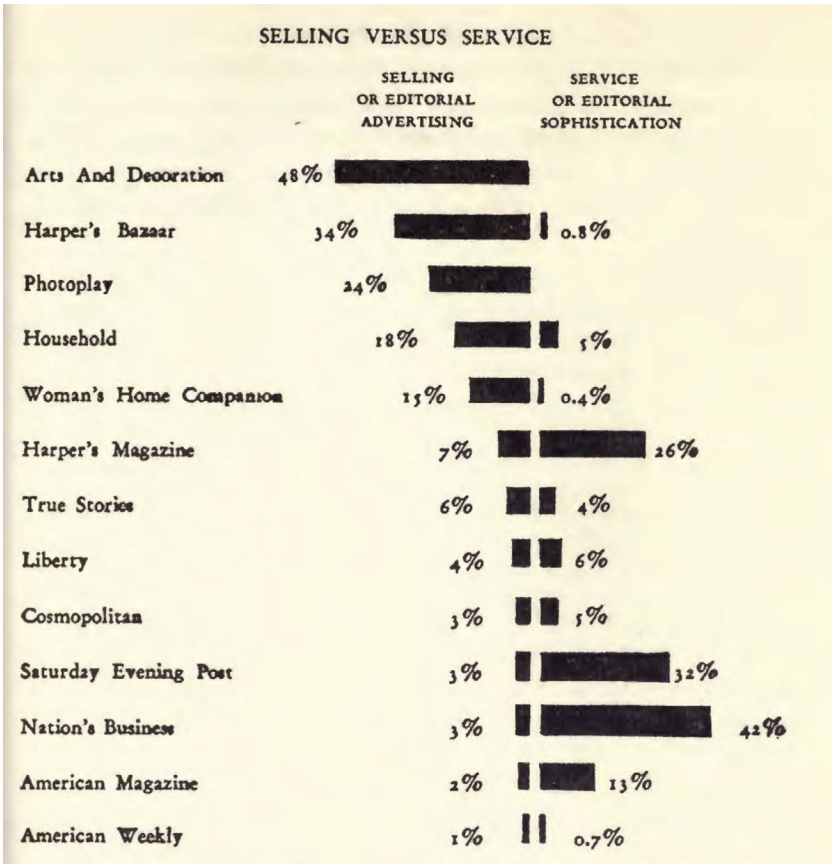
In one of Miss Ulrich's sentences, we find the clue to the nature and character of our present women's magazines. Miss Ulrich says: "The subject matter ... stories aside, covers those interests that belong to woman's sphere. There, also, the purpose is to foster buying." Miss Ulrich is correct. If the contents of the women's magazines are examined, it will be found that the editors devote from 48 to 15 per cent of the total contents of the magazine to ballyhooing certain classes of products or specifically named products; in short, to peddling something over the counter, just as advertisements do. The five magazines catering mainly to women, which rank very much below the average in respect to sophistication, rank highest in respect to the amount of editorial space devoted to salesmanship. The proportion of the total space in the women's magazines devoted to editorial advertising is as follows: *Arts & Decoration*, 48 per cent; *Harper's Bazaar*, 34 per cent; *Photoplay*, 24 per cent; *Household*, 18 per cent; *Woman's Home Companion*, 15 per cent. *Harper's Bazaar* devotes 26 of its non-advertising pages to mentioning the names of 523 stores and products.

The nature and character of our women's magazines becomes clear if one realizes that in these magazines the editor-reader relation has been perverted. Where this relation has vitality and sincerity, the readers get from the magazine something not wholly commercial. They do not merely get enough filler or entertainment to make them swallow the advertising; they are given something definite and humanly valuable, a friendly relation to the editor, who is or should be, from the reader's point of view, a person whose specific job it is to know more about affairs in general than the reader can take time to know. An editor's analysis of a situation, his judgment about it, have some weight with the reader, just as a friend's analysis of a situation and judgment about it have. However, where the editor-reader relation is perverted, as in the women's magazines, the editor does not give the reader something; he takes something away from the

reader. It is a case of the right hand giveth and the left hand taketh away. The left hand of the editor takes away from the reader part of the non-advertising or subject matter space of the magazine which is presumably what the reader pays for, and devotes it to editorial advertising. The right hand of the editor gives the reader something humanly valuable; sophistication. In the five magazines catering primarily to women, as the accompanying chart shows, the editorial left hand, the hand which takes, is the active hand.

Editorial Advertising

Editorial advertising in the accompanying chart includes three categories. In the order of their importance, that is, in the order of the amount of space devoted to them, they are as follows:



- Item 1: Pushing of advertised products.
- Item 2: Pushing of sales of, or subscriptions to the magazine.
- Item 3: Editorials or articles, pushing buying in general, or pushing the buying of certain classes of products, which may or may not appear in the magazine's advertisements.

Of the total space of the thirteen magazines, 10.9 per cent is, on the average, devoted to pushing products; 2.6 per cent is devoted to pushing the magazine; and one per cent to pushing buying generally. House ads, pushing the sale of the magazine are familiar, and hardly need illustration. The pushing of advertised products is also more or less familiar. A few examples will probably suffice:

Artificial Skills

"I sometimes think the women of today aren't sufficiently thankful for or appreciative of the fabric marvels which are theirs.... As a miracle, for instance, doesn't artificial silk answer every requirement of the word?" (*True Story*: "Sheer Fabrics That Would Make Cleopatra Jealous.")

Oil Heater

"Where lack of a basement makes installation of the usual type of cellar plant impossible ... there are heat cabinets available.... With one of these oil heaters in a room, the old fire-building, stove-nursing, ash-carrying, half-warmed days are over." (*True Story*: "Is Your Home Old-Fashioned in Its Heating Apparatus?")

Canned Meats

"In looking around to see just what I could discover in canned meats and chickens, I found great variations in the size of their containers." (*Household Magazine*: "A Short Cut to Meats—The Can-Opener.")

Condensed Milk

"She (my grandmother) tried cow's milk, the best she could obtain, but without any improvement. In desperation she finally tried a spoonful of the new condensed milk, a recent invention that a newcomer in the gold camp had brought from the East. The baby loved it." (*True Story*: "From My Grandmother's Diary.")

Electric Lamps

"She spent many months of patient searching for just the right lamps at just the right prices. Lamps that would give the perfect angle of light ...." (*Woman's Home Companion*: "A Healthful Luxury.")

Hotels

"No place in the world has such sparkle as New York at this time of year. Come for the fun of shopping ... to see the new ballets ... to enjoy the restaurant life of these new days of the wine list .... For help in choosing your hotel, write to the Travel Bureau." (*Harper's Bazaar*: "New York at Christmas.")

Tea Table Accessories

"All of our social existence is tied up in a few familiar rituals. A hostess is known by her tea tables and dinner tables. Marriages and births and political victories and personal achievements are celebrated there.... Occasionally something definite and permanent arises phoenix-like from a passing mode. Lines that appeared as startling innovations on the tea tray of some smart hostess gradually become familiar in decorative treatment and in architecture. So a new style is created." (*Arts & Decoration*: "A Portfolio of Modern Accessories.")

Somewhat more subtle and interesting are editorials and advertisements pushing buying generally, or the buying of certain classes of products.

"A Call to Colors for the American Male"

"The pioneering hard-fisted, hard-boiled American Male will cheer campaign speeches on the benefits of rugged individualism and whistle laissez faire, whenever he has to keep up his courage in a financial crisis. He will grow turgidly eloquent on the benefits both to himself and society of doing just as he sees fit when and if he pleases. He will battle to his last breath against any code prescribing a uniform way of running his business, auditing his accounts, educating his children or divorcing his wives. Any form of regulation is to him a symptom of Bolshevik tyranny. But the one moment when he is terrified of freedom is when he buys his clothes. *He is more afraid of wearing a bright orange necktie to his office than of carrying a red flag in a communist parade.*" (*Harper's Bazaar*.)

"Bare Without Jewels"

"To the great dressmakers and to the women who make fashion a matter for prayer and meditation, and especially to foreign women, we Americans are as incomplete as the vermilionless painting.... Lean back in a stall in Covent Garden on a Ballets Russe night and compare the jewels you see with those worn at the average American soiree. Foreigners cannot understand our modesty in this regard. How extraordinary, they say, that you Americans who have money are content with the small bracelet, the one string of pearls, the nice ring or two....

These simple molded gowns of black or jewel colored velvets, these dark green sheaths, these brilliant columns of stiff white satin crave the barbaric fire of emeralds, diamonds, rubies.... For the last twenty years we have been genteel and timid about jewelry. It was not always thus. Let those who feel shocked by this modern splendor remember that their aristocratic grandmamas blazed with dog collars and tiaras. *And who are we to say that the Queen of Sheba was not a lady?*" (*Harper's Bazaar*.)

"Contempora'

> "A contemporary chair or service plate can range as far in cost and beauty as those of Louis the XIVth or any other period. *Chromium is more expensive than no chromium, beveled glass is more expensive than glass that is not beveled*." (And a vote for Wintergreen is a vote for Wintergreen.) *Arts & Decoration*.

Perhaps it is because editorial advertising is newer than pure advertising that the tone of editorial advertising is often so brash. In *Arts & Decoration*, the magazine which has the highest percentage of editorial advertising, the situation has gone so far that the strident voice of salesmanship concentrates in the subject matter, while the advertisements are comparatively dignified and serene.

The editor-reader relation is the vital core of the magazine. The study of thirteen magazines shows that this relation has its credit and debit side; that it is at once an Angel Gabriel and a Lucifer. In short, it is a most human relation, in which the itchiness of the editor, eager to attract more advertising and revenue, competes with his desire to be humanly useful.

No description of the magazines would be complete without a reference to the advertisements, which in contradistinction to the editorial advertisements, are openly and unhypocritically concerned with selling. Our statistics show that on the average 30.6 per cent, or a little less than a third of the magazine is devoted to straight advertising, while on the average 43.5 per cent, or a little over two-fifths of the magazine, is devoted to straight advertising and editorial advertising combined. This 43.5 per cent is the Selling-end of the magazine. The other 54.6 per cent is devoted to what is generally known as filler and what for the purposes of this study we have defined as Sophistication and Entertainment.

Major Advertising Appeals: Fear, Sex, and Emulation

It is perhaps worth noting that the five magazines catering mainly to women rank highest not only in respect to the proportion of space in the total contents of the magazine devoted to editorial advertising, but also in the proportion of space devoted to selling. The amount of space devoted to selling averages 43 per cent in the thirteen magazines and 62 per cent in the case of the five women's magazines.

Advertisements are, to the student of a culture, one of the most revealing sections of the magazine. A great many studies of advertising have been made. First, they reflect, as in a mirror, the material culture of a people. Second, they throw light on economic levels and class stratification. With the material culture of the United States we are not, in this chapter, primarily concerned. The extent to which ad-

vertisements reflect class stratifications has already been mentioned, and will be referred to again in more detail. For the moment, we shall limit ourselves to asking one question: To what extent do the advertisements in these thirteen magazines give the reader useful information about the product? The success of the magazine, *Ballyhoo*, and its imitators, showed that many people found some ads absurd, and perhaps annoying, and that they were glad to have them kidded. Not all advertising, however, is of this character. The question is what proportion of the ads are useful, and what proportion are natural material for satire?

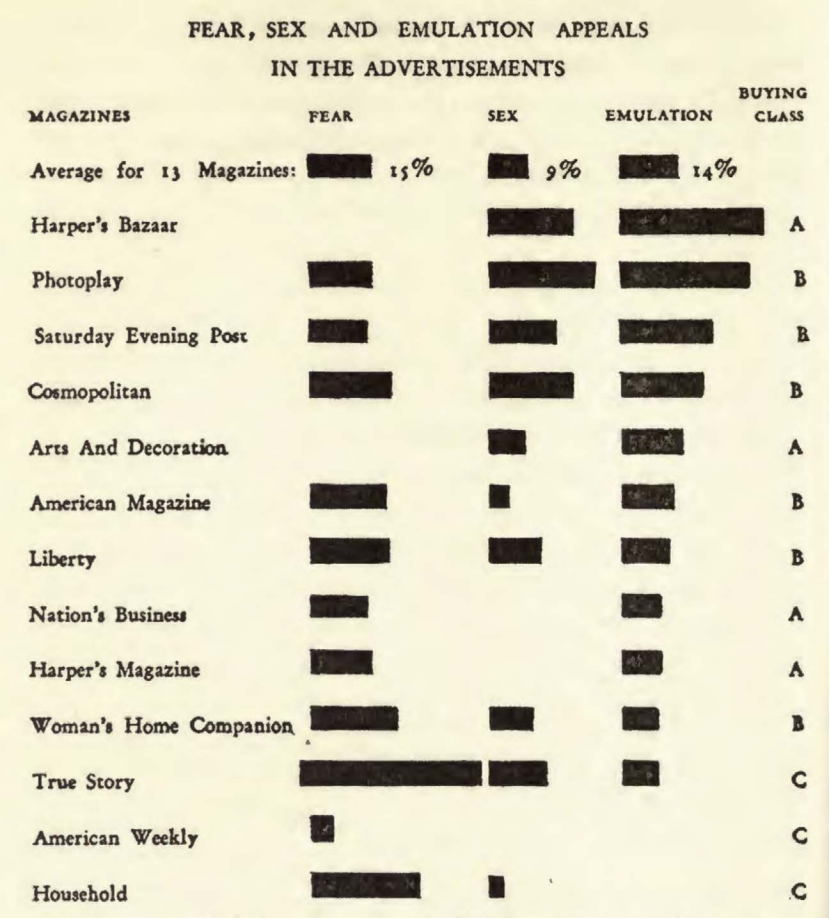
It was necessary to find a simple measuring stick. An analysis of the advertisements showed that they appealed to many different instincts on the part of the reader, to fear, to sex, to emulation, to the desire to make money, the desire to save money, and so forth. Moreover, a single advertisement often combines several appeals. It soon became apparent that the three major appeals of the ads, those that appeared most frequently, were fear, sex, and emulation. It was therefore decided to break up the ads into two categories: 1) those that unmistakably contained one of these three appeals, regardless of what other appeals the individual ad might also contain; 2) ads which did not contain one of these three appeals, and which were called straight ads. In the main, it might be said that the straight ads contain more description of the product than the fear-sex-or-emulation ads. This latter type of ad is more concerned with creating atmosphere than with describing the product.

What the writers mean by advertisements appealing to the instincts of fear or sex hardly requires explanation. Emulation, however, needs to be defined. As used in this chapter, emulation is equivalent to snobbism, it is the keeping-up-with-the-Joneses motif, the desire on the part of the individual to prove to his neighbors that his social status is enviable. In short, it is a particular form of competitiveness, relating not to personal charm or financial rating, but simply and strictly to success in maintaining or achieving social status.

An examination of the ads showed that, on the average, 39 per cent of the ads are fear-sex-and-emulation ads, while 61 per cent are straight ads. The minimum percentage of fear-sex-and-emulation ads was 6 per cent; the maximum, 66 per cent. Three out of the four magazines that reflect the culture of the rich, the Class "A" magazines, were low in respect to fear-sex-and-emulation ads. The statistics are as follows: *Harper's Bazaar*, 57 per cent; *Nation's Business*, 28 per cent; *Arts & Decoration*, 23 per cent; and *Harper's Magazine*, 17 per cent. No equally clear correlation appears in regard to the magazines which rank high in respect to fearsex-and-emulation appeals.

Nevertheless, it may perhaps be said that a low percentage of fear-sex-and-emulation ads is characteristic of the Class "A" magazines. This correlation may perhaps to some extent reflect the sophistication of this class; what it probably reflects in the main is the good manners of the rich; the desire for good tone, as *versus* vulgarity or stridency.

A further correlation between the fear-sex-and-emulation ads and class stratification appears, when we consider the percentage of advertising space devoted to each one of these three appeals in the various magazines. The appeal to fear predominates in seven magazines, which are, generally speaking, the magazines of the lower income-levels, while the appeal to emulation predominates in six magazines of the upper income-levels. In no magazine is the appeal to sex dominant over the appeal to fear or to emulation. The following graph shows not only what percentage of the total advertising space is devoted to appeals to fear, sex, and emulation, but which is the dominant appeal in each magazine.



A little reflection shows that the dominance of the fear appeal in the magazines of the lower income-levels and the dominance of emulation in the magazines of the upper income-levels is quite natural. The poor cannot afford emulation; the rich can. Moreover, the poor are used to fear and insecurity, with them the reference to fear is not an alien thing. As is the case with primitive peoples, they live surrounded by fears.

The fact that sex proves in the advertisements of these typical American magazines to be less powerful as an appeal than either fear or emulation is interesting. One grants easily, without being able to prove it, that fear is probably a stronger motivation than sex, in all societies. The question remains whether emulation is in all societies a stronger motive than sex, or whether it is merely in American society that emulation is a powerful motivation, while sex is a weak motivation.

Before leaving the discussion of the ads to consider the section of the magazines devoted to what we choose to call Entertainment, it may be in point to make a few concluding but scattering comments concerning advertisements.

First: We have seen that the majority of the ads, 61 per cent, are straight ads, dealing in the main with the product, rather than fear-sex-or-emulation ads, which are interested mainly in creating emotion or atmosphere. A qualifying note is necessary at this point. It would be inaccurate to assume that 61 per cent of the ads devote themselves mainly to describing the product. The majority of these ads devote more space to describing the effect upon the buyer of using the product than to describing the product itself. Very elaborate statistical work would have been necessary to document this observation, and because of the difficulties involved, no work of this character was done.

Second: With two exceptions, advertisements of products that appear in the magazines of the rich, the middle classes and the poor, tend to be the same; that is, to have the same words and copy, the assumption of the ad-men being that we Americans are all brothers and sisters under the skin. Of the two conspicuous exceptions, one has already been noted, namely: the fact that fear appeals predominate in the lower income-brackets, while emulation appeals dominate in the upper income-brackets. The other exception is that the fear appeals in the lower income-brackets are somewhat cruder than the fear appeals in the upper income-brackets. Specifically, there is more appeal to fear of parents for the safety and well-being of their children. Illnesses and discomforts from which both adults and children may suffer are in many instances embellished with photographs of wan, reproachful children.

1. "Mother, Why Am I so Sore and Uncomfortable?" (Waldorf Toilet Tissue ad in *True Story*.)
2. "Scolded For Mistakes That Father and Mother Made." (Postum General Foods ad in *Household Magazine*.)
3. "And Don't Go Near Betty Ann—She's a Colds-Susceptible." (Vick's ad in *Women's Home Companion*.)

Third: An examination of the advertising and also of the editorial contents of the magazines shows that the commercial interests back of the magazines treat women and the poor with scant respect, while men and the rich have a somewhat better rating.

III. The Ad-Man's Pseudoculture

It is perhaps desirable once more to say what we mean by the ad-man and what we mean by the pseudoculture. We have tried to show in the preceding chapter that the commercial American magazines are essentially advertising businesses. Hence the editors of these magazines may be, with some minor qualification, correctly characterized as advertising people motivated by considerations of profit.

But a society does not and cannot live solely by acquisitive and profit-motivations. If this were possible the joint enterprise of the advertising writer and the commercial magazine editor, which is, by and large, to promote and construct a purely acquisitive culture, would be a stable and successful enterprise.

It is nothing of the sort. Frankly the writers started with a pessimistic hypothesis, viz.: that the acquisitive-emulative cultural formula had so debauched the American people that they really liked and approved this formula as worked out by the mass and class magazines. The writers expected on examining the magazines to find the acquisitive culture dominant in all of them, and to find that in the majority of cases this culture existed undiluted by any admixture of the older, traditional American culture. If they had found what they expected to find, they would have been obliged to accept the conclusion that the ad-man's acquisitive-emulative culture is an organic thing, something capable of sustaining human life. The findings did not show this. On the contrary, they showed beyond the possibility of a doubt that the acquisitive culture cannot stand on its own feet, that it does not satisfy, that it is, in fact, merely a pseudoculture.

The magazines live by the promotion of acquisitive and emulative motivations but in order to make the enterprise in the least tolerable or acceptable to their readers it is necessary to mix with this emulative culture, the ingredients, in varying proportions, of the older American culture in which sex, sophistication, sentiment, the arts,

sciences, etc., play major rôles. Only three of the thirteen magazines examined are able to build and hold a circulation on the basis of an editorial content consisting solely of acquisitive and emulative appeals. All of these three are in one way or another special cases. *Arts & Decoration*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Photoplay* are all three essentially parasitic fashion magazines. The first two are enterprises in the exploitation of the rich, who constitute over 50 per cent of their circulation. *Photoplay*, a middle class gossip and fashion sheet, is, by and large, simply a collection agent for the acquisitive and emulative wants built up by the movies which, as we have seen, function predominantly as a want-building institution in the American culture.

In other words the business of publishing commercial magazines is a parasitic industry. The ad-man's pseudoculture parasites on the older, more organic culture, just as the advertising business is itself a form of economic parasitism; in Veblen's language, it represents one of the ways in which profit-motivated business "conscientiously withdraws efficiency from the productivity of industry," this "conscientious sabotage" being necessary to prevent the disruptive force of applied science from shattering the chains of the profit system.[4] It is, we feel, important to note that this phenomenon of parasitism or sabotage extends not merely to the economy considered as a mechanism of production and distribution but to the culture considered as a system of values and motivations by which people live.

[4] [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923).]

But the American people do not like this pseudoculture, cannot live by it, and, indeed, never have lived by it. The magazines analyzed, which were published during this the fifth year of a depression, show that fiction writers, sensitive to public opinion, often definitely repudiate this culture. Americans tend, at the moment, if the magazine culture can be considered to be a mirror of popular feeling, to look, not forward into the future, but backward into the past. They are trying to discover by what virtues, by what pattern of life, the Americans of earlier days succeeded in being admirable people, and in sustaining a life, which, if it did not have ease and luxury, did seem to have dignity and charm. Although the main drift of desire is toward the past, there are other drifts. Some editors and readers even envision revolution and the substitution of a new culture for the acquisitive and the traditional American culture.

The Battle of the Cultures

In the older, more humane culture, sex and sophistication are the major elements. In the artificial profit-motivated pseudoculture by which the commercial magazine lives and tries to make its readers live, emulation tends to replace sex as a major interest, whereas so-

phistication dwindles and ultimately disappears. The following table exhibits a striking inverse ratio:

COMMERCIALISM *VERSUS* SOPHISTICATION

Magazine	*Per cent of editorial and article space devoted to sophistication*	*Per cent of total magazine space devoted to editorial advertisements*
Saturday Evening Post	88%	3%
Nation's Business	79%	8%
American Magazine	41%	2%
Harper's Magazine	37%	7%
Cosmopolitan	28%	3%
Liberty	24%	4%
True Story	16%	6%
Household	11%	18%
Harper's Bazaar	2%	34%
Woman's Home Companion	1.5%	15%
American Weekly	.7%	1%
Photoplay	.0%	24%
Arts & Decoration	.0%	48%

In the *Saturday Evening Post* we find the maximum of editorial and article space, 88 per cent, devoted to sophistication. By sophistication we mean a realistic attempt by the editors to deal with the facts and problems which constitute the everyday concerns of their readers. The *Post* devotes a minimum of space to editorial advertising. Yet, paradoxically enough, the *Saturday Evening Post* is the greatest advertising medium in the world. This would seem to indicate that editorial advertising is to a magazine what makeup is to a plain woman. Not that the *Post* is in any true sense a satisfactory and creative cultural medium. The most that can be said for the *Post* is that it functions with some sincerity and effectiveness as the organ of a specific economic and social class.

At the bottom of this dual ascending and descending scale, we find *Arts & Decoration* with a sophistication rating of zero and 48 per cent of its total space devoted to editorial advertising. Obviously, *Arts & Decoration* represents the phenomenon of pure commercial

parasitism. It is the organ of nothing and nobody except its publishers and advertisers, and it holds its 18,000 readers by a mixture of flattery and insult, which magazine publishers, it seems, consider to be the proper formula to be used on the new-rich and the social climber. The slogan would seem to be: Mannerless readers deserve a mannerless magazine.

RAUSHENBUSH SWANSON MAGAZINE ANALYSIS

Table A

Analysis of the contents of single issues (November and December, 1933, and January, 1934) of nine mass magazines, with circulations of over a million, and four class magazines.

MAGAZINE		SATURDAY EVENING POST	NATION'S BUSINESS	AMERICAN MAGAZINE	HARPER'S MAGAZINE	COSMOPOLITAN	LIBERTY	TRUE STORY	HOUSEHOLD	HARPER'S BAZAAR	WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION	AMERICAN WEEKLY	PHOTOPLAY	ARTS & DECORATION
CONTENTS:	Total contents: (by inches)	4,608	2,772	4,140	2,800	5,481	1,650	4,008	1,728	7,345	4,512	3,080	3,600	3,208
	% Advertising	47	47	28	15	30	15	30	39	46	38	22	21	20
	% Editorials	3	28	5	17	4	9	13	5	7	17		40	7
	% Articles and features	20	25	27	52	16	34	13	20	39	14	58	39	73
	% Fiction	30		40	16	50	42	44	36	8	30	20		
CONTENTS:	% Editorial advertising*	3	3	2	7	3	4	6	18	34	15	1	24	48
	1. Promoting advertised products		1	1	2	3	2	2	11	30	11		20	37
	2. Promoting sale of magazine	3	2	1	5		2	3	7	2	4	1	4	1
	3. Promoting buying							1		2				10
	% Selling space: Advertising & editorial advertising combined:	50	50	30	22	33	19	36	57	80	53	23	45	68
	% Space not devoted to selling	50	50	70	78	67	81	64	43	20	47	77	55	32
BUYING CLASS:**		B	A	B	A	B	B	C	C	A	B	C	B	A
	$0 –$1,999	16.8	no data	21.3	10.1	19.3	19.9	45.9	38.1	15.9	23.9	no data	22.2	11.4
	$2,000–$4,999	50.8	" "	57.1	48.2	55.4	66.1	51.7	53.3	36.6	56.7	" "	51.1	35.8
	$5,000–and up	32.2	" "	21.5	51.7	25.2	13.8	2.3	8.5	47.5	19.3	" "	25.7	52.8

* For definition of editorial advertising, see page 94.

** Daniel Starch: Magazine Circulations Study.

There is another inverse ratio in which this battle of the cultures is apparent. In the magazine literature of the prewar days, men and women grew up, fell in love, married, had children, and lived more or less happily ever after. Among current magazine examples we find that the *American Magazine* is still reasonably confident that this biological pattern is fundamental to human life. In 78 per cent of its fiction content sex—sentimental sex—is a major appeal. Significantly, we note that only three per cent of the *American Magazine*'s non-advertising space is devoted to promoting emulative motivations. With the *Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine which goes to a somewhat wealthier class of readers than the American, the emphasis on sex has lessened, and the interest in the acquisitive society is much more pronounced. Only 28 per cent of the *Post*'s fiction is devoted to sex, compared to the *American*'s 78 per cent. 45 per cent of the *Post*'s

subject matter space is devoted to emulation. Still more extreme is the situation in respect to *Photoplay* and *Arts & Decoration*, where sex rates five and zero per cent respectively, and emulation rates 20 and 43 per cent.

The magazine spectrum breaks down into three major categories; the five magazines in which the acquisitive culture is dominant, the four magazines in which the two cultures co-exist; and the four remaining magazines in which the older culture is dominant. It is significant that the first group of magazines caters exclusively to women; the second and third groups to both men and women.

Table B

MAGAZINE	SATURDAY EVENING POST	NATION'S BUSINESS	AMERICAN MAGAZINE	HARPER'S MAGAZINE	COSMOPOLITAN	LIBERTY	TRUE STORY	HOUSEHOLD	HARPER'S BAZAAR	WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION	AMERICAN WEEKLY	PHOTOPLAY	ARTS & DECORATION
SOPHISTICATION:*													
% of editorial, article, and feature space	88	79	41	37	28	24	16	11	2	1.5	.7		
% of editorial, article, feature, and fiction space	37	79	18	30	7	16	6	9	2	16	.5		
% of total magazine devoted to sophistication items appearing in editorial, article, and feature space	32	42	13	26	5	6	4	5	.8	.4	.7		
EMOTIONAL APPEALS:**													
Advertisements:													
% Fear:	6	14	20	8	20	19	42	27		22	5	8	
% Sex:	8	3	5		18	11	13		21	10		26	7
% Emulation:	23	9	13	8	21	11	9	3	35	9		31	15
Editorials, Articles and Features:													
% Fear:	11	15			17								
% Sex:	27				13	17	64			10	11	7	
% Emulation:	9		8		5			40	65			21	58
Fiction:													
% Fear:	13	no fiction			9		3		23			no fiction	no fiction
% Sex:	28	no fiction	78	42	62	78	59	58	85	22	60	no fiction	no fiction
% Emulation:	71	no fiction			16	34	51	29	18	35			

* For definition of "Sophistication," see page 90.

** Fear, sex and emulation appearing as major or minor appeals. Exception: "Fiction; Sex:", which includes only stories in which sex is a major appeal.

There are two other women's magazines in which the acquisitive culture is dominant. The *Woman's Home Companion* is edited for the urban woman, and *Household Magazine*, the largest and most popular of the rural women's magazines, caters to the small town and farm woman. *Woman's Home Companion* may be said to be typical of the six urban women's magazines with over 1,000,000 circulation—*Ladies' Home Journal*, *McCalls*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Pictorial Review*, and *Delineator*; while *Household* is typical of the five rural women's magazines with over 1,000,000 circulation—*Household*,

Woman's World, *Needlecraft*, *Mother's Home Life* and *Household Guest*, and *Gentlewoman*. These nine magazines alone distribute 239,000,000 copies of their product every year.

There is a distinct difference between the rural and the urban women's magazines; the rural magazines being much closer to the older traditional American culture. *Household Magazine* is one of the few magazines on our list that mentions God; the poetry is nai've and sincere, and the editor is human, honest, and even imaginative about his readers. The difficulty with *Household* would seem to be that there is a conflict between the editorial office and the business office; the business office being intent on apeing the formula and commercialism of the urban women's magazine group. In the urban women's magazines, the older American culture has become so thin as to be hardly visible. Even the interest in sex withers away in the *Companion*. While *Household* devotes 58 per cent of its fiction to sex, the *Companion* gauges its readers' interest in sex at 22 per cent. The sophistication element in *Household* is 16 per cent; in the *Companion* it is 1.5 per cent.

The group of four magazines in which neither culture is dominant, but in which both cultures exist side by side, includes the *Cosmopolitan*, *Liberty*, *True Story* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. The following table will show what elements of the two cultures are present:

Magazine	*Older Culture*	*Acquisitive Culture*
Saturday Evening Post	Sophistication	Emulation
Cosmopolitan	Sex	Emulation
Liberty	Sex	Emulation
True Story	Sex	Emulation

In the magazines in which emulation is dominant, less than three-fifths of the fiction is concerned with sex. But in *Cosmopolitan*, *Liberty* and *True Story* over three-fifths of the fiction is concerned with sex. The acquisitive culture is represented by a considerable dash of emulation: *Cosmopolitan* 13 per cent; *Liberty* 17 per cent; and *True Story* 30 per cent. In connection with *True Story* it should be pointed out that the emulative escape for the poor is crime and that this fact is quite definitely recognized in the fiction content of this magazine.

The *Saturday Evening Post* is in a class by itself. Its sophistication content of 88 per cent is the highest of any of the magazines examined, and its emulative content of 45 per cent is second only to *Harper's Bazaar*, which is 68 per cent. A third of the *Post*'s readers have incomes of over $5,000 a year. They can afford to play this emu-

lative game and the *Post* as a commercial enterprise duly exploits this fact in its fictional content.

There are four magazines in which the older culture is dominant: the *American Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Nation's Business* and the *American Weekly*. In *Harper's Magazine* we find perhaps the most typical expression of the "cultured" upper-middle-class tradition, as it carries over from the nineteenth century. The readers of *Harper's* are given no emulative stimulus whatever, except in the ads. The sophistication rating is 37 per cent. *Harper's* ranks fourth in this respect. In the *American Magazine*, the prewar, precrash culture persists. In particular, this magazine continues to exploit the fictional formula of the prewar culture. Its preoccupation with the pretty romantic aspects of courtship reveals how strong is the cultural lag against which the hard, galvanic, emulative culture battles. In its articles and editorials, the *American* appeals to the small city and small town American man, who admires business success, bristles alertly about politics, and believes that the world is inhabited by villains and kind people, with the kind people in a position of dominance.

In the *American Weekly* we encounter another emulation zero. Its readers are urban proletarians, too poor to play the emulative game. The Hearst formula realizes that they are strongly interested in sex: 65 per cent, but that they are even more interested in science. Three times as much space is devoted to science as to sex. True, the science is of a primitive sort, like Paul Bunyan's "Tales of the Blue Ox." Typical *American Weekly* titles are: "The Sleeping Habits of the Chimpanzee," "The Growth of the Iron Horse Since the Six-Wheeled Locomotive," "Chicago Observatory Telegraphs to the Dead," "Why Our Climate Is Slowly Becoming Tropical," "What the Tower of Babel Really Looked Like." The *American Weekly* is quite simply concerned with serving a satisfying dish of weekly thrills. The technique is robust since the modern world is full of wonders and the appetites of the readers are not complicated.

The *Nation's Business* is another very special case. This magazine is the official organ of the United States Chamber of Commerce, while the *Saturday Evening Post* might be thought of as its unofficial organ. The *Nation's Business* ranks with the *Saturday Evening Post* in point of sophistication. Its editorial content is devoid of emulative appeal and even the advertisements rate remarkably low in these respects; only 9.6 per cent of the ads appeal to emulation.

It would be a commonplace to remark that most of the editorial content of these magazines is quite ephemeral. Fifty years hence the literary historian will probably have little difficulty in condensing the creative contribution of our total commercial magazine-press during the postwar period into a brief dismissive paragraph to the

effect that the fugitive literature of this period was ugly, faked and frail. After one has diligently read this curious stuff over a period of weeks, one begins to see our contemporary magazine pseudoculture as an almost human creature. It is a robot contraption, strung together with the tinsel of material emulation, galvanized with fear, and perfumed with fake sex. It exhibits a definite glandular imbalance, being hyperthyroid as to snobbism, but with a deficiency of sex, economics, politics, religion, science, art and sentiment. It is ugly, nobody loves it, and nobody really wants it except the business men who make money out of it. It has a low brow, a long emulative nose, thin, bloodless, asexual lips, and the receding chin of the will-less, day-dreaming fantast. The stomach is distended either by the abnormal things-obsessed appetite of the middle-class and the rich, or by the starved flatulence of the poor. Finally it is visibly dying for lack of blood and brains.

The Role of Emulation

In anatomizing this pseudoculture we must refer again to our definition of culture as the sum-total of the human environment to which any individual is exposed, and point out again that the test of a culture is what kind of a life it affords not for a few but for all of its citizens. One grants immediately that emulation has a place in any genuine culture. It is a question of balance, and the point here made is that the quantity and kind of emulation exhibited by the magazine pseudoculture is such as to affect adversely and probably disastrously the viability of this synthetic creature that the magazines offer us. Specifically, snobbism appears to be the antithesis of sex. Where the first is dominant, the other tends to be recessive.

An analysis of the entire contents of the thirteen magazines shows that sex and emulation are the principal appeals in the subject matter. Sentiment occupies on the average only 1.8 per cent of the total space in the magazines, humor only .9 per cent. In the advertisements there is more emulation than sex. The average appeal to sex in the ads in the thirteen magazines is 9.6 per cent, the average appeal to emulation is 14.7 per cent. In the subject matter sex continues to dominate emulation. This is particularly true in the fiction where 55 per cent of the stories have sex as the main appeal. Emulation, however, occupies no inconsiderable place in the magazines. Twenty-two per cent or one-fifth of the subject matter is concerned with emulation.

There is one generalization about emulation as it appears in these magazines that can safely be made, emulation is not a commodity that can be offered to the poor. Not even the lower middle-class can

afford it. It is distinctly for the well-to-do and for the rich. While fear is the dominant appeal in the advertising sections of seven magazines which are read by the lower income class, emulation is the dominant appeal in the advertisements of six magazines which go to the upper income-levels. For example: in *True Story*, 42 per cent of the ads are fear ads. In contrast, *Harper's Bazaar* has no fear ads, and 35 per cent of the ads are devoted to emulation.

Emulation is, of course, most apparent in magazines in which the acquisitive, emulative culture is undiluted, like *Harper's Bazaar*, *Arts & Decoration* and *Photoplay*. In the previous chapter, "Chromium Is More Expensive," we have already quoted emulative editorial advertising taken from the first two of these magazines. A few brief examples of snobbism, chosen not only from these magazines but from the general list of magazines, will perhaps illustrate the prevalence of snobbism and its character.

(1) "It was a subtle satisfaction that no big social affair was considered complete without us. 'Were the Roger Browns there?' was the regular question in the aftermath of gossip." (*True Story*)

(2) " 'She's one of the Mount-Dyce-Mounts.' 'One of the Mount-Dyce-Mounts,' echoed John unbelievingly, and forgetting all about Jean, he hurried down the steps ... and went up to where the old lady had settled herself in a chair. John introduced himself with a charming air." (*Liberty*)

(3) " 'I keep only one groom so I help to look after my ponies myself in the morning. I did not stop to take off my coat, because I was afraid I might miss you. Excuse.' He removed his duster solemnly. In his tweed coat and well-worn riding breeches, his costume conformed to type." (*Woman's Home Companion*)

(4) "He's a hotel aristocrat. You're a country gentlewoman. I'm so glad it's all over. How wise Dr. Fancher was not to announce the engagement." (*Saturday Evening Post*)

(5) "Now for the problem of the Christmas gift, for, despite the pleasure we all must surely feel in giving gifts to our friends, the choosing of gifts is indeed a problem, and the problem lies mainly in avoiding the banal." (*Harper's Bazaar*)

(6) "Those who are demanding 'contempora' are in a sense the patrons of modern design. Just as the Church was at one time, and the King at another." (*Arts & Decoration*)

The Role of Sex

Before plunging into the jungle of our magazine sex fiction it will be necessary to establish certain points of reference.

1. The biological norm of the sex relation tends to assert and re-assert itself against the religious and other taboos of the social environment, and against the limitations and frustrations of the economic environment. In other words, the readers of the magazines are both biological and social animals who would doubtless like to be human, to live balanced, vigorous and creative sexual and social lives.
2. Theoretically, the magazines, in so far as they deal with sex at all, are trying to instruct and aid their readers in solving their problems of sexual adjustment within the existing framework of the economy and of the mores. Since the writer of fiction or verse exhibits directly or indirectly a set of values, the verse and fiction writers are inevitably affecting, for good or ill, the values and attitudes of their readers in regard to sex. There are also the articles which deal with sex directly.

Against this background, let us now attempt to describe what actually goes on in these magazines. The exploitation of the sexual dilemmas of the population by advertisers will be given consideration in the chapter on "Sacred and Profane Love." In the fictional and verse content of the popular magazines we have another, less direct form of exploitation. We know who writes the advertisements and why. It is necessary now to ask: who writes the sex fiction and why?

The first point to note is that very little of it is written by literary artists. There is a categorical difference between the equipment, attitude and purpose of the literary artist who deals with sex relations, and the equipment, attitude and purpose of the sex fictioneer.

The work of the artist is a work of discovery, including self-discovery, and of statement. In the field of sex the mature artist exhibits neither timidity nor shame. True, the artist is often, like other human beings, the victim of biological or socially acquired defects, inhibitions and distortions, both physiological and psychological. Hence much genuine literature in the field of sex must be characterized as in a sense compensatory writing. It would seem probable, for example, that practically all the work of D. H. Lawrence is of this nature, as well as some, at least, of the work of Walt Whitman. But both these writers, being genuinely gifted artists, are concerned only with the presentation of the observed or intuitively perceived truth; they are concerned with discovery. They are serving no ulterior purposes, and are in one sense writing primarily for themselves. And being strong natures, they assert their own values, attitudes, judgments, for value judgments are implicit in the most "objective" writing.

In contrast, the commercial sex fictioneer is primarily concerned, not with the discovery and statement of truth, but with the making

of money. If, as ordinarily, his is a tenth rate talent, his maximum service lies in the telling of a tale; but in the telling he illuminates little or nothing. At his worst the sex fictioneer is merely commercializing an acceptable formula; he is "selling" the pseudoculture to itself; he does nothing creative with the current sexual fact or with the current sexual make-believe; he does not even achieve clear statement.

In this commercial sex fiction, the pattern is cut to the requirements of the editor, who specializes in calculating what can and cannot be said within the limits of a commercial enterprise designed to acquire or hold a certain class or mass circulation. It is a fairly complex calculation, and much study and experiment are required before the apprentice sex fictioneer gets the editorial "slant" of a particular magazine.

Of the thirteen magazines examined, *True Story* is the only one which definitely claims to offer sex instruction to its readers.

> "Until five years ago," said a full-page advertisement, ... "there was nowhere men and women, boys and girls, could turn to to get a knowledge of the rules of life.... Then came *True Story*, a magazine that is different from any ever published. Its foundation is the solid rock of truth.... It will help you, too. In five years it has reached the unheard-of circulation of two million copies monthly, and is read by five million or more appreciative men and women."

While *True Story* is certainly a commercial enterprise, and while an unsympathetic commentator might well allege that it was specifically designed to exploit the postwar relaxation of the sexual mores, it is nevertheless true that *True Story* is immeasurably closer to reality than any of the other twelve magazines examined. This, in spite of the fact that most of its "true stories" give internal evidence of being fake stories, nine-tenths of which are written by formula and perhaps one-tenth by high school graduates eager to become writers.

The distinction of *True Story* rests on the fact that it admits that sexual temptations sometimes occur and are sometimes yielded to; also that it deals with matrimony rather than courtship. Its limitation is its virtuous surrender to the Puritan conviction that an extramarital slip is a sin, inevitably followed by remorse and retribution.

Of eleven stories and articles in the issue examined, six have sex for a major theme and five of these stories deal with matrimonial difficulties, i.e., sexual temptations not evaded. One must, of course, point out that no true description of the sexual behavior of the poor is to be derived from *True Story*, although there are scenes in which a married woman prepares the room for the reception of her lover and receives him. What true descriptions we have must be looked for in the work of such novelists as Edward Dahlberg, James T. Farrell, Erskine Caldwell and Morley Callaghan. The *True Story* formula, in

its negative and positive aspects, runs somewhat as follows: sinner redeemed, sinner pays, sinner repents, saint sacrifices all; the beauty of duty, of security after a narrow escape from losing one's reputation and job; the beauty of being a true wife, the beauty of resignation, of truthfulness, and of character.

After a particularly lurid escapade the *True Story* heroine is obliged to say something like this: "If every silly, sentimental fool in this sad old world could have witnessed that scene, it would have done an enormous amount of good. Many a home would have been saved from ruin. They would have known the tempting Dead Sea fruit of illicit love for what it was, giving a bitter flavor to life for all who taste it."

Obviously, the success of Mr. Macfadden's enterprise is based on the profitableness of bearing witness.

An analysis of 45 sex stories from ten magazines, including *True Story*, yields much interesting material for speculation. But as regards the technique of sexual behavior the harvest is meagre indeed. We were able to discover only four items of premarital and two items of postmarital technique.

Premarital technique: How a mother can recognize the first sign of love in her adolescent son (*Woman's Home Companion*). How to approach a virgin (Data in a number of stories, but all very meagre and questionable). How, if a girl is careful and smart she can take everything and give nothing (*American Weekly*). Why an unmarried woman who wishes to seduce a youth should avoid tragic diversions such as those incident to the mistake of taking along her pet goat (*Harper's Bazaar*).

Postmarital technique: How to commit bigamy. How to kill a drunken husband and thereby improve one's social status.

In addition to the information about technique, the 45 sex stories present the following conclusions about sex, sex and economics, and morals:

> *Men:* "All men are pretty dumb and clumsy. There might be men somewhere who lived up to the things the poets, novelists and musicians said of men. If so, she had never met them."
>
> One man may be able to arouse a frigid woman, while another may not.
>
> A man will bet on his ability to pluck the bloom from a virgin, and then not want it.
>
> A genius is not bound by the moral code of Puritanism.

Marriage: The sex revolution of the postwar era led to unhappiness.

After "sleeping around," actually or mentally, a married couple's chance of happiness is with each other.

Through reading light, trashy stuff a woman may lose her husband.

Sex and Economics: Millions cannot buy love. A mercenary woman cares more for her car than for her husband. A rich girl is smart if she marries a poor boy who has brains. Since a poor girl is often no good, it is safer to marry a rich girl.

Morals: Virtue is more attractive than vice. An "indiscretion" can strip a woman of her good name, rob her of her freedom, and cost her every penny she has in the world. A common-law marriage may ruin a man's social position years later. A married couple should be an example to other married couples and to unmarried persons.

These conclusions and the six technical points represent *all* that is to be gained from this magazine sex fiction.

Of the 45 sex stories examined, only 13 were straight sex stories. The complications introduced in the remaining 32 are as follows:

Thirteen: economics plus sex; eleven: romance plus sex; five: the American scene plus sex; two: the sex revolution; one: religion plus sex.

It is worth noting that although complications due to intermarriage of races and nationalities might be expected, practically nothing of this sort was encountered.

It should be emphasized that this magazine sex literature centers around women rather than around men. The problems of men are considered in only three of the 45 sex fiction stories. It is also significant that men outnumber women in the cast of characters; a surplusage of men is necessary properly to dramatize the feminine dilemma. This surplusage of men is more pronounced as we ascend the class ladder. The woman of *True Story* hopes for no more than a single lover. The middle-class heroine must have at least the choice of two. The grande dame of *Harper's Bazaar* requires a circle of adoring youths with beautiful bodies, including at least one millionaire.

So frequently does the theme repeat itself in this magazine sex fiction that we feel warranted in saying that the dominant desire of the woman is to be freed from some situation in which she is bound or caught. But in only two instances out of the 45 (the sex revolution stories) does the heroine herself initiate positive action toward such liberation. The most that the average heroine permits herself is to give some clue to her prospective liberator. Out of a wealth of data we submit the following quotations which serve best to reveal the typical heroine's attitude:

> "Restlessness, dissatisfaction possessed her. She wanted more—more, somehow, than life was giving her. Other women were happy—sometimes such stupid, plain, elderly women were happy, but she was continually fretted and harassed by this sense of missing something—of being cheated." (Kathleen Norris. "Three Men and Diana." *The American*)

> "I had Wanted Out. Always I had Wanted Out. Yet whenever I had tried to find a door—when I had taken some great risk, like marriage, in order to find the door—I had failed. There had been no door. Then, suddenly, in some unexpected place the door would open!" (Elsie Robinson. "I Wanted Out." *Cosmopolitan*, April, 1934)

All these fiction heroines want happiness, of course, but it is notable that they get happiness only in the romantic moment which precedes marriage. Stories of happy married life are entirely lacking in the samples examined. Significant class differences characterize the behavior of these heroines. The extravagance of the rich woman in the matter of lovers has already been indicated. The shifting milieu of these stories would also seem to show a class difference.

In Class "A" magazines the scene is always Europe, the Swiss Alps, Scotland, England, the Riviera. America is ignored geographically. In the Class "B" magazines the geography is mixed; Africa, London, the Oregon of the gold rush, a fresh water college town, New England, Chicago, New York and Hollywood. In the Class "C" magazines with only a few exceptions the locale is America—the poor don't travel. The typical scene is the country or small town, New England, Chicago, New York and Hollywood. It would appear that Hollywood is the Riviera of the proletarian as well as to a considerable extent the focus for the dreams of the middle-class woman.

The following table indicates the range of fiction heroines encountered by class categories. Note that the typical rich heroine is mercenary, the typical middle-class heroine is an unawakened or unresponsive woman, and the typical poor heroine is sexually responsive as well as biologically more prolific. In magazine fiction as well as in life the poor woman has the largest number of babies. While the 41 fiction heroines of the middle-class produce only three children, the eleven fiction heroines of the poor produce nine children.

SEX FICTION HEROINES

MERCENARY WOMEN:

Class "A" Magazines	51 per cent
Class "B" Magazines	10 per cent
Class "C" Magazines	10 per cent

UNRESPONSIVE WOMEN:

Class "A" Magazines	56 per cent
Class "B" Magazines	45 per cent
Class "C" Magazines	17 per cent

RESPONSIVE WOMEN:

Class "A" Magazines	45 per cent
Class "B" Magazines	34 per cent
Class "C" Magazines	17 per cent

As to inter-class relationships the typical fictional device is the Cinderella theme, either straight, Poor Girl Marries Rich Man, or in reverse, Poor Boy Marries Rich Girl, the latter being apparently more popular. Proletarian characters are frequently encountered in Class "A" sex fiction. It would appear that the readers of the Class "A" magazines like to parasite emotionally upon the richer sexual life of the poor.

The bulk of American magazines are read by the middle class, the $2,000 to $5,000 income group. In the case of ten magazines which we have selected as representative types, 51 per cent of the circulation goes to the middle class. Twenty women's magazines, studied by Daniel Starch, show about the same percentage; 57 per cent of them have middle-class readers. The fact that the middle-class woman is the principal reader of mass and class circulation magazines is important to keep in mind in considering what we feel to be one of the significant findings of the study. The editor of the typical mass circulation magazine, usually a man, addresses himself primarily to the restless unhappy middle-class woman. The fiction exploits rather than resolves this unhappiness, just as the advertising exploits the emulative things-obsessed psychology of this woman, which it would seem arises chiefly from her sexual frustration. Here are two quotations which exhibit the condition of this middle-class woman.

> (1) "Quite suddenly, without warning, Diana realized that her marriage had been a losing fight. A mistake as far as her own interior happiness was concerned.... She could still go on gallantly—picking strawberries, heating rolls, brewing coffee. But somehow the glamour, the excitement was gone. Neal seemed to be just a man, she just a woman, there seemed no particular reason for their being together." (Kathleen Norris. "Three Men and Diana." *American Magazine*)

> (2) "The second period in a woman's life is when, after many strenuous years of adjustment toward husband and family, she feels entitled to let her own personality have full scope. She wants to forget as much as possible those difficult years, she wants to live her own life, to entertain

> her own friends in her own background. By this time plain Romeo has turned into Mr. Romeo Babbitt, *but there is no Mrs. Babbitt*. There is instead a gracious woman in the prime of life who has matured in excellence like old wine and the cask must be adequate." (Daisy Fellowes. "Home, Sweet Home." *Harper's Bazaar*)

We have already noted the inverse ratio of sex deficiency and emulation. Material emulation and snobbism are apparently substitutes for sexual satisfaction. From the point of view of a commercial publisher interested in achieving a maximum "reader interest" for his advertisers the ideal subscriber to a middle-class woman's magazine is the woman who has never experienced the full physical and emotional satisfactions of sex; who is more or less secure in her economic position and who determinedly compensates her sexual frustration by becoming an ardent and responsive buyer.

One of the most frequent charges leveled against American culture is that it is woman-dominated. Women, it is said, read the books, attend the concerts and exhibitions, run the charities, figure increasingly in politics, etc. The inference is that our cultural deficiencies are caused by this domination of the woman, for which various explanations have been offered.

Our examination of the magazine literature leads us to question the accuracy of this picture. Is it women who have created this adman's pseudoculture? Is it women who own and direct these commercial enterprises of mass publications? No, it is predominantly men. It may also be alleged that it is the stupidity of men which is largely responsible for the sexual and emotional frustration of the typical middle-class woman. The result of the middle-class woman's physical or emotional frustration is not that she compensates by achieving a culture superior to that of the man. A much truer statement would be that the exploitation of the dilemma of these women by men has helped to bring about the collapse of culture in the United States. It is significant to note in this connection that it is precisely in the women's magazines that sophistication tends to disappear. Of the five women's magazines examined, four devoted less than three per cent of their article and editorial space to sophistication.

In summarizing the sex content of the magazines it is sufficient merely to note that it is almost incredibly thin and vapid, useless as instruction, and deficient in thrills.

Religion, Art, Science

In the thirteen magazines examined, we find God mentioned once in a fiction story and twice in poems. Art is mentioned only by *Arts*

& Decoration. Science, which gets full if crude treatment in Hearst's *American Weekly*, is encountered in only one other magazine, *Liberty*, which contains a story by Edgar Rice Burroughs, "Tarzan and the Lion Man," in which the author has a paragraph or two about the imaginary genesis of his hybrid.

The Role of Sophistication

Of the four criteria for sophistication referred to in earlier chapters only one, the treatment of the depression, proved to be important in quantity or revealing in content. *Photoplay*, *Arts & Decoration* and *Harper's Bazaar* do not mention the depression at all. The negative response to the depression takes the form of a repudiation of the acquisitive culture and a turning back in time to the older American virtues and the older American pattern of life.

(1) "Looking back [to the days when her husband, now a farm-hand, had an $8,000 a year salary] it seems as if we never found anything very—very real to quarrel about. And the queer thing is I know we were both rather clever then. We weren't stupefied with work, the way we are now. I suppose that must be the answer. If I weren't too tired to think clearly, I'd be able to see some sense to it. It actually seems as if there were more dullness and stupidity in those smart squabbles about books and plays and clothes and places to eat than there is in sitting here—like dumb animals, too tired to talk, contented because we're warm, and fed, and alive." (Hugh McNair Kahler. "Winter Harvest." *Saturday Evening Post*)

(2) "Jonathan could not understand his sister's passionate loyalty to the old house. He worshipped the modern, the technical, the efficient. It was this that had made him persuade his brother to abandon the leather factory, with its century-old reputation for honesty and fair dealing and follow the will-o'-the-wisp of fortune with the vacuum cleaners. Their story was the story of dozens of small industries.

" 'Listen to me, Jonathan,' said Charlotte coldly, 'I want to read you a few lines from this book.' She read, her voice trembling with the intensity of her feeling:

" 'Never the running stag, the gull at wing,

The pure elixir, the American Thing....'

" 'It's that—"The American Thing"—we've got away from it, from everything we stood for. And now we're going back to it.... Look at the farmers. They've got food they can't sell but no money. We'll take their leather goods in exchange for food and hides.' ...

" 'But that's barter,' Jonathan gasped.

" 'Savagery.'

> "Bartlett looked at her steadily.... 'Barter,' he said, at length. 'Ancient as the hills and modern as tomorrow'." (Francis Sill Wickware. "The American Thing." *Woman's Home Companion*.)

In considering the positive response to the depression a brief summary of the essential characteristics of these class cultures will be useful. In magazines read by the poor, fear and sex are dominant and emulation is negligible. The middle-class are immunized against fear, exhibit a definite sex deficiency and are strong in emulation: they are the climbers. In magazines going to the rich, fear reappears, and sex is exploited chiefly for its mercenary or amusement value. Since these magazines primarily exploit the climbing *nouveau riche*, emulation is very strong and is reinforced by a tremendous preoccupation with "things." An example of the mercenary characteristic of the rich as exhibited in the high income magazines is the following:

> " 'My dear Mr. Sherrard,' he said, 'as a man of the world, you will at once comprehend the situation. My wife and I are devoted to each other; unfortunately, we have no money. Not-a-single-sou.' He paused to let this sink in, then continued blandly as before. 'Our tastes are what might be described as traditionally extravagant. We can't help it, we inherit them from our ancestors. Together, our life, save for a few moments of bliss, is impossible. Apart, we simply cannot prevent—I repeat, *cannot prevent*—money coming to us in large quantities. It is odd.'
>
> " 'Very,' agreed Sherrard.
>
> " 'I know what you are thinking: that it would be more noble to starve than acquire such money. But then we are not noble-men that way'." (Margery Sharp. "Immoral Story." *Harper's Bazaar.*)

Where, in a transitional period, do the readers of magazines think they are going? Before attempting to answer this question, it is worth noting that the letters from readers warrant the belief that the readers are going somewhere much faster than the editors would like.

The *American Magazine* represents the lower middle-class male; the *Saturday Evening Post*, the upper middle-class male; *Nation's Business*, the rich. How do the men of these different classes regard the future of business and of government? The *American Magazine* is behind the New Deal sturdily and optimistically. None the less, in a pinch it is clear that the typical *American Magazine* reader would go fascist. This is revealed by the general direction of the articles and by readers' letters. The *Saturday Evening Post* is belligerent and not frightened. The creed of the *Post* is to repel every invasion of business by the government. It professes to believe that business is capable of running the country without government aid. Whenever this illusion breaks down the magazine alertly serves its readers by offering optimistic

adaptations to the necessities of the moment. The *Post*'s high point of sophistication is registered in the following quotation which is the concluding paragraph of an article by Caret Garrett entitled "Washington Miscellany."

> "The law of necessity hitherto acting [before the Roosevelt Administration] was a law of nightmare. For that it is proposed to substitute a law of the disciplined event. To say this has never happened is not to say it cannot happen. But certainly it was by the other way that the world grew as rich as it is, which is richer than it ever was before."

The *Nation's Business* is too near, perhaps, to the seats of power not to have looked over the edge of the precipice and to have become doubtful. "Capital is Scared," it headlines, and in recording the timidity of investors remarks: "In other words they wonder whether or not the days of private capitalism are numbered." Curiously the editor of *Nation's Business* seems to be less confident that Fascism is our next phase than are the editors of the Communist *Daily Worker*. In reading the articles and editorials of *Nation's Business* one gets the impression that these frightened business men of Wall Street, and of the provincial chambers of commerce, would not be surprised if they awoke tomorrow morning to find the revolution on their doorsteps.

With regard to the poor, our magazine indices are *True Story* and the famous Vox Pop of *Liberty*. It seems clear that *Liberty* readers comprise a high percentage of war generation males, especially Legionnaires. Their notion of a revolution would appear to be a miraculous change of political administration whereby suddenly everybody would get $5,000 a year. In the lack of such miracles they advocate homespun nostrums like the scrapping of machines, going back to the land, etc. While it is clear that the readers of *Liberty* are not sophisticated radicals, labor legislation, technological unemployment, and the revolution get mentioned in the Vox Pop pages. Whether the *Liberty* readers go fascist or communist would appear to depend upon the energy and astuteness which one or the other party manifests in proselytizing and mobilizing them.

True Story is a mine of sophistication data regarding the poor. The editors write about the family problems created by the depression and invite contributions on the subject from their readers, but the absorption with these problems is clearly evident in the fiction as well. To the poor, poverty is a perpetual problem, in good as well as in bad times. It is the unique distinction of *True Story* among the magazines examined that it is the only one which contains stories about the poor. Despite the fakery which is apparent in much of this fiction, there is also much genuinely revealing stuff. In the issue examined, four of the nine fiction stories deal with the working class and two deal with the very poor.

As already noted, the fiction writers for *True Story* recognize that the way out for the poor is crime. In the following quotation there is presented a typical white-collar depression dilemma. The story concerns a burdened father who, unwilling to seek the way out through crime, kills himself in such a way that his family may collect the insurance and pay their debts.

> " 'You know, Lois, the rottenest part of it all is Dad,' he said slowly.... 'Dad hasn't had much out of life. Mother's a swell person in her way, but she's certainly made his life miserable. He's crazy about us—about all his kids—but we've cost him an awful lot and I don't think we've given him much in return. When I look at Dad and think of all the years he's striven beyond his strength, of all the things he's gone without to give us things—of how little he's had out of life, I get sick inside. He's a man made for cheerfulness, and freedom and happy-go-lucky ways. And he's been harnessed to routine and duties and schedules all his life. And for what? He's ended in disgrace and failure. No matter what we think—and we don't think he's a disgrace and a failure—that's what it boils down to in the eyes of the world.
>
> " 'A letter from Papa a letter.... He's going to commit suicide.... He's doing it for us.... You can see for yourself. He thinks he's no good, and that he'll never land another job at his age. He wants to leave us his insurance. He knows that'll wipe out every debt we have and start us fresh. It's all he has to give and he's willing'."
>
> ("Desperate Days." *True Story*.)

The alternative to crime as a way out would appear to be suicide. But what happens when the poor do essay crime as a way out of their dilemmas? The following quotation is taken from a story dealing with the very poor.

> "It was the first motion picture I had ever seen, despite the fact that our little hamlet had boasted two shows weekly for many years.... We walked ten miles to the next town.... Jimmie's pockets were bulging with the life savings of his aunt, while he let me believe the money was rightfully his.... In my talks with Jimmie, I came to see a change in him. He laughed about the decencies of life, about the people who worked hard for their bread, about the poor people who stood for oppression from the rich.... The well defined line between right and wrong seemed to grow fainter as the days passed. Sometimes I thought Jimmie was right about the unfairness of things and our privilege to make up for it outside the law....
>
> "Jimmie was sentenced first, and taken to prison several days before my sentence was fixed. As he passed the women's cells, I could hear him singing 'Let the Rest of the World Go By.' He was trying to be a good sport.... Club women called on me and tried in their mechanical way to preach morals to me. Their visits served only to antagonize me. All the time they were talking, my heart cried out 'But you've had a

> chance in life. You had love and home and friends. I didn't want to steal. Jimmie was sick, and I was scared he'd die, if I didn't help him get the stuff.' My lips did not form the words. In fact I hardly spoke to them at all. I scowled my hatred at them, and saved my tears for my pillowless bunk."
>
> ("His Mother's Confession." *True Story*.)

The conclusion indicates that crime, that is theft, is no way out after all since the wages of crime is jail. It is estimated that the poor, that is to say, those having less than $2,000 a year, constitute over 75 per cent of the total population. Where are they going in this transitional period? It seems clear that a considerable percentage of the readers of *True Story* are desperate and cynical about the possibility of escape from their dilemmas by any other route than the crime route. Clearly that route is being increasingly followed as Abraham Epstein notes in "Insecurity, A Challenge to America," when he points out that since the depression the total value of insurances policies lapsed for inability to pay amounts to $3,000,000,000, and that the prisoners admitted to Sing Sing for robbery have increased by 70 per cent. It would seem apparent that here we have a nexus of potential revolutionary material, inert at the moment, but capable of mobilization by an able revolutionary leader who could show a practical way out, other than the way of crime.

Recently in talking to a group of business men who were refocusing their advertising expenditures upon the narrowing sector of the population which represents any exploitable buying power, I raised the question as to what business intended doing with these extra-economic men. The answer was "Nothing." The assumption so far as I could gather seemed to be that the surplusage of the population would starve peaceably and eliminate itself. I recommended the reading of *True Story* to these bemused plutocrats. It seems very clear that the readers of *True Story* will not starve peaceably.

Here then we have the spectrum of the ad-man's pseudoculture as revealed by its mass and class magazine literature.

Is it desirable to rehabilitate this ad-man's pseudoculture? The question is somewhat beside the point since history does not evolve by a series of moral or esthetic choices. A culture is rejected, not because it is ugly and unjust, but because it is not viable. The more pertinent question, therefore, is: "Is it *possible* to rehabilitate this pseudoculture?" The answer here is the same answer which must be given to the question: "Is it possible to rehabilitate the capitalist economy?" The capitalist economy can survive as long as it can validate its rising mound of paper titles to ownership and income by the enslavement of labor and by progressive imperial conquests. The capitalist culture—the ad-man's pseudoculture—can survive as long

as it can give some substance to the traditional concept of individual opportunity; the ability of the able individual to rise out of his class. The economy and the culture are Siamese Twins; or rather, they are aspects of the same thing. Examination of this magazine literature reveals clearly that the democratic dogma is dying if not already dead; that the emulative culture is not accessible to the poor and to the lower middle-class; that the poor are oriented toward crime, and potentially at least, toward revolution; that the middle classes are oriented toward fascism. In short, the ad-man's pseudoculture is not satisfying. To be effectively exploited it must be diluted with elements derived from the older culture and with some measure of sophistication and service, particularly with respect to the lower income groups. Its decadence parallels rather strictly the decadence of the capitalist economy. Historically, the ad-man's pseudoculture will probably be regarded as a very frail and ephemeral thing.

We must therefore conclude that this culture, or pseudoculture, is not viable, hence cannot be rehabilitated. This conclusion will be regarded as optimistic, or pessimistic, depending upon the point of view of the reader.

7 THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ADVERTISING

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ASK a child who is just beginning to read: "What is a newspaper? What is a magazine?" He will speak of news and fiction and advertising as integral parts of the same thing. Explain and argue as much as you like, you will not be able to disturb his primitive conviction that the advertising is not just as much a part of the paper as the news, and that, if the thing is to make sense, it has to make sense as a unit. Tell him that the news and editorials represent one thing, one responsibility, one ethic, one function, one purpose; that the advertising represents another thing, another responsibility, another purpose. He nods vaguely and gives it up.

In other words, the child's instinct leads him to precisely the same conclusion as that set forth and documented in the preceding study of the magazines.

Advertising, in the broadest sense of the word, is as old as trade. The definition offered by Frank Presbrey in his *History and Development of Advertising* would seem to be sufficiently broad and accurate. To quote it again: "Advertising is printed, written, or graphic salesmanship deriving from oral salesmanship."[1] The modern spread and intensified use of the instrument in America is made possible by our almost universal literacy. But ancient graphic and written advertising exhibits a functional relationship to the then current nexus of economic and social fact which is strikingly similar to the contemporary set-up.

[1] [Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1929).]

The Babylonian temples were built of sun-baked bricks. Each brick was stamped with the name of the temple and the name of the king who built it. The temples were advertising, just as the Woolworth and Chrysler Buildings are advertising. There is even some justice in Presbrey's observation that these temples represented "an institutional campaign conducted by the kings in behalf of themselves and their dynasties."

The Rosetta Stone is a eulogy of Ptolemy Epiphanes, dating from 136 B.C., in three languages: Coptic, hieroglyphs and Greek. It was erected by the local priests in gratitude for a remission of taxes. The

priests were, in effect, the local satraps of Ptolemy and the Rosetta Stone was functional with respect to the discharge of their responsibility. It was necessary to "sell" Ptolemy to the people, and probably the priests acted at the suggestion, certainly with the approval of their overlord.

When President Roosevelt was inaugurated he proceeded more directly. Using the modern instrumentality of the radio, he sold the American people on the closing of the banks and the incidental wiping out of perhaps $6,000,000,000 of their savings. The priests—the radio broadcasters—contributed free time, and the other priests—the newspapers—contributed enthusiastic approval and applause. With the evidence of this and later triumphs of government-as-advertising before us, those primitive Babylonian practitioners seem hopelessly outclassed.

Since literacy was the privilege of a minority, the Babylonian tradesmen used barkers and symbols. Later, inscriptions were employed. Lead sheets found in ancient Greek temples affirmed the rights of property by cursing the sacrilegious people who did not return lost articles to their owners. In ancient Greece the arts of elocution and music were functional with respect to trade; the Greek auctioneer was an elocutionist and was usually accompanied by a musician.

The word "libel" is Latin. In ancient Rome a libel was a public denouncement of an absconding debtor.

It seems probable that advertising was more or less professionalized in very ancient times. For example there is some reason for believing that the walls of ancient Pompeii may have been controlled by a commercial contractor. Early posters were inscriptions announcing theatrical performances and sports, and commending the facilities of commercial baths. Presbrey renders one such advertisement as follows: "The troop of gladiators of the sedil will fight on the 31st of May. There will be fights with wild animals, and an awning to keep out the sun."

With the break-up of the Roman Empire, advertising shared the general obscuration of the middle ages. Says Presbrey, "For nearly a thousand years, following the decline of Rome, advertising made no progress. Instead, it went backward, following the retreating steps of civilization."

When the profession re-emerges, it is under the changed conditions of the medieval church-state. A decree of Philip Augustus in 1280 proclaims:

"Whosoever is a crier in Paris may go to any tavern he likes and cry its wine, provided they sell wine from the wood and there is no other crier provided for that tavern; and the tavern keeper cannot

prohibit him. If a crier finds people drinking in a tavern he may ask what they pay for the wine they drink; and he may go out and cry the wine at the prices they pay, whether the tavern keeper wishes it or not, provided always that there be no other crier employed for that tavern."

The "just price" for which the crier served was four *dinarii* a day. It was further provided that if the tavern keeper closed his door against the crier, the latter might cry wine at the price of the king's wine, and claim his fee.

Perhaps the last proviso gives a clue to the motivation of Philip Augustus' proclamation. The king was in the wine business, too, and was accordingly interested in the education and expansion of the market. The king's wine was to be sold at a given price, which provided a measuring stick for competition and was doubtless a factor in price maintenance.

As one might expect, the re-birth of advertising coincides with the expansion of trade in Western Europe made possible by the suppression of piracy and banditry by the Hanseatic League. In the sixteenth century the chief form of advertising was the poster. It was called a *si-quis* (if anybody), the derivation being from the Roman lost article posters. Most *si-quis* were want advertisements. The chief billboard in London was St. Paul's Cathedral, which was crowded with lawyers, seamstresses, etc., seeking clients. Like the modern office building or railroad terminal the sixteenth-century church also contained tobacco shops and bookstalls. Tobacco, coffee and books were among the first products advertised. It is in connection with the exploitation of literature by advertising that one encounters, with a glow of pleasure, no less a person than Ben Jonson, in his usual rôle of objector and satirist.

In *Every Man out of his Humor*, one of the characters is Shift, who haunts St. Paul's "for the advancement of a *si-quis* or two, wherein he hath so varied himself that if any of them take he may hull himself up and down in the humorous world a little longer." By 1600 handbills and placards in behalf of books became so common that Jonson enjoined his bookseller to use his works for wrapping paper rather than promote them by the sensational methods then in use.

The objection is particularly interesting as coming from Jonson, who, although he had been successively a bricklayer, a soldier and a playwright, was by nature a scholar-poet, and an intellectual aristocrat. He probably felt, like the modern historians Morrison and Commager, that advertising had already "elevated mendacity to the status of a profession." He tolerated the noble patrons to whom he dedicated his works because they helped to support him; but he clearly despised the "new people," the middle-class business men,

who, having tasted the sweets of profit in the expanding market, were marshaling their forces for the later conquests of manufacturing and commerce.

Art was conscripted into the service of trade when Hogarth was employed at making inn signs and illustrating handbills for tradesmen, including one advertising himself as an engraver and another for his sisters, who were designers of frocks.

By the end of the seventeenth century the apparatus of poster and handbill advertising was functioning at full blast within the limits set by the still primitive facilities of transport and communication. Practically all the stigmata of the modern practice of advertising were present. The greed and social irresponsibility of the advertiser expressed itself in sweeping claims and cheerful misrepresentation; his tastelessness in bad art and worse English. The seventeenth century trader was a go-getting fellow—a low fellow coming up, with nothing to lose in the matter of social status and a world of profit to gain. The nobility and the princes of the church denounced him; city ordinances were passed in London threatening with severe penalties tradesmen who were so immodest as to advertise the prices of their wares. But the advertiser met scorn with scorn and drove the logic of his acquisitive opportunity always harder and higher. A French visitor to London in the middle of the eighteenth century comments on the huge and ridiculous ornamentation of the shop signs. As some of the early prints made us realize, the streets of seventeenth century London were scarcely less vulgar and commercial than the Great White Way of modern New York.

Business, however, still lacked its major tool, the press. It is upon the evolution of this instrument that we must now concentrate our attention.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the press begins and ends as an instrument of government, whether official or unofficial, actual, or potential and aspiring. What it is today it was in its earliest beginnings. The invention of printing approximately coincided with the early struggles for power of the rising middle class. In this long chess game, with its shifting alliances, its victories, defeats and drawn battles and its unstable truces, the press is the queen without whose support the king, the official ruler, is helpless: a most bawdy, promiscuous and treacherous queen, whose power is today threatened by a new backstairs mistress, the radio. The press has played virtuous, even heroic rôles in the past, and still does. But on the whole, she is like Archibald MacLeish's poet in his *Invocation to the Social Muse*: She sleeps in both camps and is faithful to neither.

Although the press is and always was an instrument of government, it is even more important to point out that the press came to

birth as an instrument of trade, which was aspiring to be government. From her earliest memory the infant Messalina was rocked in the cradle of business.

In 1594 the French philosopher Montaigne published an essay entitled *Of a Defect in our Policies* in which he urged the establishment of exchanges for tradesmen and buyers. As a result a "Bureau D'Affiches" was established in Paris. It functioned for only a brief period and was followed by a quite obvious technical advance, the publication of a *Journal D'Affiches* (Journal of Public Notices) which is said to be the first periodical in the history of Western Europe. The first issue appeared Oct. 14, 1612. It was a want-ad medium, no more and no less—newspaper of, by and for trade, and this it has continued to be for more than 300 years. It is now called *Les Petites Affiches*, and is still a periodical of want-ads and public notices. An humble and virtuous creature, *Les Petites Affiches*—the Martha of newspaperdom. Let us keep her in mind when we come to study the careers of her successors and rivals, the Marys, Ninons, Carmens and Messalinas who have relegated her to her present comfortable and respectable bourgeois obscurity.

Trade, then, was news, and trade plus printer's ink became advertising, but still news. Abortive public registers were chartered by James I and Charles I in England. Henry Walker published his *Perfect Occurences* in 1649—this being a house organ for his Public Register or *Enterance*. But government was jealous of the emergent fourth estate. *Perfect Occurences* was suppressed in 1650 and Walker's Public Registry, being deprived of advertising, soon died.

But the forces of the trading class, with God, as usual, conscripted under their banner, were marching toward the conquest of power. In 1657 Marchmont Needham, Cromwell's official journalist, was publishing the bi-weekly *Mercurius Politicus* and *Publick Intelligencer*. He established eight offices of "public advice" in London and in 1657 obtained permission from Cromwell to issue, in addition to the news letter, a weekly sheet called the *Publick Adviser*. All the advertisements, then called "advices," were of the same size. The fees were four shillings for a workman, five for a bookseller and ten for a physician. Needham had a monopoly advantage and used it ruthlessly. When, a little later, he raised his prices, the indignant tradesmen denounced him as "The Devil's Half-Crown Newsmonger."

Since the news letter was a medium for the literate exclusively, it was natural that booksellers were among the earliest advertisers. But the medicine man and the realtor were also early on the scene. Since the mass market for food and clothing was not yet literate, such advertisers do not appear until later. At this point it is merely important to note that trade, for its full development, required universal literacy,

and that the later use of public funds for school purposes was conceivably motivated less by idealistic considerations than by the needs of trade.

Cromwell's Ironsides were business men out for power and marching under the banner of God. They needed spiritual food, and when Cromwell marched into Scotland, a newsbook was published for distribution to his army of "Saints." Here are some specimen titles of the books advertised in that publication, all of them obviously good selling copy for the Puritan conquest of power, just as, nearly three centuries later, Bruce Barton's *Man Nobody Knows* became the bible of our modern Rotarian saints, marching under the banner of "Service":

Hooks and eyes for Believers Breeches
A Most Delectable Sweet Perfumed nosegay for God's saints to smell at.
The spiritual Mustard pot to make the Soul Sneeze with Devotion.

Upon the restoration in 1660 Charles II quickly put a stop to that. He recognized the growing power of the press by suppressing it. Instead, a two-page publication was issued called the *London Gazette*. It refused to carry advertising on the ground that commercial announcement had no place in a "paper of intelligence," that is to say, a newspaper which presented non-commercial news. As a matter of fact the *London Gazette* was an official government newspaper and is still published as such. Later in the reign of Charles II it did publish advertisements, but in a separate sheet. The monarchy continued to regard the press as a government function and privilege. In 1665 Roger L'Estrange was given a patent as "Surveyor of the Press" which included the exclusive privilege of "writing, printing and publishing advertisements."

The amiable monarch was not averse to making a little money out of trade, although he doubtless considered the upstart tradesmen as permanently objectionable. The poet, Fleetwood Sheppard, who was one of his favorites, doubtless expressed the royal view when he wrote the following criticism of current advertising practice:

> They [the current newsbooks of the year 1657 when this was written] have now found out another quaint device in their trading. There is never a mountebank who either by professing of chemistry of any other art drains money from the people of the nation but these arch-cheats must have a share in the booty, and besides filling up his paper, which he knew not how to do otherwise, he must have a feeling to authorize the charlatan forsooth, by putting him into the newsbook.

Yet Charles II himself, shortly after his accession, was obliged to turn advertiser, as witness the following plaintive appeal to his rascally subjects:

> We must call on you again for a Black Dog between the greyhound and a spaniel, no white about him only a streak on his breast, and tayl a little bobbed. It is His Majestie's own dog, and doubtless was stolen. Whoever finds him may acquaint any at Whitehall, for the dog was better known at Court than those who stole him. Will they never leave robbing His Majesty? Must he not keep a dog?

By the middle of the eighteenth century a considerable press, whose principal support derived from advertising, was established in England and on the continent. The essence of the modern phenomenon had been achieved and its essence was clearly recognized by contemporary commentators. We may therefore conclude this outline of the early history of advertising with the following quotation from Dr. Samuel Johnson, writing in the *Idler* in the year 1759:

> Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused, and it is therefore become necessary to gain attention by magnificence of promises and by eloquence sometimes sublime and sometimes pathetic. Promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement [Promise them everything and blow hard, said my early tutor, the sea lion]. The true pathos of advertisements must have sunk deep into the heart of every man that remembers the zeal shown by the seller of the anodyne necklace, for the ease and safety of the poor toothing infants and the affection with which he warned every mother that she would never forgive herself if her infant should perish without a necklace.... The trade of advertising is now so near to perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvement. But as every art ought to be exercised in true subordination to the public good, I cannot but propose it as a moral question to these masters of the public ear, whether they do not sometimes play too wantonly with our passions.

Dr. Johnson wrote as a good liberal of his period and his phrases have a familiar ring. He might almost have been reviewing a volume by Stuart Chase or applauding the demand of Messrs. Schlink and Kallet for a new law to restrain the iniquities and hypocrisies of advertising. In justice to these writers one must acknowledge both the value of their exposures and the even more significant fact that all three have moved steadily leftward in their political orientation.

What the good doctor did not see—and contemporary liberals seem scarcely more acute—was that, given a literate population, the press *becomes* one of the instruments of government; that if the press is financed by the vested property interests of business, then in the end business becomes government. Finally, the good doctor should have realized the futility of introducing moral and ethical values into a trade relationship. The concepts of "good" and "bad" suffer a sea change in this relationship; good advertising is advertising which makes profits and bad advertising is advertising which does not make profits. Neither the "regulative" attempts of government

nor the idealistic campaigns of reformers in and out of advertising will seriously affect the economic determinants which operate in this relationship. At least they haven't for over three hundred years.

Dr. Johnson felt that the art of advertising had reached approximate perfection in the middle of the eighteenth century. In a sense he was right. The archetypes of contemporary technical practice are almost all to be found in the newspaper and handbill advertising of that period. The later developments have been chiefly those of speed and spread, with, however, this qualification: these developments have brought into being a series of interlocking vested interests, which, while entailed *effects* of the underlying economic process, have also come to function as important causes, influencing and even determining to a considerable extent the subsequent evolution of our civilization.

The point of view adhered to in this book is that of regarding the instruments of social communication as *instruments of rule, of government*. In this view the people who control and manage our daily and periodical press, radio, etc., become a sort of administrative bureaucracy acting in behalf of the vested interests of business. But every bureaucracy becomes itself a vested interest; it develops its own will to expansion and power. Bureaucracies are likely to be what governments die of. In Russia a bureaucracy was set up, theoretically, to solve the tasks of socialist construction, and gradually, with the coming to birth of the classless society and the elimination of the conflicts which the state power must adjust or suppress, to "wither away." The Russians are frank in confessing that they are obliged to fight the tendency of their bureaucracy to propagate itself verdantly. This struggle in fact has been and is one of the most difficult tasks of the socialist construction.

In the following chapter we shall consider two other instruments of rule, namely education and propaganda, and show how the use of these instruments is frequently combined with the use of advertising.

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Modern advertising reaches its highest expression in the United States and under the political and social forms of our democratic institutions and concepts: a free press, popular education, representative government. It is important to note that the contemporary phenomenon is an aspect of our so-called "surplus economy," as is revealed by the use of the phrase "sales resistance" in current advertising parlance. "Sales resistance" means an impedance of the distributive function. It implies a lack of spontaneous demand for the product or service which may be caused,

1. By the inferiority of the product as to quality or price with respect to competing products.
2. By the inertia of established buying patterns in the market at which the product is aimed.
3. By the inter-industrial competition, as for example, brick against lumber or meat against cheese.
4. By the inadequacy of the class or mass buying power with respect to the volume and price of commodities and services offered on the market.

Although existing buying power is ultimately determinative, it is possible to manipulate consumer preferences and the division of the consumer's dollar within this iron limit. In other words the market can be "educated"—or propagandized—as you choose to put it, just as it can be partially or wholly monopolized and the controls established with respect to volume of production, distribution and price. These are, perhaps, the two major factors in the obsolescence of the "law" of supply and demand.

The education, or manipulation of the market may proceed directly through the advertising of the product by the manufacturer or by a group of manufacturers organized as a trade association;

through unsigned publicity prepared and issued by the manufacturer or his agent; through the more or less influenced or coerced "co-operation" of the daily or periodical press, radio and cinema; even through similar influences or coercions focused upon our institutions of formal education. Sometimes all four methods are used. A few typical examples will illustrate the nature of the process, its detailed exposition being left for other chapters.

It happens that a single manufacturer dominates the market for automobile tire valves, caps and gauges. He stands to profit, therefore, by any expansion of this market. Hence his advertising has tended to be primarily "educational"; that is to say, it tells motorists that proper inflation adds to the durability of tires, that improper inflation is dangerous; that the air pressure in tires should be frequently tested, hence the motorist should own his own gauge; that the valves require more or less frequent replacement.

Note that all this "education" is sound enough on the whole and in the consumer's interest as well as that of the manufacturer and distributor. Such education, or promotion, can be achieved more economically, on the whole, by publicity than by advertising, since the publicizing of the manufacturer's name and the brand name of his product, is, while desirable in view of actual or latent competition, not essential.

Many newspapers and magazines carry columns of advice to motorists; the editors of these automobile sections and pages can readily be persuaded to publish small items urging motorists to keep the tires of their cars properly inflated; especially if the manufacturer or his agent does the whole column in which the advice about tires is mixed with other standard bits of information and warning. This relieves the newspaper or magazine staff of labor and expenditure; sometimes a staff member, or a journalist having working relations with several publications, is induced to do the job for a fee paid by the manufacturer, and then see that the "education" or promotion is duly published. *But* such arrangements are precarious unless the newspaper or magazine gets some quid pro quo. Hence an educational publicity campaign of this kind is usually correlated with a minimum expenditure for paid advertising. There is nothing unusual about such procedures, nor is any violation of the current business code involved. True, the technique requires the application of interested economic pressures. But so does the technique of security promotion represented by the Morgan preferred list. In so far as moral or ethical judgments are applicable to such procedures it would seem futile to apply them to the individuals involved; rather, they should be directed, not merely against the existing business code, but against the system under which such codes naturally develop.

Another example. General Motors sells automobiles and advertises them in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which is one of the reasons why the *Post* can pay high prices for articles and fiction and yet sell for a nickel. But the fact that General Motors and other automobile manufacturers advertise in the *Saturday Evening Post* also serves to explain certain elements in the editorial content of the magazine. The *Post* by reason of its advertising lineage becomes an important and profitable business property, one of a group of business properties. Hence the editorial policy of the *Post* is inevitably conservative in its policies. With equal inevitability its editorial management is favorably disposed toward the specific interests of its advertisers. The *Post* may or may not consider itself primarily an advertising medium; it is so regarded by the advertiser and his agent. The advertising manager of the *Post* must be prepared to show that the *Post* is a profitable medium, a favorable medium; that the editorial content of the magazine is favorable to, and supplements, the message of the advertiser.

Saturday Evening Post readers will perhaps recall that automobile fiction stories appear recurrently in that magazine; that these and other stories are often illustrated with happy and prosperous people in automobiles. Naturally the artist is not permitted to make recognizable a particular make of automobile.

The implication must, of course, be qualified before it can stand. It would be expected in an automobile age that automobiles should figure in much contemporary fiction. It would be impossible for the *Post*, which solicits and publishes advertising of all kinds of products, to emphasize unduly in its editorial columns the use of any particular product.

But it would also be bad business not to utilize the editorial content of the magazine to increase its value to advertisers, and that is exactly what is done as a matter of course, not merely by the *Post*, but by many other newspapers and magazines of large circulation, such as *Good Housekeeping*, *House and Garden*, *Arts and Decoration*. It is inevitable, since the publication is a business enterprise, that the business accounting should extend to the editorial as well as the advertising management; the deciding vote in any issue is naturally that of the advertising management.

American children, even a heavy percentage of the children of working class parents, brush their teeth. They have been taught to do so. By whom?

By the manufacturers and advertisers of toothbrushes and toothpastes, operating directly through signed advertisements in newspapers and magazines, indirectly through the co-operation of the dental profession, indirectly through the more or less syndicated "health talks" published in newspapers and magazines, indirectly through

the teaching of hygiene in the schools. The co-operation of the dental profession is secured by the distribution of free samples to dentists, the solicitation of salesmen, etc: but also and more importantly it is sought by "constructive educational" advertising in which the advertiser urges the reader to "visit your dentist every six months": such campaigns—that of the S. S. White Company, manufacturer of dental chairs, mechanical equipment, supplies, etc., is an excellent example—are in turn "merchandized" to the dental profession in the professional publications. "Merchandizing" consists essentially of advertisement of advertisements. The manufacturer points out to the dentist how much he is doing to "educate" the public to patronize the dentist, the implication being that in consideration for the manufacturer's expenditure in such "constructive" publicity, the dentist might well recommend the particular product to his patients. In the case cited the product was a good one, made according to a formula prepared by an eminent dentist, and the advertising copy more or less aggressively de-bunked the unscientific "talking-points" of competing dentifrices. A number of manufacturers, notably Colgate, have followed this policy; others, such as Forhan's, Pepsodent, Ipana, etc., have found it more profitable to select a particular half-true talking point, exaggerate it, use the simple technique of fear appeal, and while continuing to seek the co-operation of the dental profession, discount the opposition of the more sensitive and "ethical" section of the profession.

Education of another sort, secured through fostering the newspaper and magazine propaganda of "health talks," "preventive dentistry," etc., can rarely be made to benefit the interest of any particular manufacturer. In general such education is likely to be sound enough in intent, and at least harmless in effect, although sometimes objected to by dentists on the ground that it is insufficiently critical and informative, and does not—could not, since the publication is an advertising medium—take issue with the bunk which is spread on the advertising pages. If the press were or could be a disinterested educational instrumentality it might be expected to correct the mis-education sponsored by its advertisers, but then, if the press functioned in the interests of its readers rather than in the interests of its advertisers, it would not publish pseudo-scientific, more or less deceptive advertising. Again, the press is merely an advertising "medium"; not until the ghosts which use this medium to materialize their more or less sprightly profit-motivated antics—not until these ghosts are exorcized can we expect the press to be anything except precisely what it is. Ethical judgments are pretty much irrelevant. A "good" medium is not a medium which materializes only good ghosts; a "good" medium is a medium through which ghosts, good,

bad and indifferent can manifest themselves effectively. True, the more respectable mediums are prejudiced against the more disreputable ghosts and exclude them from their pages. But such prejudices and exclusions are also likely to be economically rather than ethically determined; the antics of the respectable ghosts require, for their maximum effectiveness a decent parlor half-light, not the bawdy murk in which the direct-by-mail peddlers of aphrodisiacs, abortifacients, and contraceptives squeal and gibber. And the bigger and better ghosts spend more, and more reliably.

Another form of indirect education—that which makes use of our public schools—has both its positive and negative aspects. A familiar example of the positive use of this "medium" of formal education is the "toothbrush drill" taught children in the primary grades. Manufacturers of toothbrushes and of dentifrices have used and benefited by this technique almost equally. They have enabled school boards to economize by supplying free or at cost the literature used in teaching dental hygiene, including various trick devices for making education amusing to the young. Such education is neither very good nor very bad in and of itself. But if a competent teacher or school nurse happens to believe, as do many dentists, that the toothbrush is a dubious blessing; that it should be used in strict moderation if at all; that the use, say, of dental floss, is considerably more valuable hygienically—such a school functionary is likely to encounter the pressures by which heretics are disciplined—unless she can get the dental floss manufacturers to spring to her aid. And finally, advertised toothbrushes and dentifrices are likely to be absurdly overpriced; education which results in teaching children to buy overpriced toothbrushes and dentifrices when the use of ordinary table salt, with the occasional use of dental floss, would constitute on the whole a more hygienic as well as more economical regimen—such education has a certain unmistakable ghostly quality. But the negative aspect of the advertising controls operating on our publicly owned schools is vastly more important. In recent years a new specialty has appeared in the teaching of economics; it is called "consumption economics" and concerns itself with the consumer as a factor in the economic scheme; how can the consumer best serve his own interest? What is an intelligently balanced budget for a given income level? What items should be bought and how can such items be bought most economically? What are the possibilities and limits of such developments—still embryonic in America—as consumers' co-operatives, credit unions, consumers' research, etc.

On the surface there would seem to be merit in this idea of "consumption economics." But ask the secretary of your local chamber of commerce, or the business manager of the local paper, or any

prominent retailer what *they* think about it. Or ask some of the consumption economists, such as Robert Lynd, author of *Middletown*, just how far they have got in their attempts to introduce such courses in the schools.[1] The writer asked such questions; the answers were somewhat disheartening. In conclusion he asked an even more naive question: to whom do these public schools belong anyway? The answer, of course, is that they belong to the people, since *all* the people, directly or indirectly, pay taxes for their support. But their use in the interest of *all* the people is simply impossible, because the interests of the people are divided and conflicting. In the case of "consumption economics," any attempt to perform for the masses of the population even the modest service which Consumers' Research performs for its 50,000 subscribers—an expert measurement of the qualities and values of products and services offered for sale—is and will be met by the united opposition of business and the allies of business: manufacturers, distributors, bankers, publishers—all the people who profit quite legitimately by selling products and services in as great a volume as possible and for as much more than they are worth as the traffic will bear: all these people and all the people whose political voices they control: their employees, wives, sisters, uncles, aunts and cousins—even perhaps some of the cousins who would like to consider themselves disinterested school superintendents and teachers serving the interests of all the people. The opposition is unqualified and rigorous. Business men are also in a sense educators. They use advertising and its related devices and techniques to "educate the consumer," to "break down sales resistance"; your earnest "consumption economist" would like to use education to build up sales resistance. But let him try to do it. Anybody who would want to cut the Gordian knot of this "educational" dilemma with the liberal sword of "ethics" is welcome to his pains.

In these few examples we have encountered advertising, propaganda and education as parts of a single economic nexus. It becomes necessary at this point to define these categories more sharply and to show their interrelations.

The complex of phenomena is economic, institutional, technical, psychological, whereas the tendency of current criticism by liberal publicists has emphasized invidious ethical judgments. Yet it is only by re-defining such value judgments that the play of forces can be accurately described and analyzed. It is even more important to avoid the artificial isolation of phenomena which superficial moral and ethical criticism engenders. What we are dealing with is the institutional and ideological superstructure of competitive capitalism. Whether we take our cue from Marx or merely from the respectable social ecologists, we may be sure that the mutual interaction of social

[1] [Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929).]

phenomena, whether categoried as economic, sociological or psychological, is an immitigable fact; that when we seem to find isolate, perverse and irreconcilable elements in the picture, we are merely victims of our own thought patterns, for there can be nothing mysterious or isolate about the phenomena. The contemporary French historian, André Siegfried, is obviously aware of the continuity and mutual interaction of the social and economic phenomena we have been describing when he writes, in *America's Coming of Age*: "Under the direction of remarkably intelligent men, publicity has become an important factor in the United States and perhaps even the keynote of the whole economic structure."[2]

Note that M. Siegfried is using "publicity" as an inclusive term to denote all forms of advertising, propaganda and press agentry. The writer would both widen and sharpen this inclusion by showing that the apparatus of newspaper and periodical publishing, radio broadcasting, motion picture production and distribution; with the conjoined apparatus of advertising agencies, public relations experts, and dealers in direct-by-mail, car card, and poster advertising, constitute in effect a single institution; further, that the institutions and techniques of formal education, both secondary and collegiate, are also closely related and functional within the general scheme; that the purpose and effect of these conjoined institutions and techniques is rule; the shaping and control of the economic, social and psychological patterns of the population in the interests of a profit-motivated dominant class, the business class.

The necessity of such broad inclusions in any systematic analysis of the phenomena becomes apparent when we come to define our major categories. The definition of advertising offered by Frank Presbrey in his *History and Development of Advertising* is as follows: "Advertising is printed, written, or graphic salesmanship, deriving from oral salesmanship."[3] This, of course, should be corrected to include radio and motion picture advertising, but otherwise may be allowed to stand. The point to be emphasized is that the practical advertising man views all these instruments of communication — newspapers, magazines, radio, motion picture—as *advertising media*; that this is in fact the accurate, realistic and significant view to take of these instruments of social communication, whereas the thought patterns of liberal laymen tend to make them appear to represent some sort of ideal functional relationship between editor and reader, or broadcaster and Great Radio Public—a relationship which these curious parasitic growths, advertising and publicity, are insidiously, immorally perverting. The layman sees that the tail is wagging the dog. The advertising man knows that the tail is the dog and acts accordingly. He knows that there is no real separation between the

[2] [André Siegfried, *America Comes of Age: A French Analysis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927).]

[3] [Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1929).]

business and editorial offices of a modern publication; that where such a separation appears to obtain it is purely a management device, designed to insure the more effective functioning of the publication as an advertising medium. He knows, for he is called in as a "publisher's consultant" to plan and execute the job—that the conception of a modern commercial publication starts with the definition and segregation of a particular buying public, which may be recruited and held together by a particular type of editorial policy and content. The publisher's consultant sees an unoccupied, or insecurely occupied niche in the crowded spectrum of daily and periodical publishing. The publication is thereupon concocted to the specifications necessary to entertain or inform that particular section of the buying public. The objective is not attained, however, until the circulation so recruited is sold to advertisers at so much per head, the charge being based on the average buying power and the demonstrated "reader-interest" of the readers. "Reader-interest" is measured by response to advertising and the editorial content of the magazine is carefully designed, as already indicated, to strengthen this response. You pay your money and you take your choice, depending upon the nature of your product or service and the methods by which it is promoted. The readers of *True Romances*, for example, are poor but numerous and credulous, whereas the readers of *The Sportsman* are comparatively few, but very rich—and susceptible to the arts of flattery and sycophancy. In both cases the collaboration of the editorial and business managements is intimate and accepted as a matter of course. Criticism of such arrangements by the more or less obsolete criteria of an ideal reader-editor relationship is beside the point, since the determinants are the objective forces of the competitive capitalist economy.

In propaganda we encounter a phenomenon even more disturbing and puzzling to liberal publicists and sociologists, especially since the experience of the war demonstrated the dominance of this technique of social control in modern societies. Again, contemporary students have been frustrated by their tendency to view the phenomenon as isolate and adventitious.

The latest book on propaganda, which digests and summarizes much that has been written on the subject by contemporary sociologists and publicists, is *The Propaganda Menace* by Professor Frederic E. Lumley, of Ohio State University. Professor Lumley experiences much difficulty in reaching a satisfactory definition of propaganda. After rejecting innumerable definitions offered by contemporary educators and sociologists, he offers us the following:

> Propaganda is promotion which is veiled in one way or another as to (1) its origin or sources, (2) the interests involved, (3) the methods

> employed, (4) the content spread and (5) the results accruing to the victims—any one, any two, any three, any four, any five.[4]

[4] [Frederick E. Lumley, *The Propaganda Menace* (New York: The Century Co., 1933), 44.]

In Professor Lumley's view the contrasting opposite to propaganda, necessary in defining any term, is "education." And it is precisely there that his definition falls down, because of the highly conditioned and shifting quality of the latter concept. More or less aware of these confusions, aware that education must be related to some conception of social change, Professor Lumley takes refuge in the relatively sophisticated and acute definition of education offered by Professor Bode as follows:

> When formal education becomes necessary in order to fit the individual for his place in the social order, there arises a need for reflection on the aims and purposes of education and of life. Many aims have been proposed, but if we view intelligence from the standpoint of *development*, the conclusion is indicated that aims are constantly changing and that education is, as a matter of fact, the liberation of capacity; or in Bagley's phraseology, it means training for achievement. To make this liberation of capacity or this process of growth a controlling ideal means the cultivation, of sensitiveness to the human quality of subject matter by presenting it in its social context. The fact that a given type of education is classed as liberal or cultural is no guarantee that it fosters this quality of mind. Unless this sensitiveness is deliberately cultivated, many human interests, such as business, science and technical vocations, do not become decently humanized. And to cultivate this sensitiveness deliberately means that it is made the guiding ideal for education.[5]

[5] [Boyd Henry Bode, *Fundamentals of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1922).]

In this definition Professor Bode recognizes the necessity of relating education to social change. He does not, in the passage quoted, take account of the dynamics of social change. One does not need to insist upon a strict Marxian interpretation to describe the essential nature of social change. It will be readily granted by most readers that the conflict of pressure groups within the social order results in shifting balances of power; that these pressure groups tend to represent economic classes; that the issues of conflict tend to be economic at bottom; that the basic cause of change is the changing level of the productive forces—in our day the machine technology. This is not to ignore the equally real rôle played by pressure groups in the fields of the social mores, religion, race, etc., but merely to emphasize the economic and class roots of this perpetual conflict, where propaganda is so powerfully instrumental.

If this is so, then there are certain crucial undefined terms imbedded in Professor Bode's definition. What, for example, is meant by "fitting the individual for *his place* in the social order"? Obviously the students whom Professor Bode proposes to educate after this

fashion occupy not the same but different places in our social order, which, while retaining a certain residual fluidity manifests an increasing rigidity and class stratification. To fit a third generation Rockefeller for his place in the social order is obviously a task different from that of fitting Isidore Bransky, son of a radical East Side pants maker, for *his* place, which is a matter of strictly limited but crucial choice, depending upon whether young Bransky leaves his class or doesn't; whether he is fitted to become a labor organizer, legal defense worker, radical journalist or merely an energetic legal ambulance chaser, political fixer or other capitalist functionary in business or in the professions. Should or can the educator remain above the battle as respects this choice? Will not the educational means by which capacity is liberated necessarily affect it? Finally, would Professor Bode attempt to deny that education in a typical university does inevitably indoctrinate and that on the whole it indoctrinates in the direction of conformity to the existing order? In honesty, must not the teacher tell his student that ordinarily he must save his body by serving an exploitative system and, if possible save his soul by helping to destroy this system?

What is meant by presenting subject matter "in its social context"? Whose social context? Does Professor Bode mean by social context the contemporary class conflicts of American capitalism exacerbated by the internal and international conflicts of our "surplus economy"? Does he mean the perhaps imminent "freezing" of the capitalist structure into the corporative forms of Fascism?

Returning to Professor Lumley, it might well be alleged that in urging "education" as a preventive and cure of the propaganda menace, Professor Lumley is really writing propaganda for a particular concept of education: the concept of an objective, disinterested effort to release capacity. Further, it might be argued that this concept is doomed to remain in the field of theory, since it is observably nonexistent in practice. Finally, it may be suggested that to erect a purely conceptual theory of education, while ignoring the contemporary practices and very real economic determinants of educators and the institutions they work for, is itself a kind of propaganda: propaganda by suppression which is one of Professor Lumley's recognized categories.

The necessity of such realistic clarifications cannot be evaded, and to Professor Bode's credit it must be said that he, at least in his later, more advanced position does not try to evade them. With Dewey, Counts and other modern educators he acknowledges frankly that the theory of education propounded in the passage quoted above is applicable only in a classless society.

Behold, then, this precious absolute, education, the hope of democracy! The more we turn it up to the light, whether we examine its practice or even its theory as expressed by leading educators, the more it dissolves in relativity. And our crucial problem remains with us: what is education and what is propaganda with respect to the problems of the individual in our society, faced as it is, with the self-preservative necessity of fundamental social change?

If it were only possible to posit an ideal disinterested objectivity on the part of the educator, and an absence of pressure controls operating upon our educational institutions, the problem would be greatly simplified. But, as we have seen, leading educators properly discard such claims. The facts of class interest and individual subjectivity must be and now are, generally admitted. The coercions of the social order, for achievement in which the student is trained, these, too, are frankly acknowledged. Recently Dr. Abraham Flexner has noted with proper but perhaps futile indignation the tendency to vocationalize our institutions of higher learning, that is, to make them functional with respect to the requirements of business, and to the survival necessities of students. And we have with us always the issue of "academic freedom": the degree to which a teacher is permitted to express views in conflict with the economic and social status quo. The underlying fact, of course, is that in both privately and publicly supported educational institutions the interest and prejudices of the ruling class are ultimately determining, whenever education enters the field of contemporary social and political struggle.

Many teachers, even of the social sciences, are quite unconscious of these determinants and preserve the confident illusion of "scientific objectivity" in the very act of asserting creedal absolutes which are obviously a product of social and economic class conditioning. Professor Lumley is himself a conspicuous example of this. In his concluding chapter he writes: "No sane person wants *revolutionary* communistic propaganda spread in this country." Is this the language of an objective, disinterested educator? Professor Lumley urges that instead of deporting and lynching Reds, their agitation be combatted (1) by destroying the soil of gullibility through education and (2) by removing desperate need through liberal reformism. Such recommendations may seem relatively enlightened and civilized, but they are not quite sufficient to rehabilitate Professor Lumley in his rôle of disinterested educator.

The dubiousness of his position would quickly appear under circumstances such as the following: suppose that because of the disinterested teaching of Dr. Lumley one of his students had escaped the class-conditioned thought patterns of his family and friends, or that, because of the logical capacities released by education he had

broken through these patterns. Suppose that this student, having acquired some acquaintance with Marx, Engels, Veblen, Lenin and others, should elect as the subject of his doctor's thesis *The Position of the Social Scientist under American Capitalism*. The application of the Marxian analysis to this material might well result in "revolutionary communistic propaganda." Would Professor Lumley pronounce his student insane and withdraw his fellowship? If not, should he not have to consider himself insane for permitting the spread of "revolutionary communistic propaganda"?

One thinks of a third solution for this imaginary academic dilemma: shove the student back into the educational mill and trust that on his re-emergence he would have more sense. Then suggest to him, as an interesting subject for a thesis, *Paranoiac Traits in Modern Radical Leaders*.

It is indeed difficult to escape the conviction that the god of education, like other gods, is not merely man-made, but made by a particular group of men as a rationalization of their rôle in the complex struggle of social forces—of "pressure groups": further, that the institutions built up to exemplify and discharge this rôle—our schools and universities—are similarly subject to such rationalized determinants. The claim of disinterestedness, of universality, is also made for the press, although Professor Lumley has no difficulty in seeing that the latter institution becomes inevitably an instrument of pressure groups. The same claim is even made for business, the instrument of profit-motivated property owners. All of these claims are of course equally invalid; none of these institutions is separate or self-sufficient; all are swept into the struggle of conflicting social forces; advertising, propaganda and education are inextricably merged and intertwined.

The contemporary fact of this confusion is excellently illustrated by the propaganda activities of the National Electric Light Association, to which Professor Lumley devotes an indignant chapter. The investigation of the Federal Trade Commission and the writings of H. S. Raushenbush, Ernest Gruening and others have familiarized most readers with the theory and practice of this propaganda campaign in behalf of our privately owned light and power corporations. It will be sufficient here to point out that the instruments of advertising, propaganda and education were all used in such a way as to reinforce each other, all contributing to the crude economic objective of protecting and conserving the vested interests of private property in exploiting for profit an essential public service.

Direct, explicit, signed propaganda by the National Electric Light Association and its member companies was used in the form of paid advertising. This provided an economic leverage for the control of the news and editorial content of the press as effecting the interests

of the light and power companies. Note that the press was in a bargaining position. Newspaper publishers could and did on occasion threaten to expose the iniquities of the "power trust" unless the local companies could be brought to see the propriety of buying advertising space in their papers. Once this concession was made, the papers willingly "co-operated" with the NELA campaign, by printing the propaganda furnished by the publicity directors in the form of mats, boiler plate and mimeographed releases. One interesting and important point is totally missed by Professor Lumley. In the case of the NELA campaign, as of other propagandas by vested commercial interests, what was in effect a method of control by bribery (blackmail from the point of view of the NELA) was practicable only with respect to the smaller and less powerful newspapers, just as it was only the less eminent professors who accepted fees for making speeches and writing texts favorable to the power interests. Integrity, as Stuart Chase has pointed out, is a luxury in our civilization. It is, with certain qualifications, one of the privileges of wealth and power. No evidence was produced to show that the NELA had bribed the *New York Times*. Attempts were made to influence the Associated Press, but that is a mutual corporation, in which the pressure upon individual members backs up inevitably upon the directing officials.

On the other hand, it is equally important to note that it wasn't necessary to bribe the *New York Times*, and that, stupid as the NELA publicity directors proved themselves to be, they probably had more sense than to try to bribe either the *Times* or other major publishing corporations. Yet the editorials in the *Times*, and its handling of public utility news, especially with respect to the private *versus* public ownership issue, have been pretty consistently favorable to the power interests. Why? Obviously, because the *Times* is itself a major capitalist property. It is part of the complex of financial, business and social relationships which produces what is called a "conservative" point of view. The owners and managers who express and make effective this point of view are often not aware of the economic and social pressures which influence them. They act unconsciously, much as an experienced driver operates an automobile—he is "part of the car." The specific allegiance rarely becomes overt and fully conscious.

Respectable and powerful newspapers and magazines cannot be expected to swallow and approve the rawer aspects of contemporary commercial propaganda. The *Times* duly slapped the wrist of the National Electric Light Association, following the exposures of the Federal Trade Commission. It did not go down the line for Mr. Doheny and Secretary Fall during the Teapot Dome scandal, though from time to time it deprecates Congressional investigations as in general "bad for business."

Some service—not only lip service but actual service—is due the concept of a "free press" and a modicum of such service can usually be obtained even by radical minority groups. The amount and quality of such service is determined by the circumstances of the individual case. The major determining factors are: the inherent news value of the incident and its relation to other current news; the success with which current liberal concepts of free speech, legal rights, etc., can be appealed to; the class origin and political orientation of the reporter who covers the story; the current pressures of local, national and foreign news; the reputation of the radical propagandist as a reliable news source; the mass pressure brought to bear upon the newspaper.

The writer has served as a commercial publicity man, an advertising man and as a radical propagandist. All these techniques require careful measurement and utilization of the forces operative in a given complex of public relations. Neither as a commercial propagandist nor as a radical propagandist is it intelligent to act on the assumption that the capitalist press is "kept," to use the familiar half-true radical jibe. It must always be remembered that the press has to "keep" itself; that it has its own particular values, traditions and technical requirements to conserve. Although, primarily because of the dominance of advertising, the press functions in general as an organ of business, it functions with relation to circulations which usually include a variety of more or less organized and articulate pressure groups. Also, journalism is a profession with an ethical tradition. Both the somewhat eroded and romantic professional traditions of journalism and our somewhat debilitated concepts of democratic freedom and fair play can still be used to temper the winds of "public opinion" to the shorn lambs of radical protest and agitation—especially when mass pressure in the form of protests, strikes, and demonstrations is used to force the issue.

Yet it must be confessed that these are all frail reeds to lean upon in a pinch, especially if the pinch is local. To illustrate this last point, it is sufficient to point to the contrast between the handling of the 1931 disorders in the Kentucky coal fields by the Kentucky press, as against the performance of the distant metropolitan journals and press associations. The local editors editorialized against the "Red menace," and in their news reporting suppressed and distorted the unquestionable facts of starvation of strikers, discrimination in the administration of public and private relief, the capture of the machinery of justice by the coal corporations and the violence of middle-class mobs. True, on that occasion the Associated Press also broke down, because the local A. P. reporter happened to be also one of the leaders of the middle-class mob which illegally deported one of

the successive delegations of writers and students which entered the strike area to bring relief to the strikers and to report the facts of the situation to the country at large. *But* the protests of Dos Passos and others were effective on that occasion: the offending A. P. correspondent was dismissed. And shortly afterward the *New York Times* sent a special correspondent, Mr. Louis Stark, to Harlan County, where he did an honest and competent reporting job in a series of signed articles.

A similar situation developed in connection with the Scottsboro case, in which seven negro boys faced legal lynching in a situation growing out of race prejudice and conflict fostered by ruling-class economic interests. The evidence on which the boys were convicted, later shown to have been largely perjured, was accepted pretty much without question by almost the entire Southern press. The lynch atmosphere surrounding the first trial was largely suppressed. The case was consistently "played down" throughout the South. Citizens of New York learned more about the Scottsboro case through the papers than citizens of Alabama. As a result of the efforts of the International Labor Defense, a Communist-led organization, a new trial was ordered by the United States Supreme Court. The boys were again convicted by a jury obviously swayed by anti-negro, anti-Jew and anti-radical appeals to prejudice. But the *New York Times* reporter, Mr. F. W. Daniell, reported the trial with notable accuracy and fairness, whereas the Southern press for the most part continued the policy of suppression and distortion, dictated by the pressures of local and regional ruling-class prejudice and interests. In this case the factor of professional pride entered also into the equation. The prosecution made the mistake of treating Mr. Daniell and other correspondents with scant courtesy. Promptly and without trepidation, Mr. Daniell, both in his personal conduct and in his dispatches, made it clear that the Alabama authorities were in no position to bully and coerce the correspondent of the *New York Times*.

The press handling of the communist-led Hunger March to Washington in the fall of 1932 provides another interesting example. In this case the Hoover Administration broadcast appeals to State and local authorities to "stop the Hunger March." The evidence is overwhelming that the press, actuated by the alarm of the administration and of business, undertook more or less concertedly to play down and ridicule the demonstration. The dispatches, both while the columns were enroute to Washington and after their arrival, were so colored and so flagrantly editorialized as to surprise even experienced radical organizers. The demonstrators were "neither hungry nor marching." The March was treated as a Communist publicity stunt and both the leaders and the rank and file were consistently

ridiculed. Radio and news reels joined this hostile chorus. But in the end, after the Washington police had executed their melodramatic coup, and the 3,000 marchers were practically imprisoned on a stretch of windswept highway on the outskirts of the capital, the unity of the conservative press front began to crack.

There were several factors in this partial failure of the anti-communist propaganda. In the first place, the Communist organizers of the Unemployed Councils, hugely handicapped as they were by lack of funds and by the terrified inertia of the destitute unemployed workers, had by sheer drive and energy accomplished a notable feat in bringing the three columns of marchers to a point of convergence on the capital within a few hours of each other. In the second place the more radical working class groups in the cities through which they passed had cheered the marchers, aided them with contributions of food and shelter, and otherwise counteracted the efforts of the authorities to disintegrate and abort the enterprise. In the third place, Herbert Benjamin, the Communist Director of the march, proved himself to be a cool, resourceful, courageous and humanly appealing leader. He contrasted favorably with Major (Duck-Legs) Brown, who directed the forces of the District of Columbia police. The genuine discipline of the marchers contrasted favorably with the provocative brutality and obvious unfairness of the police. Protests, sponsored by more or less well-known liberals, and invoking the rights of free speech, appeal to the government, etc., were duly printed in the conservative papers. From the publicity point of view, the most effective effort on the radical side was the delegation of socially prominent New York women which came to Washington and protested to Vice President Curtis and various Congressmen and Senators. Known radicals, however prominent, are comparatively useless for such purposes; their protests are not "news" and the conservative press virtuously plays them down as "publicity-seekers."

In the case of the Washington Hunger March the protests of the prominent liberals and radicals helped, but what helped most was the fact that Hoover, his official family and the brass hats of the army were personally unpopular with the Washington correspondents and with the staff members of the local papers. This unpopularity was a factor in the forthright protests and the vigorous news writing which accompanied and followed Hoover's expulsion of the Bonus Army a few months before. The *Washington News* printed the flagrant facts of police brutality and provocation and editorially protested. (The *News* is the local Scripps-Howard paper and the city editor happened to be a liberal, as well as personally popular with the newspaper fraternity.) At this point the hitherto almost unanimous hostility of the capitalist press began to falter. The disparity of forces, as between

the microscopic army of determined, but unarmed and unviolent marchers, and the armed might of the government police and military made the administration's effort to convert the demonstration into a Red scare seem a little ridiculous. The climax came when Benjamin executed his hair-raising "dress-rehearsal," after which he had said: "Tomorrow we march." The next day came the official order permitting the marchers to enter Washington.

What, by the way, was this performance? In its essence it was propaganda, or if you like, education, in one of its highest manifestations: that of strategic, dramatic action. It had its effect, despite the effort of the conservative press to suppress and distort its significance and muffle its reverberations.

With respect to this case there are a number of interesting points to be noted. First, the Washington press, especially the *News*, treated the marchers more fairly on the whole than the New York papers. In some instances the latter headlined the dispatches of their correspondents in such a way as to distort, always in derision of the marchers, the true bearing of the story.

The apparent reversal of the usual in such situations is simply explained. In this case the pinch was not so much local as national. The ruling-class and middle-class interests and prejudices served by the capitalist press throughout the country were vigorously hostile to the Communists and especially hostile to that particular demonstration. But in Washington thousands of people had witnessed the inept and brutal performance of the police. Although middle-class Washington public opinion was in general hostile or indifferent to the marchers, Washington didn't like Hoover, nor did it like the repetition, by a defeated and discredited administration, of tactics rawer if anything than those employed against the Bonus Army.

The Washington papers did nothing comparable to the exploit of a *Daily News* reporter who invented out of whole cloth and published a speech alleged to have been made by Herbert Benjamin, violently inciting his followers to a bloodthirsty attack upon Washington. Theoretically, the *News* couldn't do such a thing because it is a mass paper sold to "Sweeney," the working man—or at least its promotion literature so alleges. It was the Struggle of Sweeney that Benjamin was supporting. Actually, something of the sort was to be expected. The *News* uses sensational tabloid methods to exploit, for purely commercial purposes, the economic illiteracy and the economic and psychological helplessness of its readers. The *News* is a business property, a commercial, profit-making enterprise, and an *advertising medium.*

With the foregoing case histories in mind, let us return to our major categories, advertising, propaganda and education, and examine

once more the liberal views of Professor Lumley and others. The thing to look for in any system of social communication is the point of control. Obviously, the key phenomenon is advertising, which is in turn merely an instrument of competitive business. A commercial publication is an advertising medium, that is to say, an instrument by which advertisers, with the complex of interests and prejudices which they represent, shape and control the economic, social and political patterns of the literate population: directly through the signed advertisements themselves; indirectly through the controlled or influenced editorial content of the publication; indirectly through the controlled or influenced content of formal education in the schools and colleges.

When a powerful vested interest, such as the electric power industry, wishes by means of propaganda to shape public opinion favorably to its interests, it is advertising that enables it readily to employ the instruments of the daily and periodical press, radio, motion picture, etc., for this purpose. Advertising is, of course, itself propaganda, but more important, the granting or withholding of an advertising contract offers a means of bribing or coercing indirect propaganda in the editorial columns of the publication. Finally, where such bribery or coercion is impracticable, as in the case of powerful publications like the *Times*, the same end is secured by reason of the fact that the *Times* is an advertising medium. As such it is an instrument of business, and its editorial policies are conditioned by the pressures of the dominant economic forces.

Professor Lumley exclaims at the omnipresence of propaganda. Our civilization, he says is "spooky" with the ghosts of propaganda hiding behind every bush. The professor has had nerves. Propaganda is no more and no less omnipresent than the vested interests of competing and conflicting economic and social pressure groups. The balance of power is held by business, which, through advertising, controls the instruments of social communication. There is nothing mysterious about it, nothing moral, nothing ethical and nothing disinterested. How could there be? Miracles don't happen in the body politic any more than they do in the physical body of man.

Advertising is propaganda, advertising is education, propaganda is advertising, education is propaganda, educational institutions use and are used by advertising and propaganda. Shuffle the terms any way you like, any one, any two, any three, to paraphrase Professor Lumley. What emerges is the fact that it is impossible to dissociate the phenomena, and that all three, each in itself, or in combination are *instruments of rule*.

Whether the use of these instruments is veiled or overt will doubtless continue to be a matter of grave ethical concern to liberals like

Professor Lumley. But the majority of the propaganda to which he objects is overt.

Every journalist knows this. The editors of *The New Yorker* are journalists, highly competent and sophisticated in that field, and they take great pleasure in jibing at the bizarre efforts of the "public relations" experts. On occasion they become as disgusted as any man about town can permit himself to become without risk of rumpling his hair. The following comment from *Talk of the Town* in its issue of Feb. 10, 1934, is an example. The note is headed *Many Happy Returns* and I quote the first and the concluding sentences:

> The Quadruple-Screw Turbo-Electric Vessel Queen of Bermuda, Capt. H. Jeffries Davis, was the scene last week of a novel birthday party for President Roosevelt and the Warm Springs Foundation on behalf of the Bermuda News Bureau, the Furness Bermuda Line, the Fashion Originators Guild, and *Island Voyager Magazine*, by special arrangement with James Montgomery Flagg, Howard Chandler Christy, Carl Mueller, John LaGatta, McClelland Barclay, forty mannequins, the six most beautiful girls in America and Lastex. Mrs. James Roosevelt, mother of the President, received....
> Her son, Franklin, in whose honor the party was given, was fifty-two years old; and there were moments... when we wondered whether the country he has been working so hard to save was worth the effort.

One is moved to ask Professor Lumley if there is anything insidious or lacking in frankness about this extraordinary synthesis of personal, political, philanthropic and commercial propaganda? Let us consider for a moment, realistically, this question of the veiled or overt use of the instruments of social communication as a problem in tactics. One admits that the public which sees the end result only is frequently unaware of the origins of propaganda. But ordinarily the propagandist himself proceeds quite overtly in manipulating his instruments.

Advertising is overt enough as to its origin or sources because it is signed by the advertiser. The interest involved is overt; the advertiser wants to sell you something for more than it is worth, so that he can make a profit on the transaction. The method is more or less tricky, since it usually involves taking advantage of the economic, social and psychological naivete of the reader. The results accruing to the reader or to the advertiser are pretty much unpredictable as to either party.

The majority of successful propaganda practice, whether by commercial "public relations counsellors" like Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee or by radical propagandists is overt; the name of the propagandist or the company or organization he represents is typed or printed at the top of his release. Sometimes commercial interests use dummy organizations as a "front." For example, the munitions makers are more or less back of the National Security League, just as the Com-

munists are more or less back of various peripheral organizations in the field of labor defense, relief, etc. But to suppose that the hard-boiled publishers and editors of the commercial press are taken in by these fronts is to be impossibly naïve. Also, in the case of a powerful commercial client, such as, for example, the Rockefeller interests, Mr. Lee has everything to gain by having the release come from 26 Broadway. And in the case of the radical propagandist, nothing makes the city desk so suspicious and sour as clumsy attempts at indirection. As already pointed out, Benjamin's "dress-rehearsal" of the Hunger March into Washington was excellent propaganda and surely that was overt enough. Admittedly, occasional veiled publicity coups come off successfully; but the percentage of such triumphs is relatively negligible and the backlash the next time you try to make the papers more than wipes out your gains.

The publicity Machiavellis of the National Electric Light Association were the laughing stock of the public relations profession and the catastrophe which befell them was cheerfully predicted long before it happened. They failed precisely because they were not sufficiently overt. So far as the press was concerned, all they had to do was to walk in the front door of the business office, sign their advertising contracts and get pretty nearly everything they wanted. Expense? "The public pays the expense," to quote Deak Aylesworth's classic line. Instead of which they employed the most extraordinary collection of publicity incompetents that has ever been assembled under one tent. They were equally stupid when it came to professors. All they succeeded in hiring were cheap academic hacks who in the end did them more harm than good.

As already pointed out, business can influence or control our schools and universities when it wants to or feels that it has to. Professor Lumley's ideal purification of the educational function falls down at this point and at a number of others, suggested in the following questions: how does an educator, unless one grants an inconceivably psychological self-awareness, know whether or not be is "veiling" the origin or sources of his instruction, the interests involved, the methods involved or the content spread? How can he anticipate the results accruing to the victims of either education or propaganda?

Apparently, what chiefly confuses liberals like Professor Lumley is the residual ideological and institutional débris of "democracy." The thing becomes instantly explicit and forthright when rule is exercised by a dictatorship and competition for rule is eliminated by force. The liberal illusions of a free press, free radio, free speech, constitutional rights, objective education, etc., all disappear almost overnight. This has been happening under our eyes in Russia, Italy and Germany. Do liberals have to be cracked on the head before they can see it?

Pinkevitch, in his *Education in Soviet Russia*, classifies propaganda, and agitation as forms of education operating on somewhat lower intellectual levels.[6] Press, radio, schools, colleges, are all owned and operated by the state as instruments of *rule* in behalf of the ruling class, the class of workers and peasants. The purpose for which these instruments are used is to make Communists, just as they are used in Italy to make Fascists, and in America to make our curious menagerie of capitalists, capitalist snuggle-pups, saps, suckers, morons, snobs, pacifists, militarists, wets, drys, Communists, liberals, New Dealers, double dealers and Holy Rollers.

In America the industry is hugely ramified but the underlying motivations, controls and mechanisms are relatively simple, although, of course, as in any transitional period of social conflict, the balance of power is constantly shifting. A capitalist democracy is a state of conflict almost by definition. Rather than to catalogue these conflicts, expressing themselves in the form of propaganda, it would seem more profitable to accept our instruments of social communication for what they are: *instruments of rule*; then to describe how these instruments are used, in whose behalf and to what end.

[6] [A. P. Pinkevich, *The New Education in the Soviet Republic* (New York: John Day Co., 1929).]

9 TRUTH IN ADVERTISING

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The conception of "Truth in Advertising" is at once *the least tenable* and the *most necessary* tenet of the ad-man's doctrine. This contradiction arises from the fact that the advertising business is essentially an enterprise in the exploitation of belief.

It is untenable because profit-motivated business, in its relations with the consumer, is necessarily exploitative—not moderately and reasonably exploitative, but exploitative up to the tolerance limit of the traffic. This tolerance limit is determined not by ethical considerations, which are strictly irrelevant, but by the ability of the buyer to detect and penalize dishonesty and deception. This ability varies with the individual, but in general reaches its minimum in the case of the isolated ultimate consumer.

No manufacturer, in buying his raw materials or his mechanical equipment, trusts the integrity of the seller except in so far as he is obliged to do so. So far as possible, he protects himself by specifications, inspections and tests, and by legally enforceable contracts that penalize double-dealing.

But when the manufacturer or retailer turns to selling his finished product to the ultimate consumer, the situation is reversed and the elements are sharply different. In his natural state the ultimate consumer is ignorant enough in all conscience. But he is not permitted to remain in his natural state. It would be unprofitable, unbusinesslike, to leave him in his natural state. Hence business has developed the apparatus of advertising, which, as the editor of the leading advertising trade publication has pointed out,[1] is scarcely a thing in itself, but merely a function of business management.

That function is not merely to sell customers, but to manufacture customers. Veblen, with his customary precision, has indicated both the object and the technique of this function:

[1] Roy Dickinson, president of *Printers' Ink*, in "Advertising Careers."

> The production of customers by sales publicity is evidently the same thing as the production of systematized illusions organized into serviceable "action patterns"—serviceable, that is, for the use of the seller in whose account and for whose profit the customer is being produced.[2]

[2] [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), 306–7n12.]

What has honesty or truth to do with this business? A great deal, because the *idea* of truth is a highly exploitable asset. Always, the customer must be made to feel that the seller is honest and truthful and that he needs or wants the product offered for sale. Hence the advertising business becomes an enterprise in the coincident manufacture and exploitation of reader-confidence and reader-acceptance. In this respect the ad-man's technique is not essentially different from that of any vulgar confidence man whose stock in trade is invariably a plausible line of chatter about his alleged "trustfulness" and "honesty." The writer has watched these gentry operating all the way from Los Angeles to Coney Island. Their annual "take," while less than that of their respectable cousins in the advertising business, is still enormous. Their techniques and successes, if studied by sociologists, would I am convinced, yield valuable data regarding the contemporary American social psychology.

Once, at Signal Hill, near Long Beach, California, the writer permitted an oil stock salesman to give him transportation from Los Angeles to the oil well, and to lead him through the successive steps by which the "sucker" is noosed, thrown and shorn. The prospects, consisting of about a hundred more or less recently arrived Middle Western farmers, their wives and children, seemed naïvely appreciative of the hot dogs and coffee, and of the genuinely accomplished sales histrionism which they were getting free. One saw that they were devout believers in magic of the cruder sorts, ranging from fundamentalism, through rugged individualism, and spreading into the more exotic side-shows of Yoga, the Apostle of Oom, numerology, spiritualism, etc., etc., which at that time infested Los Angeles and still do. Their faces were weather-worn, their hands were stubby. They were indeed enormously decent and hard-working people—with less effective knowledge of their social environment than any African savage [*sic*].

At the climax of the performance, after an oil-smeared ex-vaudevillian had rampaged up the aisle proclaiming that "No. 6 had just come in at ten thousand gallons," a scattering few came forward and signed on the dotted line. They did so with a kind of hypnotized masochism—I am convinced that many of them were instinctively aware that they were being gypped [*sic*].

In lieu of buying any of the promoter's exquisitely engraved optimism, I took him aside afterward and explained that as an adver-

tising writer, engaged in advertising a nearby subdivision—a strictly legitimate enterprise out of which many of the buyers made a good deal of money—I, too, had a stake in the matter. He was only momentarily embarrassed. Later, on the basis of our professional kinship, I got to know him sufficiently so that, warmed by a little liquor, he became approximately confidential.

"Brother," I remember his saying (He always insisted on calling me "brother"), "the technique of this racket is simple. Always tell the truth. Tell a lot of the truth. Tell a lot more of the truth than anybody expects you to tell. Never tell the whole truth."

My colleague omitted one important element from his formula, the element of emotional conviction, which I had seen him manipulate with devastating effectiveness. It is observable that the most charlatans, like the best advertising men, are always more than half sincere and honest according to their lights. Sincerity is indeed a great virtue in an ad-man, and if one has it not, one must at least feign it. In this connection I recall the experience of a friend who took leave of the advertising business after some years of competent and highly paid employment in that business. Her employer, while acknowledging her competence, had this to say on the occasion of her resignation:

"Miss ———, you are an able person and a good worker. In my judgment you have only one fault. You are not loyal to the things you don't believe in."

At first glance this statement would seem to plunge us into the deep water of metaphysics. But the exegesis is simple. The possession of a personal code of ethics is a handicap in the practice of advertising-as-usual, the business being above all else impersonal, and in fact so far as possible de-humanized. One must be loyal to the process, which is a necessary part of the total economic process of competitive acquisition. The god of advertising is a jealous god and tolerates no competing loyalties, no human compunctions, no private impurities of will and judgment.

The yoke of this jealous god chafes. How could it be otherwise, unless one were to suppose that advertising men are a selected class of knaves and rascals? They are, of course, nothing of the sort. They are average middle-class Americans, a bit more honest, I suspect, than the average banker or lawyer. In their personal lives they are likely to be kindly, truthful, just and generous. They would doubtless like to be equally truthful and just in the conduct of their business. But this, in the nature of the case, is impossible. The alternatives are either a cynical, realistic acceptance, or heroic gestures of rationalization. Hence the tremendous pother that advertising men make about "truth in advertising"; or at least, that is half of the explanation. The other half lies in the business-like necessity of keeping advertising in

good repute; of nursing the health of that estimable goose, reader-confidence. Are they sincere, these advertising men who conduct this "truth-in-advertising" propaganda which is echoed and re-echoed by editors, publicists, economists, sociologists, preachers, politicians? How can one tell, and does it really matter?

Quite obviously, advertising is an enterprise in special pleading conducted outside the courts of law, with no effective rules of evidence, no expert representation for the consumer, no judge and no jury. To continue the analogy: in a court of law the accused swears to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," but if he is guilty nobody expects him to do so. The attorney for the defense is theoretically bound by his code of legal ethics, by penalties for contempt of court, suborning of witnesses, etc. In practice he usually makes out the best possible case for his client, using truth, half-truth and untruth with pragmatic impartiality. Moreover, the judge and the jury expect him to do precisely that, just as they expect the State's attorney to use all possible means to secure a conviction. Judge and jury are in theory, and ordinarily in practice, disinterested. They balance one barrage of special pleading against the other, and so arrive at a verdict based on the evidence.

It is generally recognized that a defense attorney does not tell the truth, or permit the truth to be told, if he thinks this truth would prejudice the case of his client. Why should it be supposed that an advertising writer, employed to sell goods for a manufacturer or retailer, can afford to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and refrain from befuddling the judgment of his prospect? In practice he tells precisely as much of the truth as serves the interest of the advertiser, and precisely as much expedient half-truth and untruth as he believes he can get away with, without impairing "reader-confidence." If it seems profitable to scare, shame and flatter his victim he does so unhesitatingly. If bought and-paid-for testimonials will do the trick many agencies buy them. If the fastidiousness or timidity of the publisher, the barking of the Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration, or the protests of the reforming wing of the profession make it seem desirable to conceal the fact that these testimonials were bought and paid for, such a concealment is effected.

Privately, the cynics of the profession will tell you that this is the prevailing practice, including their own practice. Having learned to digest their ethical sins, they have no need of rationalizing them. These cynics leave the "reform of advertising" to their more illusioned colleagues of whom they tend to be coarsely contemptuous. The plaint of the reformers—vulgarly referred to by the cynics as the "Goose Girls"—runs somewhat as follows:

"The exaggerations, the sophistries, the purchased testimonials, the vulgarities, the outright falsifications of current advertising are quite intolerable. Such practices are destroying the faith, the illusions, the very will-to-live of 'reader confidence.' They constitute unfair competition. The irresponsible agencies and advertisers who are guilty of such practices are endangering the stability, the good repute, and the profits of the advertising profession as a whole."

To this plaint the cynics retort somewhat after this fashion:

"You fellows prate a great deal about 'truth in advertising.' What do you mean, truth, and what has the truth got to do with this racket? You say we are killing that estimable goose, reader-confidence, the goose that lays the golden eggs of advertising profits. Nonsense. It wasn't the goose that squawked. It was you. And the reason you squawked was not because you really give a whoop about 'truth,' but because we, with our more sophisticated, more scientific practice, have been chiselling into your business. We can prove and have proved that bought-and-paid-for testimonials sell two to one as compared to your inept cozenage, your primitive appeals to fear, greed and emulation. Furthermore, the ethics of advertising communications is relative and must be flexible. You have to take into account both the audience to which such communications are addressed and the object which these communications are intended to achieve, and demonstrably do achieve.

"The audience, by and large, is composed of 14-year-old intelligences that have no capacity for weighing evidence, no experience in doing so, and no desire to do so. That goes equally for the readers of *Vogue* and the readers of *True Romances*. They are effectively gulled by bought-and-paid-for testimonials and even appear to take some pleasure in being gulled. They buy on the basis of such corrupt, false and misleading evidence, and this way of selling them costs less than any other way we have discovered. It is, you will grant, our duty as advertisers and as advertising agencies acting in behalf of our clients, to advertise as efficiently as possible, thereby reducing the sales overhead which must ultimately be charged to the consumer: thereby, incidentally, safeguarding and increasing the profits of the companies in which hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans, directly or indirectly, have invested their all. It is our duty to use every means we can devise, truthful or untruthful, ethical or unethical, to persuade consumers to buy, since only by increased buying can the country be pulled out of this depression. Ours is the higher morality. The burden of restoring prosperity is on our shoulders. We have seen our duty and we are doing it."

Thus the cynics, in private. I must confess that I have derived far greater intellectual pleasure from the utterances of such hard-boiled

devil's disciples than from the plaintive reproaches and lamentations of the Goose Girls. One could wish, indeed, that the cynics were more outspoken. Unfortunately, rationalization is the order of the day, in business as in politics. Every week sees another proclamation of the new order of probity upon which business is entering under the New Deal. Even Kenneth Collins.... One is disappointed to see so able and interesting an advertising man pledge himself to the Goose Girl Sorority. But consider the recent advertising of Gimbels department store in New York. Mr. Collins is Gimbels' advertising manager, having recently transferred his talents from Macy's across the street, where he had achieved a notable success by exploiting the slogan "It's smart to be thrifty."

Mr. Collins, judged by his writings in the trade press, is something of a realist. One can only conclude therefore, that when he assumed his new duties, his survey of the situation convinced him that radical measures were needed for the effective exploitation of belief. Here is the advertisement in which the new "slant" was announced:

GIMBELS
TELLS THE
WHOLE
TRUTH

Every intelligent person will join us in a great new campaign for truth in advertising. And by truth we mean the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—exactly what you demand of a witness before a Senate Committee, or of your own children at home.

Let us tell you a straight story.

For years on end, we at Gimbels have been thinking that we were telling the truth. We have been supported in our belief by "the custom of the business," by "trade privilege," by reports from the Better Business Bureau of New York and by the comments of our customers.

But what we have been telling was, so to speak, "commercial truth." We would tell you, quite honestly, that a certain pair of curtains had been copied, in design, from a famous model, that the colors were pleasing, that the price was very low. *Every word of this was scrupulously true*. But we may have failed to say that the curtains would probably fade after one or two seasons of wear.

In the same way, we would tell you that certain dresses had materials of good quality, that the styles were fresh, and the price very reasonable. *Every word of this was scrupulously true*. But we may have failed to add that the workmanship was by machine rather than by hand, and therefore the price was low.

We believe it is time to take a revolutionary step, in line with the

beliefs of the Administration, and of the opinions of intelligent people everywhere. We believe that old-fashioned "commercial truth" has no place in the New Deal. From now on, all Gimbels advertising (and every word told you by a Gimbel salesman or saleswoman) will be—

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

How are we going to assure this? It is human to make mistakes, and we may make them. If so, we want them called to our attention. We will gladly and willingly print corrections. But we believe we will make few errors, for this reason: as a check on our store buyers, and our advertising writers, we have employed the services of a famous outside research laboratory—

THE INDUSTRIAL BY-PRODUCTS AND RESEARCH CORPORATION OF PHILADELPHIA

to make frequent scientific tests of the materials, workmanship and value of the goods we offer for sale. This is one of the best equipped laboratories of its kind in the United States, with a reputation of many years of service to many of the largest industrial corporations in this country. They are experts in textiles, and chosen for this reason, because 80% of our merchandise is either textile or dependent on textile for wear.

They have no human or partisan reason to give us the benefit of any doubt. They will give us impartial tests and reports.

Please read our advertising in today's *News*, *Journal*, *Sun* and *World-Telegram*. Bear in mind when you read the advertising of this firm that

GIMBELS TELLS THE TRUTH

Note the astute dedication to intelligence, morality and unity of interest which is implicit in the first paragraph. Just what is the nature of this "revolutionary step, in line with the beliefs of the Administration, and of the opinions of intelligent people everywhere," which Gimbels, under the leadership of Mr. Collins, has taken?

Instead of contenting itself, as in the past, with telling that part of the truth which might be expected to promote sales, and suppressing the part which would tend to discourage or prevent sales, the store pledges itself to "tell the whole truth." For example, whereas it had previously described a piece of cloth truthfully as being good value, it would add in the future, the further truth that it would quickly fade; it would say that a raincoat, while worth the price asked, would last only a year.

One readily admits that this does represent a certain gain for the consumer—a gain brought about either by the evangelical enthusi-

asm of Gimbels and Mr. Collins for the New Deal, or, possibly, by the coincident collapse of the consumer's confidence and the consumer's pocketbook, and the consequent stiffening of his sales resistance. Mr. Collins is to be credited for his astuteness in recognizing and dealing with this condition. In fairness one should also credit him with a personal, though far from unique preference for fair dealing, as against the customary chicaneries of salesmanship and advertising.

But—and this but is important—Gimbels is a profit motivated corporation, engaged, like any other business, in buying as cheaply as possible and selling as dearly as possible. The Industrial By-Products and Research Corporation of Philadelphia will undoubtedly tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth to Gimbels, because it is employed by Gimbels, and, in respect to this specific service at least, is responsible to Gimbels and to Gimbels alone. But will Gimbels pass on this whole truth and nothing but the truth to its customers and to the readers of its advertising? The whole truth, including the truth about Gimbels' profit-margin—*all* the data which the customer would require in order to measure value? No such proposal is made. At this point the customer is protected by the competition of other merchants and by that alone.

No, what we have here is a lot of the truth, more of the truth than anybody expected Gimbels to tell, but not the whole truth. It is not in the nature of profit-motivated business to tell the whole truth. Gimbels is paid by its customers, but is responsible ultimately, not to its customers, but to its stockholders. Hence the pressure of the economic determinants is here as always and everywhere toward the exploitation of the customer up to the tolerance limit of the traffic. Possibly this tolerance limit is narrowing. I am not sure.

Mr. Collins' demarche is designed to produce customers by manufacturing a "systematized illusion" to the effect that business is not business, and that the customer, on entering Gimbels, can safely put aside and forget the maxim, *caveat emptor*, which is the only ultimate protection of the buyer in a profit-motivated economy.

Suppose that Mr. Collins' readers are convinced; that they do stop worrying about whether they are being cheated or not. They would like to do this because it would certainly mean a great saving of time, money and energy. But what happens if they do? They find that Gimbels' stock in trade consists not merely of goods but of "systematized illusions" built up by decades of advertising and capitalized in trademarks which add a considerable percentage to the cost of the product and a still higher percentage to the price of the product. In the drug and cosmetics department they would find that the price of the products offered for sale frequently represents about 90% of advertising bunk and 10% of merchandize. Will Gimbels, which is

pledged to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, tell them that? No. Does the Industrial By-Products and Research Corporation know this part of the truth? It either knows it or could easily learn it. Is this truth of interest and value to the customer? It certainly is. Then why doesn't Gimbels buy this truth from its research company and pass it on to its customers? Because Gimbels is a profit-motivated corporation responsible not to its customers but to its stockholders. Because the manufacturers of these absurdly priced and inadequately described products have by advertising them, built up systematized illusions to the effect that they are worth the price asked for them. Because Gimbels, which is not in business for its health or for the health of its customers, is obliged both to carry these products, and *not* tell the truth about them, or lose an opportunity for making a profit—usually a high profit—on their sale. What would happen if Gimbels started telling the truth about these products? The manufacturers would probably bring legal or economic pressure to bear, sufficient to cause Gimbels to cease and desist. Where can you learn the truth about such products? From Consumers' Research, or for that matter, from almost any honest testing laboratory you chose to employ. Why does Consumers' Research really tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to the best of its ability? Because it is employed by and responsible to its subscribing members its customers. Why doesn't Gimbels tell that kind of truth to its customers? Because it is not responsible to its customers. It is responsible to its stockholders.

It will perhaps be argued that the drug and cosmetic department is exceptional. It is somewhat exceptional, but by no means unique. The breakfast cereal business is also primarily an advertising business, and many of the packaged "values" offered by Gimbels grocery department are chiefly air, paper, cellophane and advertising.

It will be further argued that these areas of exploitation, entrenched in the systematized illusions built up in the public mind by advertising, are outside Gimbels' control. But is Gimbels completely frank about its own "house products"? If so, Mr. Collins can claim a real revolution. The ordinary practice of the retailer in substituting a house product for an advertised product is to take advantage of the inflated illusion of value built up by advertising. The house product may be, and frequently is, as good or better than the advertised product. The price asked for the house product is ordinarily just enough less than the price of the advertised product to make the substitution acceptable to the customer. By crawling under the tent of inflated "values," erected by advertisers, retailers are able to make excellent profit margins through such substitutions—in the case of such a product as face cream, margins running up to three hundred

and four hundred per cent. Wouldn't it be wonderful, Mr. Collins, if Gimbels made up a list of such products and undertook to sell them for approximately reasonable prices? Would this be in line with the beliefs of the Administration, or would it come under the head of "destructive price cutting"? In any case, wouldn't it be nice for the consumer and—just possibly—good business for you?

Sadly, one begins to suspect that the able, intelligent, hard-boiled Mr. Collins has become just another Goose Girl. The morale of the geese is terrible these days. Mr. Collins is responsible for a large flock, and as a practical advertising man he realises that he must do something about it. Hence, with his left hand, he launches "a great new campaign for truth in advertising." But his right hand is also busy. Alongside this pronouncement "Gimbels Tells the Whole Truth," we find another Gimbel advertisement headed "Sky's the Limit!" In this advertisement the reflexes of the reader are shrewdly conditioned to the need of and purchase of a collection of beach chairs, outdoor tables, etc., for use on the roofs of city apartments—a new market. This would seem to be very competent advertising-as-usual in the modern chatty manner, designed to compete with the interest of the adjoining news columns. It is currently argued in the trade that this is good "educational" advertising because it manufactures customers. From the consumer's point of view it would be possible to contend that what the consumer is interested in is a concise description of the product and why it is worth its price; that the chatter, being neither news nor information, is a tiresome impertinence, intolerable in a civilized community. But then, if the consumers had that much sense, they would no longer be geese. So that Mr. Collins' big-hearted services as Goose Girl and customer producer would no longer be required.

This example and that of the Gillette Safety Razor Company which is examined in the following chapter, have been selected because in both cases the claim of truth-telling is explicitly made. But for the fact that the American pseudoculture is based on a structure of make-believe, which, in turn rests on layer after layer of the accumulated make-believe of past decades and past centuries, it would not even be necessary to explode such claims for it would not pay to make them. Sufficient to say that when an advertiser takes the *name* of Truth, it is in the nature of the case that he should do so in vain, and with either conscious or unconscious hypocrisy; that the coincident appeal to, and exploitation of, reader-confidence is merely one of the necessary techniques of advertising mendacity-as-usual. The documentation of this mendacity has been sufficiently attended to by Messrs. Chase and Schlink in *Your Money's Worth*, by Messrs.[3] Schlink and Kallet in *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs* and by the run of the

[3] [Stuart Chase and F. J. Schlink, *Your Money's Worth: A Study in the Waste of the Consumer's Dollar* (New York: Macmillan, 1927).]

mill prosecutions by the Federal Trade Commission, by the seizures of the Food and Drug Administration and by the exposures of quack proprietaries by the American Medical Association.[4]

The conclusion which these massive accumulations of data add up to in the minds of good citizens in and out of the advertising business is that the abuses of advertising should be corrected; that Congress should pass another law; indeed, as I write this, Congress seems likely to pass another law, which will be discussed in the concluding chapters of this book. As a former advertising man, made familiar by years of practice with the various techniques of the profession, the naïveté of this conclusion leaves me groaning with despondency. Congress can and probably will legislate itself blue in the face, without changing an iota of the basic economic and cultural determinants, and so long as these determinants continue to operate the exploitation of the consumer will simply, in response to criticism, spin the kaleidoscope of technical adaptations. To put it more brutally, advertising will merely find new ways of manufacturing suckers and trimming them. Mendacity is a function of trade and observes no ethical limits just as military warfare observes no ethical limits. Advertising is an exploitation of belief. The raw material of this traffic is not merely products and services but human weakness, fear and credulity. In the end, as Veblen pointed out in the penetrating footnote already quoted, it becomes a "trading on that range of human infirmities which flowers in devout observances and fruits in the psychopathic wards."

To do them justice, the Goose Girls—the reformers have come to constitute almost a sub-profession of the profession itself—are in many cases entirely sincere, since the ideas of a unified, functional society is something undreamed of in their philosophies, or in the textbooks of orthodox *laissez faire* economists for that matter. Few of them are as logical or as frank as the banker, Paul M. Mazur, who in his book, *American Prosperity, Its Causes and Consequences*, has this to say about the "Truth in Advertising" ballyhoo:

> But should advertising ever limit itself under judicial oath to tell the whole truth, unvarnished and unadorned, woe betide confidence in America's products and industry.... If the whole truth were really told, the career of advertising would degenerate from the impact of a powerful hydraulic hammer to a mildly reproving weak slap on the wrist.[5]

So far as the writer is aware, the Better Business Bureau has never denounced Mr. Mazur for this heresy—has never even given him a "mildly reproving weak slap on the wrist."

[4] [Arthur Kallet and F. J. Schlink, *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs: Dangers in Everyday Foods, Drugs, and Cosmetics* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1933).]

[5] [Paul M. Mazur, *American Prosperity, Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Viking Press, 1928).]

10 CHAIN MUSIC: The Truth About the Shavers

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Some time during the decade following the Civil War, and for reasons unknown, whiskers began to go out in America. But this fashion mutation ran counter to the conservatism of nature, according to which whiskers continued to come in. Thus, by the mysterious power of fashion, a great new industry was created, giving employment to millions of people, and carrying the banner of progress to the most remote corners of the inhabited globe.

It was the period during which the major vested interests of the American capitalist economy were being parceled out and consolidated. Railroads, coal, oil. And now, chins. Nude chins, or rather, the dynamic, progress-generating conflict between biology and creative myth, expressed in the man-made taboo on whiskers.

The ground-plan of this industry, as laid down by the founding fathers, bears the unmistakable mark of genius, combining as it does subtlety and a certain chaste and beautiful simplicity. The annual wheat harvest is worth so much, in plus or minus figures—mostly minus in recent years. The daily whisker harvest is worth so much—always plus, the market being certain and the crop utterly reliable and independent of the acts of God. Moreover, by an application on a grandiose scale of the Tom Sawyer theory of business enterprise, the harvest hands actually pay for bringing in a crop which in itself is worth nothing.

Nobody knows who started the taboo on whiskers. Not even a wooden cross marks the unknown grave of this unknown soldier. But greatness was indisputably his. He changed the face of the human race. He kept Satan at bay by furnishing work for idle hands to do—all male hands, every morning, three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. He mocked at natural law. He refashioned the civilized ideal of masculine beauty. He added uncounted millions to the wealth of this and other countries, expressed in stock and bond "securities," and in deeds and titles to physical properties. The religion which he founded spread quickly into all lands; it brought light and leading to the wandering tribes of darkest Africa; the Igorrotes came

down out of their trees and rejoiced in the new gospel; even the Eskimos within the Arctic Circle ate less blubber and turned to higher things.

No other religion can claim an equal number of adherents. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Atheism have all slain their millions. But the Shavers are as the sands of the sea, and death would be too good for them. It would not be good business.

Moreover, as contrasted with the faltering faith of these other decadent sects, the Shavers prove their loyalty by the punctilious observance of a daily ritual and by regular tithes contributed to the coffers of the True Church.

As already noted, the founder of this church is unknown. Quite possibly, he died in poverty and obscurity. But the Great Apostle of the Shavers was King C. Gillette. He became famous and rich. Quite probably his portrait has been more widely disseminated than that of any other religious leader in the history of the world. When he died he left a large fortune, made out of nothing; made out of "such stuff as dreams are made on."

The writer is a Shaver and will probably die a Shaver. Why, he does not know. His father was a Shaver. The only whiskers in his immediate family environment adorned the chin of his maternal grandfather, who was some special kind of Shouting Methodist, I believe. At the age of ninety, he was still stroking those whiskers and singing lustily "There is a Green Hill Far Away." There was also old Maginnis, the Celery King, but he was a very dirty and eccentric old man, whom the Shavers used as a Horrible Example.

The myth had been invented some years before I was born, and during my childhood the taboo on whiskers became increasingly strict. The faces of the young men especially were vigilantly watched for signs of heresy. Whiskers were derided as a mark of effeminacy. Even mustaches were considered a dangerous deviation from the Pure Faith.

On my sixteenth birthday, my father presented me with a Gillette Safety Razor, and from that day on I observed the ritual punctiliously, although during the early months the harvest was meagre. The blades, I noted, were marked, "Not To Be Re-Sharpened." This I took to be an Article of the Faith, which I scrupulously obeyed, although it meant that, since money was scarce, a package of blades had to last at least a year. The first thirty days were the hardest. After that the frictional heat generated by repeated scraping was sufficient to cauterize my wounds.

I remember that my grandfather, observing the lamentable condition of my chin, once urged that I see if his knife hone wouldn't help those blades a bit. I repelled the suggestion with scorn. Grandfather

and I were in opposite camps. He was a Shouting Methodist and a bearded ancient. I was an atheist and a Young Shaver.

The effects of this early religious training still linger. At various times I have wondered what I would look like in my natural whiskered state. But what would people say? And what would happen to my job? And how would my best girl feel about it? So the next morning I would turn a deaf ear to those perverse curiosities, and perform again the ritual of the Gospel According to King C. Gillette.

I am reconciled now. Never while I live shall I look in the mirror and see the image of myself as nature intended me to be. I am not myself. I am not my own master. I am, like millions of my fellow men, a Shaver.

I remember that shortly before the war, there was a minor outcropping of heresy. The Spirit of Doubt was abroad in the land, and the morals of the young were being sapped by the insidious infection of a materialist culture. Once I recall seeing a young man under thirty, doubtless in a spirit of bravado, enter a public restaurant looking like the portraits of Alexander Dowie. Quietly but firmly the waiters, with stern, set, smooth-shaven faces, put him out into the night. Such devil's disciples were rare, but unquestionably the minds of the people were troubled. One shrinks from imagining what might have happened but that, just at the crucial moment, the President declared war. Force without stint. The Huns were at the gate. The whiskered Bolsheviks of Russia were attacking the very foundations of civilization.

In the tremendous outpouring of religious faith and devotion that followed, all doubts were swept aside. And the True Church did not fail to do its bit. Sitting in solemn conclave in Boston the synod of the Church decreed that not one American doughboy should lose his immortal soul for lack of proper equipment to perform the ritual.

I have reason to know that the Church made good on this patriotic commitment. Along with two million other Shavers I went, as a private soldier, to France. I knew what I was fighting for. Those whiskered Bolsheviks, and those bearded German professors who had signed the manifesto pledging science and scholarship to the aid of the Huns!

Before I sailed I was presented at various times with eight separate and complete shaving kits. Three of them were the official equipment of the True Church; the others were put out by various dissenting sects which, however, had made common cause with King C. Gillette in the Great Crusade. Since I regarded these gifts as church property I preserved them carefully, although the transportation problem was difficult for a private soldier. My pack had only limited capacity, and

in the aggregate this plethora of equipment added quite a bit to the load I staggered under on long hikes. With the best will in the world, I found that they tended to drop out of the pack, to fall into mess kettles, and otherwise disappear. But I still had six when I sailed.

Before I left the boat I was presented with three more. At the base hospital the Y.M.C.A. secretary insisted on giving me another pair. I attempted to protest, but his face froze, and I took them. This was getting a bit thick I felt. My face was o.k. I shaved every morning, in cold water at that. What was I expected to do with those eleven kits? Then a great idea occurred to me. I would give them away. Besides doing my bit at the front, I would enlist my services in the Propaganda of the Faith, using the materials with which the Church had provided me.

I gave one to a bearded priest who was serving as brancardier with a French ambulance section to which my unit was attached. He would only take one, and I was a little saddened later when I found him, still jolly and hirsute, using the blade as a nail cutter. Except for one bearded old peasant woman who chased me out of her bistro, I had better luck, curiously, with the women. I gave six separate shaving kits to six different marraines, chiefly laundresses and barmaids in French villages behind the lines. The women shaved too, it seemed. Obviously, the war was going better than I had thought it was.

However, I made no real headway, because more shaving kits kept coming in, from the Y.M.C.A. and through the mails from solicitous maiden aunts at home. I broke down gradually and took to leaving them in the pig pens where we occasionally lodged, and where, in the nature of things, they would be of no service to the Cause. Even so, I reflected, I was better off than the mules. The quartermaster's department, I was informed, had been supplied with 300,000 branding irons for the mules. I wondered what the mules would do with them. Provided there were any mules. In six months at the front I never saw one; nothing but a herd of Algerian donkeys, once, which rapidly disappeared into the French soupe. But if there had been mules doubtless they would have branded themselves thoroughly. The Church, I reflected, was not alone in its outpouring of patriotic service. With all this I can testify that the morale of the American troops was high. We shaved. We shaved almost every day. We shaved with ditch water. We shaved with luke warm coffee. After excusable omissions of the ritual, caused by duty at the front, we shaved twice. For God. For Country. For King C. Gillette.

What happened after the Armistice was a different matter. As I look back, it would seem that the whole magnificent structure of American idealism crumbled almost overnight.

It was a fact, a regrettable fact, but a fact, that the chins of the American doughboys were pretty sore. They started wagging. Some of the things they said I hesitate even now to repeat.

They said they had too damned many shaving kits. They regretted that the envelopes protecting the blades were not larger so that the paper might be used for purposes for which the quartermaster's department provided no regular supplies. They pointed out that whereas every soldier was equipped with a dozen or so of shaving kits of assorted brands, none of these kits was equipped with more than one blade. The Y.M.C.A. gave you razors but no blades. You had to buy the blades. And the blades were extraordinarily dull. I remember that one godless doughboy asserted in plain words that they were made dull on purpose. Nothing happened to him. In due time he was honorably discharged from the service and I met him later in civil life. The doughboys talked a good deal about those blades. Sometimes, in the evenings, there was enough chin music of this sort to drown out the regimental band. Always, in such sessions, the name of King C. Gillette would be intimately and often obscenely coupled with the Y.M.C.A.

It was probably just shell shock—the reaction from the hardships and dangers of the front. For myself, although a little disheartened, I could excuse the talk. It was the things they did. They took to shying shaving kits at truant pigs. The main street of a French village where we were quartered became littered with them and the Mayor protested. The lieutenant ordered out a detail, and a dozen men faced court-martial rather than move a step. Nothing happened. The lieutenant, it soon appeared, was growing a beard.

I am a good Shaver still, but naturally I did not go through this experience unscathed. And in the years that followed the Armistice I could not help observing that the Church seemed to be slipping. The phrase "not to be re-sharpened" was no longer engraved on the blades—a doctrinal concession to modernism for which the official church was to pay heavily, for innumerable re-sharpening contraptions were soon on the market and some of them were more or less effective. Meanwhile, the chin music increased in volume and shrillness until at last the Church was obliged openly to take the field against the growing heresy.

In 1926 the Gillette Safety Razor Company spent nearly a million dollars in newspaper and magazine advertising. The copy was moderate in tone, attempting to reason the children back into the fold. The blades had been improved. They were continually being improved. The mass production process by which they were produced was incredibly accurate and was checked by innumerable inspections of the finished product. The steel used was the best and most expen-

sive tool steel obtainable. True believers should understand, when they experienced pain and consequent doubt in connection with performing the daily ritual of the Faith, that it wasn't the blade's fault. It might be the weather. Or the stiffness of the communicant's bristles. Or the hardness of the water. Or the temporary and excusable hardness of the communicant's heart, induced by a late party the night before.

Reading this campaign I knew in my heart that it marked the beginning of the end. Not so would old King C. Gillette have spoken in the great days before that erratic genius sold out his interests to the bankers, and went gaga as amateur economist and world -saver. The Church had become rich and soft. Where the Great Apostle had once peddled his invention at ten dollars a kit from door to door, the degenerate princes of the Church now gave the razors away with a tube of shaving cream. True, the empire was now huge, and rich tribute in the form of profits on blades flowed in from every quarter of the globe. But godless men, actuated by motives of material gain and without license of the True Church, had actually ventured to manufacture blades suitable for the official razor and offer them for sale in the marts of trade. And to such a low ebb had the morale of the faithful sunk that more and more these blades were purchased and used. So that the prestige of the True Church was shaken and its tithes reduced.

Again the following year the Church struck out with a huge advertising campaign. But again the note of authority was missing from its pronouncements. The blades too, lacked edge, or at least the chins of the faithful continued wagging to that effect. This heresy was encouraged by a subversive organization known as Consumer's Research, which informed its subscribers that some of the competing blades were perhaps a little better than the official equipment—not much, but a little. Other insidious rumors went forth; one to the effect that the Church had even gone so far as to manufacture and sell, under a shameful disguise from which the face of the Great Apostle had been removed, cheap and inferior blades designed to compete both with the mavericks and with the official product.

Day after day this subversive chin music gained in volume and in ominousness. Meanwhile a major crisis approached in the internal economy of the church. By virtue of the original patents issued by the State, the gospel according to Gillette had become an Established Church and the Gillette Company enjoyed a monopoly in the sale of the patented razor. This greatly helped in keeping the ritual pure, as also in the collection of tithes. But within a year these patents would expire. Chaos, certainly would ensue unless somehow, somewhere, the officialdom of the Church could muster a little statesmanship.

Long conferences were held, and at last a decision was reached. The Church would apply for patents on an improved razor and an improved blade, which latter would fit the old razor also. But since it would be patented, the conscienceless mercenaries who already infested the market would be stopped from imitating it. Meanwhile, the Church would put forth huge quantities of the new razor, offered to the faithful free with a tube of shaving cream. In a short space of time the new razors would displace the old and since they required the new blades which only the official Church would be entitled to make and sell, the elders of the Church would once more sit at ease in Zion and further diversion of the tithes would be prevented.

Everything went through as scheduled except those essential iron clad patents. By some fluke or treachery, just before the Church's New Deal for the Shavers was announced the market was flooded with blades which fitted the new razor perfectly, as well as the old razor. And the State remained neutral. And the Elders rent their garments. And the Shavers? It is appalling to realize how little the Shavers cared about the whole matter except that, finding the heretical blades to be of reasonably good quality, they bought them in great quantities. So that the Elders were obliged to seek out the heretic, and purchase his business for a large, a very large sum of money. And a little later, after the stock market crash, the stockholders of the Church questioned the statesmanship of the elders—in fact raised hell. So did a hundred circumcised and uncircumcised owners of production machinery that could turn out blades, for countless new brands appeared on the market.

The later history of the Church is almost too melancholy to record. Remembering the genius of the Great Apostle, the Elders sought out one of the most famous Doctors of Advertising Homiletics in America and told him to launch a new advertising campaign. He did so. He gave the Faithful the old time religion plus a dash of Listerined Freud. "Am I losing my husband's love?" (Picture of weeping wife; copy plucks at the conscience of the husband who is forgetful of the morning ritual; the cheek you love to touch.)

Too late. It didn't work. So then what did those dumb elders do? The Truth! The Truth, no less, with the elders themselves beating their breasts and crying "Mea Culpa." The truth being a confession that for a while the official blades were not so good, but now they're much better, please, and we're honest men and need the money.

The truth, forsooth! Since when has a self-respecting church felt called upon to defend its divinely inspired truth against the hecklers of the market place?

The official blades *are* better now, they say. And they cost just about half what they formerly cost. I don't care. I am a Shaver, a

devout Shaver, if you like, but after all that has happened, I can no longer be a faithful churchman. I buy any old blades. A while back I bought a re-sharpening contraption and it worked more or less. And just the other day I got out grandfather's hone which he specifically bequeathed to me. It is a good hone. It has been a good hone since 1833. In fact it does a better job, with less trouble than the contraption. I suspect that there are by this time thousands like me. Ours is indeed a faithless generation. And the Church does so little for us. Beards are coming in again, I suspect. Some of my best friends are sporting mustaches. And one of them has a red beard a foot long—says it prevents colds.

Well, one man can't be expected to stand alone against these heresies. And the Church is impotent, or at least silent, while the evil grows. There is House of David, for example. And Senator J. Ham Lewis. And Chief Justice Hughes. Old King C. Gillette would have known how to meet that issue like a man and a Shaver. But if the Church has ever issued a bull against Justice Hughes I have no record of it.

Now that the Church has lost its grip, I suppose it's a matter for the NRA.

A great industry is at stake. The livelihoods of thousands of workers hang in the balance. Congress ought to pass a law.

11 BEAUTY AND THE AD-MAN

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We have seen that, since advertising is essentially a traffic in belief, the profession habitually takes the name of Truth, though usually in vain. But since Beauty is Truth, Truth, Beauty, the profession is also forever rendering vain oblations at the shrine of Beauty.

This worship has two major phases. The first is the manufacture, by advertising, of successive exploitable concepts of feminine beauty, of beauty in clothes, houses, furniture, automobiles, kitchens, everything. The second phase of this worship has to do with the ad-man's view of his own craft, and would appear to represent, in part at least, a perversion of the normal human instinct of workmanship.

From some reason it is thought necessary for the ad-man, not merely to sell the idea of beauty for profit, but to sell beauty beautifully. Why? Is there not something excessive and pathological about advertising's will-to-be-beautiful?

It is contended that an attractively designed advertisement of an allegedly beautiful toilet seat is more effective than an ugly advertisement of the same object. But this has never been proved conclusively. On the contrary, there are many examples of very ugly advertising which have been exceptionally effective. Yet the desire for beauty in advertising is inextinguishable and has more or less had its way. Fifteen years ago the well-designed newspaper or magazine advertisement was the exception; today it is the rule. Has the effectiveness of advertising increased proportionately? On the contrary, it has decreased, and one of the factors in this decline is undoubtedly the increased cost of producing this economically superfluous beauty in advertising. In any case, beauty of design or text is only one of the many variable, more or less unknown and unpredictable factors in the selling relationship established by the advertisement. And finally, it would be easy to show that even in 1929, when artists were often paid $2,000 for a single painting, photographers $500 for a single print and typographers equally fancy prices—even in the heyday of art-in-advertising, cheap and ugly advertisements frequently sold goods just as well or better. And today, what could be uglier than the

inane, story-in-pictures advertisements which sell Lux, Fleischmann's Yeast, Lifebuoy Soap, and other products with demonstrated effectiveness?

There is, of course, a recognized and demonstrated commercial justification for using expensive "art" and expensive typography in the advertising of certain luxury products such as perfumes, de luxe motor cars and the like. The principle is that of "conspicuous waste," used to create an ambience, a prestige for the product, which will lift it above the rational level of pride competition. The familiar snob appeal, applied to such prosaic commodities as fifteen-cent cigarettes and twenty-five-cent collars, also accounts for a good deal of conspicuous expenditure in advertising "art," and up to a certain point, this is commercially justifiable. Yet it remains true, as many hard-boiled professionals have pointed out, that beauty has been permitted to run hog-wild in contemporary advertising practice. Carroll Rheinstrom, Advertising Manager of *Liberty*, was recently quoted in *Advertising and Selling* as believing that 90% of current advertising is waste because of the ad-man's pre-occupation with his own techniques, to the exclusion of practical economic considerations.

No, the logical economic explanations don't make sense. Advertising today, while anything but efficient, is far better designed and written than it needs to be; obviously it costs far, far more to produce than it ought to cost. Part of the explanation, I think, lies in a private impurity of the advertising craftsman; he is more interested in beauty than he is in selling. For him the advertisement is a thing-in-itself . Highly developed craftsmanship in the graphic arts and in writing, enormous expenditures of mechanical skill, are deposited at the shrine not of Mammon but of Beauty. And all pretty much in vain. The art isn't really art. The writing isn't really writing. And frequently the worst "art" and the worst "writing" sell products better than the best art and the best writing.

Yes, the explanation of this curious phenomenon may well be that advertising, since it doesn't make sense in economic, social or human terms, jumps right through the Looking-Glass and becomes a thing-in-itself!

It takes a naïve eye to see this. I had to have it pointed out to me by a poet friend who makes his living writing prose for a very expensive magazine. He picked up a copy of the publication and pointed to a Camel cigarette advertisement in color. How much did that cost, he asked? I estimated rapidly: $1,000 for the drawing, add $200 for the time of the art director and an assistant, $400 for the color plates, $100 for typography, $100 more for miscellaneous mechanical charges, $100 for copy, $300 pro-rated for executive and management charges. Total for one advertisement, not counting the cost of the space, about $2,300.

"Well," commented my poet friend, "that's the end-result, isn't it? That's why Kentucky planters go bankrupt growing tobacco, why negro and white share croppers sweat, starve and revolt, why millions of men and women diligently smoke billions of cigarettes all so that this magnificent advertisement might be born and live its little hour."

My friend was treating himself to a little poetic license, of course. But the more I stared at the phenomenon, the more I became convinced that it made just as much sense upside down as right side up. And the more I reflected upon the rôle of the "creative worker" in advertising, the more I came to suspect skullduggery of an obscure, unconscious sort. Ostensibly these craftsmen are employed to write words and draw lines that will persuade their fellow man to buy certain branded cigarettes, soaps, toothpastes, gadgets, etc. But do these fellows really give a whoop about these gadgets and gargles or whether people buy them or not? Did I, when I was a member in good standing of the profession?

Never a whoop nor a whisper. What I cared about was my craft, and that is what every genuine craftsman cares about—that and nothing else. Each piece of copy was a thing-in-itself. I did a workmanlike job, not for dear old Heinz, or Himmelschlussel, or Rockefeller, or whomsoever I was serving indirectly, but for myself; because it was pleasant to do a competent job and unpleasant to do a slovenly job. I was aware, of course, that Mr. Rockefeller, via the agency, was paying me, and I tried not to get fired. But I never worried about my duty to Mr. Rockefeller and to his oils and gadgets. The prospect, the customer? I was a bit sorry for the customer, and tried to let him off with as little bamboozlement as possible. But my real loyalty was to the Word, to the materials of my craft. Loyalty to the Word—writing a competent advertisement—sometimes meant being pretty rough and mendacious with the customer. I couldn't help that. I was carried away by the fury of composition, just as a good Turkish swordsman becomes carried away in his professional dealings with the Armenians.

But chiefly, I think, my indomitable instinct of workmanship was hard on my employer. Unconsciously I sabotaged his interests continuously. I wrote clean, lucid prose, when the illiterate screed that the advertiser wanted to print would probably have sold more goods. When my immediate superior plaintively objected that what I wrote was too good for the audience to which it was addressed, I was indignant and recalcitrant. Ordered to rewrite the advertisement, I seized the opportunity to bring it closer to my standard of craftsmanship, which had nothing to do with commerce. If the client objected, I bullied him if possible, and otherwise made a minimum of grudging concessions.

A percentage of the copy writers in advertising agencies are craftsmen. I have known scores of them. They felt as I felt, and consciously or unconsciously, they did what I did. The artists were even more obsessed and obstreperous. As I knew them, their disinterestedness in the profits of Mr. Rockefeller was extreme. They were interested in drawing pretty pictures. They drew them as well as they could, regardless of whom and of what? Regardless of the advertiser and what he had asked them to draw. Naturally, the picture had to convey a sales message, and they chattered a great deal about "putting a selling punch" into their pictures. But I noticed that the best of them became so interested in the design and the drawing that they frequently left no room for the copy or even for the trade-mark of the manufacturer. (This last I suspect was a trick of the Freudian unconscious; the trade-mark was resented because it was the signature of the advertiser.) When account executives and advertisers repined at such extravagant oblations at the shrine of Beauty, the artists were haughtier even than the copy writers. And since the average American business man has a puzzled and diffident reverence for art, coupled with an enormous ignorance of the nature of artists, their motivations and techniques, these so-called "commercial" artists did then and still do get away with an astonishing amount of sheer mayhem and murder. The writers, too, though to a less degree, because most advertisers can read and write. The technique is less strange and the technician correspondingly less formidable. All account executives in agencies, and worse still, all advertisers, have an obscene itch to write themselves. Consequently the copy writer must sternly and vigilantly keep these vulgarians in their places. I always considered it to be my duty to stand on my dignity as a "genius"—the word still goes big in the world of commerce, especially on the West Coast—and *epater* these bourgeois, partly as a matter of self-respect, and partly as a practical measure of professional and personal aggrandizement.

Commercial artists and writers indeed! Art for art's sake was our motto, and to hell with the advertiser. I can remember not one, but half a dozen times when an advertisement was written, illustrated, set up in exquisite type, and deposited in proof form on the account executive's desk almost ninety-nine and three-quarters per cent pure. True, the text had more or less to do with the product which we were supposed to be advertising, but the advertiser's "message" was merely a point of departure for the copy writer's lovingly executed exercise in pure design, and the typography was a study in black on white which made no concessions whatever to readability. The advertiser's trade-mark and signature were either carefully concealed or left out entirely. Usually, of course, these pure triumphs, these pious oblations at the shrine of Beauty, caused the account executive

to yell bloody murder. He was right and we knew he was right. We had gone too far. We would therefore execute a careful retreat from such tactical excesses, grumbling dourly for the sake of the record that the account executive was obviously an ignoramus, and that his precious client was a misbegotten idiot whom we would like to kill and stuff with his own Cheery Oats, or whatever it was he sold; that, however, as loyal employees of dear old Kidder, Bidder & Bunkstein we would gladly give him what he wanted and hoped it choked him.

We never did, of course, for that would have been to concede too much. So that the client was kept in a constant, salutary state of baffled rage, alarm and hope; and every now and then an unhappy account executive would have a nervous breakdown. We never had nervous breakdowns.

Does this seem exaggerated? But how can the honest chronicler record fantasy except in the terms of fantasy? And the vast accumulation of advertising during the post-war decade was fantastic in the extreme. It is still fantastic. Look at it in the pages of any commercial magazine. Does it make sense in terms of the sober, profit-motivated business that advertising is supposed to be? Recently the investigators of the Psychological Corporation discovered that the variation as between advertisements of lowest and highest effectiveness runs as high as 1,000 per cent. An automobile assembly line is considered poor if it permits a quality variation of more than 30 per cent. Is it sensible to believe that a production technique which frequently shows 3,000 per cent variation in the quality of the product is really aimed at its avowed objective, namely the sale of products and services to customers? Well, if I were out duck shooting and missed my duck by 1,000 per cent, I should consider it open to question whether or not I was really trying to hit that duck.

No. To understand this phenomenon we must employ a far subtler analysis, giving all the factors their due weight, no matter how fantastic these factors are, and no matter how seemingly irrational the conclusion to which we are led.

Again, Veblen furnishes us with the essential clue. In the *Theory of Business Enterprise* and elsewhere in the whole body of his work, Veblen notes that advertising is one element of the "conscientious sabotage" by which business keeps the endlessly procreative force of science-in-industry from breaking the chains of the profit system.[1] In this view the business man figures as an art-for-art's-saker. His art is the making of money, which has nothing to do with the use of the productive forces by which a society gains its livelihood. The art of making money is perhaps the purest, the most irrational art we know, and its practitioners are utterly intransigent. Today these artists in money making are prepared to starve millions of people,

[1] [Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904).]

to plunge the planet in war, to destroy civilization itself rather than compromise the purity of their art.

Veblen saw all this clearly, and Stuart Chase has employed the Veblenian apposition of business and industry in a sequence of useful books. But one might well go further and assert that the contradictions of capitalism persist even within the mental gears and pistons of its exploitative functionaries.

Business sabotages industry by means of advertising. True. But we, as advertising craftsmen, consciously or unconsciously motivated not by a desire to make money but by an obsessed delight in the materials of our craft—we in turn sabotaged advertising. We were and are parasites and unconscious saboteurs. During the whole postwar decade we gathered strength, inflated our prestige, consolidated our power. More and more the "creative worker" became the dominant force in agency practice, and advertising consequently became more and more "pure." The shrine of Beauty was buried under the fruits and flowers placed there by devout artists and writers in advertising. We were no humble starvelings. We caused the salaries and fees paid advertising artists and artists to become notorious. Even I, who was always more or less aware of what I was doing, and who was indifferent to money for its own sake—even I, without particularly trying, because I never could keep more than a fraction of my mind concentrated on the absurd business, managed to triple my salary during the postwar decade. Agency production costs hit the ceiling, broke through and sailed off into the empyrean. We developed an esthetic of advertising art and copy, a philosophy, a variety of equally fantastic creeds—a whole rich literature of rationalization which should interest the psychiatrists greatly if they ever get around to examining it.

I say "we" with poetic license. I speak for the profession, but I speak out of turn, and I shall doubtless be roundly repudiated and contemned by the menagerie of Cheshire Cats, March Hares, Mad Hatters and Red Queens who still roam the scant pastures on the other side, the *right* side of the Advertising Looking-Glass. As a matter of fact I contributed nothing to this literature of rationalization. I was too busy making a living, trying to keep sane and do a little serious work on the side, and wondering just how soon that beautiful iridescent bubble would break, leaving us "creative workers" with nothing much in our hands and a lot of soap in our eyes.

It broke. Came Black Thursday, and a chill wind blew through the advertising rookeries of the Grand Central District. Advertising appropriations were cut. That exquisite First Article of the Ad-Man's Credo: "When business is good it pays to advertise; when business is bad you've got to advertise," was invoked with less and less effect.

As the months and years passed the whole structure of the industry began to sideslip and sway. *And advertising became less pure*. That beautiful, haughty odalisque had to hustle down into the market place and drag in the customers. She had to speak of price. She became dowdy and blatant and vulgar. The primitive techniques of Hogarth in the eighteenth century were resurrected via the tabloids, and the moronic sales talk issued in ugly balloons from the mouths of ugly moronic figures. Photography was cheaper than drawings and worked as well or better. Testimonials were cheap and worked best of all.

Desperately, advertising began to step out of its part and tell the truth a little. The customer got an occasional break. But advertising lost her name, the poor girl. And it got worse. Every time car loadings hit a new low, another big advertiser would go buckeye with testimonials and other loathsome practices, and she would lose her name again. Alarmed, the reformers of advertising started another vice crusade, and their activities will be described elsewhere. They haven't accomplished much, despite General Johnson's benediction pronounced on the "good" advertising that will be needed more and more under the New Deal. Their voices become ever fainter and more faint.

Quite evidently the religion of Beauty-in-Advertising has entered upon a period of decadence. The advertisers, being only one jump ahead of the sheriff, or more often two jumps behind, are obliged to cut each other's throats without benefit of Beauty. In fact many of them, having learned wisdom from the tabloids, are openly blasphemous and vengeful with respect to the art-for-art's-sakers. Pursued by their unforgiving maledictions, the Priests of Beauty have fled to Majorca or Vermont, where they nurse their wounds and wait. Not all of them, however. In 1932 and 1933, a few stalwarts attempted a counter-offensive against the sansculottes who had laid waste the pleasant fields of advertising. The more or less recognized leader of this gallant Lacedemonian band is Mr. Rene Clarke, President of the firm of Calkins & Holden, Inc., one of the oldest, most ethical, and most respected advertising agencies in America. Mr. Clarke is a genuinely gifted designer whose worship of Beauty is without flaw or compromise. Among his many triumphs is that of so glorifying Wesson Oil that millions of American housewives consume tons of it, under the impression, doubtless, that it is a kind of champagne.

When the evil days came, Mr. Clarke had no pleasure in them, and no sympathy for the panic-stricken advertisers who with more or less success were trying to lift themselves out of the spreading sea of red ink by the balloon technique borrowed from the tabloids. Hence, after the slaughter of the morons had proceeded without benefit of

Beauty for three depression years, Mr. Clarke, in 1932, published in *Advertising and Selling* the pronunciamento which is here quoted in full:

Challenge

Bring me Idealism: I'm tired of things that look like things as they are. Have you buried your hearts like pots of gold in the earth? You who are entrusted with the responsibility of showing others what they cannot see for themselves. If your eyes see only what is seen by others, from where will the vision come? You who have been so disdainful of the ordinary, will you stand aside now and let the ordinary lead you back to the paths that stretch up to the heights?

You claimed to be the leaders, the gifted, sensitive few, who discerned and brought into being the beauty that is truth. The quality of leadership is tested by adversity. Because we have adversity, do you renounce your leadership and hoard your visions against that time when some one else has made a market for your talent?

Is your sense of beauty so delicate that it cannot be exposed to the frost? Will you come out again like house flies at the first warm touch of prosperity's spring?

Bring me Courage: I'm tired of conformity that hides behind the general use. It is indeed a low level that parallels the taste of the throng. If we all conform, wherein will the crowd find guidance away from the common level? You say it narrows your market. Nothing of worth has been created with one eye on one's market. One needs both eyes and yet more to see into one's heart, and it is from there that truth is born.

Courage walks alone, even in the market places. The crowd must follow where the trail is blazed. Look at your idols. Did they hesitate because no one had been that way before? Did they wait for acceptance before they advertised their principles?

Bring me Imagination: I'm tired of today and want to see tomorrow.

I need an image, not of what I am, but of what I hope to be. Put away the mirror; set up the telescope. Was it not yesterday you boasted that your souls had wings, that you could penetrate rare atmospheres where the rest of us could not exist? Fly now, and bring us down a measure of that ozone.

Bring us back from those excursions of the mind, which are the responsibility of your guild, a portion of wine to wash down our dry daily fare—wine from the vineyards of romance and imagination.

If you bring us only bread, you become mere housewives serving the needs of the body, and we recede step by step from that estate which breeds the very license of your occupation.

Have you no contacts with the gods that you only recite the conversations of the world? What binds you to this circling round and round? Can you not stretch your tether ever so little that the next circle would be trod on untrampled ground?

> Do you listen to those who counsel return to something which we had but have lost. That is the creed of those who lack imagination or courage and the refuge of those without plan. What we had we have not now. It belongs to yesterday, not today nor tomorrow. Others may lean on and borrow from the past, but you may not. Yours is the responsibility to create the new, the fresh, the vital vision of tomorrow, what we hope to be.

Obviously Mr. Clarke has gone dada, and I trust no person in this audience will be so ungracious as to ask what he is talking about. In the old days, when, in the heat of copy and art conferences, advertisers voiced such impertinent questions, we always boxed their ears and told them to mind their own business, if any. Often there was little enough by the time we got through with them.

I regard Mr. Clarke's manifesto as a classic of its kind, and not without its historic interest; for Mr. Clarke himself is perhaps the last of the art-for-art's-sakers in advertising. His manifesto is illustrated by a most artistic photographic study of the artist himself, standing with one hand resting on his hip, the other hand lifted and placed upon a pillar of the temple of advertising, the clear, unsubdued eyes gazing into the distance. The pose is suggestive, even ominous. What does this Samson of Art-in-Advertising mean to do? Shorn of his prestige, will he gird his loins once more, and bring the whole temple roaring down upon the heads of the Philistines? It would be a fitting end.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the primary phase of the Ad-Man's worship of Beauty: the manufacture by advertising of successive exploitable concepts of feminine beauty, of beauty in clothes, houses, furniture, automobiles, kitchens, everything. One notes three major points: first, that these concepts must be as rapidly obsolescent as possible; second, that the connotation of beauty with expensiveness is rigorously enforced; third, that beauty is conceived of as functional with respect to profitable sales, rather than with respect to satisfying beautifully and economically the living and working needs of the population.

Most exploitation of the idea of beauty reduces in practical terms to a promotion of sales and profits through the fostering of obsolescence. This is most apparent in the field of women's fashions. Here the exploitative apparatus includes not only advertising in the narrow sense of the word, but also the editorial propaganda of the style magazines, plus a more or less collusive hook-up with the rotogravure supplements of the newspapers, with stage and motion picture actresses, and with Junior League debutantes. This complex promotion apparatus is utilized to achieve, first, the fundamentally false identification of beauty and fashion. The acceleration of fash-

ion changes during the postwar period is an index of the textile industry's rapid emergence into the "surplus economy" phase of capitalism, with its entailed crisis. The life-span of a successful style was roughly about a year in 1920. Today, according to the testimony of well-known stylists, this life-span has dropped to less than six months. The mortality of the candidates for fashion's favor has correspondingly increased.

Winifred Raushenbush, in an article in the *New Freeman*, described the dilemma of the dress manufacturer who knows that nine out of every ten designs are doomed to "take a bath," to use the trade jargon. This mortality is about equally high throughout the fashion industry, whether in hats, dresses or cloaks, and whether the manufacturer is serving the high, medium or low style markets. Snobbism is, of course, the major instrument of the promotion technique. The exquisite hauteur with which both the advertisers in *Vogue* and the editor of *Vogue* lecture their nouveaux riche readers is matched only by the slightly burlesqued imitation of this manner to which indigent stenographers are subjected when they look for bargains on Fourteenth Street. The diffusion of a fashion change, both as to geography, and as between the high, medium and low style levels has become almost instantaneous. Emulative pressures are invoked all down the line. Women dress today not merely for men, but for women as a form of social competition. So potent is the style-terror that even during the depression the majority of women would rather starve than risk the shame of nonconformity. They save and scrimp, skip lunches, buy the latest mode, and four months later are obliged to buy again—this time an "ensemble," so that the manufacturers of handbags and even cosmetics may also share in the profits of style-obsolescence.

Deterioration of function fostered by advertising is especially conspicuous in the field of fashion. Even in expensive high-style apparel, the materials tend increasingly to be shoddy. And the crowning joke is that for about fifty per cent of American women, the dress, cloak and hat manufacturers do not produce, do not even attempt to produce, clothes which have any relation to the physical type of the women who are asked to buy them! This, at least, is the testimony of Miss Raushenbush in another *New Freeman* article entitled "15,000,000 Women Can't go Nude." They don't go nude, of course. They accept the ruthless prescription of the current fashion, which is usually appropriate for the young flapper type. It looks and fits like the devil on the mature woman, the short woman, the tall woman, the "hippy" woman. There are at least five major feminine types of these "forgotten women" the existence of whom the fashion industry has barely deigned to notice, let alone serve adequately.

In recent years the attempt has been made to extend the sway of fashion, *i.e.*, profit-motivated obsolescence, into every conceivable field of human purchase and use. Invariably this fashion offensive wears the masque of beauty. Almost invariably, the net result is to increase the tonnage of shoddy make-believe. One must say this at the same time that one acknowledges in fairness that the industrial designers who have both promoted and profited by this offensive, have tried to introduce some slight measure of the substance and function of beauty, and in some cases have measurably succeeded.

The motivation of this crusade is acknowledged in the title of an article contributed by Earnest Elmo Calkins to *Advertising and Selling:* "The Dividends of Beauty." One readily acknowledges that nothing, whether beautiful or ugly, can be made under a profit system unless it does pay dividends. The point is that under a profit system both the guiding esthetic and its expression by a profit-motivated industry are severely limited and distorted, so that the net product of beauty is likely to be meagre indeed. Says Mr. Calkins:

> The place of art in industry is becoming firmly established. A restaurant arranges common vegetables in patterns in its windows, taking full advantage of the different greens of peas, asparagus, cauliflower and artichoke, and adds eye-appeal to appetite appeal. A railroad landscapes its stations with grass plots and climbing roses and transforms an unsightly utility into an attractive eye-catcher, builds local goodwill, adds an esthetic touch to mere ordinary travel, and creates a new sales argument.
>
> Much has been accomplished in this new field, but the list is long of manufactured articles waiting for that beautifying touch which costs but little and adds so much to acceptance. The initial shape and color of most machine-made articles are ugly. Why, I don't know. Nature does not err that way. All her products are artistic and harmonious with each other. Some appeal to several senses. An ear of corn is pleasant to sight and touch.... Nothing but man with his filling stations, hot-dog stands and automobile cemeteries strikes a discordant note.... A forest grows unhelped and is forever beautiful. A town grows as it will and looks like hell hit with a club. Beauty in man-made articles must be the result of conscious thinking....

Mr. Calkins, a veteran of the advertising profession, admits that he doesn't know why most machine-made articles are ugly. By and large, the writer must admit a similar ignorance. The glib radical answer would run to the effect that it is not the machine, but the application of machine technology to the making of profits that results in this ugliness. But this answer doesn't cover all the facts by any means. Some machine-made articles, even some machine-made consumer's goods, made for profit and sold at Woolworth's, *are* beautiful. Many handmade articles are ugly—Elbert Hubbard's de luxe

editions for example, and much of the present flood of sweatshop toys, china, etc., coming out of Japan and Germany; also the neo-Mayan design in pottery and textiles which results when the primitive social-economic pattern of a Mexican village is shattered and the native craftsmen are Taylorized by a capitalist entrepreneur. Yet the burial urns and other art objects turned out in quantity during some of the best Chinese periods, trade-marked, and exported for profit to Persia, were and are extremely beautiful. Production for use does not necessarily result in beauty, nor does production for profit necessarily result in ugliness. Estheticians and sociologists have striven vainly to discover the rationale of beauty in the social context of production, sale and use. The best that the writer can offer is a tentative observation to the effect that the American genius, operating under the conditions of modern industrial capitalism burns brightest, and gives the largest product of beauty in the field of producer's goods: the machines themselves, turbines, electric cranes, modern factory architecture and the product of these factories for strict use seen in bridges, viaducts, etc. On the other hand the American blind spot is in the field of economic and social organization; hence we are likely to find that a machine product, designed for sale to the ultimate consumer usually, though not always betrays the disorder, the insanity, the ugliness of our decadent capitalist economy and our chaotic distributive system. In general I think it may be said that where the salesman and advertiser, rather than the craftsman and producer, are in the saddle, what the consumer gets is likely to be ugliness. In a fragmented civilization such as ours, art and the artist tend to be tossed off to the periphery of a system which no longer is organic. Mr. Calkins would like to bring the artist back to the center of the system, where, as industrial designer, he can contribute "that beautifying which costs but little and adds so much to acceptance." The attempt is in fact being made on a considerable scale, but without much success, and for very good reasons.

A very good industrial designer—there are a number of highly talented Americans at work in this field—can control some but not all of the factors which determine whether a product is to be beautiful or ugly. He can't control the profit-motive and that is precisely where he falls down. As a matter of fact, who is it calls in the industrial designer? The advertising agency, usually, or the sales manager of the manufacturer. Why do they call him in? To make the product a beautiful object? Incidentally, perhaps, but primarily to make the product a *salable* object. The designer hence must work not as an artist, but as a showman, a salesman. If he were working as an artist, he would make the form of the object express the truth of its function, not merely in mechanical but also in economic and social terms, and it

would be beautiful. But his is perforce a one-dimensional art. Working as he must, as a showman, he usually gives the object a novel flip of line or color—he "styles" it in terms of the showman, not of the artist. As a designer he finds himself frustrated and stultified by the false and anti-social production relationships which condition his labor. The same thing is true, of course, of the engineer, the educator, the doctor, the architect, indeed of all creative workers in an acquisitive society. Recently one of the best known and most highly paid industrial designers in America came to me and asked what chance he would have of doing serious work in Russia. He was fed up with the rootless frivolities that sales managers had asked him to turn out.

It is in the field of package design that the artist has greatest freedom and has scored his maximum of seeming successes. It is true that simple, bold lettering, clear colors and good design produce more sightly packages and that customers are attracted by such packages. It is also true that these packages are likely to contain the same overpriced, overadvertised and sub-standard content that they always held. This package "beauty" is therefore skin deep, and its creation the proper concern of business men and commercial dilettantes, not of artists who have any conception of the social function of art. If these packageers had any such conception they would probably feel obliged to ask first, in three cases out of five, whether the product really ought to be packaged at all.

It occurs to me that in discussing the rôle of the craftsman in advertising I may have given the impression that his "conscientious sabotage," his interest in the materials of the craft rather than in selling, his attempts to convert advertising into a thing-in-itself, represent a genuine release of creative capacity. No such impression was intended. If any genuine creation goes on in advertising agencies I have never seen it. I have seen the sort of thing described: the crippled, grotesque, make-believe of more or less competent craftsmen who played with the materials of their craft but could never use them systematically for any creative purpose. By and large there is no such thing as art in advertising any more than there is such a thing as an advertising literature.

The best of us, certainly, had more sense than to make any such pretensions. I suppose that in some twelve years of advertising practice I must have written some millions of words of what is called "advertising copy," much of it for very eminent and respectable advertisers. It was all anonymous, thank heaven, and I shall never claim a line of it. True, half-true and false, the advertiser signed it, the newspapers and magazines printed it, the radio announcer blatted it, and the wind has blown it away. It was all quite without any human dignity or meaning, let alone beauty, and it cannot be too soon forgotten.

No, we knew what we were. On the door of the art department of an agency where I worked, a friend of mine, one of the ablest and most prolific commercial artists in the business, once tacked a sign. It read: "Fetid Hell-Hole of Lost Souls."

There are many hundreds of these "fetid hell-holes" in the major cities of America. The inmates are, of course, dedicated to beauty, beauty in advertising. Whether they knew it or not they are, as artists, so many squeaking, tortured eunuchs. The Sultans of business pay them well or not so well. They have made sure that they do not fertilize the body of the culture with the dangerous seed of art.

12 SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE

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In tracing the pattern of the ad-man's pseudoculture, we come next to the concept of love, which figures as an ingredient in most of the coercions of fear and emulation by which the ad-man's rule is administered and enforced. The theory and practice of this rule are clearly indicated in the title of a comparatively recent advertising text book by Mr. Kenneth M. Goode: *How to Turn People into Gold*.[1] As a practicing alchemist in his own right and also as an agent of that purest of art-for-art's-sake gold-diggers, the business man, the ad-man treats love pragmatically, using every device to extract pecuniary gain from the love dilemmas of the population. The raw ore of human need, desire and dream is carefully washed and filtered to eliminate all impurities of intelligence, will and self-respect, so that a deposit of pure gold may be precipitated into the pockets of the advertiser.

[1] [Kenneth M. Goode, *How to Turn People into Gold* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1929).]

The enterprise of turning people, with their normal sexual desires and human affections, into gold, is greatly helped by the fact that our Puritan cultural heritage is peculiarly rich in the psychopathology of sex. This social condition is in itself highly exploitable, but it is not enough. The ad-man is in duty bound not merely to exploit the mores as he finds them, but further to pervert and debauch the emotional life of our literate masses and classes. He must not merely sell love-customers; he must also create love-customers, for, as we have seen, the advertising profession is nothing if not creative.

The dominance of the love appeal in contemporary advertising must be apparent to every reader of our mass and class magazines, as well as to the Great Radio Audience. Curiously enough, it would appear that the so-called "higher" manifestations of sex—its moral, ethical, spiritual and romantic derivatives and sublimations, the domestic affections and loyalties of husbands and wives, and of parents and children, are more exploitable than the grosser sexual appetites. Love rules the world, and the greatest triumph of modern advertising is the discovery that people may be induced to turn themselves into gold simply by a forthright appeal to their better natures, as a

kind of public duty, since it is recognized in all civilized communities that gold is more beautiful and more valuable than people. Today, therefore, many of our most successful advertisers stand, like John P. Wintergreen in "Of Thee I Sing," squarely upon the broad platform of Love, and when their campaigns are conducted with proper vigor, skill and enthusiasm, their election is almost automatic, as in the Third Reich. This, at least, is the contention of many eminent members of the advertising profession.

The distinction between sacred and profane love is difficult to maintain, and is in fact frequently blurred in current advertising practice. For convenience in examining the evidence, perhaps the following categories will serve:

Sacred Love. The affections and loyalties of husbands and wives. Maternal, paternal and filial affections. Religious and charitable impulses. Respect for the dead. Idealism in romantic love, this being closely related to the concepts of chastity and beauty.

Profane Love. The physical intimacies of adolescents, such as kissing, petting, etc. The problem created by sexual desire on the part of both the married and the unmarried, as complicated by the desire not to have children.

Illustrative material in both categories is so abundant that the specimens cited in this exposition will necessarily fail to include many of the most distinguished achievements of contemporary advertising. No slight is intended, and any reader who wishes to do so can easily correct the balance by a brief survey of the advertising pages of current mass and class magazines.

The sanctity of marriage is a major item in the Christian idealism of love. I quote at this point an advertisement by the Cadillac Motor Company which exploits this idealism with all the resources of modern advertising technique:

I DO

> It may have been but a decade ago ... or it may have been in the beautiful 90's ... but sometime, somewhere, a young man stood in the soft light of a Junetime morning ... and repeated the words ... "I do." ... Since that time he has fought, without interruption, for the place in the world he wants his family to occupy.... And it may be that, out of the struggle, he has lost a bit of the sentiment that used to abide in his heart ... for success is a jealous master and exacts great servitude.... But not when the Junetime comes ... and, with it, that anniversary of *another* June! ... Then the work-a-day world, with its many tasks, is cast abruptly aside, and sentiment—pure and simple—rules in his heart once more.... And, because there are literally thousands of him, doorbells are ringing this June throughout America ... and smiling boys in uniform stand, hats in hand, with the proof of remembrance.... And along with the beautiful flowers, and the boxes of candy, and the other

> tokens ... some of those brides of other Junes will receive the titles to new Cadillacs... and for them there will be no other June like this—save one alone.... There is a Cadillac dealer in your community—long practiced in the art of keeping a secret.... Why not go see him today? You can trust him not to tell!

Note the exquisite, hesitant style. The copy writer knows he is treading on sacred ground. Do not blame him for using the "three dots" device invented by that fleshly Broadway columnist, Walter Winchell. Rather, one should admire the catholicity of spirit by which profane techniques are converted to sacred uses. Note that this tender message to fond husbands, written not without awareness of its effect upon wives, focuses upon the *proof* that he has remembered his marriage anniversary. Ladies, by their works ye shall know them. The more costly the proof the more profound the sentiment. On that remembered June she got a husband. This June she gets a Cadillac. Clearly the one was a means to the other. Note too that only *some* wives will get Cadillacs, precious both in themselves and as emulative symbols in the endless race to keep up with the Joneses.

In the original advertisement the photograph of orange blossoms was reproduced in color. Beauty, sentiment, tact, effrontery—by means of these reagents the advertising alchemist converts the pure and beautiful devotion of husbands into something still more pure. Gold. Pure gold.

Advertisers believe enormously in children. They have lavished immense sums upon the education of parents in matters of infant care and feeding, the prevention of disease, etc. Much of that education is sound enough, much of it is irresponsible and misleading, and all of it, of course, is anything but gratuitous. I have before me an advertisement of Cream of Wheat which shows the familiar scare technique used in exploiting parental devotion. The headline, "At the Foot of My Baby's Crib I Made a SOLEMN PROMISE" is melodramatic even as to typography. What's it all about? The baby in the fable was shifted from milk to solid food not Cream of Wheat and got sick. The doctor, who judging from his photograph might well be a retired confidence man, tells the parents to feed the baby Cream of Wheat. The inference is that if he'd been fed Cream of Wheat from the beginning, he wouldn't have become sick, which is itself an impudent enough non sequitur. Add the fact that semolina, a non-trade-marked wheat product used by macaroni manufacturers, is in the writer's experience of baby-feeding, an entirely satisfactory equivalent for Cream of Wheat costing about a third as much, and you get a measure of the advertiser's effrontery. Compute Cream of Wheat's share in the huge annual levy of over-priced and de-natured breakfast cereals on American food budgets, and you get a measure

of the advertiser's service to the American Home and the American Kiddy. The writer might add, merely as his professional opinion, that without advertising the breakfast cereal business would wither in a year, with very considerable benefit to the health and wealth of American men, women and children.

Death. It is probable that but for the ineffable mortician and his confederate, the casket-maker, we might by this time have modified, in the direction of decency, taste and economy, some of the grotesque burial rites that we inherit from our savage ancestors. But no. It still costs a tired, poverty-stricken American laborer about as much to die and be buried as it does a high-caste Balinese, and the accompanying orgies are, of course, infinitely more hideous. It is scarcely worth it. Readers interested in this macabre traffic are referred to the study by John C. Gebhardt for the Russell Sage Foundation. Advertising plays its part, of course, and the appeal, in terms of menacing solemnity, is invariably to the love of the bereft ones for the departed. New York columnists still remember the maggoty eloquence of one Dr. Berthold E. Baer in behalf of Campbell's Funeral Church, under such headlines as "Buried with her Canary Bird," "Skookum," etc. This series ran in New York newspapers during the winter of 1919-1920. The current advertising of the National Casket Company is scarcely less gruesome.

Romance. When we enter the starry fields of romance, the advertising lines begin to blur, and we can never be sure whether we are dealing with love in its sacred or in its profane aspects. Of one thing, however, we can always be sure. We are in the field of sex competition, and the advertiser, with his varied stock of cosmetics, soaps, gargles and deodorants, figures as Love's Armourer; also, perhaps, as schatchen; also—well, the Elizabethans had a word for it. The advertiser's sales patter runs somewhat as follows: "You want a lover. Very well, gargle with Blisterine, use such and such soaps and cosmetics, and let Cecilia Bilson teach you how to be charming without cost." The exploitation of love's young dream is by this time a huge industry in itself. Recently, advertisers of such remotely serviceable products as radios and razor blades have been trying to muscle in on it.

Profane Love. When we come to the "marriage hygiene"—nèe [*sic*] "feminine hygiene"—advertisers it becomes clear that we are dealing with the physical aspects of love. Physical love is taboo in our society except when legalized by the State; taboo also, if one were to take our various and tangled State and Federal statutes seriously (which practically nobody does) except when having procreation as its object. The débris of the law, reflecting as it does our obsolete mores, is ridiculous enough—in Connecticut, for example, it is legal for a drug

store to sell contraceptive devices but illegal for a man or woman to use them.

Very few people obey the law, of course. Birth control is today one of the facts of American life. It is practiced, or at least attempted in some form, almost universally.

But the laws remain on the statute books. The shadow of the taboo remains, and in this shadow the advertising profession operates what is probably the most flourishing racket in America, now that Capone is in jail and prohibition is no more.

In the files of Consumers' Research I counted leaflets advertising some fifty different antiseptics and other contraceptive products, and in the files of the National Committee on Maternal Health, some hundred and fifty more. Neither organization attempts to list them all; the total probably runs into thousands. Each is represented either directly or by implication to be a convenient, safe and reliable contraceptive. Meanwhile the gynecologists of the world have been searching for precisely such a thing and say they haven't yet found it. Meanwhile, the leaders of the English Birth Control movement, in despair, are demanding the legalization of abortion, and of sterilization as in Russia. Meanwhile Margaret Sanger and her lieutenants in the American Birth Control movement are pointing out that the existing legislation which prohibits the dissemination of birth control information is really class legislation. Upper and middle-class people whether married or not can get advice from their doctors and buy contraceptives at drug stores. The fifty per cent of the population which lives at or below a subsistence level can afford neither doctors nor rubber goods. Only a few thousand can be accommodated by the present capacity of the birth control clinics.

But gynecologists are merely scientists and Mrs. Sanger is merely the gallant and indomitable Mrs. Sanger. They scarcely rank with Doctor Sayle Taylor, LL.D., now, because of the querulousness of the American Medical Association. As the "Voice of Experience," Doctor Taylor comforts thousands of wounded hearts over the radio. In his personal appearances before Men Only and Women Only he details the mysteries of love and sells little booklets full of highly dangerous misinformation and not lacking the address of a contraceptive manufacturer.

But how about the respectable drug houses whose annual "take" from the contraceptive racket far surpasses that of the eloquent "Doctor"?

The hired ad-men of these drug houses perform miracles of delicacy in conveying to the magazine readers half-truths and outright deceptions.

Take Lysol, for example. In their monumental study "The Con-

trol of Conception," Dr. Robert L. Dickinson and Dr. Louise Stevens Bryant say flatly that Lysol should be banned as a contraceptive. Not that it isn't a good antiseptic. It is indeed, a powerful antiseptic—too powerful to be used for contraceptive purposes except in weak solutions which the average woman can scarcely be trusted to make with accuracy and not reliable in any case. Further, the clinical evidence to date both in England and in America, indicates that no antiseptic douche is at all dependable as a contraceptive in and of itself.

In the earlier stages of the feminine hygiene campaigns, the language of the ad-men was full of euphemisms, of indirection, of tender solicitude for the sad-eyed wives pictured above such captions as "The Very Women who supposed they knew, are grateful for these enlightening facts." But recently the pressure of competition has speeded up the style. "Now it Can be Told," they declaim, and "Why mince words?"

Some of them don't; for example, the ad-man for Pariogen tablets, who writes the following chaste communication, addressed presumably to the automobile trade:

"Pariogen tablets may be carried anywhere in a purse, making hygienic measures possible almost anywhere, no other accessories or water being required."

It has been argued that birth control education is a necessary social job, and that the ad-men are doing it. The answer to that is that they are doing it badly, irresponsibly and expensively, with a huge by-product of abortion and other human wreckage and suffering. Thus far birth control has been the obsession of a few honest crusaders like Mrs. Sanger, Dr. Dickinson, and Dr. W. J. Robinson. For support, it has had to let itself be made the plaything of philanthropic social registerites, and say "please" to an organized medical profession so divided in its counsels, so terrified of offending the mores, and so jealous of its emoluments that it has dragged on the skirts of the movement rather than assume the courageous leadership which is not merely its right but its obvious duty. The medical societies of Michigan and Connecticut are notable exceptions to this judgment.

Despite such handicaps, the labors of Mrs. Sanger, Dr. Dickinson and others, aided by the gradual relaxation of the taboo since the war, have achieved the following major results:

1. Some 144 clinics functioning in 43 States.
2. A technique, which while far from ideal or even completely reliable is successful in 96 to 98 percentage of cases.
3. An increasing penetration of the daily and periodical press with birth control propaganda. (Except for one or two liberal stations with negligible audiences, birth control is still barred from the air.)

4. Laboratory and clinical research at Yale, the Universities of London and Edinburgh, and elsewhere, which may at any moment yield revolutionary results. Russia, of course, has endowed such research heavily and may be first to solve the problem.

5. The establishment of birth control courses in practically all of the leading medical schools, and a considerable propagandizing of the profession through the *Birth Control Review* which, however, was discontinued in July, 1933.

What could be built now, on the foundations laid by the devotion of these pioneers? The answer runs in terms of economics, politics and sociology. A birth control clinic operated on a fairly large scale, such as the Sanger Clinic in New York, can provide instruction, equipment and clinical followup for about $5.00 per year per patient. Multiply that $5.00 by about twenty million and you get $100,000,000 a year as the bill for a publicly administered contraceptive service of approximate adequacy. Would it be worth $100,000,000? Of course. Will anything of the sort be done? Probably not. Why? The Pope and the Propaganda of the Faith, which still, to paraphrase Veblen, "ignores material facts with magisterial detachment"—one of these facts being that wherever birth control clinics have been opened they have been patronized by Catholics in full proportion to the percentage of Catholics in the populations served. The Fundamentalists are equally obstructive, although their magazines cheerfully publish contraceptive advertising. Alas, of course, the big drug houses, which doubtless would interpose objections on purely moral, ethical and spiritual grounds. Also the Fourth Estate, whose freedom to defend the sanctity of the home must not be impugned or calumniated by any suspicion of a material interest arising out of the advertising income received from the before-mentioned drug houses. Also the medical profession, a small part of which feels itself obliged, like the advertising profession, to turn human life into gold, a large part of which is plain stupid and timid, and a part of which—a small part—is magnificent and may be counted upon to go the limit at almost any cost to itself.

In contrast to what is being done by the birth control clinics and what might be done by an intelligent expenditure of public funds, let's have one more look at how the job is being done by business men and advertisers interested solely in "service" and "truth."

It is roughly estimated that the American people spend about $25,000,000 a year for contraceptive devices and materials. Largely because of the failure of these commercially exploited hit-or-miss techniques, Prof. F. J. Taussig of Washington University estimates that there are about 700,000 abortions every year in this country. This

situation is, of course, highly exploitable, especially because of the bootleg nature of the traffic. The most popular contraceptive sells at a profit to the retail druggist of nearly 1000 per cent. According to Mr. Randolph Cautley of the National Committee on Maternal Hygiene, the advertising of abortifacients in the pulp magazines increased 2800 per cent in one year—between 1932 and 1933. It is, of course, a commonplace of medical knowledge that no abortifacient is effective and that all of them are highly dangerous as well as illegal. In his survey which was incomplete because of the limited funds at the disposal of his organization—the three major contraceptive advertisers spent a total of $412,647 in 1933—Mr. Cautley counted 16 advertisers who were obviously selling abortifacients, 35 who were selling contraceptives and 20 classified as "uncertain." The abortifacient copy is especially discreet. "Use it when nature fails you," they advertise, and "For unnatural delay. Double strength. Rushed first class mail." Now and then the Food and Drug Administration catches one of these rats, but it is difficult, and will continue to be difficult even under the strengthened provisions of the Copeland Bill.

13 SCIENCE SAYS: Come Up and See Me Some Time

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The mission of the ad-man is sanctified by the exigencies of our capitalist economy and of our topsy-turvy acquisitive pseudoculture. His mission is to break down the sales resistance of the breadlines; to restore prosperity by persuading us to eat more yeast, smoke more Old Golds and gargle more assorted antiseptics.

In fulfilling this mission it is appropriate that the ad-man invoke divine aid. The god of America, indeed of the modern world, is the scientist. Today it is only in the Fundamentalist, Sunday School quarterlies that God wears long white whiskers. In the advertising pages of the popular magazines He wears a pince-nez and an imperial; sometimes He squints through a microscope; or, instead of Moses' rod, He brandishes a test tube. The scripture which accompanies these pictorial pluckings of modern herd responses is austere, erudite, and asterisked with references to even more erudite footnotes. The headline, however, is invariably simple and explicit. In it the god says that yeast is good for what ails you.

The god is often a foreign god, resident in London, Vienna, Paris or Budapest. That makes him all the more impressive—and harder for the skeptical savants of the American Medical Association to get at and chasten.

In response to a recent inquiry printed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, these savants remarked: "Yeast is so uncertain in laxative effect that it is hardly justified to classify it among the cathartics.... That, among the hosts of persons taking yeast a skin disorder clears up occasionally is not surprising. The association might be entirely accidental. The history of yeast, the periodic waning and gaining in favor, suggest that it has therapeutic value, but that this value is slight indeed."

Sometimes, as in the case of yeast, the god is appeased by appropriate sacrifices: $750, f.o.b. London, was the price offered to and declined by one prominent English medico. Advertisers, however, have little difficulty in rounding up plenty of less fastidious impersonators of the deity, and the required honorariums are distressingly

small—less than half what is normally paid to society leaders. After being duly salved and photographed, surrounded by the paraphernalia of his profession, the "scientist" gives his disinterested, expert, scientific opinion. But sometimes he goes further. He *proves* that the advertisers product is the best.

The makers of Old Gold cigarettes have gone in heavily for this sort of proof. A while back they proved that Old Gold is the "coolest" cigarette. This demonstration was made by Drs. H. H. Shalon and Lincoln T. Work, for the New York Testing Laboratories. They proved, using the "bomb calorimeter," the "smokometer" and other assorted abracadabra, that an Old Gold cigarette contains 6576 B.T.U.'s; whereas Brand X contained 6688 B.T.U.'s, Brand Y 6731 B.T.U.'s and Brand Z 6732 B.T.U.'s.

What, by the way, is a B.T.U.? It is an abbreviation for "British Thermal Unit"—a measurement of *heat content*. If Old Golds contain a fraction of a per cent less B.T.U.'s than the other tested cigarettes, does that make them any "cooler." Not by a jugful. What does it prove? Nothing.

Scientists of this stripe are almost painfully eager to show that they are good fellows—that they are prepared to "go along." Intellectually, they are humble creatures—the altar boys and organ blowers of the temple of science. They have wives with social ambitions and children who need shoes. They lack advancement, and when advertisers, who are often very eminent and respectable, make friendly and respectful overtures, they are often very glad to serve the needs of business.

Such friendships would doubtless be more general but for certain unwarranted apprehensions, especially prevalent among the banking fraternity. The strong men of Wall Street have been slow in realizing that the glamorous Lady Lou and many of these stiff, spectacled earnest creatures of the laboratory know their place in an acquisitive society; that beneath that acid-stained smock there often beats a heart of gold.

Recently Mr. Kettering, vice president and research director of General Motors, felt obliged to defend the engineer against the banker's charge that he is upsetting the stability of business. Said Mr. Kettering, with a candor which cannot be too much admired: "The whole object of research is to keep every one reasonably dissatisfied with what he has in order to keep the factory busy in making new things."

This definition of the object of engineering research may seem a little startling at first. But it must be remembered that Mr. Kettering is not merely an engineer, a scientist, but also a corporation executive and as such a practical business man. In fact, it might almost be said

that in the statement quoted Mr. Kettering speaks both as a scientist and as an advertising man; a scientific advertising man, if you like, or an advertising scientist. Hence, when he says in effect that in our society the object of scientific research is the promotion of obsolescence in all fields of human purchase and use, so that profit-motivated manufacturers may be kept busy making new things, his words, even though they sound a little mad, must be listened to with respect. It would appear that under the present regime of business, subject as it is to the iron determinants of a surplus economy, the sales function must be reinforced in every possible way. Hence the lesser departments of science, with their frail purities, their traditional humanities, their obsolete and obstructive idealisms, will be brought more and more under the hegemony of the new "science" of advertising, than which no department of science is more pure, more rigorous. The objects and ends of this science are predetermined: they are, quite simply, to turn people into gold, or to induce people to turn themselves into gold.

The medical experimenter may have qualms about vivisecting his guinea pigs until he has first anesthetized them. The biologist may drop a tear over his holocausts of fruit flies. But the young Nietzscheans who run the advertising agencies observe a sterner discipline. The science of advertising is the science of exploitation, and in nothing is the ad-man more scientific, more ruthless than in his exploitation of "science." He is beyond the "good" and "evil" of conventional morality. Not for a moment can he afford to forget his motto: "Never give the moron a break."

14 WHOSE SOCIAL SCIENTIST ARE YOU?

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As ADVERTISING became more and more an essential part of the mechanism of sales promotion, and as our newspapers and magazines took definite form as *advertising businesses*, the advertising profession became highly respectable. It was part of the status quo of the acquisitive society and could be effectively challenged only by persons and interests standing outside this status quo.

As already indicated, the product of advertising was a culture, or pseudoculture. Advertising was engaged in manufacturing precisely the material which our economists, sociologists and psychologists are supposed to study, measure and interpret—necessarily within some framework of judgment. What framework? Where did our social scientists stand during advertising's period of expansion and conquest?

They stood aside for the most part while advertising proceeded to play jackstraws with the "law" of supply and demand, and other items of orthodox economic doctrine. Thornstein [*sic*] Veblen saw the thing clearly and his brief treatment of advertising in *Absentee Ownership* remains today the most exact description of the nature of the advertising phenomenon which has yet appeared.[1] But Veblen was a lone wolf all his days. And it has been the journalists, publicists and engineers, rather than the professors, who have made most effective application of Veblen's insights. Stuart Chase, a disciple of Veblen, has worked without academic sanctions, while the director of Consumers' Research, Mr. F. J. Schlink, is an engineer, and Mr. Arthur Kallet, his collaborator in the writing of *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs* is another.[2] For the most part, orthodox economists have either ignored advertising, or in very brief and inadequate treatments, have complained gently about its "vulgarity," as if, in the nature of the case, it could be anything but vulgar. A notable exception is the chapter on "Consumers in the Market" by Professor Corwin Edwards in the second volume of *Economic Behavior* by members of the Economics department of New York University.[3] Against this competent and forthright analysis, however, must be set the sort of thing which

[1] [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), chap 11.]

[2] [Arthur Kallet and F. J. Schlink, *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs: Dangers in Everyday Foods, Drugs, and Cosmetics* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1933).]

[3] [Corwin Edwards, "Consumers in the Market," in *Economic Behavior: An Institutional Approach*, edited by Willard Earl Atkins and Donald William McConnell, vol. 2, 20–40 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931).]

Leverett S. Lyon, economist of Brooking's Institute, contributes to Volume I of the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. I quote here the concluding paragraph of Mr. Lyon's article:

> Consumer advertising is the first rough effort of a society becoming prosperous to teach itself the use of the relatively great wealth of new resources, new techniques, and a reorganized production method. Whatever eventually becomes of advertising, society must provide some device for this task. Some agency must keep before the consumer the possibilities resulting from constant advance, for the world appears to be learning to produce goods ever faster. Today the voices crying most loudly in the wilderness of consumption are more concerned with noisily advertising the weaknesses of advertising than with patient teaching of standards of taste which will reform advertising by indirection. Other action is possible. An increase of government specifications would help, although not as much as is often thought, and they would require an enormous amount of advertising. What is most needed for American consumption is training in art and taste in a generous consumption of goods, if such there can be. If beauty is profitable, no manufacturer is desirous of producing crudity or vulgarity. Advertising, whether for good or ill, is the greatest force at work against the traditional economy of an age-long poverty as well as that of our own pioneer period; it is almost the only force at work against puritanism in consumption. It can infuse art into the things of life; and it will, if such an art is possible, and if those who realize what it is will let the people know.[4]

[4] [Leverett S. Lyon, "Advertising," *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by Edwin R. A. Seligman, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 470.]

Intelligent and honest advertising men, at least, will have no difficulty in recognizing this as a piece of advertising copy about advertising. Like practically all advertising copy it is a piece of special pleading and its appearance in an otherwise excellently edited reference work is calamitous enough in all conscience.

It may be observed incidentally that Mr. Lyon is a frequent contributor to the advertising trade press. He stands well within the status quo, not merely of orthodox economic teaching, but of the advertising business itself. It is natural enough that he should rationalize and justify the rôle of advertising in our society, while making the usual pretense of "objectivity."

The fact is, of course, that as advertising became powerful and respectable it had a good many well-paid jobs to offer social scientists, and that none of these jobs tolerated any degree of "objectivity" whatsoever: Jobs of teaching merchandizing and market analysis in schools of business administration; jobs for statisticians as directors of research in advertising agencies; jobs for psychologists in testing new devices of cozenage, measuring "consumer reactions," etc. There can be no doubt as to whom these social scientists belong. They belong to the advertising business, and they can no more write "objectively" about that business than a copy writer can write objectively about his client's gargles and gadgets.

With the rapid growth of the schools of business administration since the war, these business-minded economists, psychologists, statisticians, etc., came to rival in number and in influence their colleagues in the departments of economics and psychology proper. But even the strictly academic social scientists, practitioners of a "purer" discipline, found increasing difficulty in sustaining their claim of "objectivity" and the younger ones, especially the economists, pretty much gave it up. Both the motivation and the futility of this claim are well analyzed by Mr. Sidney Hook in an unpublished manuscript:

> The fascination of physical science for the social theorists is easy to explain. Not only does it possess the magic of success, but what is vastly more important, the promises of agreements and objectivity. In the popular mind, to be objective and to be "scientific" are practically synonymous terms. What is more natural, therefore, than the fact that in a field in which prejudice, bias, selective emphasis are notorious, there should be a constant appeal to a neutral point of view. It is this quest for objective truth from a neutral point of view, independent of value judgments, which has become the great fetich of American social science.
>
> It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the social activity which contributes the subject matter of the social sciences is an activity carried on by human beings in pursuit of definite ends. If we take these ends as our starting point nothing is clearer than the fact that these ends, whether they be of individuals or of classes, conflict. Social conflicts are a real and permanent feature of the society in which we live. Every attempt to develop an objective social science which will do for social organization what science has done for technology must grapple with the difficulty that there are as many directions in which social reorganization may be attempted as there are social classes. The attempt to evade this class conflict and to refuse to regard it under existing conditions as fundamental is behind the strenuous effort to emulate the "exact sciences" in which the only recognized conflict is between the "true" and the "false."

Taking, as Mr. Hook suggests, the ends sought by advertising as the proper starting point for a consideration of the phenomenon, let us return to Mr. Lyon's forensic summation and see what it amounts to. He says: "Consumer advertising is the first rough effort of a society becoming prosperous to teach itself the use of the relatively great wealth of new resources, new techniques and a reorganized production method." In the first place, advertising is conducted by and for advertisers, and the dissemination of a material culture which it accomplishes is strictly in the interest of the advertiser, primarily, and of the total apparatus of the advertising business secondarily. The advertiser is concerned with "teaching" the consumer only in so far as such teaching profits the advertiser and the routine product of advertising is therefore pretty consistently mis-educational rather than

genuinely educational. This "teaching" involves not merely huge economic wastes but a definite warping and conditioning of the consumer's value judgments into conformity with the profit-motivated interests of the advertiser.

Mr. Lyon proposes, by implication, a "patient teaching of standards of taste which will reform advertising by indirection." A teaching by whom and for whom? Advertising is itself a tremendous "educational" effort which operates in the interest of the advertiser with incidental profit to the consumer only in so far as he can disentangle the truth from a mass of special pleading, this incidental profit being vastly overbalanced by the mis-educational pressures exerted not merely on his pocketbook but upon his "taste," that is to say, his value judgments. Advertising, as Veblen said, is not merely an enterprise in sales promotion, but an enterprise in the production of customers which necessarily becomes an enterprise in "creative psychiatry."[5] Does Mr. Lyon propose that this huge *interested* mis-educational and anti-cultural activity be balanced and corrected by another educational activity? In whose interest? Financed and conducted by whom? By Consumers' Research, perhaps? By government? But why should any government which pretends to govern in the interests of the people as a whole proceed by "indirection"; that is to say, educate consumers to resist in their own interest the "education" which advertisers disseminate in *their* interest? Wouldn't it be simpler to eliminate your negatives first and then see how much and what kind of positive education is required?

[5] [Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 307n12.]

Advertising, says Mr. Lyon, "is almost the only force at work against puritanism in consumption." By what right and in whose behalf does he introduce this value judgment into his argument? Maybe our people would prefer a little more puritanism in consumption, intolerable as such an attitude may be to advertisers operating in the "surplus economy" phase of industrial capitalism. And does advertising really work against puritanism in consumption? What do you mean, puritanism in consumption? Buying wheat for what it is worth instead of "puffed wheat" at eight times as much? Buying a radio instead of shoes for the baby?

Advertising, says Mr. Lyon, "can infuse art into the things of life, if such an art is possible, and if those who realize what it is will let the people know." How? By more advertising, doubtless, along the lines so frequently proposed by Mr. Bruce Barton and Mr. Walter Pitkin in the interests, not of the "people" but of the advertiser and the advertising business?

One gives space to such lamentable rationalizers as Mr. Lyon only because he represents so typically the values, attitudes and motives of the ad-man's pseudoculture as they are currently set forth by ad-

vertising apologists. We shall encounter precisely the same kind of logical jabberwocky when we come to consider the radio and the movies. Meanwhile, let us have a look at the rôle of the psychologists.

15 PSYCHOLOGY ASKS: How Am I Doing?

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Advertising, defined as the technique of producing customers, rather than the technique of selling goods and services, employs well-known psychological devices, and the advertising man is, in fact, a journeyman psychologist. Academic and business school psychologists are therefore naturally and properly interested in advertising as a field of study. But when the quality and effects of this interest are examined, there would appear to be a conflict between the layman's naive view of psychology as a disinterested "objective" scientific discipline, and certain current activities of academic psychologists in the field of applied psychology.

In 1920, the founder of the American school of "Behaviorism," Dr. John B. Watson, resigned his professorship at Johns Hopkins and entered the employ of the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency.[1] Psychologists have questioned the originality and value of Dr. Watson's contributions to the young science of psychology. But his contributions, as a business man, to the technique of advertising are outstanding.

[1] [See Kerry W. Buckley, "The Selling of a Psychologist: John Broadus Watson and the Application of Behavioral Techniques to Advertising," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 18, no. 3 (1982): 207–21; and Peggy J. Kreshel, "John B. Watson at J. Walter Thompson: The Legitimation of 'Science' in Advertising," *Journal of Advertising* 19, no. 2 (1990): 49–59.]

The J. Walter Thompson Company is one of the largest and most consistently successful advertising agencies in the world. Over the past fourteen years the advertising which it has turned out has betrayed increasingly the touch of the master's hand. It is good advertising, effective advertising. It is also more or less unscrupulous, judged by ethical standards, even the ethical standards of the advertising profession itself. It is natural that this should be so, since ethical considerations are irrelevant to the application of scientific method in the exploitation of the consumer.

Consider the advertising of such products as Fleischmann's Yeast, Woodbury's Facial Soap, Lifebuoy Soap, Pond's Vanishing Cream, etc.—all J. Walter Thompson accounts of long standing. In this and other advertising prepared by this agency, the fear-sex-emulation formula is used systematically to "condition the reflexes" of the reader into conformity with the profit-motivated interests of the advertiser. By putting the bought-and-paid-for testimonial technique on

a mass production basis, this agency has doubtless achieved important economies for the advertiser in the production of customers. Dr. Watson's agency was also one of the leaders in the adaptation to advertising of the story-in-pictures-balloon technique borrowed from Hogarth via the tabloids. Objections on the score of ethics and taste are met by the realistic argument that the market for these products consists chiefly of fourteen-year-old intelligences, and that the unedifying means used to convert these morons into customers are justified by the ends achieved: the profits accruing to the advertiser, the internal and external cleanliness of the moron, and the fixation of systematized illusions in the minds of the public, necessary to the use and wont of an acquisitive society.

Nothing succeeds like success. Probably Dr. Watson was never obliged to ask his employers, "How am I doing?" His achievements were manifest, and his present salary as vice president of his agency is reputed to be four times the maximum stipend of a university professor.

Nothing succeeds like success. It may well be alleged that the prestige of business dominates the American psychology, not excepting the psychology of American psychologists. Veblen, whose approach to economics was through social psychology and the analysis of institutional arrangements, had an Olympian respect for himself, and no respect whatever for business. But in terms of pecuniary aggrandizement and academic kudos, Veblen got nowhere during his lifetime. Hence it was natural that in the field of applied psychology, contemporary psychologists would have chosen to follow Watson rather than Veblen.

In 1921, the year following the elevation of Dr. Watson's talents to the realms of pecuniary accumulation, an organization called the Psychological Corporation was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York.[2]

The stock of the corporation is held by some 300 American psychologists, all of them members of the American Psychological Association, and most of them having the status of professor or assistant professor in American universities and colleges.

The second article of the corporation's charter reads as follows:

> The objects and powers of this corporation shall be the advancement of psychology and the promotion of the useful applications of psychology. It shall have power to enter into contracts for the execution of psychological work, to render expert services involving the application of psychology to educational, business, administrative and other problems, and to do all other things not inconsistent with the law under which this corporation is organized, to advance psychology and to promote its useful applications.

[2] [See Michael M. Sokal, "The Origins of the Psychological Corporation," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 17, no. 1 (1981): 54–67.]

This article is quoted in one of the sales pamphlets issued by the corporation and is supplemented by the following paragraph:

> In the hands of those properly qualified, psychology can be applied usefully to many problems of business and industry, and of educational, vocational and personal adjustment. The purpose of the Psychological Corporation is to promote such applications of the science and to prevent, where possible, its exploitation by pseudo-scientists. A portion of all fees for services rendered by the corporation is devoted to research and the advancement of scientific knowledge of human behavior.

At a special meeting of the stockholders and representatives of the corporation, held in conjunction with the 1933 convention of the American Psychological Association at Chicago, Dr. Henry C. Link, Secretary and Treasurer of the corporation, presented his report. In effect Dr. Link was appealing to the value judgments of his colleagues. He was saying: the corporation has been doing such and such things. Business, especially the advertising business, thinks we have been doing pretty well. How do you think we have been doing?

There was a row, a fairly loud row, judged by academic standards, and it got into the papers. Some of the assembled psychologists, themselves stockholders in the corporation, seemed to feel that Dr. Link had sold the integrity, the purity of American psychology down the river to the advertising business. Among the more forthright objectors was Dr. A. W. Kornhauser, associate professor of Business Psychology at the University of Chicago. It is interesting to note that the most strenuous objection came, not from one of the science-for-science's-sake psychologists, but from a business school professor. Perhaps it was because Dr. Kornhauser is more aware of the nature and methods of business than some of his less sophisticated associates. But before we discuss this row, it will be necessary to describe briefly the sort of thing that the Psychological Corporation had been doing.

Perhaps the most distinguished achievement to which Dr. Link pointed with pride was co-operative study, carried on by sixty psychologists, of the effectiveness of advertising, particularly among housewives. Dr. Link's report of this study was published in the January, 1933, issue of the *Harvard Business Review*.[3]

Between March 16 and April 4, 1933, 1,578 housewives in 15 widely scattered cities and towns were interviewed by instructors and graduate students of psychology working under the supervision of some fifteen assorted Ph.D.'s and M.A.'s. They used a test questionnaire which asked such questions as the following:

> What canned fruit company advertises "Just the Center Slices"? What toothpaste advertises "Heavens! Buddy must have a girl!"? What

[3] [Henry C. Link, "A New Method of Testing Advertising Effectiveness," *Harvard Business Review* 11 (1933): 165–77.]

> product used in automobiles uses pictures of *little black dogs* in its advertising? What product asks "What is the critical age of the skin"? What toothpaste advertises "Pink Toothbrush"? What product for use in automobiles has been using advertisements showing pictures of fish, tigers, flying geese and other animals? What do 85% of dentists recommend (according to an advertisement) for purifying the breath? What soap advertises "I learned from a beauty expert how to hold my husband"? What does, for a product used in automobiles, *what butter does for bread*? What company or product advertised "This is Mrs. F. C. Adgerton of Spokane, Washington"? What company advertises "Don't wait till the doctor tells you to *keep off your feet*"? What electric refrigerator is "Dual-automatic"? What company advertises a widely used toilet product as often containing "harmful acids"?

There is a total of twenty-seven questions of this sort on the questionnaire and the housewives had to answer all of them. The mind shrinks from contemplating either the amount of high-powered psychological persuasion required to hold them to their task, or the sufferings endured by these 1,578 female guinea pigs in the cause of "science." How many doorbells had to be rung before one willing housewife was captured? Did they suffer? And how much? Dr. Link should have answered those questions, too. I am sure the answers would prove something, although I am not sure just what.

What *was* proved, beyond question, when the questionnaires were all turned in, collated, tabulated, analyzed, etc., by the most rigorous scientific methods, was that, sure enough, housewives did read advertising. I quote from Dr. Link's article:

> The outstanding result of this test is the proof of the amazing influence which advertising can and often does exert. For example, 1,090 or 69% of the 1,578 housewives answered "Chase & Sanborn" to the question about the "Date on the can." The correct answer, "Ipana" was given by 943 or 59.7% of these women to the question regarding "Pink Toothbrush." On the other hand, the themes of certain very extensive campaigns registered correctly among only 15.65%, 11.3%, and even 7% of these housewives. In some cases, single advertisements, appearing only once, registered better than campaigns which had run in all the major magazines for six months, a year, or longer. That is to say, some advertising was 50, 100 or 150 times more effective, as measured by this test, than other advertising. The most conspicuous example of this was the result of the question, What soap advertises "Stop those runs in stockings"? This was the headline, explained in the copy, of a full-page advertisement for Lux soap which had appeared in just one of the leading women's magazines. Almost one half of the housewives, 47.7%, answered "Lux." This one insertion, costing about $8,000, was found six times as effective as a year's campaign advertising another article and costing about a million dollars, a ratio of 750 to 1. The average of correct answers to the thirteen most effective campaigns or advertisements was 36.3%. The average for the fourteen least effective was 8.8%.

The writer is not qualified to judge the scientific integrity of Dr. Link's methods. But the findings of this study are manifestly highly interesting and useful to advertisers, advertising agencies and advertising managers of publications, *who, incidentally got all this research for nothing*. It was done gratuitously by the co-operating psychologists, assistants and students, as a disinterested effort toward the "advancement of scientific knowledge of human behavior." ... Well, perhaps not wholly disinterested. The published study was in effect, a free sample and an advertisement of the sort of thing the Psychological Corporation is equipped to do. Doubtless it was a successful advertisement, since the corporation during 1933 conducted many scientific investigations, sponsored and paid for by individual advertisers, and conducted by its wideflung organization of psychology professors, instructors and students.

In other words, what Dr. Link was presenting proudly to his assembled colleagues was a successful advertising business, operating efficiently according to current standards, and using advertising to sell its services. Incidentally this business is in a position to cut the market price for advertising research because public and philanthropic funds help to support the co-operating professors, and they in turn are able to use their students as Tom Sawyer labor, sustained wholly or in part by the pure passion of science.

Whether "scientific" or not, that study of 1,578 housewives was indubitably a contribution. To whom and for what end? Not to science, but to the advertising business, to the end that it might conduct more efficiently its effort to "teach the use of the relatively great wealth, of new resources, new techniques and a reorganized production method." (L. S. Lyon's definition in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*).[4]

This effort makes systematic use of techniques which are most accurately characterized by Veblen's phrase: "creative psychiatry."[5] For example, one of the advertising campaigns tested was that of Ipana Toothpaste, which for the past ten years or more has been parroting "Pink Toothbrush," in the effort to make people worry about their gums and buy an expensive toothpaste, the use of which is alleged to prevent the gums from bleeding, the advertising being the customary melange of half-truth, inference and ambiguity.

When, therefore, Dr. Link appealed to the suffrages of his professional colleagues, it was upon the following grounds: that the Psychological Corporation has established efficient machinery by which its members might sell their scientific abilities and the leg work of their students to advertisers engaged, to quote Veblen once more, in "the creative guidance of habit and bias, by recourse to shock effects, tropismatic reactions, animal orientation, forced movements,

[4] [Leverett S. Lyon, "Advertising," *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by Edwin R. A. Seligman, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1930).]

[5] [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), 307n12.]

fixation of ideas, verbal intoxication.... A trading on that range of human infirmities which blossom in devout observances and fruit in the psychopathic wards."

What happened? The next annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Psychological Corporation was held in New York on Dec. 1, 1933. The managing director, Dr. Paul S. Achilles, explained that the objections of Dr. Kornhauser and others may have arisen from insufficient knowledge on the part of many psychologists of the charter and purposes of the corporation and the nature and extent of its current activities. He said that inasmuch as the corporation had never been subsidized nor conceived as an organization to be supported by subsidies, his efforts for the past three years had necessarily been concentrated chiefly on putting the corporation on a self-sustaining basis.

It was Dr. Achilles' opinion that the two basic assumptions on which the corporation was founded are: (1) That psychologists render services of economic value; and (2) that a business organization of co-operative psychologists rendering such services could not only be self-supporting and useful to the science but could earn funds for research and improvement of services. He felt that only as the corporation succeeded first in demonstrating its capacity for self-support through rendering creditable and marketable services such as it was now offering could it hope to achieve its larger aims. In brief his feeling was that it was equally if not more respectable for psychologists to earn their own way and their funds for research than to depend on subsidies.

Dr. W. S. Woodworth, of Columbia, expressed the opinion that one of the original aims of the corporation was to have frankly a commercial standing so that it could do business with business men with more freedom and directness than a university professor usually feels that he can. Further, in regard to the corporation's market survey work, that this seemed a legitimate field and that the mere fact that a market study involved personal interviewing did not make it unworthy or undignified.

The matter was clinched by the treasurer's report showing an 125% increase of gross receipts by the corporation over the preceding year, and payments of $7,000 to psychologists representing the corporation and their students. The corporation, which had been in the red for some time, was climbing out. Dr. Achilles (who incidentally has been serving without salary) and Dr. Link were re-elected as managing director and secretary-treasurer respectively. Other names on the present list of officers and directors are J. McKeen Cattell, E. L. Thorndike, L. M. Terman, Walter Dill Scott, W. V. B. Bingham, A. T. Poffenberger, R. S. Woodworth and Rensis Likert.

So that is that, as we used to say when the client laid down the law at an advertising conference. It looks bad for my old friends in the research departments of the advertising agencies. If the Psychological Corporation, under its present efficient management, continues to progress, this sweated academic scab labor is going to take the bread out of the mouths of a lot of families I know in Bronxville, Great Neck and elsewhere. Doubtless, too, the standards of advertising research will be greatly improved, when the job is taken over by psychologists instead of the more or less irresponsible apprentices in the agencies to whom such work is ordinarily assigned.

In the old days before the war I remember that advertising research was considered to be something of a joke. You knew the answer before you started out. Your job was to get the documents. We, too, went out with questionnaires, were chased down the street by irate Italian green grocers, and got our toes caught in doors closed energetically by unco-operative housewives. It really wasn't so very dignified, Dr. Woodworth, but it had its humorous compensations and it kept one in the open air. I recall a two-hundred-pound football player who on graduation drifted into an advertising agency where I worked and was assigned to research. It was the middle of July, and he had to interview some fifty housewives residing somewhere in the Oranges. I forget what he had to ask them. Did they use Gypso, maybe, and if not why not?

His name was—call him Mr. Retriever. Two days later, Retriever stumbled back into the office in a state of moral and physical exhaustion. Somebody was callous enough to ask him how he had been doing and how he felt.

"I've lost twenty pounds," said Mr. Retriever. "I feel like the hobo who started cross the continent by freight. He got aboard the car next the engine and the brakeman kicked him off. He grabbed the next car and got aboard. The brakeman kicked him off, but he scrambled back into the third car. This ritual continued until the train stopped at a way station, when the hobo walked to the front of the train and got aboard the first car. The brakeman spotted him and in exasperation demanded: "Brother, where in hell are you going?" "I'm going to Kansas City," replied the hobo, "if my tail holds out."

The sacrifices of dignity demanded of an advertising researcher are in fact extreme. I recall a baby-faced collegian who rang a doorbell somewhere in the wilds of Bergen County. There appeared in the doorway a comely middle-aged German woman who listened silently to his patter, meanwhile scrutinizing him shrewdly. When he finished, she gave him a ravishing smile and said: "I know what you want. You want a piece of apfelkuchen." The collegian blushed, searched his conscience and said: "Yes." This particular anecdote has

a Rabelaisian sequel which the writer feels obliged to withhold, in deference to the feelings of the Better Business Bureau. In a contribution to the Nov. 9, 1933, issue of *Printers' Ink*, Dr. Link states that "during the last two years we have interviewed almost 12,000 women in their homes, in more than sixty cities and towns." One is sure that the anecdotal literature of advertising research has been greatly enriched by these investigations.

It is possible, of course, that the Psychological Corporation, representing as it does the idealism and public spirit of American psychologists, is secretly engaged in boring from within the advertising business; one notes the repeated references ta the scientific research which these pot-boiling activities are designed to finance. Possibly the corporation intends to take as a point of departure Veblen's description of advertising as an enterprise in "creative psychiatry," and, using the data obtained by its commercially sponsored investigations, institute studies designed to show just what the advertising business has done to improve or debauch the mental, ethical and moral level of the average American. An attitude of suspended judgment is therefore indicated. The difficulty is that a study such as that above suggested would require some framework of value judgment, which would be most unscientific. And if, in spite of this objection, the corporation elected to make such a study, to whom would it report its results, asking again, "How am I doing?"

16 THE MOVIES

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ALTHOUGH not a part of the advertising business proper, the movie industry maintains and is maintained by a huge and efficiently operated advertising apparatus—the dozen or so popular movie magazines whose combined circulation of over 3,000,000 ranks next in volume to that of the women's magazines.

These magazines serve in effect as house organs for the $42,000,000,000 movie industry which every week spreads its wares before 77,000,000 American movie-goers, including 28,000,000 minors. But like other mass and class publications these movie magazines are also house organs for their advertisers—chiefly manufacturers of cosmetics, drugs and fashion goods. How this dual rôle is worked out and how the movie magazines articulate into the general economic scheme of the movie industry becomes at once apparent when we examine their promotion literature. I quote from a looseleaf promotion booklet issued by *Photoplay Magazine*, the largest and most successful of the movie magazines:

> *Photoplay* offers you a concentrated, compact audience of 600,000 predominantly younger women the New Wanters ... *Photoplay* ... is outstandingly tributary to the great sales-making, want-building influence of the screen.

We begin to glimpse what is perhaps the major rôle of the movie in our society, and a little later, in a signed statement by the editor, Mr. James R. Quirk, we find this rôle explicitly stated:

> It became increasingly apparent to the publishers of *Photoplay* that the vast public who spent millions through motion picture box offices was interested in more than the stories flashed upon the screen; that they were absorbing something beyond the vicarious emotions and adventures of the screen folk.
>
> The millions of young women who attended motion pictures began to realise that, closely observing the stars and leading women of the screen, they could take lessons to enhance their own attractiveness and personality. Hollywood became the beauty center of the world....

> Following closely the new interests which the motion picture provoked in the minds of the audience, and the desires of millions of women to profit by their achievement of beauty, the magazine sent experts on beauty and fashions and famous photographers to Hollywood and reported to its readers every new phase of the development of feminine attractiveness. These subjects today share in basic importance with the news of Hollywood pictures and personalities.
>
> That made *Photoplay* outstanding as a medium for advertisers.... Its readers are inspired by the editorial pages to buy the goods shown in its advertising pages. The editorial and advertising interests dovetail perfectly.
>
> Its fashion and beauty editors, all of whom have had training in actual merchandising, are recognized by the trades as experts. Such stores as Marshall Field & Company of Chicago use its fashion pages in their selections and merchandising, and credit *Photoplay* in their newspaper advertising, recognizing the combined style promotion power of the screen and the magazine. Thousands of beauty shops throughout the country receive and display its announcements of new Hollywood coiffures and new beauty methods of the most beautiful stars.

One somehow gets the impression that Mr. Quirk knows what the motion picture industry is all about and what it is for. This impression is confirmed when we note that *Photoplay* lists over 80 well-known manufacturers of drugs, cosmetics and fashion goods among its 1931–32 advertisers. It is further confirmed by the following even more explicit statement of the nature of the business, quoted from the same source:

> When women go to the movies they go to see themselves not in the mirror but in the ideal world of fancy. During that hour or two in the romantic world of make-believe, potent influences are at work. New desires are instilled, new wants implanted, new impulses to spend are aroused. These impulses may be at the moment only vague longings, but sooner or later they will crystallize into definite wants.
>
> When the American woman sees her favorite screen actress and notes with very keen interest every detail of her attire ... she is immersed in that mood which makes her most receptive to the suggestion that she must have these lovely things for her own ... and she will scheme and plan to have for her own the charming frocks and appealing millinery, the smart footwear, the seductive furs and wraps—all the tempting possessions which the silver screen has so seductively exposed to her view....
>
> *The motion picture paves the way.* Photoplay *carries on, renewing the impulses caught on the screen. It gives your product's address and telephone number.*

The facts are as stated, and the argument is logical and convincing. It is clinched on the next page by a skillful reference to what is without doubt the major asset of this movie-advertising coalition, which is Youth.

> Last year two million, next year two million, in the next ten years twenty million, young men and women will come of age.... They will want necessities, pleasures, luxuries. And they will get them—because their *buying temperature* is high.... It will pay you handsomely to find the best point of contact with these millions of new wanters. It will pay you to lay your wares before them in the atmosphere of enthusiasm and romance in which the desire to own the good things of life is engendered.... Photoplay's *audience, 600,000 strong, is predominantly with the younger women.*

What is the nature of this admirable piece of promotion literature, prepared under the direction of one of America's leading publisher's consultants?

It is, quite evidently, by way of being applied sociology and psychology. It is supplemented by tables and graphs showing the buying power of *Photoplay*'s readers, these being based on the research of Daniel Starch, Ph.D., who operates a well-known and successful commercial research bureau. Dr. Starch's figures seem startlingly high, but there is really no good reason for supposing that his study was less honest, less "objective," than that of the group of sociologists, psychologists and educators who conducted the Payne Fund study of the motion picture with respect to its influence upon children and adolescents. Dr. Starch was employed by the allied motion picture-advertising business which has an axe to grind, and admits it. The Payne Fund investigation was financed by a philanthropic foundation and instigated by a middle-class reform organization, the Motion Picture Research Council, which also has an axe to grind, a moral axe, if you will. A little later we shall encounter another eminent sociologist and psychologist operating in this arena, namely Mr. Will Hays, who also has an axe to grind and more or less admits it, although in the nature of the case Mr. Hays' operations require a lavish output of pragmatic make-believe.

But first let us attempt to construct, on the foundations already laid, a slow-motion picture of what this business is and how it works.

As in all other forms of advertising, the causal sequence traces back to mass production as the most profitable technique of exploiting the "art and science" of the motion picture. Mass production requires mass distribution (including block booking and blind booking) and mass advertising; also standardization of the product in terms of maximum salability and a systematic "production of customers by a production of systematized illusions." The Payne Fund investigators discovered with horror that between 75 and 80 per cent of current motion pictures deal with crime, sex and love—obstinately refusing to merge the second two categories.

Surely this is pretty much beside the point; an analysis of Shakespeare's plays would probably show an even higher content of such subject matter.

The *Photoplay* promotion booklet, written by people who really know something about the industry, hits the nail on the head in emphasizing the standard content of romance, luxury and conspicuous expenditure. This is not only the commodity of maximum salability, but in the process of its manufacture and sale there emerges an important by-product which is duly sold to advertisers by the movie magazines.

Why does the motion picture with a high content of "romance," "beauty" and conspicuous expenditure represent the standard movie product of maximum salability? Because the dominant values of the society are material and acquisitive. And because the masses of the population, being economically debarred from the attainment of these values in real life, love to enjoy them vicariously in the dream world of the silver screen. The frustrations of real life are both alleviated and sharpened by the pictures. As in the case of sex, the imaginative release is only partially satisfying, and the female adolescent, particularly, leaves the motion picture theatre scheming, planning "to have for her own ... all the tempting possessions which the silver screen has so seductively exposed to her view." From this point *Photoplay* carries on, and renews the sweet torture in both its editorial and advertising columns, so that the stenographer goes without lunch to buy her favorite star's favorite face cream. The sales cycle is now completed, and the following mentioned profit-makers have duly participated: the producer, distributor and exhibitor of the motion picture; the motion picture magazine; Dr. Starch, who helped to present the merits of the motion picture magazine to the advertiser; the advertising agency which got a 15 per cent commission on the cost of the advertising space; the advertiser and all the distributive links ending with the drug store that sold the stenographer the vanishing cream (net manufacturing cost eight cents, retail price $1.00).

But we are not through yet. The exploitative process as above outlined runs counter to the residual Puritanism, both consumptive and sexual of the American middle class, particularly the middle-class resident in that section of America referred to in the shop talk of the industry as "the Bible Belt." The movie industry is obliged, for honest commercial reasons, to break down this Puritanism. But the Puritans feel obliged to organize and effectuate their sales resistance, if only to protect their children from the corruptive influence of the movie industry. They also feel morally obliged to protect the children and adolescents of the lower classes and prevent them from enjoying almost the only kind of emotional release which their economic condition permits them.

So censorship movements spring up here, there and everywhere, usually sponsored and financed by the church groups, women's

clubs, parent-teacher organizations, etc., through which the middle class expresses its view of the morals, expenditure and conduct appropriate for an eighteen-year-old proletarian typist. These movements provided jobs and salaries chiefly for preachers without other "calls" and for women's club leaders enjoying more eminence than income.

Naturally, the industry felt obliged to defend its vested interest in the exploitation of the American masses, and specifically of the American kiddy, sub-flapper and flapper. That made more jobs, and since the industry was better organized and in a position to pay adequate salaries to such genuinely gifted propagandists as Will Hays, the industry invariably won. Mr. Hays makes use of a well-known principle of applied sociology which is expressed in the formula: "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." With his characteristic evangelical enthusiasm, Deacon Hays has managed in one way or another to "join" almost every movie-reform movement which has appeared on the horizon during his long tenure of office as President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., popularly known as the "Hays office."

The public relations machinery operated by the Hays office is in effect a two-way system of diplomatic communication between the industry and the various pressure groups which represent public opinion as applied to the movies. Since Mr. Hays is employed by and responsible to the industry, he is expected to see that these pressure groups interfere as little as possible with the business as usual of the movies. But being a man of talent, and a sociologist of parts, the good deacon does a lot better than that. He strives always, and often with notable success, to induce these reform groups to become propagandists for the Hays office and salesmen of the Hollywood product, to the end that the Hays office, far from being merely a defense against censorship, may become a positive and useful sales promotion department for the industry as a whole. With this in view he has built up three major instrumentalities: (1) the National Board of Review, which clears and effectuates the judgments of ten organized pre-viewing groups: The International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, National Council of Jewish Women, National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution, the Congress of Parents and Teachers, National Society of New England Women, General Federation of Women's Clubs, Women's University Club of Los Angeles, Boy Scouts of America and Young Men's Christian Association. Note that these are all middle-class organizations, chosen because it is in middle-class pressure groups that censorship movements originate, although the bulk of the industry's income is derived from the lower classes and lower middle classes. In other words representatives

of the ruling middle and upper classes are invited to pass on what movies the masses are permitted to see.

(2) The local Motion Picture Councils, Better Film Committees, etc., consisting usually of club women, church women and local parent-teacher groups organized to deal with the 12,000 "neighborhood theatre situations" into which Mr. Hays breaks down his field organization problem. In 3,000 of these "situations" there is today a public group of some kind working with the theatre manager, and the membership of these groups is somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000.

(3) The Studio Relations Committee in Hollywood, which digests and clears the data coming in from the field, determines broad lines of production policy as it is affected by the organized opinion of these groups, and enables each producer to learn from the mistakes of the others.

Now watch what happens when this machinery goes into action. Some of these pre-viewing groups pass some pictures; others pass other pictures. In the end most of the pictures are likely to be passed by some one of the groups. This permits Dr. Hays to announce in his annual report for 1932 that of 476 feature films reviewed by seven committees 413 (86.7%) were "variously endorsed for family, adult and child entertainment ... by one or more of these committees." There we have not merely censorship reduced to innocuity, but a positive testimonial asset which the Hays office duly capitalizes by spreading the glad news to his field organization that "unsophisticated films pay ... more than 80 per cent of box-office champions of last year also endorsed in National Previewing Groups selections." And the motion picture committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs sends out a statement of its program for the year urging each local club committee to take as its slogan, "Be Better Film Buyers."

But this isn't all. When the motion picture code hearings were held in Washington a group of representative club women appeared to protest against the evil of double features, which the producers also object to for profit reasons. And when Henry James Forman's book, *Our Movie-Made Children*, appeared the *Pennsylvania Clubwoman*, according to an article in the *Christian Century*, attacked this popularization of the Payne Fund studies and the Motion Picture Research Council which instigated these studies.

So that a neutral layman, listening to the hue and clamor about the movies, finds it a bit difficult to determine whether the Hays office has joined the reformers or the reformers have joined the Hays office. But the result is not in doubt. The industry has won every battle thus far, including the battle of Washington at which the motion

picture code was signed. In this code the industry got practically everything it asked for, including an undisturbed continuance of the blind booking and block booking practices by which the big producers are enabled to ensure a part of their market in advance of production. What did the reformers get? They got President-Emeritus Abbott Lawrence Lowell, of Sacco and Vanzetti fame, sitting on a committee with Eddie Cantor and Marie Dressier to safeguard the morality of the movies and the interests of the artists. This was supposed not to be funny, but Dr. Lowell couldn't see it that way and resigned. Dr. Lowell is now president of the Motion Picture Research Council, which instigated the Payne Fund studies of the effects of the motion pictures upon children, and that was also a serious matter.

Prior to the Payne Fund studies, the reform of the motion picture had been almost the exclusive province of preachers, club women, parent-teachers, Y. M. C. A. secretaries, Scout Masters, etc. Naturally the sociologists, educators, psychologists and other academic savants wanted in; there was a considerable overproduction of social scientists during the late New Era, and the universities and colleges were not able to absorb the surplus. Moreover, the Great Movie Argument, what with one thing and another, and especially Will Hays, had become loud, raucous and most unscientific. It was clearly up to the social scientists to Establish the Facts.

The Facts, as determined by eighteen assorted sociologists, psychologists and educators, are set forth in nine volumes published by Macmillan, and are also summarized and popularized in a book by Henry James Forman entitled *Our Movie-Made Children*.[1] It took four years to dig up the Facts, which, however, turned out to be pretty much what everybody knew all the time: that children who attend the movies frequently are likely to be stupider than children who don't go to the movies at all (this is also probably true of adults); that very young children are frequently shocked and nervously injured by horror pictures; that the movies not only reflect our changing sexual mores but also *affect* them—girls learn about men from John Gilbert and Clark Gable; boys learn about women from Clara Bow and Greta Garbo. Life then proceeds to imitate the art and pseudoart of the movies, in respect both to sex and to other aspects of conduct. Other findings were that children do learn from the movies and retain much of what they learn; that the movies constitute in effect an independent, profit-motivated educational apparatus rivalling and sometimes surpassing in influence the home and the school; that the movies can be and are used as propaganda for and against war, for and against different racial groups; that gangster pictures, with or without moral endings, tend to teach gangsterism.

[1] [Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (New York: Macmillan, 1935). On the Payne Fund studies, see Garth Jowett, Ian C. Jarvis, and Katherine H. Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).]

Although the investigators made much pother about the "objective" "scientific" nature of this fact-finding study, they could scarcely escape value judgments, and Mr. Forman frankly applies such judgments in his popularization. They are middle-class value judgments, derived from the conventional mores of the middle-class community, and applied to an industry which is organized to serve not the classes, but the masses. These value judgments crop out when Cecil De Mille's ineffable "King of Kings" is cited as a "good" picture, and when Mr. Forman quotes the testimony of high school and college youngsters, asked to describe what effect the movies had on their lives. A college boy remarks sensibly enough:

> The technique of making love to a girl received considerable of my attention ... and it was directly through the movies that I learned to kiss a girl on her ears, neck and cheeks, as well as on the mouth.

The implication is clear that such techniques are highly reprehensible, whereas on purely objective grounds there would appear to be something to be said for them.

But what the Payne Fund investigators didn't find is almost more interesting than what they did find. For instance, they failed to remark the rôle of the movie as commercial propaganda in promoting the enterprise of the advertiser. The consistent class bias of the movies also escaped attention although it is apparent enough both in the news reels and in the feature pictures. During the 1932 Communist-led Hunger March on Washington the newsreels were even more unfair than the press in deriding and misrepresenting the marchers. And who ever saw an American movie featuring as hero a successful strike leader?

As one of our three major instruments of social communication, the movie is an instrument of rule. Naturally, in a business-ruled society, the movie serves the propaganda requirements of business, both as to commerce and politics. Why did the industry get what it wanted and the reformers get nothing when the movie code was signed? Isn't it possible that the administration felt that it needed the good-will of the industry in order to stay in office?

Dr. W. W. Charters, director of the four-year study financed by the Payne Fund, remarks in his introduction to Mr. Forman's volume: "the commercial movies present a critical and complicated situation in which the whole-hearted and sincere co-operation of the producers with parents and public is essential to discover how to use motion pictures to the best advantage of children."

One is tempted to ask "What parents and what public?" The middle-class, more or less religious, more or less Puritan parents would doubtless like a good deal less frank sex in the movies, more

"education" and more "wholesome" romance of the *Ladies' Home Journal* variety. But the younger generation of the great cities might be expected to assert, with some justice, that there is both more art and more health in the sex movie at its worst than in the average woman's magazine romance. There would probably be equally violent disagreement concerning other varieties of social content. The radical labor movement, if it were strong enough to have an effective voice in the reform of the movies, would presumably demand that the producers stop using news reels and feature pictures as anti-labor propaganda, and even give them an occasional picture with a strike leader as hero. One doubts that the middle-class reform groups would either make or support such a demand.

The dilemma, which would have become apparent if, as originally planned, a competent and sufficiently unorthodox economist had been included in the group that made the Payne Fund study, is that the movie industry represents Big Business operating in a cultural field, but for purely commercial purposes. The industry will co-operate "wholeheartedly and sincerely" with anybody and everybody for the good of the industry as determined by box office receipts. Pressure groups, whether middle-class or proletarian, which would like to see a different set of value judgments, will in the end, one suspects, be obliged to shoot their own movies and build their own audiences.

No mention has been made of the use of the movie for direct advertising purposes. The "sponsored" movie—a more or less entertaining short subject, advertising a commercial product or service and introduced into a regular program—was tentatively tried out in 1929 and 1930. The idea was to sell the advertiser a given run of his sponsored short in chain theatres. The theatres "owned" their audiences, or thought they did, and would have been glad to sell the "fans" at so much a head to the advertisers. But the audiences proved restive and the idea was pretty much abandoned. A certain modicum of two-timing is observable in the current run of pictures, but it ordinarily takes the form of propaganda rather than of advertising. The industry frequently needs to use the paraphernalia of the army and the navy. It is therefore good business to permit a percentage of army and navy propaganda in the pictures. As for the use of the pictures and endorsements of movie stars in advertising, that is merely a by-product of the industry and a part of its promotion technique. Whether or not the public credits the sincerity of these endorsements is unimportant; they sell goods and they advertise the star.

17 RULE BY RADIO

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RADIO broadcasting came into the world like a lost child born too soon and bearing the birthmark of a world culture which may never be achieved.

Her begetters, the physicists and engineers, didn't know what to make of the creature. That she was wistful for a world not yet born did not occur to them. Indeed her begetting was in a sense accidental. They had been thinking of something else. And as for bringing her up, that was scarcely their affair. Men of science are notoriously neglectful of their technical progeny. Observing this neglect an American historian, Vernon Parrington, was moved to remark that "science has become the drab and slut of industry."

Radio had to belong to somebody. She couldn't belong to nobody. So one day Business picked her up off the street and put her to work selling gargles, and gadgets, toothpaste and stocks and bonds. What else could have happened? Neither art nor education had the prestige or the resources to command the services of this new instrument of communication, even if they had had anything important to communicate, which may be doubted. Government? But in America government was business and business was government to a far greater degree than in any other country. So that the development of the "art and science of radio broadcasting" became in America a business enterprise, instead of a government monopoly as in England and elsewhere in Europe.

About two years ago, Dr. Lee De Forest, one of the pioneers of electronic science, and by general concession one of the begetters of radio, encountered the lost child in his travels and was inexpressibly shocked:

> "Why should any one want to buy a radio or new tubes for an old set?" declaimed the irate inventor, "when nine-tenths of what one can hear is the continual drivel of second-rate jazz, sickening crooning by degenerate sax players, interrupted by blatant sales talk, meaningless but maddening station announcements, impudent commands to buy or try, actually imposed over a background of what might alone have

> been good music? Get out into the sticks, away from your fine symphony orchestra pickups, and listen for twenty-four hours to what eighty per cent of American listeners have to endure! Then you'll learn what is wrong with the radio industry. It isn't hard times. It is broadcasters' greed—which is worse. The radio public simply isn't listening in."

One wonders why Dr. De Forest should have been so surprised to encounter this Bedlam on the air. Surely he was familiar with its terrestrial equivalent. At the moment, in fact he was engaged in fighting the Radio Corporation of America in the courts.

The vulgarity and commercial irresponsibility of advertising-supported broadcasting have been greatly complained about. Yet there is a sense in which the defenders of the American system of broadcasting are right. Radio is a new instrument of social communication—that and nothing more. In and of itself it contributed nothing qualitative to the culture. It was right, perhaps, or at least inevitable that it should communicate precisely the pseudoculture that we had evolved. Can any one deny that it did just that? The culture, or pseudoculture, was acquisitive, emulative, neurotic and disintegrating. Our radio culture is acquisitive, emulative, neurotic and disintegrating. The ether has become a great mirror in which the social and cultural anomalies of our "ad-man's civilization" are grotesquely magnified. The confusion of voices out of the air merely echoes our terrestrial confusion.

This confusion becomes particularly apparent when attempts are made to challenge exploitation of radio by business. In the van of such attacks are the educators, marching under the banner of "freedom" and "culture" and invoking such obsolete political concepts as "States' Rights." Allied with the educators is the Fourth Estate. The appeal is to "public opinion," expressed and made effective through the machinery of representative government in a political democracy where one man's vote is as good as another's. But we have already had occasion to examine the status of the Fourth Estate and of Education in our civilization. The press is essentially an advertising business and as such a part of the central acquisitive drive of the culture. Education is a formal, traditional function which becomes increasingly peripheral, decorative and sterile when it adheres to its ideals of disinterested "objectivity" and increasingly pragmatic and vocational when it attempts to relate itself to the acquisitive realities of business as usual. The press has a vested interest both in the purveying of news and as a medium of advertising; commercial broadcasting chiselled into the advertising income of the press and latterly began to compete in the field of news purveying. Hence the interest of the press in "reforming" the radio was strictly competitive

and pecuniary in quality although, of course, the appeal to public opinion was not made in those terms. It may fairly be alleged that the interest of the educators was also, and not improperly, a job-holding and job-wanting interest, although again the appeal to public opinion was not made in those terms. As for the artists, the writers, poets, dramatists and critics, who might claim a modicum of service from Radio—well, art is scarcely an organized and independent estate in an acquisitive society. The artists tend either to accept service as the cultural lieutenants of business, to retreat into ivory towers or to become frank revolutionaries claiming allegiance to a hypothetical future "classless culture" and to the "militant working class" also more or less hypothetical at the present stage of the social process.

The American system is quantitatively successful as judged by the rapid extension of service—some kind of service—to about 15,000,000 American homes. Today the potential radio audience numbers over 60,000,000. In less than twelve years radio has become a cultural indispensable and has introduced important new factors into the social and political process.

The bill for this service is paid first by the set owners. Mr. H. O. Davis of the Ventura Free Press estimates the annual amount of this bill, covering the cost of power, new tubes, repairs and replacements of radio sets, at $300,000,000. The same authority estimates that the maximum annual expenditures of all broadcasting stations and networks, including the operation of enormously expensive advertising sales departments, is not more than $80,000,000 and that $50,000,000 covers the total expense for the actual production and transmission of all programs.

The estimates are based on the technical and economic *status quo* of the "art and science of radio" as developed by business. Mr. Davis undertook a reconnaissance study of this *status quo*, which took the form of an analysis of a typical day's output transmitted to the listening public by 206 American broadcasting stations. The following is quoted from his summarized findings:

> The average number of interruptions for sales talk during a total of 2365 hours of broadcasting, sustaining programs included, was 5.28 per hour per station.
>
> The average number of interruptions for sales talks during 1195 program-hours sponsored by advertisers was 9.36 per hour. (Interruptions for station announcements are not included in these figures.)
>
> On 1195 hours of programs sponsored by advertisers the sales talks consumed 174.7 hours, or 14.61 per cent of the total program time, almost three times the maximum permitted on Canadian programs.
>
> The number of "spot ads," sales talks unaccompanied by entertainment supplied by the advertiser, totaled 5092 and consumed 57 hours. Canada prohibits the broadcasting of "spot ads."

> Out of a total of 2365 broadcasting hours 789 hours, or 32.26 per cent, were consumed by the playing of phonograph records. "Electrical transcriptions"—specially made records—consumed 30 hours or 4.82 per cent of the total broadcasting time.
>
> A little more than 75 per cent of the entire number of hours was devoted to music of some kind.
>
> All musical programs consumed 1845 hours.
>
> On the day of the survey the 206 stations under observation broadcast $9\frac{3}{4}$ hours of symphony-orchestra music, devoting .6 per cent of the total music time to this type of entertainment. The same number of hours was filled by the output of so-called haywire or hill-billy orchestras.
>
> Dance orchestras, on the other hand, filled 388 hours or 21 per cent of the total music-time with jazz.
>
> Other instrumental and vocal music of the popular variety, crooners included, occupied 1219 hours, two-thirds of the total music-time.
>
> From the quantitative standpoint vaudeville is next in importance to music. It occupies almost half of the time not given over to music. Vaudeville includes reviews, jinks, dramatic sketches, jamborees and similar mixtures of entertainment.
>
> The third largest portion of all broadcasting time is taken up by sales talks of advertisers, which consume 8.5 per cent of all time on the air, including both sponsored and sustaining time. In fact, commercial sales talks consume as much of the broadcasting time as all news broadcasts, all religious and political addresses and two-thirds of the lectures put together....
>
> On a typical day the average station will devote three-quarters of its programs to some kind of musical presentation, but the highest class of symphony-orchestra music will be heard during one-half of one per cent of the total music time. And when music is on the air, four programs out of ten will consist of the playing of phonograph records. More than five times every hour the program will be interrupted for the delivery of a sales talk lasting in excess of one minute. In addition there will also be four breaks per hour in the program continuity for station announcements, making a total of nine interruptions per hour.

The reader, who is also probably a radio listener, will be able to dub in the sounds that go with this statistical picture: the bedlamite exhortations and ecstacies, the moronic coquetries and wise-cracks, the degenerate jazz rhythms, punctuated by the ironic blats and squeals of a demon from the outer void known as "Static." An evening spent twiddling the dials of a radio set is indeed a profoundly educational experience for any student of the culture. America is too big to see itself. But radio has enabled America to hear itself, and what we hear, if closely attended to, supplies important clues to the present state of the culture.

When we turn to the educators who have struggled for the uplift of radio what we find is merely further proof of the cultural disintegration which radio makes audible. It may be said without serious exaggeration that the problem of the controlling and administering of radio broadcasting is approximately coextensive with the problem of controlling the modern world in the economic and cultural interests of the people who inhabit it. Granted that the radio is socially and culturally one of the most revolutionary additions to the pool of human resources in all history—how does one go about integrating it with a civilization which itself functions with increasing difficulty and precariousness? Radio is potentially, even to a degree actually, an instrument of world communication. But the interests of the world population divide along racial, national and class lines. If these terrestrial conflicts could be reconciled, presumably we should have harmony on the air—even conceivably the communication of a world culture. As it is, the great mirror of the other not only reflects the conflicts of class and nation and race, but serves to expand the scale and increase the intensity of these conflicts.

An adequate study of these conflicts, as they are reflected in the current struggle for control of the microphone, would require a book in itself. We have space here only for a brief description of what happens when education and the arts encounter business-as-usual as represented by the "American system of broadcasting."

The records of the Federal Radio Commission show that in May, 1927, when the present radio law went into effect, there was a total of 94 educational institutions licensed to broadcast. By March, 1931, the number had been reduced to 49. According to the National Committee on Education by Radio, 23 educational broadcasting stations were forced to close their doors between January 1 and August 1, 1930. At present, out of a total of 400 units available to the United States, educational stations occupy only 23.16 units, or one-sixteenth of the available frequencies. In short, educators and educational institutions which desire to make independent use of the radio as an educational instrumentality are facing strangulation. They must either fight or acquiesce in the present trend, which, if continued, will give the commercial broadcasters complete control of the air—the educators being invited to feed the Great Radio Audience such education as the commercial stations consider worth broadcasting, at hours which do not conflict with the vested interests of toothpastes and automobile tires or with the careers of such established radio personalities as Amos 'n' Andy, Phil Cook and Lady Esther.

The militant wing of the educators has chosen to fight and was organized as the National Committee for Education by Radio. Represented on the committee are the National Education Association,

the National Council of State Superintendents, the National Association of State Universities, the Association of College and University Broadcasting Stations, the National University Extension Association, the National Catholic Educational Association, the American Council on Education, the Jesuit Education Association and the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities. Joy Elmer Morgan, editor of the *Journal of the National Education*, is chairman of this committee. Its work is financed by the Payne Fund.

Let us turn now to the battalions of the opposition by which these educational militants are confronted. On June 1, 1931, there were in the United States 609 licensed stations divided in a ratio of one to sixteen between the education and the commercial broadcasters. The strongest of the latter group are affiliated in two great chains with the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting Company. N.B.C. is a one-hundred per cent owned subsidiary of the Radio Corporation of America, which manufactures radio equipment and pools the patents of General Electric, Westinghouse and American Telephone and Telegraph. Obviously the educational militants are facing a closely affiliated group representing the dominant power and communications interests of America. N.B.C. and Columbia represent big business, and what does big business care for education and culture? But big business cares a great deal, insist the commercial broadcasters, citing their cultural sustaining programs and their repeated offers of free time on the air to educators. There is, in fact, a group of educators who have accepted the existing commercial set-up of broadcasting to the extent at least of working with it and through it. They too are organized. The National Advisory Council on Radio in Education is financed jointly by John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the Carnegie Corporation. Its president is Dr. Robert A. Millikan and its vice president is Dr. Livingston Farrand, President of Cornell University.

Two years ago the educational militants were engaged in propaganda for the Fess Bill, which would have assigned 15 per cent of the broadcast band to educational broadcasting by educational stations. Latterly they have turned more and more to the demand for congressional investigation of radio with the hope that a congressional committee would recommend government ownership and operation of radio facilities as in England and more recently in Canada. The conservatives, as represented by the National Council on Radio in Education, abstain entirely from political propaganda and lobbying. The objectives of the council, as stated in its constitution, emphasize fact-finding and fact-dissemination; it undertakes to "mobilize the best educational thought of the country to devise, develop and sponsor suitable programs, to be brought into fruitful contact with the

most appropriate facilities in order that eventually the council may be recognized as the mouthpiece of American education in respect to educational broadcasting." Officially it still suspends judgment on the question of private *versus* public ownership and operation of broadcasting facilities, remarking that, "as yet no one is prepared or competent to say whether or not this [the announced educational program of the council] will eventually force the council to discuss the mechanisms necessary for educational broadcasting and whether their ownership should be in commercial hands, in the hands of educational institutions, or in the hands of non-profit co-operative federations, or perhaps in all." That statement was written four years ago and the council is still busy "finding the facts" by rigorously "objective" scientific procedures, meanwhile sponsoring politically innocuous educational broadcasts on free time contributed by the commercial chains.

In May, 1933, the National Council on Radio in Education held its annual assembly. The Director of the Council, Mr. Levering Tyson, delivered a report discussing various activities in broadcasting, research and publication and urged the establishment of a National Radio Institute. The writer participated in the discussion of this report and of the prepared speeches which followed it, which are published in *Radio in Education*, 1933.[1] I was frankly puzzled by the attitude of the educators as revealed at this conference.

[1] [*Education by Radio* 3, no. 12 (1933).]

In this view business, including the business of selling toothpastes, laxatives, stocks and bonds, etc., by radio is assumed not to be educative. The advertisers' sales talks (doctrinal memoranda in the Veblenian terminology) and the jazz, vaudeville and other entertainment by which they are made more palatable—all this is assumed not to be educative. But obviously this business expresses the central acquisitive drive of the culture. Obviously it influences the lives of the radio listeners infinitely more than the relatively microscopic amount of "education" which the council had been able to put on the air—more in all probability than the total output of American class rooms and lecture platforms. Yet, by definition, it is not "education," which is conceived of as a meliorative something added to a secular process which may be profoundly diseducational in that it contradicts and opposes at practically every point the attitudes and ideals of the educator.

In arguing for a more realistic and more vital conception of the educational function the writer pointed out that the end result of American commercial broadcasting, as we have it, is demonstrably diseducational; that radio advertisers are not interested in educating the great radio audience in any true sense. What really happens is that the advertisers are interested solely in promoting the sale of

products and services. Hence they tend to exploit the cultural inadequacies of the radio audience and its moral, ethical and psychological helplessness.

At this meeting, Mr. Henry Adams Bellows, LL.D., vice president of the Columbia Broadcasting Company, made the usual formal offer of free time on the air to the assembled educators. At the moment it happened that a group of Communist "fellow-travelers," organized as the League of Professional Groups, was conducting a series of public lectures under the general title "Culture and Capitalism." The services of this group, which included some well-known teachers and writers, were offered without charge to Mr. Bellows but, as might have been expected, these radicals clamored in vain for "the freedom of the air."

The issue of censorship was again raised at this meeting after Mr. Hector Charlesworth, chairman of the Canadian Broadcasting Commission, had declared that Communists and communist sympathizers were permitted on the air in Canada. The position of the American commercial broadcasters, as stated repeatedly by Mr. Bellows and others, is that the American system provides more effective freedom for minority groups than the system of government ownership as operated in England and in a more modified form in Canada. The contention, of course, finds little support in the experience of Communists and others who recurrently make application in vain to the educational directors of the major chains.

It is difficult to write about the problem of radio censorship since all our eighteenth century concepts of "freedom" are quite evidently made obsolete by the technical nature of the instrumentality. Some form of censorship and some form of international control is necessary. The domestic problem is simplified under a political dictatorship. Both Mussolini and Hitler promptly seized complete control of radio upon assuming power and used it to consolidate and extend their rule. At the moment Hitler's use of radio, which knows no political boundaries, is perhaps his strongest weapon in his struggle to bring Austria under the Nazi hegemony. It is safe to predict that in the next great war, radio will constitute a major offensive weapon, second only in effectiveness to the airplane.

Meanwhile, in America, the confusion brought about by our various and sundry forms of censorship, both overt and concealed, is almost indescribable. Miss Lillian Hurwitz, in a study of radio censorship prepared for the American Civil Liberties Union, has no difficulty in showing that despite the prohibition of censorship embodied in our present radio law, The Federal Radio Commission "has so construed the standard of public interest, convenience and necessity as to enable it to exercise an indirect censorship over station

programs."[2] The very assignment and withdrawal of radio licenses by the commission involves an indirect censorship.

Meanwhile, as Miss Hurwitz abundantly proves, the stations themselves are obliged to operate a systematic censorship, if only to protect themselves against libel suits. They go much further than that, of course. They not only impose their own conception of the "public interest, convenience and necessity" but their own standards of taste, morals and political orthodoxy. They protect their own source of revenue by forbidding radio lecturers to attack radio advertising. When Mr. F. J. Schlink, director of Consumers' Research, addressed the American Academy of Political and Social Science on the subject of the New Deal as it affects the consumer he was cut off the air by the Columbia Broadcasting Company. Only after the issue was publicly posed by the resulting newspaper publicity, was he permitted a week later to make the same speech over Columbia facilities.

What will emerge from this welter of technical and commercial necessities and political make-believe is quite impossible to predict. Proposals to unify all communications services under a single government control are now before Congress with the President's endorsement. A non-partisan investigation of the broadcasting system has been repeatedly urged and something of the sort is probably imminent. Meanwhile, however, it should be pointed out that a tightened control of the American Telegraph and Telephone Company would perhaps put the government in a position to audit the wire charges which constitute a heavy proportion of the overhead of the broadcasting chains. It has been widely asserted that these charges are excessive; that both the technical and economic problems of broadcasting could be solved by a combination of "wire and wax." By "wax" is meant wax records which have been so perfected that an electrical transcription is now practically indistinguishable from an original studio broadcast. By "wire" is meant wire chain hookups, the present cost of which is at present almost prohibitive except for the two major chains. Then also there is an assortment of more or less known technical potentialities, such as wired radio, short wave and micro-wave broadcasting and television, although the latter, according to competent technicians, is at present to be classified as a stock-market development rather than an electronic development. Taken together these various potentialities make impossible any clear anticipation of what is likely to happen. With this exception however: the trend of both technical and economic developments point to the need of centralized control. This will be particularly true if the Roosevelt Administration is forced, by the failure of the NRA to increase buying power, to go left in the direction of a functional reorganiza-

[2] [Lillian Hurwitz, *Radio Censorship* (New York: American Civil Liberties Union, 1932).]

tion of distribution.[3] As we shall see later, when we come to discuss the NRA program with respect to advertising, this cannot be accomplished without a huge deflation of the advertising business, affecting both the press and the commercial broadcasters.

[3] [NRA refers to the National Recovery Administration.]

A significant factor in the situation is, of course, Mr. Roosevelt's immensely skillful and successful use of radio in building public support for his administration. On the whole, it would seem only a matter of time when Mr. Roosevelt, or whoever succeeds him, will be obliged to say to radio broadcasting, "You're mine! I need you to help me rule!" A faint intimation of this rather probable development appears in the speech of Federal Radio Commissioner Harold A. LaFount at the 1933 Assembly of the National Council on Radio in Education already referred to. Commissioner LaFount said:

> Educational programs could, and I believe in the near future will, be broadcast by the Government itself over a few powerful short-wave stations and rebroadcast by existing stations. This would not interfere with local educational programs, and would provide all broadcasters with the finest possible sustaining programs. The whole nation would be taught by one teacher instead of hundreds, and would be thinking together on one subject of national importance. Personally I believe such a plan would be more effective than a standing army.

The commissioner, who in view of his record, can scarcely be accused of being unfriendly to the commercial broadcasters, was probably innocent of dictatorial ideas. Yet his language is, to say the least, suggestive.

A more detailed discussion of the problem of radio is contained in the writer's pamphlet "Order on the Air!" published by the John Day Company.[4]

[4] [James Rorty, *Order on the Air!* (New York: John Day Company, 1934)]

18 RELIGION AND THE AD-MAN

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WEEKS before real beer came back, the beer gardens sprang into bloom along Fourteenth Street. They are cheap. Fifteen cents buys a roast beef sandwich, a portion of beans, a portion of potatoes and a slop of thin gravy. You sit at an enamel table, look and listen. Imitation tile. Imitation Alps. Imitation Bavarian atmosphere. Imitation beer. Three people sit at the next table: an imitation pimp, an imitation stage mother and an imitation burlesque show manager. Maybe the burlesque show manager is real. He is gray-haired, red-faced, thickset and voluble. He declaims:

"I'm a faker. God in his blue canopy above—that's out of Shakespeare—God knows I'm a faker. When the priest baptized me, he shook the holy water on my head (snap, snap) and said: 'Taker, faker, faker!' "

I saw that. I heard that. If I had sat there long enough I am confident I could have seen and heard anything. If one wishes to discover America, all one has to do is to forget all the solemn and reasonable things that solemn and reasonable people have spoken and written, and then go listening and pondering into cheap restaurants, movie palaces, radio studios, pulp magazine offices, police stations, five- and ten-cent stores, advertising agencies. Out of this atomic, pulverized life, the anarchic voices rise. They are shameless, these voices, and truthful, and wise with a kind of bleak factual wisdom. Each atom speaks for itself, to comfort itself, to assert itself against the overwhelming nothingness of all the other atoms: each atom sending out an infinitesimal ray of force, searching for some infinite reason, and protesting obstinately against some infinite betrayal.

Fake. Baloney. Bunk. Apple sauce. Bull. There are over a hundred slang synonyms for the idea which these words express, most of them coined within the last two decades. No other idea has called forth such lavish folk invention, and this can mean only one thing. It is the pseudoculture's bleak judgment upon itself. It is possible for an inhuman society to pulverize humanity, but the human essence is indestructible. It is meek, or it is bitter; it remains human, truthful and essentially moral, even religious.

What is religion, if it is not the framework of instinctively felt values of truth and beauty and honor by which the race lives—if it is to live? Reverse these thin worn coins of the folk argot—bunk, baloney, etc.—and you find the true currency of the human exchange. Honoring truth, the burlesque comedian pauses in his exit, shakes his rear and says: "Horsefeathers!"

But what we are concerned with here is not the deep human core of the religious spirit, but the make-believe against which these atomic voices are crying out: the fake religion, the moral, ethical and spiritual make-believe of the acquisitive society, of the ad-man's pseudoculture. If the inquiry were to be in any degree systematic and exhaustive, it would lead us far back in time, back to the medieval synthesis of church and state and its breakup by those Knights Templar of the rising trading class, John Calvin and Martin Luther.

There are plenty of able and informed advertising men, and some of them know this. Yesterday I was in the research department of a large agency gathering certain statistical data. A former associate paused, greeted me and we fell into conversation. Knowing me, he guessed what I was doing—in fact I had never at any time tried to conceal anything—and, helpfully, he offered his own explanations. He blamed Martin Luther. For the long sequence of cultural disintegration, climaxed in our time by the paradox of mass production and mass starvation and by the development of the advertising agency as a mass producer of fakery, human stultification and confusion, he blamed Martin Luther.

This man started life as a traveling salesman. He never went to college, so that his mind remained fresh and avid, if cynical. And he had known great charlatans in his time—notably Elbert Hubbard. He understood them very well, and, being of a speculative turn, he had checked up on their origins. He blamed Martin Luther. He was greatly interested when I told him that the famous German scholar, Max Weber, author of *The Protestant Ethic*, also blamed Martin Luther a little, but John Calvin a great deal more.[1]

My friend had only a few minutes for gossip, however. He had to get back to his desk and read proof on a new toothpaste campaign in which, by a trick of pragmatic self-hypnosis, he had come to believe fervently. When he had finished he would placidly stroll to the station, buy a paper, and solve a cross-word puzzle en route to White Plains and his comfortable and charming suburban family.

While somewhat exceptional, this man is far from being a unique figure in the business. To those atomic voices heard above the clatter of dishes in the Fourteenth Street beer gardens, we must add the voices of the speakeasy philosophers of the Grand Central district—advertising men, many of them, college men and more or less self-

[1] [Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930 [1905]).]

conscious fakers. God in his blue canopy above knows they're fakers, but it is perhaps somewhat to their credit that they know it too.

2

In discussing religion and the ad-man we are not concerned with the sales publicity of the churches. There are plenty of texts on the subject. What concerns us is the extent to which the culture of our acquisitive society, as represented and publicized by the ad-man, has become a rival of the Christian culture, represented by the Protestant and Catholic Churches of the United States.

Since it is our purpose to compare these two cultures, it may be useful to note what social scientists think culture and religion are. Culture may be defined as the total social environment into which the individual is born; religion is a behavior pattern which seeks to dominate the culture. As sociological phenomena, religion, nationalism and radicalism, although dissimilar in many respects, are categorically the same. The sociologist would note the similarities between religions, nationalism and radicalism, by calling them all behavior patterns. The layman would call them religions. The name is not important. What is important is the fact that they have common characteristics.

Each of these religions has an inclusive pattern for human life and society. Each of them would prefer to be dominant and to exclude other behavior patterns from the scene. Witness Russia and the Christian Churches, or Nazi Germany and the Socialist and Communist Parties. As a practical matter behavior patterns do succeed in living side by side, but though the competition may not be overt, it is present. Every behavior pattern has to be sold, more or less, continuously, to the public. This is true, as the anthropologist, Malinowski, has pointed out, even among primitive peoples. He says: "The reign of custom in a savage society is a complex and variegated matter just as it is in a more civilized society. Some customs are very lightly broken; others are regarded as mandatory." The more effective techniques used in selling the public a behavior pattern may be considered techniques of rule. Religious rituals belong in this category; so do the publicity engines of Mussolini, and of Hitler. No proper perspective can be gained in relation to such behavior patterns as religion, nationalism and radicalism, unless one realizes that they are highly important in relation to group survival. As Bagehot has said: "Any polity is more efficient than none." But the more shrewd and complete the polity, the more efficient an instrument it is in the struggle for survival.

There are certain interesting parallelisms between the techniques of persuasion and admonition used in religious rituals and those used in contemporary advertising. Jane Harrison, the distinguished student of Greek religions, notes that ritual in its beginnings has two elements: the *dromenon*, something which is done, and the *legomenon*, something which is said.[2] In the beginning, the words of the ritual, according, to Miss Harrison, may have consisted of "no more than the excited repetition of one syllable." The action of the ritual is something that is "re-done, commemorative, or predone, anticipatory, and both elements seem to go to its religiousness." The points at which the techniques of religious ritual and advertising correspond are the following: In both instances, there is repetition. In both instances the symbols used in the ritual, or the ad, have the same meaning to the audience. A symbol, which always has the same meaning, is called by Durkheim, "a collective representation." A number of social scientists have pointed out that the Utopias of the radicals become comprehensible if one realizes that they serve as collective representations. In advertising, the name of the product, the slogan, the packaging and the trade-mark, are obviously used as collective representations.

[2] [Jane Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912).]

The net result of religious ritual is to leave the participants in a religious ceremony more restless than soothed, simmering gently, or boiling violently as the case may be, in an impressionable, emotional state, which cannot find complete release in immediate action. (Note the ritualistic function of the movies already described as a want-building adjunct of the advertising business.) While the audience is in this impressionable state, the minister or priest makes strong persuasive or admonitory suggestions in regard to the action which the individual should take in the future. In advertising, the admonitory or persuasive voices of the priesthood are also present.

The close analogy between the sales publicity methods of the Christian Church and those of the modern Church of Advertising was noted in 1923 by Thorstein Veblen, who missed little, if any, of the comedy of the American scene. Veblen's long foot-note (p. 319, *Absentee Ownership*) should be read in its entirety in this connection. It is particularly interesting as showing the rapid movement of forces during the intervening decade.

> The Propagation of the Faith is quite the largest, oldest, most magnificent, most unabashed, and most lucrative enterprise in sales-publicity in all Christendom. Much is to be learned from it as regards media and suitable methods of approach, as well as due perseverance, tact, and effrontery. By contrast, the many secular adventures in salesmanship are no better than upstarts, raw recruits, late and slender capitalizations out of the ample fund of human credulity. It is only quite recently, and even yet only with a dawning realization of what may be achieved by

> consummate effrontery in the long run, that these others are beginning to take on anything like the same air of stately benevolence and menacing solemnity. No pronouncement on rubber-heels, soap-powders, lip-sticks, or yeast-cakes, not even Sapphira Buncombe's Vegetative Compound, are yet able to ignore material facts with the same magisterial detachment, and none has yet commanded the same unreasoning assent or acclamation. None other has achieved that pitch of unabated assurance which has enabled the publicity-agents of the Faith to debar human reason from scrutinizing their pronouncements. These others are doing well enough, do [*sic*] doubt; perhaps as well as might reasonably be expected under the circumstances, but they are a feeble thing in comparison. "Saul has slain his thousands," perhaps, "but David has slain his tens of thousands."[3]

[3] [Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), 319–20.]

Within a year after this footnote was written, Mr. Bruce Barton published *The Man Nobody Knows*, in which the life and works of the Saviour are assimilated into the body of the ad-man's doctrine, and in which the very physical lineaments of the traditional Christ begin to take on a family resemblance to those of the modern ad-man, so excellently typified by Mr. Barton himself.[4] The discussion of this brilliant job of rationalization must be reserved for a later chapter. At this point it is sufficient to observe that today Veblen's ironic patronage of the emerging priesthood of advertising sounds astonishingly inept and dated. For it may well be contended that today the Propagation of the Faith is relatively nowhere, while the religion of the ad-man is everywhere dominant both as to prestige and in the matter of administrative control. Granted that both religions are decadent, since the underlying exploitative system which both support is itself disintegrating by reason of its internal contradictions; none the less, the ad-man's religion is today the prevailing American religion, and the true heretic must therefore concentrate upon this modern aspect of priestcraft. The ancient Propagation of the Faith continues, of course, sometimes in more or less collusive alliance with the Church of Advertising, sometimes in jealous and recalcitrant opposition. We can give little space to the quarrels and intrigues of these competing courtiers at the High Court of Business. Clearly the present favorite is advertising, and we turn now to a brief resumé of the historic process by which the priesthood of ballyhoo attained this high estate.

[4] [Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1924).]

3

Starting, as any discussion of the economic and ideological evolution of modern industrial capitalism must start, with the breakup of the medieval church-state synthesis, we note that the Christian feudalism of the Middle Ages did not live by buying and selling. As John Strachey puts it in *The Coming Struggle for Power*, "what Western man

accomplished by some four hundred years of struggle, between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries, was the establishment of the free market."[5] The development of monopoly capitalism in the modern period qualified this "freedom" of course; it also intensified the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, and sharpened the ethical dilemma which is concisely stated by the conservative philosopher, James Hayden Tufts, in his *American Social Morality*:

> The impersonal corporation formed for profit represents in clearest degree this separation of the modern conduct of commerce and industry from all control by religious authority and by the moral standards and restraints grounded in the older professedly personal relations of man to man in kinship, neighborhood or civic community.... To turn over all standards to the market was to lay a foundation for future conflicts unless the market should provide some substitute for the older standards when man dealt with his fellow and faced the consequences of his dealing.[6]

[5] [John Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1932).]

[6] [James Hayden Tufts, *America's Social Morality: Dilemmas of the Changing Mores* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1933), 125.]

The market did provide such a substitute, of course—a fake substitute. It provided the religion of advertising and developed the forms and controls of the ad-man's pseudoculture.

It is this utilitarian fakery with which we are here concerned, rather than with the economic and political conquests of the trading class. We are concerned with the ideological and religious rationalizations by which these conquests were both implemented and justified. My former advertising colleague who blamed this long history of serio-comic rationalization on Martin Luther would seem to be somewhat in error, just as Max Weber probably overemphasizes the rôle of the Protestant Ethic, the Calvinistic doctrine of "justification by works."

In Weber's view the Calvinistic doctrine of worldly success in a "calling" as a means of winning divine favor constituted a necessary theological counterpart of capitalism; without such reinforcement of the normal lust for gain, he argues, the extraordinary conquests of capitalism in England and in America would have been impossible. Calvinism reconciled piety and money-making; in fact the pursuit of riches, which in the medieval church ethic had been feared as the enemy of religion, was now welcomed as its ally. It is important to note, as does Tawney in his introduction to Weber's great essay, that the habits and institutions in which this philosophy found expression survived long after the creed which was their parent had practically expired. So that, quoting Tawney, "if capitalism begins as the practical idealism of the aspiring bourgeoisie, it ends ... as an orgy of materialism."[7]

An orgy is an irrational affair. To the writer, the most interesting and suggestive aspect of Weber's interpretation, as applied to the

[7] [R. H. Tawney, Foreword, in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930 [1905]), 3.]

contemporary phenomena of the ad-man's pseudoculture, is this divorcing of the acquisitive drive from any control by hedonistic rationality. The pursuit of wealth, for the Calvinistic entrepreneur, was not merely an advantage, but a duty. And this sense of duty persisted long after the Calvinistic sanctions had ceased to be operative. Moneymaking for money-making's-sake, like art-for-art's-sake, supplied its own sanctions. Both are self-contained disciplines, fields for the display of an irrational and sterile virtuosity. Weber, in the concluding pages of his essay, sets forth this consummation with moving eloquence:

> In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often give the character of sport. (The advertising "game." J. R.)
>
> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrifaction, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."[8]

[8] [Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 182.]

But note that this was written in 1905. What Weber saw with horror was not "the last stage," but the next-to-the-last stage—perhaps not even that. The cage was kept spinning, not merely by its accumulated momentum, but by the organized application, on a tremendous scale, of the great force of emulation. Ten years before Max Weber wrote the paragraph quoted, Thorstein Veblen had written *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, which gave currency to his fertile concepts of "vicarious expenditure," "conspicuous waste," etc.[9] These concepts, all revolving about the central motivation of emulation, are the stock-in-trade of the modern advertising copy writer.

[9] [Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899)]

New prophets did arise in America—Elbert Hubbard for one, Bruce Barton for another. America entered upon the "surplus economy" phase of industrial capitalism, and the appropriate religion for this period, which was interrupted, but also accelerated by the war, was the religion of advertising, which did not reach full maturity until after the war. The motion picture industry came along as an important adjunct of the emulative promotion machinery, used as such both at home, and as an "ideological export," to further the conquests of American imperialism in "backward" countries. Peering out of the vistas ahead were radio and television.

Seeing all this, Theodore Dreiser seized upon the great theme of emulation—keeping up with the Joneses—and wrote *The American*

Tragedy. And Carl Sandburg wrote, almost as a kind of sad ironic parody of Weber: "This is the greatest city of the greatest country that ever, ever was." And the cage spun faster than ever. And Robert Frost wrote *West Running Brook*, in which he symbolizes western culture as a stream disappearing in the barren soil of the American acquisitive culture. And Robinson Jeffers wrote:

> Man, introverted man, having crossed
> In passage and but a little with the nature of things this latter century
>
> Has begot giants; but being taken up
> Like a maniac with self love and inward conflicts cannot manage his hybrids.
>
> Being used to deal with edgeless dreams,
> Now he's bred knives on nature turns them also inward; they have thirty points, though.
>
> His mind forebodes his own destruction;
> Actæon who saw the goddess naked among the leaves and his hounds tore him.
>
> A little knowledge, a pebble from the shingle,
> A drop from the oceans; who would have dreamed this infinitely little too much?

When he wrote this, as a kind of an advance obituary of industrial capitalism, Jeffers was an unknown recluse on the coast of California, and the book in which it appeared was printed at his own expense. But that same year the presses rolled out the four millionth copy of Elbert Hubbard's *Message to Garcia*, in which the big business cracks the whip over the modern office wage slave.[10]

[10] [Elbert Hubbard, *A Message to Garcia* (East Aurora, NY: Roycrofters, 1903).]

The cage spun faster still. On an August midnight in Union Square, New York, a banner was flung out of the *Freiheit* office reading "Vanzetti Murdered!" and, in the words of the New York *World*'s reporter:

> The crowd responded with a giant sob. Women fainted in fifteen or twenty places. Others too, overcome, dropped to the curbs and buried their heads in their hands. Men leaned on one another's shoulders and wept. There was a sudden movement in the street to the east of the Square. Men began running around aimlessly, tearing at their clothes, and dropping their straw hats, and women ripped their dresses in anguish.

Thus the State of Massachusetts was killing the God in man. But Bruce Barton still lived, and, having written *The Man Nobody Knows*, went on to write *The Book Nobody Knows*, and *On the Up and Up*.

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The emergence of organized and incorporated salesmanship as the characteristic phenomenon of the American society, the transmigration of the soul of the Fourth Estate into the material body of the advertising business—these developments can be viewed as logical sequences in the evolution of industrial capitalism; they can also be studied as the end products of a social philosophy. In this chapter we shall attempt to outline the ideological evolution as it appears in the life and works of significant American personalities. Benjamin Franklin, Jay Cooke, P. T. Barnum, Henry Ward Beecher, Elbert Hubbard, Bruce Barton: what these men thought and did and said was doubtless determined largely by the economic environment in which they rose to power and influence. But their attitudes, acts and utterances served to rationalize and thereby to promote the material evolution, in the study of which the economist specializes. What we look for, in the evidence of these lives, is the religion of salesmanship which became more and more, after the turn of the century, the religion of advertising. What we find is a kind of sequence of crowd heroes, each modeling himself more or less on the ones preceding. They are middle-class heroes, all of them, and the crown and glory of the towering structure of rationalization which they erected is the identification of the Christ mission with the mission of the middle-class salesman and advertising man, which was accomplished by Mr. Barton in *The Man Nobody Knows*.[1]

[1] [Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1924).]

Even today the masthead of the *Saturday Evening Post* bears the proud statement "Founded by Benjamin Franklin." The statement is true in spirit if not in fact. The *Saturday Evening Post* is the most influential advertising medium in America—in the world for that matter. And the social and political philosophy of its publisher derives clearly from the sly wisdom of that ineffable parvenu, that Yankee all-right-nick of genius who signed himself "Poor Richard." Franklin serves as a point of departure because he was a business-minded pragmatist. He was not a Babbitt and it is impossible to conceive of Franklin, a man of genius, playing the rôle of a Hubbard or a Barton

a century later. But on the other hand it seems fair to credit Franklin with laying the ground-work of the American acquisitive ethic.

Benjamin Franklin

"Remember, that time is money ... Remember, that credit is money. If a man lets money be on my hands after it is due, he gives me the interest, or so much as I can make of it during that time. Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Remember this saying, '*the good paymaster is lord of another man's purse.*' He that is known to pay punctually and exactly to the time he promises may at any time and on any occasion raise all the money his friends can spare ... The most trifling actions that affect a man's credit are to be regarded. The sound of your hammer at five in the morning or eight at night, heard by a creditor, makes him easy six months longer; but if he sees you at a billiard table or hears your voice at a tavern, when you should be at work, he sends for his money the next day."

Remember, remember. Remember, in the matter of sex, its utilitarian aspect; sexualize to promote health or for the sober procreation of children; "do not marry for money, but marry where money is." If as a young man you cannot afford to marry, choose your mistress wisely, preferably an older woman, since a pretty face adds nothing of utility or substantial enjoyment to the transaction and moreover the older women are so grateful.

Franklin was careful to be good because, honesty being the best policy, it paid him to be good. And when he was not careful to be good, he was careful to be careful.

"I grew convinced that truth, sincerity and integrity in dealings between man and man were of the utmost importance to the felicity of life ... Revelation had indeed no weight with me as such; but I entertained an opinion that, though certain actions might not be bad because they were forbidden by it, or good because it commanded them, yet probably those actions might be forbidden because they were bad for us, or commanded because they were beneficial to us in their own nature, all the circumstances of things considered."

The utilitarian point of view could scarcely be made more explicit. But Franklin achieved a further logical extension of the utilitarian philosophy, to which Weber calls attention in "The Protestant Ethic."

"Now, all Franklin's moral attitudes are colored with utilitarianisms. Honesty is useful, because it assures credit; so are punctuality, industry, frugality, and that is the reason they are virtues. A logical deduction from this would be that where, for instance, the appearance of honesty serves the same purpose, that would suffice,

and an unnecessary surplus of this virtue would evidently appear to Franklin's eyes as unproductive waste. And as a matter of fact, the story in his autobiography of his conversion to those virtues, or the discussion of the value of a strict maintenance of the appearance of modesty, the assiduous belittlement of one's own desserts in order to gain general recognition later, confirms this impression. According to Franklin, those virtues, like all others, are only in so far virtues as they are actually useful to the individual, and the surrogate of mere appearances is always sufficient when it accomplishes the end in view. It is a conclusion which is inevitable for strict utilitarianism."[2]

[2] [Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930 [1905]), 50–52.]

Compare this accurate characterization of Poor Richard's credo with the attitude of the manufacturers of Creomulsion, a proprietary remedy, expressed in a form letter designed to coerce newspaper publishers into attacking the Tugwell Pure Food and Drugs Bill:

> Gentlemen: You are about to lose a substantial amount of advertising revenue from food, drug, and cosmetic manufacturers. Your pocketbook is about to be filched and you will see how if you will personally study ... the enclosed copy of the Tugwell Bill. This bill was introduced by *two doctors*.... You publish your paper for profit and as a service to your community. *In most virile business organizations the altruistic policies in the final analysis are means to the primary end which is profit*. (My italics J. R.) ... An isolated editorial or two will not suffice.... You need to take an aggressive stand against this measure. You need to bring all personal pressure you can upon your senators and representatives. You need to enlighten and thereby arouse your public against this bill which is calculated to greatly restrict personal rights. If this bill should become law we will be forced to cancel immediately every line of Creomulsion advertising....

Surely the italicized sentence expresses the essence of the Poor Richard Philosophy and shows that the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin still lives in the hearts and minds of his countrymen, especially those who, like the manufacturers of Creomulsion, are engaged in manipulating the techniques of rule by advertising.

Jay Cooke

Vernon L. Parrington, in the third volume of his *Main Currents of American Thought*, remarks that "in certain respects Jay Cooke may be reckoned the first modern American."[3] He financed the Civil War, and in the course of his operations developed and used on the grand scale most of the techniques of the modern advertiser and mass propagandist. With the Liberty Loan drives in mind, compare Parrington's summary of Cooke's pioneering achievements.

[3] [Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, vol. 3 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930), 36.]

Under his bland deacon-like exterior was the mind of a realist.... If he were to lure dollars from old stockings in remote chimney cor-

ners he must "sell" patriotism to his fellow Americans; and to do that successfully he must manufacture a militant public opinion. The soldier at the front, he announced in a flood of advertisements, must be supported at the rear.... To induce slacker dollars to become fighting dollars he placed his agents in every neighborhood, in newspaper offices, in banks, in pulpits patriotic forerunners of the "one-minute men" of later drives.... He subsidized the press with a lavish hand, not only the metropolitan dailies but the obscurist country weeklies. He employed an army of hack-writers to prepare syndicated matter and he scattered paying copy broadcast.... He bought the pressings of whole vineyards and casks of pure wine flowed in an endless stream to strategic publicity points. Rival brokers hinted that he was debauching the press, but the army of greenbacks marching to the front was his reply. It all cost a pretty penny, but the government was liberal with commissions and when all expenses were deducted perhaps $2,000,000 of profits remained in the vaults of the firm to be added to the many other millions which the prestige of the government agency with its free advertising brought in its train.

Having successfully sold a war, Jay Cooke turned to selling railroad stock—specifically, the Northern Pacific. He kept much of his war publicity machine intact and used it both for this purpose and to shape public opinion in regard to taxation funding, and the currency—naturally in his own interests. But the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War smashed Cooke's European bond-selling campaign and the fall of the house of Cooke precipitated the panic of '73.

Jay Cooke carried into the realm of national finance and politics the morals, ethics and philosophy of a frontier trader and real estate speculator. Profoundly ignorant of social or economic principles he wrote or had written for him contributions to economic theory which were little more than clumsy and transparent rationalizations of a money lender's greed. *But*—he was successful in amassing great wealth; hence he was, during his heyday, a popular hero whose opinions on any subject were listened to with great respect by his fellow Americans. Moreover, he was, as Parrington noted: "Scrupulous in all religious duties, a kind husband, a generous friend, benevolent in all worthy charities, simple and democratic in his tastes, ardently patriotic." As a man, he seems to have had neither blood nor brains—Franklin had both—but in his life and work he applied the middle-class virtues of Poor Richard to the acquisitive opportunities of the Gilded Age. So that to a people given over to the worship of money-progress and money-opportunity he was a kind of Moses, envied and revered in life by all classes and worshipped by his biographer.

In brief, he was a mean and sorry little parvenu; and one of the founding fathers of the religion of salesmanship and advertising. His

career marks a step in the evolution of the American crowd hero, and in the evolution of the American pseudoculture.

P. T. Barnum

Salesmanship and showmanship are variants of the same technique and both find their sanctions in Franklin's utilitarian ethic. America's greatest showman belongs in the historical sequence of American crowd heroes for a number of reasons. In him the doctrine of justification by works receives its extreme pragmatic application in "the people like to be fooled" and "there is a sucker born every minute." That this greasy faker, this vulgar horse-trading yokel could have successfully worn the cloak of piety all his life; that his autobiography, the prototype of the American success story, was for years an unrivaled best seller, standing alongside of Franklin's *Autobiography* and *Pilgrim's Progress* in many thousands of American homes; that he was, for multitudes of his fellow citizens a model American—all this is difficult to believe at this distance. Yet his biographer, M. R. Werner, supplies impressive evidence that it was so.

> When you give one of your daughters away in matrimony, advise her to imitate Charity Barnum; when your son leaves home to try his luck on the ocean of life, give him Barnum for a guide; when you yourself are in trouble and misery and near desperation, take from Barnum's life and teachings consolation and courage.

Henry Hilgert, a Baltimore preacher, stood up in his pulpit and said this to his congregation and there is every reason to believe that he expressed with substantial accuracy the contemporary popular evaluation of the great showman. The man he was talking about started his career in a country store in Bethel, Connecticut, watering the rum, sanding the sugar and dusting the pepper that he sold to his fellow townsmen, cheating and being cheated, playing cruel practical jokes, all strictly in accordance with the savage mores of that idyllic New England community, where the public whipping post menaced the ungodly arid suicides were buried at the crossroads. From this he advanced to running a public lottery and with the profits went to New York, where the advertising of Dr. Brandeth's Pills was helping James Gordon Bennett to lay the foundations of the modern American newspaper.

At thirty-one Barnum was writing advertisements for the Bowery Amphitheater at four dollars a week. He was a "natural" at the business and used his skill to get control of the American Museum where he began to advertise in earnest. When the posters of the negro violinist didn't pull, he changed them to show the violinist playing upside down. Then they pulled, and the customers didn't mind, be-

cause Barnum gave them a flea circus and a pair of albinos as added attractions. He advertised his theatrical performances as religious lectures, and the best and most devout people flocked to them. His advertisements of Joyce Heth, "the nurse of George Washington," the Japanese mermaid, the white whales, Jenny Lind and Jumbo drained the dictionary of adjectives. Modern movie advertising has added nothing new or better to the technique. He stood—with Tom Thumb—before kings. He lectured to thousands on power of will and success through godliness. He invested his money in factories and in real estate developments designed to house religious working men who didn't drink, smoke or chew. He went bankrupt, but with the $150,000 his creditors couldn't get he "came back" gloriously and made another fortune.

To the museum which Barnum gave to Tufts College there still come on Sunday afternoons good people from the surrounding suburbs who stand in awe before the stuffed carcass of Jumbo. And the college glee club still sings:

Who was P. T. Barnum?
The first in tents
And consequently hence
The first in the realm of dollars and cents.
The first to know
That a real fine show
Must have a gen-u-ine Jumbo.
The first to come
With the needful sum
To found our college mus-e-um!
Pee Tee Barnum!!

Henry Ward Beecher

Barnum had nerve, a kind of bucolic Yankee hardihood which enabled him to trade in godliness with the same poker-faced effrontery that characterized his circus barking. That, with a certain crude but vigorous histrionism, would appear to be his contribution to the evolution of the American crowd-hero type.

Henry Ward Beecher, in contrast, was a deplorable 'fraidcat all his days. But he was a much more complex and interesting figure than the great showman, and embodied more richly the conflicting strains of the cultural heritage. He, too, was a middle-class crowd hero. Yet curiously, his unrivaled eminence as a preacher and editor, in a period when the influence of the church and the church press was enormous, never quite gave him the mass influence which Barnum clearly had. One reason for this, of course, was the scandal which clouded his later years. But there is perhaps another and even more

important reason. Beecher, though a showman both by nature and by long training, had a private impurity which is incompatible with pure showmanship, pure salesmanship, pure money-making. Beecher took himself seriously. He was a faker, a liar and a cheat, as was Barnum, and at bottom he was just about as vulgar as Barnum. But Beecher had a personal mission—to repudiate the harsh Calvinism of his father, the loveless despotism of that barren Litchfield parsonage, and proclaim the gospel of love. So Henry Ward Beecher struggled; a scared child, he begged the love of women which he never earned; women whom he later repudiated. Seemingly they loved him; at least they never gave him the hatred which his cowardly betrayals richly deserved. Why? Perhaps because they pitied him and saw that he was struggling genuinely after his fashion; struggling to be himself, to defy the Calvinist God, to assert the Tightness of the tremendous emotionality which was his greatest endowment. Victoria Woodhull, that extraordinary woman, probably came close to stating the truth about Beecher when she wrote:

> The immense physical potency of Mr. Beecher, and the indomitable urgency of his great nature for the intimacy and embraces of the noble and cultured women about him, instead of being a bad thing as the world thinks, or thinks it thinks, or professes to think it thinks, is one of the noblest and grandest endowments of this truly great and representative man. Plymouth Church has lived and fed, and the healthy vigor of public opinion for the last quarter of a century has been augmented and strengthened from the physical amativeness of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.

How Beecher writhed when he read this! And with what maledictions the brethren of Plymouth Church rejected this intolerable tribute to their adored pastor! For it was not precisely Henry Ward Beecher's business to revolutionize the sexual mores of his time. Not his the stuff of which martyrs are made. Earlier in his career, Beecher had rejected this rôle. When his brother, his father, most of his more courageous parishioners had embraced the cause of abolition Beecher had played safe on the slavery question. Instead he had chosen as his pulpiteering stock in trade the denunciation of the liquor traffic. And the jibe of a distiller whom he had attacked was well earned:

> You cannot justify slavery by talking about the making of whiskey.... Why is thy tongue still and thy pen idle when the sentiments of thy brother and thy church on slavery are promulgated? Thou idle boaster—where is thy vaunted boldness? ... You are greatly to be pitied, even by a distiller.

Just what was Henry Ward Beecher's business, his "usefulness" to the preservation of which he sacrificed friend after friend along with his own honor and decency? It was the preaching business. It was

also indirectly the advertising department of the real estate business. In *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait*, Paxton Hibben writes:

> The investment character of his church was a matter that every metropolitan minister of that day was expected to bear in mind. Pews were auctioned off to the highest bidder and church scrip bore seven per cent interest. A popular preacher was, also, a better real estate advertisement than whole pages of publicity. Indeed, such a preacher as Henry Ward Beecher proved, readily secured pages of publicity for the neighborhood in which he officiated. For it was the day when church going was the only amusement permitted the godly, and divine service received the attention from the press later accorded theaters and social activities.[4]

[4] [Paxton Hibben, *Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), 107.]

Beecher had trained hard for this business. In a later lecture at Yale, which took the form of a success story, he said:

> I got this idea: that the Apostles were accustomed to feel for a ground on which the people and they stood together; a common ground where they could meet. Then they stored up a large number of the particulars of knowledge, which belonged to everybody; when they get that knowledge that everybody would admit, placed in proper form before their minds, then they brought it to bear upon them with all their excited heart and feeling.

It is not difficult to recognize this as essentially the formula of Mr. Barton's syndicated lay preachments. In fact, Beecher's pulpiteering and Barton's syndicated essays are essentially advertisements designed to "sell" the acquisitive society to itself. Beecher's method was in all important respects the method by which an advertising agency after appropriate "research" arrives at the most effective "copy slant" with which to sell a new toothpaste or a new gargle. The basic conviction which underlies all these enterprises in showmanship, salesmanship and advertising is expressed in one of Mr. Barton's favorite mottoes: "There is somebody wiser than anybody. That somebody is everybody."

However, one must admit that although Beecher unquestionably had the authentic Big Idea, he was too neurotic and too blundering ever quite to come through as a successful advertising man. He was forever picking the wrong theme song at the wrong time. Take his attitude toward Lincoln:

> It will be difficult for a man to be born lower than he was. He is an unshapely man. He is a man that bears evidence of not having been educated in schools or in circles of refinement.

Thousands of middle class American parvenues took that view of Lincoln but it took a pompous blatherskite like Beecher to plump out with it from the pulpit of a Christian church. And many of Beecher's

parishioners had sense enough to see that Lincoln was not merely a better man but a better politician than Beecher. But there we run again into Beecher's limiting private impurity. He was not merely a snob, but a sincere snob.

Beecher was to achieve worse flops than this. In the year 1887, when strikes were sweeping the country, Beecher undertook to rehabilitate his smirched reputation by coming out as the defender of "law and order" and "life, liberty, and *prosperity*" to quote his significant revision of Jefferson. He said:

> Is the great working class oppressed? ... yes, undoubtedly, it is ... God has intended the great to be great and the little to be little ... the trades union, originated under the European system, destroys liberty.... I do not say that a dollar a day is enough to support a working man, but it is enough to support a man!... not enough to support a man and five children if a man would insist on smoking and drinking beer.... But the man who cannot live on bread and water is not fit to live.

One can scarcely do better than to quote Paxton Hibben's comment on this catastrophic muff, which the cartoonists exploited for years afterwards:

> As the slogan of a great crusade in the leadership of which Beecher could reconquer the esteem of the American public, this bread and water doctrine somehow lacked pulling power.

Beecher was not so much a cynic as a charlatan, and the limiting vice of charlatans is that they tend to take themselves seriously. That is bad business and the more sophisticated charlatans like Elbert Hubbard are careful not to handicap their operations by private impurities of this sort. Moreover, Beecher was sloppy and careless. Take his flier in advertising in connection with Jay Cooke's Northern Pacific promotion operations.

In January, 1870, Beecher received $15,000 worth of Northern Pacific stock for the express purpose of influencing the public mind to favor the new railroad. Beecher's aid was to include the use of the *Christian Union*, a newspaper which he edited. The matter came to light and Beecher was roundly denounced. The moral would seem to be that Beecher should have been more careful as were some of his parishioners, like "Tearful Tommy" Shearman, clerk of Plymouth Church, who were also in on the proposition. The modern method of accomplishing the required enlightenment of public opinion would have been for Jay Cooke to place a substantial advertising contract with the *Christian Union* and then threaten to cancel it if Beecher failed to "co-operate." Theodore Tilton, the man whose wife Beecher begged love from and whom he ruined and drove into exile—Theodore Tilton, also an editor, told Jay Cooke to go to hell. But Tilton was a good deal of a man.

Beecher, like other divided souls, was not his own master. His physical amativeness appears to have been genuine, and he was an authentic sentimentalist, if there is such a thing. And he really did hate his father and his father's Calvinism. So in the end, when it was fairly safe to do so, Beecher came clean on one count. He denounced the Calvinist hell, whose flames had been licking his conscience for all those many years. Call it wish-fulfilment if you like, but Beecher stood up in Plymouth Church and said:

> To tell me that back of Christ is a God who for unnumbered centuries has gone on creating man and sweeping them like dead flies—nay, like living ones—into hell is to ask me to worship a being as much worse than the conception of a medieval devil as can be imagined.... I will not worship cruelty. I will worship love—that sacrifices itself for the good of those who err, and that is as patient with them as a mother is with a sick child.

On the whole this was a pretty good negative-appeal advertisement. But it wasn't entirely well-timed. Beecher had to alter the slant several times before he hit the bull's eye of public opinion—that wise "everybody" to whom he dedicated his "usefulness."

Not a pleasant figure, Beecher. Half sincere and more than half neurotic charlatans are never pleasant, nor are their lives at all happy. And in age their faces look like the wrath of God.

Elbert Hubbard

In the sequence thus far we have seen a statesman, a financier, a showman and a preacher, using the philosophy and techniques of salesmanship and presenting themselves, with greater or less success, as heroes for the admiration of the crowd. None of them was a professional advertising man. But all of them were crowd leaders engaged in selling themselves; also in selling the middle-class acquisitive ethic, and in rounding out the body of rationalization which the expansion of American industrial capitalism required. Advertising, as Mr. Roy Dickinson, president of *Printers' Ink*, has pointed out, is not an independent economic or social entity. It is merely a function of business management, and all these American crowd heroes were business men, first, last and always.

In Elbert Hubbard, however, we encounter the advertising man *per se*, a professional of professionals. All the others had "callings" in which, to earn divine favor, they were obliged to be successful. To be successful they were obliged to employ the techniques of salesmanship, of showmanship, of advertising, since these were the most effective techniques of leadership and of rule in the system as they found it. But Hubbard was called to the pure priesthood of advertising from

the beginning, and by his success in this "calling" became a crowd hero. True, they called him a great writer, and a great printer, but the rose of advertising smells the same by whatever name it is called; in effect he never wrote or printed anything *but* advertisements. This, as we shall see, is equally true of that other great professional, Bruce Barton.

Elbert Hubbard deserves much more careful and detailed study than he has received at the hands of his biographers. He was born in 1856 in Bloomington, Illinois, the son of a physician. At thirty he was already a highly successful advertising man in the employ of a Buffalo, N. Y., soap manufacturer; among the sales techniques which he helped to develop were the use of premiums and various devices of credit extension. In 1892, he had made enough money to retire and give himself a college education. He entered Harvard as an undergraduate, but soon gave it up. Obviously President Eliot and his academic co-workers didn't know what America was all about. Hubbard wasn't sure himself, but he had a hunch. It was the period of rococo enthusiasms in art, in economics, in politics. Hubbard went to England, met William Morris, and cheerfully appropriated all the salable elements of Morris's social and aesthetic philosophy. He knew what he wanted, did Hubbard, and especially what he didn't want. He wasn't having any of Morris's militant socialism for one thing. As far as radicalism was concerned, Franklin's "surrogate of appearance" was what Hubbard required—in other words a "front." And in his later career as strike-breaker and big business apologist he discarded even that. As for art, Hubbard made haste on his return to America to debauch everything that was good in the Morris aesthetic and to heighten and distort what was bad to the proportions of burlesque. The quantity of typographic and other sham "craftsmanship" spawned by Hubbard's East Aurora workshop is too huge even to catalogue. Some of the de luxe editions he got out sold for $500 apiece. He knew his American self-made business man, did Hubbard, and the cultural "surrogates of appearance" which the tycoons of the nineties required for their libraries were hand-illuminated by a "genius"—long hair, flowing tie and everything—to the order of the patron.

The "people like to be fooled" said Barnum. But Hubbard was sharp enough to see that the enterprise required none of the elaborate paraphernalia of dwarfs, elephants and white whales that the pioneer showman assembled. Hubbard was a one-man circus, and a one-man Chautauqua. He edited and wrote a one-man magazine, *The Philistine*, and ran a one-man strike-breaking agency. A solo artist if ever there was one. True he had helpers and disciples, but none was ever permitted to share the limelight with the only original Fra

Elbertus. His point of view about the help was accurately expressed in *A Message to Garcia*.

> It is not book learning young men need, but a stiffening of the rertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to trust, to act promptly, to concentrate their energies, do the thing, "carry a message to Garcia."

A hard taskmaster, the Fra, who got the efficiency idea early and gave it its necessary ethical and moral rationalization. Carping critics suggested that Hubbard's chief industry at East Aurora was working his disciples. But big business seized upon *A Message to Garcia* as a revelation from Sinai, and the Fra simply coined money from then on. Hubbard wrote in this classic manifesto which corporation executives bought and distributed by the hundred thousand to their employees:

"He would drop a tear for the men who are struggling to carry on a great enterprise, whose working hours are not limited by the whistle and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to hold in line dowdy indifference, slipshod imbecility and heartless ingratitude which but for their enterprise would be both hungry and homeless."

That, it would appear, was the only cause over which Elbert Hubbard ever dropped a genuine tear. It was his own cause because he was a capitalist in his own right. (By 1911, his plant at East Aurora included two hotels, a group of factory buildings, and a farm, and he had five hundred people on his payroll.) It was also the cause of the expanding capitalist economy and the correlative acquisitive ethic, which came to full maturity during the two decades preceding the war.

One wonders a little at the harshness with which Hubbard rebuffed the craving of the white-collar slave for "book-learning." He himself was a kind of philosophical and literary magpie who lined his nest with trifles gathered from the most recondite sources, both ancient and modern. These, after having received a Hubbardian twist, were dished up in the *Philistine* and the *Fra* as the authentic pot-distilled wisdom of the sage of East Aurora.

He wrote so beautifully, sighed the newspaper critics of that Maytide of commercial sentimentality which piled high and shattered itself upon the realities of the war. In 1915, Elbert Hubbard went down with the Lusitania, and the *Literary Digest* in recording the event, quoted this tribute by Agnes Herbert which appeared in the London *Daily Chronicle*:

> Give me, I pray you, the magic of Elbert Hubbard. None of your Hardys, your Barries, your Kiplings for me. The pen of Elbert Hubbard, an' it please you.... Scoffers called him a literary faker. On occasion he was so. He popularized his knowledge of the great philosophers and transposed them so that the man in the street who would avoid the original teachers as he would the plague, swallowed the carefully wrapped up wisdom gratefully.... Everything Elbert Hubbard touched was made beautiful by the magic of his mind. He was the greatest advertising writer in the States and his methods turned the crying of wares into a literary adventure. Each was a faceted gem not to be passed by.

This seems a little lush, perhaps. The tribute of one Harold Bolce, writing under the title "Hubbard, the Homo, Plus" in the *Cosmopolitan* for March, 1911, is more to the point.

> Elbert Hubbard realized long ago that he was an heir of the ages and he has foreclosed. He is rich, happy, healthy and wise. He has the woman he loves.... He has struck pay dirt on Parnassus....
>
> "In addition to factories and fields, the Fra has at least a quarter of a million followers. Hubbard is not a crank. 'Whom do you represent?' was asked of Harriman when that great financier was beginning his remarkable career. 'I represent myself,' was the reply. Similarly Hubbard does. He does not even constitute a part of the movements his writings have helped to promote....
>
> "A New Thought convention was in session at his inn, the delegates paying full rates and getting their money's worth. 'What is New Thought?' asked a journalist. 'Blamed if I know,' said Hubbard.... Mr. Hubbard is sane—as sane as a cash register. In many ways he is, perhaps, the most roundly gifted genius since Benjamin Franklin."

The Fra's production of advertising copy, not counting his *Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great*—including the home of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound—was enormous. As Joseph Wood Krutch pointed out in *The Nation*,

> He is the spiritual father of all the copy which begins with an anecdote about Socrates and ends with the adjuration to insist upon the only genuine article in soapless shaving cream. He taught the merchant swank.

Toward the end of Hubbard's career, he became overgreedy and overconfident. The small change of lecture fees and book royalties was not enough. He had become a pretty important fellow and felt that he was worth important money. His price on one recorded occasion, for a job of literary strike-breaking, was about $200,000. Does this sound excessive? It sounded a little high even to John D. Rockefeller and to Ivy Lee, his public relations counsel in the lamentable affair of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. The correspondence

was reprinted in *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 30, 1915, under the title, "Elbert Hubbard's Price," and the first letter is dated June 9, 1914.

> Dear Mr. Rockefeller:
>
> I have been out in Colorado and know a little about the situation there. It seems to me that your stand is eminently right, proper and logical. A good many of the strikers are poor, unfortunate, ignorant foreigners who imagine there is a war on [the bullets that riddled the strikers' tents at Ludlow were doubtless purely imaginary J. R.] and that they are fighting for liberty. They are men with the fighting habit preyed on by agitators....

Hubbard went on to cite an article he had written about. the Michigan copper country and said he was writing one about Colorado. He mentioned his mailing list of 1,000,000 names of members of Boards of Trade, Chambers of Commerce, Advertising Clubs, Rotarians, Jovians, schoolteachers, judges and Members of Congress. He quoted a price of $200 a thousand for extra copies of the issue of *The Fra* in which his planned article would appear. He concluded:

> Just here, I cannot refrain from expressing my admiration for those very industrious, hard-working people, Bill Haywood, Charles Moyer, Mother Jones, Emma Goldman, Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair. Why don't you benefit the world ... (by stating the Rockefellers' side of the case. J. R.)?

Elbert missed out on that one, although he was persistent enough. He played golf with the elder Rockefeller. He wrote repeatedly to the well-known Mr. Welborn, President of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. "Do I make myself clear, boys?" he seemed to be saying. He did. Ivy Lee cannily suggested that Elbert be permitted every facility to gather material for his article. Then if Mr. Welborn liked it, he could doubtless arrange about the price. Ivy Lee knew his Fra. He wasn't buying any pig in a poke from Elbert Hubbard.

The proposition, as the editor of *Harper's Weekly* pointed out, was in two parts:

1. The Fra offered to sell his opinion.
2. The Fra offered to make an investigation in support of his opinion.

The Fra's one-man Chautauqua came to Middletown, N. Y. when the writer was in high school and also working on the local daily paper. It came twice in fact. The first year Elbert lectured on *The March of the Centuries*. It was a hodge-podge of Thoreau, Whitman, Emerson, Michelangelo and who not. I recall being a bit puzzled, although I reported the lecture respectfully enough, as was proper considering the eminence of the lecturer. The next year, I was a year older

and so was the Fra. He was getting pretty seedy, in fact, I thought. Moreover, his lecture, under a different title, was word for word the same balderdash he had given us the year before. The next day in the columns of the *Middletown Daily Times-Press* I took out after him with shrill cries of rage. The owner of the paper was away and I had fun. The piece was picked up and reprinted widely. At the moment, as I remember it, Hubbard had got himself a rating as a Bohemian immoralist, so that the up-state editors had declared an open season on the Fra.

My employer, when he came back, was horrified. It was the first time in the history of his management that the paper had printed an unkind word about anybody. But the Fra didn't mind—it was just so much publicity grist for his mill. The public likes to be fooled.

There seems to be nothing final to say about Fra Elbertus except that he advertised and sold everything and everybody he could lay his hands on: William Morris, Michelangelo, Thoreau, Emerson, Karl Marx, Socrates and Paracelsus. And himself, Elbert Hubbard, a founding father of the advertising profession—"the most roundly gifted genius since Benjamin Franklin."

20 THE CARPENTER RE-CARPENTERED

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Although Mr. Bruce Barton represents a logical projection of the rising curve along which we have traced the evolution of the American hero, he is, after Elbert Hubbard, rather an anti-climax. Mr. Barton's rôle in the war, as director of publicity for the Y.M.C.A. was comparable, in a way, to that of Jay Cooke in the Civil War. But Mr. Barton's rôle was much smaller and the techniques employed were much more impersonal and mechanized. Moreover, this mechanization and industrialization of sales publicity became even more pronounced during the period of advertising expansion that lasted from the Armistice to the fall of 1929. It would seem that Mr. Barton's distinctive contribution to the evolution of the American hero was the professionalization of advertising salesmanship and its sanctification in terms of a modernized version of the Protestant Ethic. The analysis is complicated by the fact that we are dealing here with a contemporary figure whose career is not completed; nor are the facts of his career readily available. This, however, is perhaps not so important as it might seem. Mr. Barton has been a prolific writer, and it is with the evolution of his thought that we are primarily concerned.[1]

The Man Nobody Knows was published in 1924, the year following the publication of Veblen's *Absentee Ownership*, which, in general, has supplied the framework of theory for this analysis.[2] It was only with the publication of this book that Mr. Barton became, in any sense, a national figure. In retrospect it is clear that the ad-man's pseudo-culture had already entered upon its period of decadence. The far flung radiance of advertising during this period was a false dawn; the fever-flush of a culture already doomed and dying at the roots. But it is precisely in such periods that the nature of the culture is most explicitly expressed and documented. *The Man Nobody Knows* is an almost perfect thing of its kind: more significant and revealing as a sociological document, I think, than either Barnum's autobiography or Hubbard's *Message to Garcia*. We see the same thing in the Athens of Pericles. As Euripides was to the more virile poets of the Athenian rise to power, Aeschylus and Sophocles, so Bruce Barton is to Barnum and Fra Elbertus.

[1] [For a particularly perceptive treatment of Barton, see Lears, T. J. Jackson, "From Salvation To Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880–1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880–1920*, edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, 1–38 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).]

[2] [Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1924); and Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923).]

When Mr. Barton published *The Man Nobody Knows* he had already achieved some standing as a writer of articles and fiction for the popular women's magazines and his lay sermonettes were appearing in the *Red Book*. The advertising agency in which he was senior partner was rapidly expanding and the chorus of applause which greeted *The Man Nobody Knows* was no small factor in enhancing the prestige and profits of its author's more strictly secular activities in promoting the sale of such products as Lysol, Hind's Honey and Almond Cream, *The Harvard Classics*, and a little later, the Gillette safety razor and blades.

In 1924 the writer was in California, employed at part time by a San Francisco advertising agency and for the rest, engaged in seeing the country, writing poetry and participating in indigenous cultural enterprises including the editing of an anthology of contemporary California poetry. In connection with this latter enterprise, conducted in collaboration with Miss Genevieve Taggard and the late George Sterling, I encountered the poetry of Robinson Jeffers, whose work was then almost unknown and who was living at Carmel on the California coast. Greatly excited, I went to the editor of a magazine published in San Francisco and devoted to the economic and cultural interests of the Pacific coast. I informed this editor that California had a great poet and that I should like to call attention to his work in the pages of the magazine.

It is at this point that Bruce Barton enters the picture. Shortly before, I had been approached by this editor, or his associate, with a practical proposition. The lay sermons of Mr. Barton in the *Red Book* were considered highly edifying by the ex-Kansans and ex-Iowans who had sold their farms and come to sun their declining years on the California littoral. The editor felt that if he was to increase his circulation, he must offer equivalent literary and philosophical merchandize. I was an advertising man. Mr. Barton was an advertising man. Couldn't I write something just as good as Mr. Barton's sermonettes?

I tried. As I studied my model it seemed a simple enough task. I, too, could quote Socrates, and Emerson, and Lincoln. I had the requisite theological background—my grandfather had been a shouting Methodist. And as for the style, I, too, I thought, could be simple though erudite, chaste though human, practical but portentous.

Well, I wore out one whole typewriter ribbon on that job and produced nothing but sour parodies. Some imp of perversity stood at my shoulder and whispered obscenities into my ear. I quoted Marx when I had intended to quote Napoleon or Benjamin Franklin. Desperately I tried to shake off this incubus. Once I started with a quotation from Louisa May Alcott, but when I pulled it out of the typewriter it read like a contribution to Captain Billy's Whizbang.

Some of the least awful of my efforts I submitted to my prospective employer. He shook his head. They lacked the human touch, he said. As a matter of fact, they were human, all too human. My spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.

The editor was kindly and told me to keep trying. I was still supposed to be trying when I came in to bring up the matter of Robinson Jeffers. As I recall it, there was some confusion on that occasion. The editor was still hot on the trail of a Bruce Barton *ersatz* and he couldn't get it through his head that I was talking about something else. When I finally managed to get within hailing distance of his attention, he consented reluctantly to print an unpaid review of Jeffers' privately printed *Tamar*. The magazine did print part of my review but the editor wrote a footnote in which he dissented strongly from my enthusiasm.

About two years later, I saw a copy of a magazine published at the Carmel artists' colony. The center spread was an advertisement of a Carmel realtor headed "Carmel, the Home of Jeffers." That gave me pause. If I had only gone to the realtors in the first place, I reflected, I might have made better headway with that Jeffers' promotion. Later, too, I came to understand why I had failed so miserably in my attempt to imitate those Barton sermonettes. The simple fact that they were advertisements had never occurred to me. They were and are advertisements, designed to sell the American pseudoculture to itself.

I was used to writing advertisements. Maybe, if I had tried, I could have written correct imitations of Mr. Barton's advertisements of obscure but contented earthworms, of the virtues of industry and diligence, of the vanity of fame. Also, maybe not. Mr. Barton may be only a minor artist, but I suspect that he is inimitable.

The digression is perhaps excusable in that it reveals the early spread of the Barton influence as compared with that of a major poet of the era whom the average American has never heard of. By the time I returned to New York, Mr. Barton had published *The Man Nobody Knows* and was soon a national figure comparable in influence to Henry Ward Beecher. Instead of preaching in Plymouth Church, he was the honored guest at luncheons of Rotary and Kiwanis clubs and Chambers of Commerce. Instead of editing a religious journal—early in his career he had edited the short-lived *Every Week*—his syndicated sermonettes were published in hundreds of newspapers. A professor of homiletics in a well-known seminary has assured me that the influence of Mr. Barton's writings upon the Protestant Church in America has been enormous. The son of a clergyman, brought up in a small Middle-Western city, not unlike the "Middletown" so ably described by the Lynds, he learned early the lessons of pious emulation and of "salesmanlike pusillanimity" which were the ineluctable

patterns of behavior for all young men of good family.[3] And Mr. Barton's family was excellent. His father was not merely a popular and respected preacher but a scholar of parts, author of a not undistinguished life of Lincoln. But this distinction, in the early years at least, brought no proportionate pecuniary rewards. So Bruce suffered the typical ordeal of the minister's son. He had the entree to the best houses in the community but no money with which to compete in the local arena of conspicuous waste, pecuniary snobbism, etc.

[3] [Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929).]

Here we have the two opposing absolutes which, in his later creative years, Mr. Barton undertook to reconcile: the quite genuine Christian piety, and enforced asceticism of the parsonage, and the "spirit of self-help and collusive cupidity that made and animated the country town at its best." The quotation is from Veblen's study of the country town in *Absentee Ownership*.[4] The neo-Calvinist ethical rationalizations described by Max Weber are brought into sharp relief by Veblen's analysis. In the following passage he seems almost to be laying down the ideological ground plan for Mr. Barton's subsequent career. Says Veblen:

[4] [Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 156.]

> Solvency not only puts a man in the way of acquiring merit, but it makes him over into a substantial citizen whose opinions and preferences have weight and who is, therefore, enabled to do much good for his fellow citizens—that is to say, shape them somewhat to his own pattern. To create mankind in one's own image is a work that partakes of the divine, and it is a high privilege which the substantial citizen commonly makes the most of. Evidently this salesmanlike pursuit of the net gain has a high cultural value at the same time that it is invaluable as a means to a competence.

One must not be misled into regarding Mr. Barton's specific contribution as of the iconoclastic or creative sort. He found ready to hand the ethical code and the theological rationalization of this code. His task was merely that of the continuer, the popularizer. Here in Veblen's words is a formulation, complete in all essentials, of the idealistic code of the advertising agency business, of which Mr. Barton was to become so distinguished an ornament:

> The country town and the business of its substantial citizens are and have ever been an enterprise in salesmanship; and the beginning of wisdom in salesmanship is equivocation. There is a decent measure of equivocation which runs its course on the hither side of prevarication or duplicity, and an honest salesman—such "an honest man as will bear watching"—will endeavor to confine his best efforts to this highly moral zone where stands the upright man who is not under oath to tell the whole truth. But "self-preservation knows no moral law"; and it is not to be overlooked that there habitually enter into the retail trade of the country towns many competitors who do not falter at prevarication and who even do not hesitate at outright duplicity; and it will not do

> for an honest man to let the rogues get away with the best—or any—of the trade, at the risk of too narrow a margin of profit on his own business—that is to say a narrower margin than might be had in the absence of scruple. And then there is always the base line of what the law allows; and what the law allows can not be far wrong.[5]

[5] [Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 157.]

When Mr. Barton was going to high school and Sunday school, one of the things he could scarcely help noticing was the characteristic red store front of the A. & P. Big Business was beginning to build the distributive counterpart of the emerging system of mass production. Veblen notes this transition as follows:

> Toward the close of the century, and increasingly since the turn of the century, the trading community of the country towns has been losing its initiative as a maker of charges and has by degrees become tributary to the great vested interests that move in the background of the market. In a way the country towns have in an appreciable degree fallen into the position of tollgate keepers for the distribution of goods and collection of customs for the large absentee owners of the business.[6]

[6] [Veblen, *Absentee Ownership*, 152.]

Mr. Barton's eminence both as advertising man and as an author became established during the postwar decade. As most people realize by this time, the catastrophic economic and cultural effects of the war were deferred and postdated so far as America was concerned. This postdating was accomplished by salesmanship and promotion applied to new industries—notably automobiles, the movies and radio. It was without doubt the rankest period of financial and commercial thievery in our whole history. Salesmanship became a thing-in-itself, incorporated, watered, reorganized, re-watered, aided and abetted by the state, and then duly sanctified and validated under the Constitution. Veblen's concept of *Absentee Ownership* became less and less descriptive of the actual situation in which the going rule became: "never give a stockholder a break." The more realistic terms were no longer owners and managers but "insiders" and "outsiders." One has only to refer to the Insull affair, and to the exploits of Messrs. Mitchell and Wiggin of the financial oligarchy, to establish the justice of this description. The *reductio ad absurdum* of the capitalist economy was accomplished by the "profitless prosperity" of the New Era. It will remain Mr. Barton's undying distinction that, in *The Man Nobody Knows*, he accomplished the *reductio ad absurdum* of "the Protestant Ethic."

2

With this background we are now in a position to give Mr. Barton's masterpiece the sober and respectful attention which it should

long ago have received at the hands of sociologists and literary critics. It is worth recalling that Henry Ward Beecher, too, wrote a life of Christ and that Elbert Hubbard, albeit a free thinker, was also faithful after his fashion in that he did not fail to exploit such elements of the Christian tradition as suited his market. The Christs of Renan, of Nietzsche, of Henry Ward Beecher, of Elbert Hubbard, of Giovanni Papini, of Bruce Barton—these and other interpretations of the Christ figure should provide an interesting and instructive gallery for the student of human ecology. But in the space at our disposal here we must confine ourselves to Mr. Barton's Christ. Clearly Mr. Barton felt that if the Saviour was to live again in the mind and heart of the twentieth century American business man, a radical though reverent reconstruction of the legendary Christ was required.

The first point to note about *The Man Nobody Knows* is that the book is an advertisement. Mr. Barton is clearly engaged in "selling" the twentieth century American sales and advertising executive to the country at large and to *himself*. This secondary aspect of Mr. Barton's unique promotion enterprise is very important. It must be remembered that in terms of social prestige the big-time salesman, and especially the advertising man, was still, in 1924, an upstart and a parvenu; this in spite of the strategic, even crucial importance of the salesman, the promoter, the advertising man in the struggle of business to keep the disruptive force of applied science from destroying the capitalist economy. In 1924 we were already face to face with the tragi-comic social paradox which Stuart Chase describes in his *Economy of Abundance*. The only method of resolving that paradox open to the business man was to sell more goods at a profit and, when the "sales resistance" of a progressively dis-employed population couldn't be broken down, to sabotage industry by monopoly control of production and prices.

So Mr. Barton was the man of the hour on more than one count. Despite the stout labors of P. T. Barnum, Elbert Hubbard and others, advertising still bore the stigma of its patent medicine origins. In the callous view of the crowd, the adman still wore the rattlesnake belt and brandished the pills of the medicine man who, in the light of flaring gasoline torches, had for many decades been giving the admiring citizens of Veblen's "country town" practical lessons in the theory of business enterprise and the uses of salesmanlike duplicity.

But times had changed. Advertising on the grand scale had become an industry no less essential than coal or steel. It had become a profession endorsed, sanctified and subsidized by dozens of Greek-porticoed "Schools of Business Administration" in which a new priesthood of "business economists" translated the techniques of mass prevarication into suitable academic euphemisms.

Advertising—in other words, mass cozenage—had become a major function of business management. The ad-man had become the first lieutenant of the new Caesars of America's commercial imperium not merely on the economic front but also on the cultural front.

The rattlesnake belt and the gasoline torch were no longer appropriate for so eminent a functionary. They must be burned, buried, destroyed, forgotten. The ad-man needed glorification and needed it badly.

3

It was to this task that Mr. Barton addressed himself with an elan, an imaginative sweep and daring that can be adequately characterized only by the word "genius." Consider the magnitude of the enterprise. It was necessary not merely to reconcile the ways of the ad-man to God, but to redeem and rehabilitate a tedious and discredited Saviour in the eyes of a faithless and materialist generation. Mr. Barton accomplished both of these stupendous tasks in a single brief book. And he was able to do this because, as a true son of his father, he had not fallen from grace. Like a modern Sir Galahad, his strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure. He was sincere.

I am aware that certain readers, who have not had the benefits of Mr. Barton's strict upbringing, will probably question this statement. I can only invite them to consider the evidence.

In the best homiletic tradition, Mr. Barton starts with a scriptural text:

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's *Business*?" (The italics are Mr. Barton's.)

The people settle back in their pews, the little boy in the second row finds a safe cache for his gum, the rustle of garments ceases, and the little boy hears the preface of Mr. Barton's great book entitled "How it came to be written."

> The little boy's body sat bolt upright in the rough wooden chair, but his mind was very busy.
>
> This was his weekly hour of revolt.
>
> The kindly lady who could never seem to find her glasses would have been terribly shocked if she had known what was going on inside the little boy's mind.
>
> "You must love Jesus," she said every Sunday, "and God."
>
> The little boy did not say anything. He was afraid to say anything; he was almost afraid that something would happen to him because of the things he thought.

Love God! Who was always picking on people for having a good time, and sending little boys to hell because they couldn't do better in a world which He had made so hard! Why didn't God take some one His own size?

Love Jesus! The little boy looked up at the picture which hung on the Sunday school wall. It showed a pale young man with flabby forearms and a sad expression. The young man had red whiskers.

Then the little boy looked across to the other wall. There was Daniel, good old Daniel, standing off the lions. The little boy liked Daniel. He liked David, too, with the trusty sling that landed a stone square on the forehead of Goliath. And Moses, with his rod and his big brass snake. They were winners—those three. He wondered if David could whip Jeffries. Samson could! Say, that would have been a fight!

But Jesus! Jesus was the "lamb of God." The little boy did not know what that meant, but it sounded like Mary's little lamb. Something for girls—sissified. Jesus was also "meek and lowly," a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He went around for three years telling people not to do things.

Sunday was Jesus' day; it was wrong to feel comfortable or laugh on Sunday.

The little boy was glad when the superintendent thumped the bell and announced: "We will now sing the closing hymn." One more bad hour was over. For one more week the little boy had got rid of Jesus.

Years went by and the boy grew up and became a business man.

He began to wonder about Jesus.

He said to himself: "Only strong magnetic men inspire great enthusiasm and build great organizations. Yet Jesus built the greatest organization of all. It is extraordinary...."

He said, "I will read what the men who knew Jesus personally said about Him. I will read about Him as though He were a new historical character, about whom I had never heard anything at all."

The man was amazed.

A physical weakling! Where did they get that idea? Jesus pushed a plane and swung an adze; He was a successful carpenter. He slept outdoors and spent His days walking around His favorite lake. His muscles were so strong that when He drove the money-changers out, nobody dared to oppose Him!

A kill-joy! He was the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem! The criticism which proper people made was that he spent too much time with publicans and sinners (very good fellows, on the whole, the man thought) and enjoyed society too much. They called Him a "wine bibber and a gluttonous man."

A failure! He picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world.

When the man had finished his reading he exclaimed, "This is a man nobody knows."

> "Some day," said he, "some one will write a book about Jesus. Every business man will read it and send it to his partners and his salesmen. For it will tell the story of the founder of modern business."

Note the "action pattern" suggested in the last sentence. It is a recognized device of advertising copy technique: "Mail the coupon today!" "Look for the trade-mark!" "Send no money," etc. Business men got the point and distributed thousands of copies of the book. In fact no other lay sermon, save only Elbert Hubbard's *Message to Garcia*, has been so generously subsidized in this way.

Note, too, the evocation of the "little boy" who is, of course, Mr. Barton himself. But he is also all the other little boys who had squirmed in those straight pews of the Protestant Communion and now ruled the church of business. Out of the mouths of babes. Mr. Barton, who is, in fact, a remarkable example of arrested development, didn't have to get down on his hands and knees to play church with these children. Standing upright and fearless, he saw eye to eye with every fourteen-year-old intelligence in the hierarchy of business.

The process of imaginative identification with the Saviour, suggested in the preface, is continued in a sequence of logical and reverent chapters: "The Executive," "The Outdoor Man," "The Sociable Man," "His Method," "His Advertisements," "The Founder of Modern Business," "The Master."

It is regrettable that space is lacking for extensive quotation. No paraphrase of Mr. Barton's remarkable chronicle can do more than faintly suggest the apostolic glow and conviction of the original. In the first chapter he notes that the great Nazarene, like all successful business executives, was above personal resentments and petty irritations. When the disciples, weary at the end of the day, were rebuffed by inhospitable villagers, they urged Jesus to call down fire from heaven and destroy them. Here is Mr. Barton's imaginative rendering of the Saviour's behavior on this occasion:

> There are times when nothing a man can say is nearly so powerful as saying nothing. Every executive knows that instinctively. To argue brings him down to the level of those with whom he argues; silence convicts them of their folly; they wish they had not spoken so quickly; they wonder what he thinks. The lips of Jesus tightened; His fine features showed the strain of the preceding weeks and in His eyes there was a foreshadowing of the more bitter weeks to come.... He had so little time, and they were constantly wasting His time.... He had come to save mankind, and they wanted Him to gratify His personal resentment by burning up a village!

So, in later years, Mr. Barton, like Jesus, like Lincoln, knew how to ignore the jeers of captious critics. He was a personage and knew it. He had important work to do. He had to write with his own hand

the advertising message of important Christian advertisers, Jewish advertisers and—just advertisers. And he had to direct the work of others and endure, like Jesus, the stupidity and folly of his helpers; like Elbert Hubbard, he was sometimes moved to cry out against the "slipshod imbecility and heartless ingratitude which but for their enterprise would be both hungry and homeless." Once in a symposium on what the advertising agency business most needed, he wrote, "God give us men."

It would seem probable, too, that Mr. Barton was not unmindful of the career of his great predecessor, Fra Elbertus. Did Mr. Barton think of himself as playing Jesus to the Fra's. John the Baptist? Probably not, but the following passage suggests the comparison:

> Another young man had grown up near by and was beginning to be heard from in the larger world. His name was John. How much the two boys may have seen of each other we do not know; but certainly the younger, Jesus, looked up to and admired his handsome, fearless cousin. We can imagine with what eager interest he must have received the reports of John's impressive success at the capital. He was the sensation of the season. The fashionable folk of the city were flocking out to the river to hear his denunciations; some of them even accepted his demand for repentance and were baptized.... A day came when he (Jesus) was missing from the carpenter shop; the sensational news spread through the streets that he had gone to Jerusalem, to John, to be baptized.

Why boys leave home. Another bright young man digs himself out of the sticks and goes to the big town to make his fortune.

In the chapter entitled "The Outdoor Man" Mr. Barton undertakes to prove that Jesus was what is known as a he-man, somewhat resembling Mr. Barton himself in stature and physique. In support of this contention he points out:

1. He was a carpenter and carpenters develop powerful forearms. No weakling could have wielded the whip that drove the money-changers from the temple.
2. He was attractive to women, including "Mary and Martha, two gentle maiden ladies who lived outside Jerusalem" and Mary Magdalene, whose sins he forgave.

In "The Sociable Man" Jesus is seen at the Marriage Feast of Cana. If not the life of the party He is at least genial and tactful. The wine gives out and Mr. Barton exclaims: "Picture if you will the poor woman's chagrin. This was her daughter's wedding—the one social event in the life of the family." So Jesus, to uphold the family's middle-class dignity turns the water into wine.

"His Method" describes the selling campaigns of the obscure Nazarene through which he climbed to the distinction of being the

"most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem." Paul, especially, impresses Mr. Barton—Paul, who was "all things to all men" and who became the hero of Mr. Barton's latest book, *He Upset The World*.[7]

[7] [Bruce Barton, *He Upset the World* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1932).]

"Surely," remarks Mr. Barton, "no one will consider us lacking in reverence if we say that every one of the 'principles of modern salesmanship' on which business men so much pride themselves, are brilliantly exemplified in Jesus' talk and work."

The final conference with the disciples is presented as a kind of "pep" talk similar to those by which, during the late New Era, the salesmen of South American bonds were nerved to go forth and gather in the savings of widows and orphans.

"His Advertisements" in Mr. Barton's view were the miracles. Here is the way one of them, according to Mr. Barton, might have been reported in the *Capernaum News*:

PALSIED MAN HEALED
JESUS OF NAZARETH CLAIMS RIGHT TO FORGIVE SINS
PROMINENT SCRIBES OBJECT
"BLASPHEMOUS," SAYS LEADING CITIZEN
"BUT ANYWAY I CAN WALK," HEALED MAN RETORTS

In the parables, especially, says Mr. Barton, the Master wrote admirable advertising copy, and laid the foundations of the profession to which Mr. Barton pays this eloquent tribute:

> As a profession advertising is young; as a force it is as old as the world. The first four words uttered, "Let there be light," constitute its charter.

In "The Founder of Modern Business" Mr. Barton finds Jesus' recipe for success in the following scriptural quotation:

> Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

Mr. Barton is quick to identify this as the modern "Service" creed of Rotary. He says:

> ... quite suddenly, Business woke up to a great discovery. You will hear that discovery proclaimed in every sales convention as something distinctly modern and up to date. It is emblazoned on the advertising pages of every magazine.

One gets fed up with this sort of thing rather easily. Addicts of the faith who find their appetite for the gospel according to Bruce Barton unappeased by the foregoing quotations, are urged to consult the original. The book ran into many editions and duly took its place on

the meagre bookshelves of the American Babbitry, alongside of the First Success Story—Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, the Second Success Story—P. T. Barnum's *Autobiography*, and a de luxe edition of Elbert Hubbard's *The Message to Garcia*.

In due course, Mr. Barton's great book was made into a movie, which enjoyed some success and further extended the popularity and influence of the author. So far as I know, no attempt has been made to sculpture Mr. Barton's re-carpentered Carpenter in wood, plaster or papier-maché. It would seem that the dissemination of the new icon might well have been put on a mass-production, mass-distribution basis, like that of the Kewpie doll, and Mickey Mouse. The neglect of this logical extension of business enterprise is possibly attributable to the jealous opposition of the vested interests concerned with the ancient Propagation of the Faith, to which Veblen refers in a passage already quoted.

The Man Nobody Knows was preceded by a relatively unsuccessful lay sermon entitled *What Can A Man Believe*? It was followed by *The Book Nobody Knows*, a volume of Old and New Testament exegesis, done with Mr. Barton's characteristic unconventional charm, which found much favor in church circles, and among Christian business men. A collection of Mr. Barton's syndicated sermonettes has been published under the title *On the Up and Up*. One finishes the reading of this volume convinced more than ever that Mr. Barton is sincere. Take, for example, the quite charming little essay entitled "Real Pleasures," in which the author describes his delight in "walking along Fifth Avenue, looking in the shop windows, and making a mental inventory of the things I don't want." This, from the head of one of America's largest advertising agencies, is sheer heresy. But Mr. Barton, being exempt from the "vice of little minds," is full of heresies. Elsewhere he praises the simple joys of primitive country living. And when asked by "Advertising and Selling" to contribute his professional credo to a running symposium which included the leading advertising men in America, Mr. Barton went much farther than any other contributor in recognizing, by implication at least, the inflated and exploitative nature of the business, and in predicting the present drive for government-determined standards and grades. It should be added that his firm has for many years been considered rather exceptionally "ethical" in its practice; that it has never used bought or paid-for testimonials; that it has declined much profitable business on ethical grounds; that it has doubtless tried to give its clients a fair break always, and the public as much of a break as considerations of practical business expediency permitted. There are a number of agencies of which this may be said, and it isn't saying much. Mr. Barton's firm, operating well within the existing code of commercial

morality, and even striving sincerely to advance and stiffen that code, has sponsored and produced huge quantities of advertising bunk, of expedient half-truths, etc.—that being the nature of the business.

It is clear that in Mr. Barton we have at least four personalities:

1. The Sunday School boy who hated the Calvinist Christ (the Beecher complex);
2. The infantile, extraverted, climbing American who created that grotesque ad-man Christ in his own image, as a kind of institutionalized, salesmanlike tailor's dummy, to serve as a kind of robot reception clerk for the front office of Big Business.
3. The timid but talented minor essayist and dilettante who, given different circumstances, and subjected to a different set of social compulsions, might have produced a considerable body of charming and more or less scholarly prose; who might even have come to understand something of the meaning of the Christ legend and of the ethical values by which a civilization lives or dies.
4. The intelligent, acquisitive, informed man of affairs who knows a little of what it is all about, but lacks the nerve to do anything about it, except by intermittently adult fits and starts. Good old Daniel! Just what lions has Mr. Barton ever fought honestly and fought to a finish?

An interesting figure, slighter on the whole than either Beecher or Hubbard, but more complex, perhaps, than either. It was the institutionalized and syndicated Barton that came to the fore again in his last book *He Upset the World*, which was excellently reviewed by Mr. Irving Fineman, the novelist, in the magazine *Opinion* for April 25, 1932. Mr. Fineman notes that Mr. Barton has become a little patronizing in his attitude toward The Man. He knows Him better now, perhaps; certainly he recognizes that St. Paul was a better business man. Says Mr. Fineman: "It is a bit shocking, no later than the twentieth page of this book, to find Bruce Barton censuring Jesus—however gently! 'He had no fixed method, no business-like program.... He came not to found a church or to formulate a creed; He came to lead a life.' So that, once having assigned to each his job—to Jesus, as it were, the divinely pure genius, and to Paul, the hustling, mundane *entrepreneur*—it becomes a simple matter for Mr. Barton to accept, indulgently, the impracticality of the one, who hadn't the sense apparently to syndicate his stuff, and the go-getting tactics of the other, who was frankly, 'all things to all men.' "

In his preface, Mr. Barton explains that he hadn't been interested in St. Paul at first, but was induced by his publisher to re-examine the scriptural sources and thereby converted to writing the book. Mr. Fineman's parting jibe deserves recording:

"He should be warned however against the wiles of publishers, lest one of them induce him to write a little book about Judas."

The implied analogy would be more just if, in Mr. Barton, we were dealing with an adult and fully integrated personality, but obviously this is not the case. One does not accuse a child of betraying anything or anybody. And Mr. Barton exhibits, more clearly, I think, than any other contemporary public figure, the characteristic infantilism of the American business man.

One suspects, however, that Mr. Barton has grown up sufficiently to regret his masterpiece; indeed, that it is beginning to haunt him, like a Frankenstein monster. The following episode, which I have slightly disguised, out of consideration for the organization involved, would appear to confirm this suspicion.

I was once visited in my office by a lady who represented a committee, organized to serve a worthy, sensible, and admirable philanthropic cause. The committee was getting out a new letterhead, of which she showed me a first proof. She explained that she wanted a pregnant sentence that would express the high aims of her movement. She had found that sentence in *The Man Nobody Knows*, by Bruce Barton, author and Christian advertising man. She had learned that I knew Mr. Barton. She knew that his books were copyrighted, but? Would I intercede for her and obtain Mr. Barton's permission to use as the motto of her society one of the most felicitous and beautiful sentences she had ever read?

Gladly, I replied, wondering what this was all about. But what was the sentence?

She opened the Book. She pointed to the underlined sentence. It read: "Let there be Light!"

I dictated a long memorandum urging Mr. Barton to grant her request. Mr. Barton was not amused.

21 A GALLERY OF PORTRAITS

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NO DESCRIPTION of the ad-man's pseudoculture can be considered complete without some notation of the curious atrophies, distortions and perversions of mind and spirit which the ad-man himself suffers as a consequence of his professional practice.

I have heard it said of So-and-so and So-and-so in the profession: "They are born advertising men." Obviously this cannot be true. Even if one assumes the inheritance of acquired characteristics, the phenomenon of advertising is too recent in biological time to have brought about any substantial modification of human genes. Moreover, although I have known many perverse and diabolical little boys, none of these creatures was sufficiently monstrous to prompt the suspicion: "This will grow up and be an advertising man."

No, the ad-man is born not of woman, but of the society. He is the subhuman or pseudohuman product of an inhuman culture. His insanities are not congenital. They are the insanities of a society which, having failed to embody in its growth process any valid economic, ethical or moral concepts, is moronic in these respects. The ad-man seems exceptional and terrifying merely because his whole being is given over to the expression and dissemination of this moronism.

The ad-man is not necessarily an intellectual prostitute. As already pointed out, if one accepts the economic and social premises of American capitalism, the ad-man plays a logical and necessary rôle. The production of customers, and the control of factory production in the direction of profit-motivated obsolescence—these are functions in a profit economy no less essential than the production of coal or steel. Most advertising men feel this very strongly. It gives them confidence and conviction, so that they are the more easily reconciled to their habitual and necessary violation of the principles of truth, beauty, intelligence and ordinary decency. They are profit-motivated producers of customers, and they have the producer's psychology. It is right and beautiful to make a customer out of a woman, even though this involves making her into a fool, a slave and a greedy neurotic. *It is so right and so beautiful that the ad-man tends to make the same sort of thing*

out of himself, his family and his friends. I have had many friends in the advertising business who have been solicitous about me, because of my unorthodox views. At various times I have been put to some embarrassment to keep them from trying, for the good of my soul, to make me also a fool, a slave and a greedy neurotic. Your run of the mill ad-man has no inferiority complex; indeed he is positively messianic about his profession—there isn't a doubt in a carload of these fellows.

This sounds quite mad, but it is also quite true. The inference, also true, is that the society is mad; the ad-man is exceptional only in that he carries more than his share of the burden of this madness.

Hence it is easy to absolve the ad-man on the ground that he knows not what he does. This, I think, is a just acquittal for the vast majority of the profession. But there are, of course, many exceptions. There are many men and women in the profession who have explored worlds of the mind and the spirit lying beyond this Alice-in-Wonderland world of the advertising business. They are perhaps somewhat to be blamed, especially those fallen angels who use their exceptional qualities of mind and imagination actively to promote what they know to be a very dirty and anti-social traffic. The distinction, while tenuous, is, I think, genuine. It is between the intellectually sophisticated ad-man who sells a part of himself to make a living, and the greedy cynic, often with a will-to-power obsession, who sells *all* of himself. I and most of my friends in the business belonged to the first category, which is fairly numerous. The will-to-power cynic is quite exceptional, and, incidentally, he usually goes mad, too; he tends to believe in and justify this acquired, distorted self; so that in the end we see this ex-literary man or ex-artist as a Captain of Advertising, frothing at the mouth at advertising conventions, or leading his hosts of devout, iron-skulled ad-men into battle for God, for country and for Wet Smack chocolate bars.

In the portrait studies which follow I have tried to include proportionate representation of all three basic types. While these studies are based on the writer's observation of real people, they are all composite portraits; names, places and incidents have been disguised. The writer is not interested in attacking individuals; rather he permits himself the faint hope that some very likable ad-men who may read this book may be freed from the coils of the "systematized illusions" in which they have become entangled along with their victims. When, as now, we are faced with the necessity of building a civilization to replace the self-destroying barbarism which has hitherto contented us, it is well to have as many people as possible know what they are doing, even though what they are doing happens to be

a mean and dirty job. Most jobs are like that in our society, if that is any comfort.

ECONOMICS

Pete Sykes is the American University's great gift to advertising, and perhaps the most typical advertising man I know.

In both the smaller and larger American colleges and universities, during the period just before the war, the mindset of the average bright young man was determined by the time he became a sophomore. Pete was above the average as to energy and charm, but in all other respects he was the perfect stereotype of the extraverted, emulative, career man in his undergraduate phase.

He had some literary talent and made the staff of the college newspaper. He had some executive ability and became assistant manager of the football team. He was personable, his family was good enough, and he made one of the snootiest fraternities. All this happened during his first two years. As to his studies: in a moment of confidence he once confessed to me that he could make nothing of Professor Ely's economics, although he had studied hard in that course. He had determined to make a million dollars after graduating, and he had been given to understand that economics was the science of making a million dollars.

When Pete made this confession he was the managing head of a large Middle Western agency. Although then only in his early forties he had already made about half that million dollars. Without benefit of Ely, however. I tried to explain. I cited the correspondence of a radical editor with an engineer, exiled in Alaska, whose grown sons were in college in Seattle and also studying Ely. The engineer became curious and read Ely himself. He wrote: "I think Professor Ely should have married Mary Baker Eddy, for they are manifestly agreed as to the non-existence of matter. And if they had married, I am confident that their child would have been a bubble."

Pete laughed and asked me what book he could read that did make sense. I suggested Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of Business Enterprise*.[1] Fine! After lunch he stepped into a book store and ordered the book; also a new detective novel.

[1] [Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904).]

I wasn't horsing Pete. He was and is a good fellow, with enough salt in his nature to make him worth taking seriously, which is more than can be said for most advertising men. After graduating he had been a newspaper reporter, and he understood the surfaces of American life very well. He was tolerant, too, if realistic. A year later he fired a friend of mine on the ground that my friend's insistence on giving no more than half time to the "business nobody knows" im-

plied a lack of unmitigated devotion to his profession, although in all other respects he was o.k. My friend thought his point well taken and departed gracefully.

Pete had to fire over a third of his staff as the depression deepened, and it bothered him. The civilization had put him on the spot, and it wasn't fair, because he was still only a bright sophomore. His ambition, his emulative obligation to himself, to his parents, to his classmates, and later to a growing family, had never permitted him to achieve the intellectual maturity which he secretly craved. What was he to do with these stock-market-ruined surplus executives, these debt-burdened copy writers—Smith's wife was going to have a baby, Robinson had tuberculosis, etc., etc. Pete stalled, compromised, whittled, made private unadvertised loans out of his own pocket, and in the end had to fire most of them anyway.

Pete fought hard. To hold the business. To get new business. But he was on the spot there, too. Pete was ethical, a power for "truth in advertising," and as sincere about it as practical business considerations would permit. His agency turned out quantities of bunk, of course. But respectable bunk. No bought-and-paid-for testimonials. None of the gaudier and dirtier patent medicine accounts. His fastidiousness cost him money and work. He had to prove that it was possible to match the achievements of the testimonial advertisers by using other, more ethical advertising methods. It wasn't easy, and sometimes the ethical distinction between Pete's methods and those of the testimonial racketeers seemed a bit tenuous. Particularly now that the depression had forced advertisers to become increasingly hard-boiled.

So Pete wasn't happy. He had worked terribly hard all his life. He was moral. He had even cut out liquor so that he could work harder. After failing and succeeding, failing and succeeding, half a dozen times, that million dollars which he desired with such naïve emotional abandon was, in 1929, almost within his grasp. But the stock market crash had postponed the realization of that ambition indefinitely. And now the iron collar of economics—Ely's, Veblen's, somebody's—economics was not only choking him, driving down his standard of living, brushing aside his pecuniary ambitions, but forcing him to be an advertising faker, a slave driver, a hard-boiled executant of decisions written in red ink and passed by vote of his board of directors.

It wasn't fair and Pete suffered. There he was, grimacing like the gargoyle outside his skyscraper office, chilled by the winds of panic that swept the country, watching the waters of prosperity recede, taking with them first his profits, and now threatening the very continuance of his profession. A tough spot. Out on the end of a limb. The

buzz of the Brain Trust in Washington worried him. Would they saw off the limb on which he was sitting? But that would be outrageous! He was a hard, competent worker. And a good fellow. He had fought like hell in behalf of his employees. He had resisted the onslaughts of the advertising vandals who were destroying reader-confidence. Economics? Damn economics! Where did he get off in this beautiful American economic scheme of things? And when would he get a little sleep?

You can see how hard it is to find effigies to burn, bad men to drive out of office. I don't blame Pete. I blame the American university for spawning so many sophomores, telling them that advertising was a respectable career for an honest, intelligent person, and then walking out on them as soon as the depression proved that the reverend professors of "economics" were just as imbecile as any village socialist had always said they were.... No, it's no use blaming the university either. Let's blame Alexander Hamilton a good deal and Thomas Jefferson, too. And John Calvin. And Daniel Shays for not being as good a revolutionary engineer as Lenin....

I guess that let's Pete out. If I were Commissar in a Soviet America—and I can think of few people less competent for the job—I should want Pete at a desk around the corner. I'd have to watch him for a while because he has a considerable will-to-power. But he's a good fellow, and, given something serious to do, a good workman. The depression has matured him. He isn't a sophomore any more. But there he is, holding the bag for a staff of two hundred people, underpaying them and overworking them because he has to, and occasionally obliged, for business reasons, to strike those sophomoric attitudes he no longer believes in. Pete is still one of the Kings of Bedlam. I think some nights he prays for a revolution.

BROADWAY IS SHOCKED

A few years ago there came into an agency where I was working a tall Westerner who had got himself a job in the publicity department. (Yes, advertising agencies have publicity departments. They are quite legitimate, although the newspapers don't like them much.)

His name was—call him Buck McMaster. He looked like a cowboy and had been one in his youth in Oklahoma. He was a competent, facile newspaperman and likable. The job paid more than most newspaper jobs and it was easy. The smaller newspapers had to like the stuff and even the desk men on the big ones were trained to say maybe, without meaning maybe. The stuff had to tie up with the news, of course, and it had to be competently written. But Big Business is news, and that agency was doing jobs for Big Business. It

was pap for Buck, even though they loaded his desk with plenty of assignments.

He was happy as a lark at first. But within a couple of weeks that cowboy was riding high and grabbing for the carriage of his typewriter. Looking through the glass of my cubicle I could see him, scowling. And from time to time I would hear him rip spoiled drafts out of his machine and crunch them into the waste basket.

"Jesus Christ," he would bleat. "Holy Mother, what next?"

At that time some of my signed writings were appearing in radical magazines. He must have read something of mine and decided I was safe.

Late one afternoon he came into my cubicle and sat down.

"I'm going gaga," he said. "This stuff is terrible. Do you mind telling me—" he leaned forward and whispered—"is this a racket, too?"

I was startled. Newspapermen are supposed to be hard-boiled. And this one was an ex-cowboy to boot, who looked tough enough for anything.

"Do you mind telling me," I asked, "What was your last job?"

"Sure," he said. "I was publicity man for———." He named one of the most salacious of the Broadway producers. "It was a lousy job—you know, cheap and nasty. I'd heard about the advertising business and decided to get into something decent."

He seemed hurt when I laughed.

"Well," he said morosely. "Then I guess it's back to the bright lights for me. I suppose you don't happen to know of anything in this town a man can do and keep his self-respect?"

Buck got out finally by writing cheap fiction for the pulps. He was and is a lot better than that. He has written honest, sensitive fiction stories which he hasn't been able to sell. So he writes more pulp fiction and is forever spoiling his business by writing it too well. He lives in the country now, and has got himself elected justice of the peace in his township. He's an honest judge, although he tells me the local political pressures are considerable. He has a considerable local reputation among the young people. When a couple arrives at his house, wanting to get married, he first strives earnestly to dissuade them. If he is over-ruled, he then leads them to an idyllic spot beside a brook and reads them the Song of Solomon. Finally, he refuses to accept a fee.

PURE GOLD

There is a very scared man huddled back of his desk in a big Western agency. He is one of the most gifted literary craftsmen I know. He is

something of a sophisticate, and I am confident has never believed a word of the millions of words of advertising copy he must have written. But he rarely says anything like that, even when drunk.

He is very scared. He is in his late fifties now, and has six children. He is very eminent and successful, but he is scared just the same. As the depression deepened, he saw to it that the people in his department who stayed could be counted upon to protect his job. Just before the bank holiday he put ten thousand dollars in gold coins in his safe deposit box. Every now and then he would go in and make sure that the gold was still there.

Mr. Gentroy. The brilliant Gentroy. Once he had literary ambitions. But he was scared. And he is old now. A little of his light red hair is still left. His face is red, too. When you ask him something he never commits himself. And when you listen to him, you wonder who or what is speaking.

There was something there once. A person. Possibly an artist. It is gone now. For years he has been following Mr. Goode's prescription: he has been turning people into gold. Now he is gold himself. Pure gold. Only occasionally, when he is drunk, does a small bubble of laughter or anger rise to the surface. The refining process is never quite complete. But Gentroy, because he was so scared, has carried it farther than most. Gold. Pure gold.

POSTURE

Bodfish had asked the doctor about liquor, and the doctor had shrugged. Bodfish had a leaky heart—the diagnosis was positive on that point. Yet when Bodfish had asked him about liquor, the very Jewish, very eminent and very expensive diagnostician had looked out of the window, lowered his Oriental eyelids, and shrugged.

So Bodfish had gone directly from the doctor's office to the speakeasy. In half an hour he was jolly. An hour later the Good Kid came in and told him cheerfully that he was tight. He hadn't felt tight. On the contrary, he felt himself to be the center of an immense, serene and sober clarity. The experience was not unknown to him. The creative moment. It was his ability to experience such moments that made him a great advertising man. He had felt this way the night he had thought of the Blisterine idea, which had revolutionized the advertising of proprietary medicines. A sense of power, of marching analysis, of kaleidoscopic syllogisms resolving into simple, original and utterly right conclusions.

The sensation was similar, but this time his relaxed, athletic mind was exploring strange territory. Himself. His life. The curious, strained, phantasmagoric pattern of his days.

There was something he had wanted to tell the Good Kid, but she wouldn't listen. He had felt a beautiful, paternal pity for the Good Kid. It wasn't her fault, he had tried to tell her. It wasn't his fault, either. They were both victims. As he said it, he had put forth a hand, the wrist hairy, the flesh around the knuckles showing the first withering of age, and attempted to lay it upon her brow in a gesture of chaste absolution.

The Good Kid had laughed at him. "You're drunk, B. J." she had assured him briskly. And a little later she had gone off with the art director, leaving him alone in the speakeasy in a corner facing the mirror.

The lamps of the speakeasy were heavily shaded. But there was light—the mood of revelation persisted. It was as if his flashing mind played against the mirror, and in that clear illumination the face of Bodfish stared out at him in sharp relief. There were two Bodfishes now. There was Bodfish, the ad-man, posing, gesticulating in the mirror. And there was a new, masterful, illuminated Bodfish who smiled sardonically, fingered his cigar, and continued the inquisition of that Mephistophelian physician.

"Do you want the truth?" the physician had asked, and Bodfish had said he did.

Now, with the patient caught in the relentless reflection of the mirror, Bodfish repeated the question.

"Do you want the truth?"

The lips in the mirror smiled. The head nodded. Yes, it was to be the truth.

"Your posture is bad, Bodfish. Stand up!"

Bodfish stood up.

"Your nose is six inches ahead of your body. You're ahead of yourself."

The face in the mirror smiled deprecatingly. Bodfish's associates had frequently made that flattering complaint. Bodfish was too bright. He thought too fast. His mind was so active that———

"Nonsense, Bodfish. I doubt very much that you have ever in your life experienced the discipline of honest thought. That head and shoulder posture what does it remind you of?"

The face in the mirror smirked.

"A hawk? Really, if I am to do anything for you, we'll have to dispense with a few of these bizarre illusions. There are hawks in your business, but not many of them. As it happens a number of my patients are advertising men. Most of them are like yourself. Have you ever watched a mechanical rabbit run around a race track pursued by whippets?" The doctor hadn't said that—not quite. But being something of a histrion, as well as a good deal of a masochist, Bodfish enjoyed exaggerating and refining the cruelties of the diagnosis.

"Posture, Bodfish, is not merely a physical thing. Yours is a moral, a spiritual disequilibrium. Moreover, you embody, in your own psychic and physiological predicament, the dilemma of the civilization. Its acquisitive nose is ahead of its economic body. It is wobbling, stumbling, about to fall on its face. Throw your chin in, Bodfish. Think! Do you remember when you first got into the advertising business?"

Bodfish remembered.

"You were an average youth, Bodfish; perhaps a little more sensitive than the average, and with a frail talent for writing—not much, but a little. You had an idea of yourself. It was that idea that held you together that kept your shoulders back and your chin in. Posture, Bodfish, is largely a matter of taking thought. You thought a good deal of yourself in those days. Everything that happened to you mattered. It mattered to the degree that it affected, favorably or unfavorably, your idea of yourself. Tell me, Bodfish, in those days did you think of yourself as a charlatan, a cheat and a liar? Did you think of yourself as a commissioned maker and wholesaler of half-truths of outright deceptions; a degraded clown costumed in the burlesque tatters of fake science, fake art, and fake education, leering, cozening, bullying the crowd into an obscene tent show that you don't even own yourself—that by this time nobody owns?"

The reflected face became distorted as Bodfish advanced upon the mirror.

"Answer me, Bodfish! You wanted me to explain to you why you've got a leaky heart, why your back hurts so you can't sleep, why none of your office wives takes you seriously—not after the first week anyway. The answer is that you've not only lost the idea of a society—you've lost the idea of yourself. It's silly to speak to you as a sick person. As a person you've practically ceased to exist. Long ago you stuffed yourself into the waste paper basket along with all the other refuse of your dismal trade. You went down the freight elevator in a big bale, back to the pulp mill. What's left is make-believe. Why, you need three gin fizzes before you can even take yourself seriously. You flap and rattle like a prewar tin lizzie. And you come to me for repairs! Tell me, Bodfish, why should any intelligent man waste his time rehabilitating *you*? Why, you're as obsolete as a Silurian lizard! ... Be sensible, Bodfish, have a drink."

Bodfish had a drink.

"To your great profession, Bodfish! To your billion dollar essential industry! Fill up, Bodfish!"

Bodfish filled his glass.

"To your historic mission, Bodfish, the *reductio ad absurdum* of a whole era. Drink, Bodfish!"

Bodfish drank.

"To the 40,000 ewe lambs of American advertising, who, as the crisis deepened, poured out their last full measure of devotion on the altar of business as usual. To the vicarious sacrifice which history exacts of the knave, the weakling, and the fantast. Drink, Bodfish!"

At three o'clock in the morning the push-broom of the negro roustabout encountered an obstruction under the table next the mirror.

"Mistah Tony!"

The proprietor wiped the last glass, placed it carefully on the shelf, and leisurely emerged from behind the bar.

"Get Joe and put him in the back room," instructed the proprietor briefly.

His partner, the ex-chorus girl, returned from padlocking the front door.

"They tell me he's lost the Universal Founders account."

"Yes. His gal friend's quitting—told me so this evening."

The proprietor frowned, opened the cash drawer and examined a check.

"Better take him off the list, Clara."

It was late afternoon of the next day before Bodfish awoke.

He lay quietly staring at the painting of Lake Como on the opposite wall. Then he closed his eyes. There was something he wanted to remember something that had happened in the night. What was it? Oh, yes, posture! That was the word, posture. Marvellous. A big idea. Never been used in advertising before. Nine out of ten have posture defects.

Sitting up in bed he extracted pencil and an envelope and made hasty notes. That was it. A cinch. That Universal Founders' account wasn't lost. Not by a damn sight.

He rose, scrubbed briefly at the dirty sink, and inspected himself in the mirror. Eyes clear. Face rested. Cured!

Great thing, posture. What the doctor ordered.

Bodfish straightened himself. That's it. Head up. Chin in. Posture.

22 GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: Advertising and the Depression

doi | original pdf

The evolution of the American salesman hero, climaxed by Mr. Barton's deification of the salesman-advertising man in *The Man Nobody Knows* was rudely interrupted by the stock market crash in 1929. During the depression years Mr. Barton's syndicated sermonettes struck more and more frequently the note of Christian humility. It was an appropriate attitude. For as the depression deepened it became apparent that the ad-man could not carry the burden of his own inflated apparatus, let alone break down the sales-resistance of the breadlines and sell us all back to prosperity.

The ad-man tried. It is pitiful to recall those recurrent mobilizations of the forces of advertising, designed to exorcize the specter of a "psychological depression": the infantile slogans, "Forward America!" "Don't Sell America Short!"; finally, the campaign of President Hoover's Organization on Unemployment Relief, to which the publications contributed free space and the advertising agencies free copy.

One of these advertisements, which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* issue of Oct. 24, 1931, is headed "I'll see it through if you will." It is signed in type "Unemployed, 1931," and the presumptive speaker is shown in the illustration: a healthy, well-fed workman, smiling and tightening his belt. The staggering effrontery of these frightened ad-men in presuming to speak for the unemployed workers of America can scarcely be characterized in temperate language. This campaign signed by Walter S. Gifford, president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, which was at the same time paying dividends at the expense of the thousands of workers which it had discharged and continued to discharge, and by Owen D. Young, chairman of the Committee on Organization of Relief Resources, was designed to kill two birds with one stone: first, to wheedle money out of the middle classes, and second, to persuade the unemployed to suffer stoically and not question the economic, social and ethical assumptions on which our acquisitive society is based and out of which

the eminent gentlemen who sponsored the campaign were making money. The particular advertisement already referred to understated the volume of unemployment about a third, and then the ineffable ad-man, speaking through the masque of the tailor's dummy workman said, "I know that's not your fault, any more than it is mine."

It didn't work. The rich gave absurdly little. And the sales of advertised products continued to drop despite the pleading, bullying, snarling editorials printed by the women's magazines at the urgency of the business offices which saw their advertising income dropping and their "books" becoming every week and every month more svelte and undernourished.

Nothing worked, and pretty soon the ad-men had so much to do, what with the necessary firing and retrenchment that went on in the agencies and publications, that they no longer even pretended that they could make America safe for Hoover by advertising us out of the depression. The worst of it was that the general public, and even the advertisers quite evidently didn't give a whoop about the advertising business—that is to say, the publisher-broadcaster-agency structure. Thousands of ad-men were out of work—and the heartless vaudevillians of Broadway sat up nights thinking up cracks about this unregretted circumstance.

The doctors, the architects, the engineers, even the lawyers were able to command some public sympathy. But although from 1929 on the consumer got less and less advertising guidance, stimulus and education, it was apparent that anybody who had the money had no difficulty in buying whatever he wanted to buy. So that when apprised of the sad plight of the ad-men, the unsympathetic layman was likely to couple them with the bankers and remark in Broadway parlance, "And so what?"

And so the evil days came, and the profession had no pleasure in them. And the priests of the temple of advertising went about the streets in snappy suits and tattered underwear. And when they read their *Printers' Ink* in the public library they encountered some very saddening statistical trends.

The Advertising Record Company uses a check list of 89 magazines and gives dollar values, which increased from $190,817,540 in 1927 to $203,776,077 in 1929. By 1932 the magazine lineage had dropped to $16,239,587 and the dollar value to $115,342,606. Partial figures for 1933 are provided by *Advertising and Selling*. They show magazine lineage to be about 29 per cent under the 1932 figures for the first six months of 1933. In July the descending curve began to flatten, so that, what with beer and the NRA the September lineage is only minus 5.88 per cent as against September, 1932—incidentally a reversal of the usual seasonal trend.

The curve of national advertising in newspapers behaves similarly. Starting with a dollar value of $220,000,000 in 1925, it reaches a 1929 peak of $260,000,000. Then it drops to $230,000,000 in 1930, $205,000,000 in 1931, and $160,000,000 in 1932. The drop continued in the early months of 1933, but the recovery came sooner and has gone higher; August newspaper advertising was 23.65 per cent above the same month of the preceding year.

As might be expected, agriculture is the sore spot of the advertising economy as it is of the economy in general. The Advertising Record Company's figures show a slightly earlier incidence of distress in this quarter. National advertising in national farm publications faltered from $11,092,342 in 1929 to $10,327,956 in 1930, dropped suddenly to $7,775,415 in 1931, and slumped hopelessly in 1932 to $4,921,514.

Radio advertising is unique in that it shows a continuous upward trend during the depression years up to 1933. The combined figures of the two major chain systems, National and Columbia, show an increase of broadcasting expenditures by national advertisers from $18,729,571 in 1929 to $39,106,776 in 1932. But by April of this year radio advertising was 42.71 per cent under the total for the same month of 1932. A reversal of this trend is indicated by the August total which is off only 16.53 per cent as against August, 1932. In spite of their increased income during the depression, however, the Wonder Boys of radio have managed somehow to stay in the red—NBC, for example, has yet to pay a dividend to its common stockholders.

So much for the statistical records of the advertising industry. The summary is incomplete since it does not include the trade press, car-cards, outdoor advertising and direct advertising. The trends, however, have been similar.

The human records during these years of the locust have been even more depressing. Certainly, the Golden Bowl of advertising is not broken. But it has been badly cracked, and through that crack has leaked at least half of the 1929 personnel of the profession and, probably, a bit more than half of the profession's 1929 income. This is merely a rough estimate, since no reliable figures are available. The writer is indebted to a leading employment agency in the field for the estimates here given. They are based on considerable evidence plus the best judgment of an informed observer.

Advertising salaries were, of course, preposterously inflated during the late New Era. A good run of the mill copy writer got $150 a week, whereas a newspaper reporter of equal competence would be lucky to get $50 a week. Practically any competent artist could choose between starving to death painting good pictures and making from $10,000 to $50,000 a year painting portraits of branded spinach,

pineapple, cheese, etc., so realistic that the publications in which they were reproduced had to be kept on ice in order to arrest the normal processes of nature. (The writer admits that the artists were not solely to blame for this interesting phenomenom.)

The push-button boys, the high-power advertising executives, the star agency business getters and publication space salesmen—all these were similarly inflated as to salaries, and as to their conviction of their own importance. Executive salaries of $25,000 and $30,000 were common in 1929, and there were even a few $50,000 a year men, not counting the agency owners. Research directors and merchandizing experts had also begun to come in on the big money. In some of the larger agencies, an owlish, ex-academic or pseudo-academic type was in great demand as a front for the more important clients. These queer birds got from $12,000 to $40,000 a year. They specialized in the higher realms of the advertising make-believe, being as statistical, psychological, economico-psychological, statistical-sociological as Polonius himself. Since there was indeed something rotten in Denmark, and advertising was distinctly a part of that something, they, too, were pierced by the sword of the depression and fell squealing behind the arras.

Eheu! Those were the happy days! Where are they now, those Pushers of the Purple Pen, those pent-housed and limousined "artists," those academic prime ministers in their modern dress of double-breasted serge, those industrial stylists and package designers, those stern, efficient, young-old, button-pushing High Priests of the Gospel of Advertising?

A few, who didn't get caught in the stock market, are sitting and drinking in Majorca, waiting for the waters to subside and the peak of the advertising Ararat to reappear.

Some are doing subsistence farming in Vermont and elsewhere, with perhaps a hot dog stand as a side line.

Some of them are on the receiving end of the formula of salesmen-exploitation which many companies have adopted as a means of conquering the rigors of the depression. You use your own car and your own gas trying to sell a new gadget in a territory infested by other salesmen for the same gadget. In two months you have sold two gadgets and your commissions amount to $58.75. Your business expense for the same period amounts to $79.85. That proves you're a poor salesman.

Some of the savants are back in the fresh-water colleges teaching the same old stuff about scientific merchandizing to the Young Idea, from whom they carefully conceal what's happened, assuming that they know what's happened, which is doubtful.

A former copy writer of my acquaintance became business manager of a radical monthly, on a theoretical salary. Another has gone to California, where Life is Better, and the climate more suitable for practicing his former craft of commercial fiction. He wasn't fired, by the way. It was merely that he found he had no aptitude for the brass-knuckled rough and tumble of current advertising practice.

One hears that some of the unemployed poets in advertising are writing poetry and that some of the unemployed novelists in advertising are writing novels. Perhaps that is one explanation for the increased tonnage of manuscripts by which editors, publishers and literary agents have been inundated.

For the so-called "creative" workers in advertising, the adjustment has perhaps been a little easier than for the executives, "contact men," space salesmen, etc. A relief administrator told the writer about an advertising man who had presented a difficult problem to her organization. He needed money to feed his family, but he wouldn't surrender his respectable address just off Park Avenue. He still hoped to get back into the running, had a hundred "leads" and schemes. Meanwhile, he must look prosperous, since an indigent, unsuccessful advertising man is a contradiction in terms.

Many of the agencies started firing and cutting right after the stock market crash. By the fall of 1930 wholesale discharges were frequent. During the past year the havoc has been appalling. Agencies that formerly employed six hundred people are operating with about half that number. In the smaller agencies the staffs have been reduced from 150 to 30, from 30 to 8, from 16 to 4. Salaries have been cut again and again. In some agencies there have been as many as four successive cuts. They have hit the higher and middle brackets hardest—particularly the "creative" staffs. The employment agent already referred to has recently placed copy writers at $50 and $70 a week who in 1929 were getting $10,000 and $14,000 a year. Secretaries and stenographers have dropped from $40 and $303 week to $18 and $15. In the entire agency field there are perhaps a handful that have refrained from cutting salaries or have restored cuts when business improved for that particular agency.

Mergers have been numerous during the depression. The earlier trend toward concentration of the business in the hands of a comparatively few large agencies has been accelerated. In the process many well-known names have disappeared from the agency roster.

As to the effect of the weeding-out process on the quality of the residual agency staffs, it may be said that a percentage of sheer incompetents has been dropped; that a percentage of incompetents has been retained because through social or financial connections they controlled the placing of valuable business; that in general, the trend

has been toward a more rigorous "industrialization" of the business, with a lower average wage scale, and a progressive narrowing of responsibility. The residual ad-men tend to be or at least to act hard-boiled. They do what they are told, and they are told to get and hold the business by any available means.

Competitive business is war. Advertising is a means by which one business competes against another business in the same field, or against all business for a larger share of the consumer's dollar. The World War lasted four years. The depression has lasted four years. You would expect that advertising would become ethically worse under the increasing stress of competition, and precisely that trend has been clearly observable. But, as already pointed out, ethical value judgments are inapplicable under the circumstances. Good advertising is advertising which promotes the sale of a maximum of goods or services at a maximum profit for a minimum expense. Bad advertising is advertising that doesn't sell or costs too much.

Judged by these criteria, and they are the only permanently operative criteria, good advertising is testimonial advertising, mendacious advertising, fear-and-emulation advertising, tabloid balloon-technique advertising, effective advertising which enables the advertiser to pay dividends to the widows and orphans who have invested their all in the stocks of the company. It is precisely this kind of advertising that has increased and flourished during the depression—this kind and another kind, namely, price-advertising, which advertising men, including that ad-man at large, General Hugh S. Johnson, view with great alarm. This brings us to a consideration of various confused and conflicting aspects of the New Deal which serve excellently to document the previously set forth contentions of the writer concerning the nature of the advertising business, its systematized make-believe, and its strategic position in the capitalist economy.

23 NIRA: The Ad-Man on the Job

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When President Roosevelt succeeded to the politically bankrupt Hoover Administration, it was necessary not merely to legislate a New Deal but to *sell* this New Deal to the American People. Tribute has already been paid to the President's extraordinary persuasiveness in his radio addresses. It was natural that he should choose as his first lieutenant a high-powered sales executive, General Hugh S. Johnson, who became Director of the NRA.

The theory of the recovery, as outlined in the pronouncements of the President, was to raise prices and wages, eliminate cut-throat price competition, and thereby restore the solvency of the whole capitalist fabric of production and distribution for profit. One of the businesses that had to be rehabilitated was the advertising business.

Speaking before the convention of the Advertising Federation of America held at Grand Rapids in June, 1933, General Johnson said in part:

> Good advertising will become more essential than ever. It will be in a position to help the business executive avoid those wasteful and expensive practices in selling which so often add needless costs to needed products. Good advertising is opposed to senseless price cutting and to unfair competition. These are two business evils which we hope to reduce under the new plan of business administration.
>
> Constructive selling competition will be as strong as ever, and there will be great need for aggressive sales and advertising efforts. The only kind of competition that is going to be lessened is the destructive cut-throat kind of competition which harms the industry and the public as well. There should be more competition than ever in presenting quality products to consumers, and in selling those products. What we are going to need more than ever is energetic, honest efforts to sell goods to people who are going to use them....
>
> If there is one job for advertising men and women to carry through at this moment, it is to study the implications and effects of the industrial recovery act and then to apply their skill in assisting business to gain fully from the planned results of the law.

When General Johnson addressed the Advertising Federation of America, he was speaking to the responsible heads of the advertising business, including the owners and managers of major publishing properties. Certainly these gentlemen realized very clearly that if any deliberate deflation of advertising were included in the plans of the administration, it would mean their bankruptcy. General Johnson understood this as well as they did. He also must have realized acutely that the administration could not afford to do anything of the sort, since it is highly dependent upon press and radio support for the execution of its program—even for its continuance in office. Hence, the wings of the Blue Eagle were spread benignly over one of the most fantastically exploitative and non-functional businesses in our whole acquisitive economy. With this qualification, of course: "*Good* advertising will become more essential than ever ... *Good* advertising is opposed to senseless price cutting and to unfair competition."

General Johnson knew his press and knew his politics. As a patriotic savior of capitalism he was convinced that the advertising business was one egg that couldn't be broken even to make the omelet of the New Deal. But it was impossible to keep the recovery program pure, even if the President had wanted to. Reform was bound to creep in. The investment bankers got it first in the Securities Act. And eventually that advertising egg did get cracked, or at least candled. It turned out to be Grade "C" or worse.

It was Professor Rexford J. Tugwell, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, who started all the trouble by insisting that the Recovery Program should include passage of a New Pure Food and Drugs Bill, designed to protect the health and the pocketbook of the consumer. At this writing this bill, as revised by Senator Copeland, under pressure from the proprietary medicine, drug, food and advertising interests, is still being fought by these interests although most of its original teeth have been pulled. By the time this book is published it seems probable that the revised bill or a substitute measure will have been passed. Since the purpose of this book is not to analyze the legislative and other developments incident to the New Deal but to describe the advertising business, considered as an instrument of rule controlled and manipulated by the American business hierarchy, we shall be content in the next chapter with showing how and why the vitamin men, the medicine men and especially the ad-men were successful in beating the Tugwell Bill. The story is told in detail in the 500 page transcript of the hearings on S. B. 1944, otherwise known as the Tugwell-Copeland Food and Drugs Bill, held in Washington, Dec. 7 and 8, 1933. It is one of the most fascinating and revealing documents the Government Printing Office has ever issued. Reading it is a sobering experience, even though Moliere [*sic*] himself

could scarcely have conceived the rich comedy of the situation. What emerges is a cross-section of the American pseudoculture. Benjamin Franklin, Jay Cooke, Henry Ward Beecher and Elbert Hubbard were all there in spirit, represented by slightly burlesqued reincarnations in the bodies of statesmen, lawyer-lobbyists, medicine men and admen. Bruce Barton didn't appear at the hearings, but did his bit in the field by speaking against the bill. Dr. Walter G. Campbell, Chief of the Food and Drug Administration, did an altogether magnificent job in explaining the need for the bill so that by the time he had finished the assembled lobbyists didn't have a leg to stand on. They did, however, have plenty of money and an effective influence upon the daily and periodical press. In the Sept. 18, 1933, issue of the *Drug Trade News* appeared the following frank statement of the strategy and tactics of the United Manufacturers of Proprietary Medicines, as generalissimoed by lawyer-lobbyist Clinton Robb.

The 17 Plans

1. Increase the membership of association at once to present a united front in combating the measure.
2. Secure co-operation of newspapers in spreading favorable publicity, particularly papers now carrying advertising for members of the association.
3. Enlisting all manufacturers and wholesalers, including those allied to the trade, and inducing them to place the facts before their customers through salesmen, and in all other possible ways, to secure their co-operative aid.
4. Secure the pledge of manufacturers, wholesalers, advertising agencies and all other interested affiliates to address letters to Senators to secure their promise to vote against the measure.
5. Line up with other organizations, such as Drug Institute, Proprietary Association, National Association of Retail Druggists and others, to make a mass attack on bill.
6. Appointment by the President of a committee to work in conjunction with Attorney Clinton Robb.
7. Co-operation of every member in forwarding to headquarters newspaper clippings and all available data as basis for bulletins and favorable publicity.
8. Co-operation of every member in doing missionary work in home districts to arouse public to the dangers of the legislation proposed.
9. Carrying to the public by every means available, radio, newspaper, mail and personal contact, the alarming fact that if the bill is

adopted, the public will be deprived of the right of self-diagnosis and self-medication, and would be compelled to secure a physician's prescription for many simple needs.

10. Arrange for conferences between Association Committee and representatives of all other trade associations interested.
11. Enlist the help of carton, tube, bottle and box manufacturers.
12. Defeat use of ridicule by American Medical Association, proponents of the measure, by replying with ridicule.
13. Convince newspapers of justness of cause and educate public to same effect.
14. Setting up publicity department for dissemination of information.
15. Enlisting aid of Better Business Bureau in various cities.
16. Direct and constant contact with situation at Washington under leadership of Attorney Robb.
17. Pledge of 100 per cent co-operation on part of every member of the association present for continued and unremitting activity in every possible direction to defeat measure.

Note plan No. 15, the mobilizing of the Better Business Bureaus, which are agencies set up by the organized advertising business to expose and penalize dishonest and misleading advertisers. We cannot stop here to trace the history of the Better Business Bureau, except to point out that its criteria of "Truth in Advertising" are the commercial criteria already discussed in an earlier chapter; further, that even these criteria cannot be applied to the disciplining of important advertisers or powerful advertising agencies. The internal politics of the advertising business is realpolitik. The Better Business Bureau can point with pride to the scalps of numerous "blue-sky" stock promoters and cheap and nasty patent medicine racketeers whom it has put out of business. But in the nature of the case it cannot successfully hunt bigger game, indeed it is not designed for this purpose. It is essentially a "Goose Girl" organization which is concerned with the maintenance of reader confidence, with keeping the methods and practices of the advertising profession within the tolerance limit of an essentially exploitative traffic.

But the Tugwell Bill attacked this traffic at several vital points : (1) the clause declaring a drug to be misbranded if its labeling bears any representation, directly or by ambiguity or inference, concerning the effect of such drug, which is contrary to the general agreement of medical opinion; (2) a similar clause leveled at false and misleading advertising, which provided that the advertisement of the drug or cosmetic be considered false "if it is untrue, or by ambiguity or inference creates a misleading impression"; (3) the clause authorizing the

Secretary of Agriculture to "promulgate definitions of identity and standards of quality and fill of container for any food."

But "ambiguity and inference" is the stock-in-trade of the advertising copy writer. And as for quality standards, it is the recognized task of advertising to establish *systematized illusions* of quality which will lift the product above the vulgar level of price competition.

Being thus clearly attacked, it was to be expected that the "reform" pretensions of the advertising business would pretty much collapse; that the profession would make a more or less united front with the patent medicine racketeers, and with the drug, food and cosmetic industries; that newspapers, magazines and radio stations would either actively fight the bill or fail to support it.

In effect that is what happened, although the more respectable advertisers and publications were considerably embarrassed by the rough tactics of the patent medicine lobby, and certain partial cleavages developed. At its annual convention the Association of National Advertisers failed to pass resolutions attacking the bill, for the reason, doubtless, that those advertisers who were affected slightly if at all by its provisions felt that "reader confidence" would indeed be somewhat rehabilitated if the patent medicine advertisers, the "Feminine Hygiene" advertisers, etc., were obliged to pull their punches a little. *Advertising and Selling* and *Editor and Publisher* attempted to play fair, gave much space to the proponents of the bill and stoutly refused to "go along" with the campaign of abuse, misrepresentation and press coercion laid down in Mr. Robb's "17 Plans."

To meet this attack Professor Tugwell and the officials of the Food and Drug Administration had to rely upon their excellent and popular case, upon the support of a handful of liberal and radical publications, which carried little or no advertising, upon the far from active or organized support of the medical profession, and upon the intermittent and poorly financed help of a few women's clubs and consumer organizations. The Food and Drug Administration had no propaganda budget; it did, however, manage to stage its famous "Chamber of Horrors" exhibit at the Century of Progress and later route this exhibit to women's clubs and other organizations which asked for it. This pathetically inadequate attempt to fight back was greeted by yells of rage from the patent medicine lobby which was busy spending money lavishly in the execution of Mr. Clinton Robb's "17 Plans." United States Senators began getting letters like the following from Mr. Daniel A. Lundy:

> My dear Senator: It would seem, if Section 6 of the Deficiency Appropriation Act, for the fiscal year of 1919 and prior year, is still active, Walter Campbell may well be dismissed and prosecuted for his alleged gross violations and abuse of authority, in spending government

> money without permission of the Congress for radio, Paramount News Reel, diversion of his employees' time for selfish purposes and other means to influence passage of unconstitutional Tugwell-Copeland-Sirowich Food and Drug Bills.
>
> Walter Campbell, it would seem, has overridden all official propriety and wisdom in his alleged overt act, and no public trust or confidence once violated, as in this case, can be restored. There seems but one road for Congress—the road in dismissing the Chief of the F&D Department, with penalties, if substantiated.
>
> All others who have aided and abetted in these vicious and irregular proposals, whether in lending their names or in actions, should come under the same discipline.
>
> Honest industry and a decent public prays for a thorough and speedy investigation and not a white-wash of an alleged crime as despicable and deplorable as the sell-out of the "Teapot-Dome."

Mr. Lundy, as might be guessed, is a member of the Board of Managers of the United Medicine Manufacturers Association. He is also connected with the Home Drug Company, against which the Food and Drug Administration has a case pending. But the Senator didn't know this. Nor was the Food and Drug Administration empowered to tell him unless he specifically asked; it had no means and no power to expose one of the most brazen and vicious lobbies that ever disgraced Washington. In the *Nation* of February 14 the writer undertook to expose this lobby and the substance of that article, which was entered in the record of the second hearing by Mrs. Harvey W. Wiley.

24 *ALL FOR PURITY*

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THERE are no interested, profit-motivated lobbyists at Washington; only patriots, crusaders, guardians of our most sacred institutions, saviors of humanity. If you doubt this, read the transcript of the public hearings held December 7 and 8 in Washington on the Tugwell-Copeland Food and Drug Bill. If, after that, you are still cynical, you should read the mail the President, General Johnson, and Postmaster Farley received from the patriotic medicine men, vitamin men, and cosmeticians whose sole concern appeared to be the welfare of the present Administration and the NRA. The names of these correspondents cannot be divulged, but here are a few samples of their style:

> With yourself and every other loyal citizen of the United States endeavoring to assist in the relief of unemployment, it would seem that any type of legislation that would retard the recovery of business would be unfortunate at this time. Therefore, House Bill 6110 and the Copeland Bill should be given serious consideration as their effect upon an enterprise with an annual output of over $2,000,000 would be serious indeed....
>
> We have no objections to regulation but ... here is no ordinary regulator measure of the industry. Here is a bill known as the Tugwell Bill ... that openly demands that the Secretary of Agriculture in enforcement of regulations be final and absolute and without appeal to the courts.... Now I'm no disgruntled manufacturer writing you; I'm quite well able to take care of myself and have been doing it in this business for many, many years....
>
> Practically all the worth-while factors in proprietary cosmetic, drug, food, and advertising industries are in accord that these Tugwell measures are impossible of amendment and should be withdrawn....
>
> I have recently been impressed with the danger to the Administration that is resulting from the agitation created by what is known as the Tugwell Bill....

There are four main points to note about this huge correspondence, of which only a few typical examples have been excerpted: (1) that the names of most of the ready letter-writer firms are already

familiar through notices of judgment issued by the Food and Drug Administration at the termination of cases brought under the present inadequate law, in Post Office fraud orders or in the Federal Trade Commission cease-and-desist orders; (2) that the writers invoke the principle of "recovery" as opposed to "reform" in order to defend businesses which in most cases are demonstrably a danger and a burden to both the public health and the public pocketbook; (3) that they do not hesitate to misrepresent both the nature and effects of the bill, as for example by asserting that Administration action would not be subject to court review although such review would be easily available to defendants under both the original bill and the present revised Copeland Bill; (4) that the writers, by implication, threaten the Administration with a political headache and political defeat, regardless of the merit of the issues involved.

The nature and methods of this lobby can best be understood by examining the following "Who's Who" of the leading lobbyists. A complete list is as impossible, as would be any attempt to estimate the expenditure, undoubtedly huge, of the proprietary drug, food, and advertising lobby.

Frank (Cascarets) Blair. Mr. Blair represents the Proprietary Association, the chief fraternal order of the patent-medicine group, but even closer to his heart, one suspects, is Sterling Products. This is a holding company for the manufacturers of such products as Fletcher's Castoria, Midol, Caldwell's Syrup and Pepsin, and Cascarets, a chocolate-covered trade phenopthalein and cascara laxative recently seized by the Food and Drug Administration. The Proprietary Association and Mr. Blair, plus the National Drug Conference, backed the Black Bill, written by Dr. James H. Beal, chairman of the board of trustees of the United States Pharmacopoeia. The Black-Beal Bill would further weaken even the present inadequate law, make seizures practically impossible, and permit nostrum-makers to get away with murder in their advertising. In short, it is a sheer fake.

Hon. Thomas B. (Crazy Crystals) Love. Mr. Love, a former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, is attorney for the Crazy Water Company of Mineral Wells, Texas, manufacturers of Crazy Crystals, a prominent exhibit last summer in the Food and Drug Administration's well-known "Chamber of Horrors." At the December hearings Mr. Love said, "No harm has ever resulted, or is likely to result, from the misrepresentation of the remedial or therapeutic effect of naturally produced mineral waters," which is a brazen enough falsification. Two kinds of harm result from such misrepresentation—harm to the health of the victim who takes a dose of horse physic under the illusion that a dose of salts is good for what ails him; harm to the victim's pocket-book because he paid about five times as much for that

dose of salts as it was worth.

H. M. (Ovaltine) Blackett. Mr. Blackett is president of Blackett-Sample-Hummert, a Chicago advertising agency. His pet account is Ovaltine, that mysterious "Swiss" drink which puts you to "sleep without drugs" and performs many miracles with underweight children, nursing mothers, busy workers and old people. "Food and drug advertising," Mr. Blackett writes to magazine and newspaper publishers, "is different from other classifications. It must actually sell the product. It must put up a strong selling story—strong enough to actually move the goods off the dealers' shelves." More briefly, Mr. Blackett believes it would be impossible to sell a "chocolate-flavored, dried malt extract containing a small quantity of dried milk and egg" for what it really is—at least for a dollar a can.

William P. (Jacob's Ladder) Jacobs. Mr. Jacobs is president of Jacobs' Religious List, which would appear to represent the alliance of the fundamentalist business and the proprietary-medicine business. As a publishers' representative of the "official organs of the leading white denominations of the South and Southeast," he offers a combined weekly circulation of 300,317 to the God-fearing manufacturers of Miller's Snake Oil (makes rheumatic sufferers jump out of bed and run back to work), kidney medicines, rejuvenators ("Would you like to again enjoy life?"), contraceptives (presumably for an equally holy purpose), reducing agents and hair-growers. Mr. Jacobs is secretary and general manager of the Institute of Medicine Manufacturers; he is, in fact, a member of the old Southern patent-medicine aristocracy. His father, J. F. Jacobs, was author of a profound treatise on "The Economic Necessity and the Moral Validity of the Prepared Medicine Business."

J. Houston Goudiss. Mr. Goudiss appears to be the missing link in the menagerie of medicine men, vitamin men, and ad-men who crowd the big tent of the Washington lobby and do Chautauqua work in the field. On November 16th last he appeared before the convention of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs, donned the mantle of the late Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, and begged his hearers to oppose the Tugwell Bill. He said in part:

> So far as I am known to the American public, I am known as a crusader for the better health of our people.... Early in my career I came under the benign influence of the late Dr. Harvey W. Wiley. I was privileged to support him in his work ... Were Dr. Wiley alive today, I am sure that he would be standing here instead of me. And if I presume to wear his mantle, it is because I feel that the great urgency of the situation calls upon me to do so.... When I was first informed that our Congress was ready to consider a new pure food and drugs law ... I was exultant.... Later when I read the proposed law ... my heart fell with foreboding. I recognized it as only another overzealous measure

> like our unhappy Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act.... The Tugwell Bill is fraught with danger....

About that Harvey W. Wiley mantle the widow of Dr. Wiley, in the course of an eloquent plea for the Tugwell Bill at the December hearing, said: "I have never heard Dr. Wiley mention Mr. C. Houston Goudiss, and inquiry at the Department of Agriculture discloses the fact that no correspondence between Dr. Wiley and Mr. Goudiss between 1905 and 1911, when Dr. Wiley resigned, is on file."

And now about Mr. Goudiss himself: He publishes the *Forecast*, a monthly magazine full of vitamin chatter not unrelated to Mr. Goudiss's activities as broadcaster over Station WOR for various and sundry food products. He is author of *Eating Vitamins* and other books also of a signed advertisement for Phillips' Milk of Magnesia. His Elmira speech was promptly sent out as a press release by the Proprietary Association, and he also fought the Tugwell Bill over the radio.

The organizational set-up of the drug men, the food men, the medicine men, and the ad-men is almost as complicated as that of the Insull holding companies. At the top sits the High Council of the Drug Institute, an association of associations, formed originally to fight the cut-rate drug stores. The Proprietary Association, the Institute of Medicine Manufacturers, and the United Medicine Manufacturers, all have booths in this big tent. The last-named organization came right out in the open, whooping, yelling, and rattling the wampum belt. The Food and Drug Administration knows them well, and the public would know them better if this department of government were authorized by law to publicize its files. Here are a few of the most eminent and vocal patriots and purity gospelers:

President J. M. (Toma Tablets) Ewing. Toma Tablets are innocuously labeled, but advertised for stomach ulcers, The advertising clause of the Copeland Bill is what is worrying Mr. Ewing.

Vice President I. R. (Health Questions Answered) Blackburn. Mr. Clinton Robb, the legal magician for the U. M. M.A., fixed up the labels of the Blackburn products, which rejoice in a string of notices of judgment. These products are sold through an advertising column headed "Health Questions Answered." You write to Dr. Theodore Beck, who answers the questions in this column, and the good doctor informs you that one or more of the Blackburn products is good for what ails you. It's as simple as that.

Vice President George Reese is at present slightly handicapped in selling venereal-disease remedies by the seizure by the Food and Drug Administration a month ago of one of his nostrums—not the first action of this kind, judging by the notices of judgment against this firm.

Vice President Earl E. (Syl-vette) Runner can boast a dozen or more notices of judgment against his many products, the most prominent of which, Syl-vette, was seized only a short time ago. This "reducing agent" is a cocoa-sugar beverage that keeps your stomach from feeling too empty while a diet does the slenderizing.

D. A. (Gallstones) Lundy, of the Board of Managers of the U. M. M. A., advertises: "Gallstones. Don't operate. You make a bad condition worse. Treat the cause in a sensible, painless, inexpensive way at home." But, alas, the proposed new law forbids the advertising of any drug for gallstones, declaring the disease to be one for which self-medication is especially dangerous. Perhaps this explains Mr. Lundy's fervid letters to Senators demanding the dismissal and prosecution of Chief Campbell of the Food and Drug Administration on the ground that the latter has been improperly spending the Federal Government's money for propaganda.

William M. (Nue-Ovo) Krause, of the membership committee of the U. M. M. A. Mr. Krause's Research Laboratories, Inc., of Portland, Oregon, labeled Nue-Ovo as a cure for rheumatism until 1929 when the Food and Drug Administration seized the product and forced a change of the label. Nue-Ovo is still widely advertised in the West as a cure for rheumatism and arthritis.

Kenneth (Vogue Powder) Muir, of the Board of Managers of the U. M. M. A. When Mr. Muir's Vogue Antiseptic Powder was seized in 1930, it was being recommended not only for genito-urinary affections of men and women but also in the treatment of diphtheria.

T. S. (Renton's Hydrocine Tablets) Strong, of the Board of Managers of the U. M. M. A., is a partner in Strong, Cobb & Company of Cleveland, pharmaceutical chemists who manufacture products for other concerns. There are notices of judgment against venereal-disease remedies and a contraceptive manufactured by them. This firm also makes Renton's Hydrocine Tablets, a cinchophen product sold for rheumatism to which, according to the American Medical Association, many deaths have been directly traced.

C. C. (Kow-Kare) Parlin. For months now Mr. Parlin, research director of the Curtis Publishing Company, assumed much of the task of mobilizing and directing the heterogeneous but impassioned hosts of purity gospelers that fought the Tugwell Bill. Mr. Parlin is a statistician, a highbrow, and no end respectable. Moreover, he represents, indirectly at least, the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *Country Gentleman*. In their February, 1934, issues both of these Curtis properties published editorials, written in language strikingly similar to Mr. Parlin's recent speeches and signed writings, to the effect that in their advertising pages they had struggled to be pure—well, pure enough—and that the new bill was just painting the lily.

How pure is pure? The February issue of the *Country Gentleman* contains advertisements of several products which would be subject to prophylactic treatment if an effective law against misleading advertising were passed. The February issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which says that for more than a generation it has "exercised what we consider to be proper supervision over all copy offered for our pages," contains advertisements of at least eight products whose claims would require modification if the proposed bill became law. The *Ladies' Home Journal*'s "pure-enough" list includes Pepsodent, Fleischmann's Yeast, Ovaltine, Listerine, Vapex, Musterole, Vicks Vapo Rub, and Pond's creams. In addition to some of the foregoing, the *Country Gentleman* stands back of advertisements of Ipana, Toxite, Sergeant's Dog Medicines, Bag Balm, and Kow-Kare. Concerning the last-named product, the fact-minded veterinary of the Food and Drug Administration comments as follows:

> This used to be sold as Kow-Kure, which purported to be a remedy for contagious abortion, until trouble threatened with the Pure Food and Drug Administration. No drug or combination of drugs has any remedial value in treating contagious abortion. The danger of these nostrums is that the farmer relies upon them.

There is one obvious lack in the foregoing list of purity gospelers. It includes no women. We therefore hasten to present Gertrude B. Lane, editor of the *Woman's Home Companion*.

In the *Woman's Home Companion*'s "index of products advertised," the statement is made that "the appearance in *Woman's Home Companion* is a specific warranty of the product advertised and of the integrity of the house sponsoring the advertisement." Why, then, did Miss Lane oppose the bill? Was she alarmed by the fact that the *Woman's Home Companion* publishes as pure some of the same misleading advertisements that appear in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, already referred to, and that would be embarrassed by the advertising provision of the Copeland Bill? It is a great industry: women editors, publication statisticians, ad-men, vitamin men, medicine men, cosmeticians, all in the same boat and rowing for dear life against a rising tide of public opinion which demands that this grotesque, collusive parody of manufacturing, distributing and publishing services be compelled to make some sort of sense and decency no matter how much deflation of vested interests is required.

25 CALL FOR MR. THROTTLEBOTTOM

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THE inevitable conflict between the idea of capitalist "reform" and the idea of capitalist "recovery" emerged most sharply in the drive for commodity standards initiated by the more liberal members of Mr. Roosevelt's official family. These liberals—loudly denounced as "Reds" by the patent medicine, drug and food lobby—achieved a somewhat insecure footing in the Consumers' Advisory Board of the NRA and in the Department of Agriculture under the leadership of Assistant Secretary Tugwell.

It seems clear that in the beginning the Consumers' Advisory Board of the NRA and the Consumers' Counsel of the AAA were conceived of as decorative ingredients, designed to float around harmlessly in the otherwise strictly capitalist alphabet soup of the New Deal. Under no circumstances were they supposed to challenge the rule of business as administered by the Industrial Advisory Board, backed by the Trade Associations and the Chambers of Commerce. General Johnson's job was to ride herd on the unregenerate forces of Big Business and induce them, by alternate threats and pleadings, to save themselves and the country.

It was a tough assignment, and not the least of General Johnson's embarrassments was the disposition of the Consumers' Advisory Board and Professor Tugwell's group in the Department of Agriculture to clarify and fortify the soup of the New Deal with some stronger functional plans and programs.

The first blow-off came in the summer, when Professor Ogburn, of the University of Chicago, resigned his appointment to the Consumers' Advisory Board on the ground that a price- and wage-raising program, unregulated by a statistical reporting service, was dangerous, and that he had neither authority nor funds to establish such a statistical control. This was followed by mutinous murmurs from the remaining members of the Consumers' Advisory Board to the effect that their carefully prepared and devastating briefs in behalf of the consumer frequently got no further than General Johnson's desk; further, that Charles Michelson, sitting at the publicity

bottle-neck of the NRA, saw to it that the press got only such denatured releases from the Consumers' Advisory Board as would not disturb the equanimity of the dominant business interests.

What the Consumers' Advisory Board and Professor Tugwell's group were trying to do, of course, was to prevent the American people, as consumers, from being ground between the lag of wages behind the increase in prices—this trend being more and more apparent as the NRA codes, with their open or concealed price-fixing provisions, went into effect. The difficulty was that the consumer was a somewhat novel and unsubstantial entity in the New Deal economics. Like Mr. Throttlebottom, in "Of Thee I Sing," he was the man nobody knows, although it was precisely he whom business was theoretically set up to serve. If the Labor Advisory Board had wished to do so, it might well have contended that labor and the consumer are substantially identical. But it was apparent from the beginning that the Labor Advisory Board represented not the rank and file of labor, but the American Federation of Labor officialdom, which was if anything less radical than Big Business itself.

Hence the Consumers' Advisory Board was without allies at Washington and without the support of an organized pressure group outside Washington. One may doubt that the Chairman of the CAB, Mrs. Mary Harriman Rumsey, had any notion of the political dynamite which any serious attempt to discharge the ostensible functions of the board would explode. But on the board were Dr. Robert Lynd, co-author of *Middletown* and author of a penetrating study of the economics of consumption contributed to *Recent Social Trends*,[1] Dr. Walton Hamilton, Yale economist, and author of an iconoclastic dissenting opinion embodied in the Report of the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care, and Dr. James Warbasse, chairman of the Board of the Co-operative League. And the staff of the CAB, headed by Dexter M. Keezer, formerly of the *Baltimore Sun*, assayed a rather high degree of sophistication both as to economics and politics. For months both the board and its staff were consistently rebuffed and slighted by General Johnson, and their press releases were carefully censored by Publicity Director Michelson. But they continued to submit briefs at code hearings, and these briefs, although largely disregarded, kept the issues alive. And in connection with the hearings on the Tugwell-Copeland Pure Food and Drug Bill, there came another blow-off.

One of the most loudly mouthed charges of the patent medicine lobby was that the Tugwell Bill was "anti-NRA", in that it would embarrass the activities of nostrum makers, and reduce the income of newspapers, magazines and broadcasters which sold advertising space and time on the air to these nostrum makers. In the middle of the hearings, Dr. Lynd was called over from the Consumers' Advisory Board to answer this charge.

[1] [Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929); and Robert S. Lynd, "The People as Consumers," in *Recent Social Trends*, vol. 2 (York, PA: Maple Press Company, 1933).]

Apparently it had never occurred to the assembled medicine men, drug men, food men and cosmeticians, that the Consumers' Advisory Board could be anything but the customary make-believe with which business-as-usual cloaks its simple acquisitive motivations. Hence the consternation of these lobbyists as Dr. Lynd proceeded deftly and suavely to invoke the pale ghost of the ultimate consumer—to bring Mr. Throttlebottom to life.

"Do you see what I see?" said the ad-men to the patent medicine men. And the drug men, the cosmeticians, the vitamin men of the food industry, and the Fourth Estate all chimed in on a chorus of denunciation that became more and more hysterical as the hearings proceeded.

They saw that the drive of the Consumers' Advisory Board of the NRA to get consumer representation on the Code Authorities and quality standards inserted in the codes, the effort of the Consumers' Counsel of the AAA (headed by Dr. Fred C. Howe) to insert quality standards in the food processing and other agreements which it was then negotiating, and the controls and penalties embodied in the Tugwell Bill, especially the quality standards provisions, were all co-ordinate elements in the attempt of the President's left-wing advisers to do right by Mr. Throttlebottom, Mrs. Throttlebottom and the children.

From the point of view of business-as-usual, this sentimentalism about the consumer is the sin against the holy ghost, nothing less. Business, especially the interlocked drug, cosmetic, food and advertising businesses, is organized to do Mr. Throttlebottom right, and the difference is more than a matter of phrasing.

Amidst audible grinding of teeth by the assembled ad-men, Dr. Lynd argued from the premises of "quality merchandise," "service" and "truth in advertising" to which *Printers' Ink* and other organs of the advertising business have long proclaimed allegiance. Today, he pointed out, in view of the elaborate fabrication of commodities, the widespread use of synthetic materials and current packaging processes, fair competition, the avowed objective of the NRA, must include both quality competition and price competition. For example, the AAA had found that the milk agreements, in order to quote price at all, had also to quote butter fat. In nearly every line of merchandizing, a similar need exists for quality standards on which to base price competition. In fact, some of the producers and growers, such as the citrus fruit, rice millers, and cling-peach canners, had actually asked for quality grades in the AAA agreements.

The object of the NRA, continued Dr. Lynd, is to increase net buying power, which means that it must not only increase wages but stop losses through substandard buying. Both government and

industry avoid such losses by buying on specification. Should not consumers—the 30,000,000 families who in 1929 spent 60 per cent of the national income over retail counters—know what they are buying? Under the New Deal, labor, the consumer and government are recognized as co-partners in American industry. The proposed Food and Drug Bill, like the demand for quality standards in the recovery codes, represents a simple and necessary aid to the isolated consumer in his difficult and largely helpless effort to compete on an equal footing with the massed resources of industry.

Note how carefully Dr. Lynd kept within the theoretical zone of agreement. None the less the ad-men and their allies lost no time in putting him on the spot. The December 14th issue of *Printers' Ink*. headlined a mangled version of his statement: "Opposes NRA, SAYS Lynd", and in the Dec. 21st issue Mr. Roy Dickinson, president of *Printers' Ink*, declared:

> ... it is my firm belief that Professor Lynd's plans in the Consumers' Advisory Board, in connection with the Consumers' Board of the AAA, are a definite threat to the success of the whole NRA program. His scheme of attempting at this time to change the whole system of distribution of trade-marked, advertised merchandise, is a distinct menace to the whole industrial machine out of which wages, profits and government taxes must come. Both President Roosevelt and General Johnson have publicly expressed themselves that increased advertising of quality branded merchandise is an integral and essential part of the whole recovery program. Professor Lynd ... would attack over a wide front the whole system on which not only advertising but profits depend. Which viewpoint is truly representative of the Administration attitude? It is time that advertisers, publishers and all other industries dependent on advertising were told what they may expect, and get ready to fight for their existence if the Lynd viewpoint is representative.

One gathers from this that Mr. Throttlebottom just mustn't know too much, and that any attempt to inform him must be scotched before it starts. So Mr. Dickinson called out the advertising mob, and with similar warning tocsins, the medicine men called out their macabre guerrillas. The impression one gains from reading the trade press during this period is much like that made by the final reel of a gangster melodrama, in which the good-bad gangsters draw their rods and "blast their way out." This ferocity becomes understandable when we add up what was at stake.

It has been roughly estimated that about $350,000,000 a year was at stake for the advertising business alone. This money is paid by advertisers, chiefly through advertising agencies which collect commissions, to newspaper and magazine publishers, broadcasters, car-card and direct by mail companies for the advertising of foods, drugs and

cosmetics theoretically designed to inform and instruct Mr. Throttlebottom, eliminate his halitosis, pep him up with vitamins, and otherwise make him a better and more popular fellow.

But we have already seen that modern advertising represents not so much a competitive selling of goods and services as a competitive manufacture of consumption habits, the technique of this manufacture being essentially a technique of "creative psychiatry." What was attacked by the Tugwell Bill, and even more, by the attempt to embody quality standards in the codes, was this enterprise in "creative psychiatry," and the largely irrational and un-economic consumption habits which advertisers manufacture and capitalize. In *Recent Social Trends*, Dr. Lynd notes that the Maxwell House Coffee habit of the American people was bought in 1928 for $42,000,000, and the Jell-O habit in 1925 for $35,000,000. The asking price for the Listerine habit and the "Crazy Crystal" habit would also doubtless be impressive if we knew them.

When the ad-men, the food men, and the drug men howl about the brain trust's attack on "the whole system on which not only advertising but profits depend," that is the system they are howling about, and the loudness of the howl is directly proportioned to the size of the howler's stake in the matter. The capitalized claims of the food, drug and cosmetic advertisers upon the creatively psyched Mr. Throttlebottom's shrinking dollar would probably run into billions if accurately computed. The stake of the advertising business, otherwise known as the newspaper, magazine and broadcasting business, is smaller, but even more indispensable. Newspapers and magazines derive about two thirds of their income from advertisers, and somewhere between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of this advertising income is contributed by the food, drug, proprietary medicine and cosmetic advertisers. Naturally the publishers and broadcasters and their allies want this creative psyching of Mr. Throttlebottom to go right on. Naturally, when they contemplate what would happen if quality standards were systematically introduced into the codes, they become hysterical and incoherent.

In contrast, the functionalists in Washington have been almost excessively lucid. In fact, one fears that for all their suavity and sweet reasonableness, they have made themselves all too clear. For example, they sponsored the work of a committee, headed by Dr. Lynd, which has recommended the establishment of a Consumers' Standards Board under the joint control of the Consumers' Advisory Board of the NRA and the Consumers' Counsel of the AAA, with a technical director, and a technical staff of commodity experts and an interdepartmental advisory committee drawn from Federal Bureaus. The budget asked for provided $65,000 for the first year for

administrative expenses, plus $250,000 for research and testing. Dr. Lynd's report quotes that devastating sentence from the impeccable Hoover's 1922 report as Secretary of Commerce:

> The lack of ... established grades and standards of quality adds very largely to the cost of distribution because of the necessity of buying and selling upon sample and otherwise, and because of the risk of fraud and misrepresentation and consequently larger margins of trading.

Still keeping on the safe, sane and conservative territory of economic and technical truisms, Dr. Lynd's report goes on to quote a 1930 report of the Bureau of Standards:

> Producers are experts in their own commodity fields, but seldom does the consumer get the full benefit of this knowledge. Under present conditions this group knowledge is suppressed and the tendency is all too frequent to give the buyer merely what he asks for.

Moreover, as F. J. Schlink, director of Consumers' Research, points out in his "Open Letter to President Roosevelt," "it is impossible for a private consumer to secure access to the immensely valuable findings of the Bureau of Standards, paid for in every major respect by general taxation of *consumers*." In this letter Mr. Schlink urges a Department of the Consumer, with Cabinet representation and equal status with other Federal Departments. But even the less sweeping recommendations of Dr. Lynd's committee were calculated to freeze the blood of the embattled ad-men, drug men, cosmeticians, vitamin men, etc. According to Dr. Lynd, the standards promulgated by the Consumers' Board would not stop at the point at which the commercial standards of the Bureau of Standards must now stop, *i.e.*, at the type of standards to which 65 per cent of the industry is ready to agree, but would go on beyond this to a thoroughly satisfactory set of consumer grades and labels. Past experience has shown that the official promulgation of definite consumer standards, even though they go beyond current practice, operates as a norm to which competitive business tends to approximate.

It requires but little imagination to see that what is here envisaged is a fundamental reorganization of distribution in the direction of function. This would entail a huge deflation of the vested interest of advertisers, and of the advertising business, in the exploitation of the American consumer; also huge economies in both production and distribution.

Even poor old Throttlebottom should be able to see this if there were any way of getting the word to him. There isn't, for the reason that our instruments of social communication, the daily and periodical press, the radio, are in effect the advertising business.

Anybody who wants to fight Mr. Throttlebottom's battles in America had better hire a hall or write a book. Advertising is the Sacred and Contented Cow of American journalism. Any irresponsible naturalist who attempts to lead that cow into the editorial office of any advertising-sustained American publication is greeted by hoots of derision. The writer knows, because he has tried. Here are a few typical hoots:

> This is an admirable article. Why don't you hire a hall somewhere in the Bronx and read it to a lot of people?

> This subject is the Sacred Cow herself and you know it damned well. Yet you seem to want old Bossie to commit hara-kiri just because she's not a virgin. And what would happen to the kiddies then, including yours truly? Sure, I know: man does not live by bread alone. There is also butter. I see I've got to teach you the facts of life all over again, starting with the bees and the flowers. Meanwhile, as one professor of animal husbandry to another, go sit on a cactus.

> Sorry that this article is not adapted to our present needs. Have you any child's verse?

26 CONCLUSION: Problems and Prospects

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"THERE is nothing the matter with advertising," Bruce Barton once protested, "that is not the matter with business in general."

Since advertising is, in the end, merely a function of business management, Mr. Barton's statement is true, broadly speaking. It might be added that there is nothing the matter with business that is not the matter with the professions; also, that there is nothing the matter with business *and* the professions except that they are obsolete as practiced under the limiting conditions of an obsolete capitalist economy. Finally, there is nothing the matter with the machine, with industry, except that its productive forces cannot be released, and its dehumanizing effects controlled, under a profit economy.

All these qualified acquittals must be rendered lest the edge of criticism seems to bear too sharply and too invidiously upon the adman. Invidiousness is, of course, the bread of life in a competitive capitalist society. It is inevitable, in a fragmented civilization, that the fragments should quarrel. It is curiously unsatisfying for a man to be honorable and respectable in the sight of God. No, his sense of virtue and status must be fortified by the conviction that he is *more* honorable, more respectable than other men.

I have been greatly amused, more than once, by the complacent naïvetés of architects, engineers, doctors, dentists, "pure" scientists, and "objective" social scientists, who were quite prepared to agree with me that advertising is a very dirty business. They regarded me, apparently, as a reformed crook who was prepared, like a mission convert, to testify concerning the satanic iniquities that I had put behind me. I have noticed that my replies tend to chill the sympathetic interest of such people. I say, first, that I have not wholly reformed. Since I intend to maintain myself economically in an exploitative economy while it lasts, I expect to enjoy the luxury of integrity in strict moderation. I say, second, that I am not interested in pouring invidious moral and ethical comfort into their pots by telling them how black my particular kettle undoubtedly is.

This invidiousness, these differential judgments, came to the surface with a rush when, in the aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash, the magazine *Ballyhoo* was launched. This development, revealing as it did the catastrophic collapse of "reader-confidence" in advertising, deserves some detailed consideration.

Whereas the stock in trade of the ordinary mass or class consumer magazine is reader-confidence in advertising, the stock in trade of *Ballyhoo* was reader-disgust with advertising, and with high-pressure salesmanship in general. Initially the magazine carried no paid advertisements. It directed its slapstick burlesque primarily at the absurdities of current advertising. By October, 1931, its circulation had passed the million and a half mark and a score of imitators were flooding the news stands.

The editor of *Ballyhoo*, Mr. Norman Anthony, was formerly one of the editors of *Life*, and had at various times vainly urged that humorous weekly advertising medium to bite the hand that fed it by satirizing advertising. The stock market collapse, and the consequent reaction against super-salesmanship of all kinds, gave Mr. Anthony his opportunity, which he seized in realistic commercial fashion.

In style, *Ballyhoo* is a kind of monthly Bronx Cheer, bred out of *New Yorker* by *Captain Billy's Whizbang*. It expresses the lowest common denominator of sterile "sophistication," and it is still successful, although its circulation, at last reports, had dropped to approximately half of its 1931 peak. And for at least two years it has taken advertising—advertising designed to sell goods, although adapted to the pattern of *Ballyhoo*'s burlesque editorial formula.

What had apparently happened was this: the frantic excesses of the ad-man in the production of customers by "creative psychiatry" had created a new market in which Mr. Anthony established a pioneering vested interest. This new market consisted of a widespread popular demand to have advertising burlesqued. Hence *Ballyhoo* became what might be called an enterprise in tertiary parasitism. In the present period of capitalist decline, business, as Veblen has shown, parasites on the creative forces of industry. Advertising, as the writer has tried to show in this book (c.f. the chapter on "Beauty and the Ad-Man") parasites to a considerable degree on business. *Ballyhoo*, in turn, parasites on the grotesque, bloated body of advertising.

Mr. Anthony's enterprise is, of course, strictly commercial. When, after its initial success, the owners of the magazine desired to two-time their readers in the conventional manner of publishing-as-usual, it is reported that Mr. Anthony at first objected. But he was overruled, and in due course an advertisement appeared in *Printers' Ink* offering advertising space in *Ballyhoo*.

Without serious injustice the sales talk of *Ballyhoo*'s advertising

manager may be paraphrased as follows:

"Advertisers: Buy space in *Ballyhoo*. Of course we burlesque you and shall continue to do so, whether you buy space in the magazine or not. But these burlesques don't hurt your business. They help it. True, the saps laugh, but they also buy. Think of it! A mob of a million and a half saps, laughing and buying! Here they are, packaged and ready to deliver. How much do you offer?"

After this, the hostility with which many advertisers and many advertising-supported publications had regarded *Ballyhoo* began to subside. What if Mr. Anthony's publication was, in a sense, a parasitic enterprise? He was smart. *Ballyhoo* had got away with it. And forthwith they proceeded to imitate him.

More and more, advertising began to step out of its part and kid itself. The single column, cartoon-illustrated campaign for Sir Walter Raleigh Smoking Tobacco is an early example of this trend. The early copy, particularly, was an obvious burlesque of the Listerine halitosis-shame copy. Other advertisers picked up the idea, especially radio advertisers. Ed Wynn's kidding of Fire Chief gasoline is an excellent example of the application of burlesque to the production of customers. More and more, it is the fashion to make radio sales talk allegedly more palatable by infecting the whole program with burlesque advertising asides.

Even the preview advertising in the motion picture theatres is beginning to betray a similar infection. For example, the preview promotion of *George White's Scandals* consisted of a genuinely amusing satire of the hackneyed extravagances of motion picture advertising. The Jewish comedian who played the rôle of assistant impresario was sternly forbidden by Mr. White to use the words "stupendous," "gigantic" and"colossal" in describing the wonders of the new show. Driven to desperation by this cruel stifling of commercial enthusiasm, the comedian threatened to shoot himself, and did so. His dying words are: "George White's Scandals is a stupendous, gigantic, and colossal show."

It is contended by the broadcasters, and doubtless also by the movie producers, that this burlesque sales promotion takes the curse out of sales talk, and this is probably true to a degree. But the prevalence of the trend gives rise to certain ominous suspicions. In every decadent period, satire and burlesque tend to become the dominant artistic forms. When the burlesque comedian mounts the pulpit in the Church of Advertising, it may be legitimately suspected that the edifice is doomed; that it will shortly be torn down or converted to secular uses.

Confirmation of this suspicion appears in the current rôle of the advertising trade press, indeed of the trade press in general. The

writer has had occasion to note that his contributions on the subject of advertising were not welcomed by consumer publications supported by advertising. In contrast, the trade press has given space to forthright radical attacks upon the advertising business both by the writer and by other critics of advertising such as Dr. Robert Lynd, F. J. Schlink and others.

This is less surprising than it might seem at first sight. Both *Advertising and Selling* and *Printers' Ink* have at first times built their circulations by crusading for "truth in advertising," the prohibition of bought-and-paid-for testimonials, and other items of pragmatic advertising morality. Moreover, their readers want to know what the dastardly enemies of advertising are doing and thinking, and who is in a better position to tell them than these very miscreants themselves?

This brings us to a consideration of the agitation for government grading of staple products, which is the chief threat by which the advertising business is now menaced. It met and defeated this threat by deleting the standards clause from the original Tugwell Bill. But the same threat popped up at every code hearing and in Dr. Lynd's report urging the establishment of a Consumers' Standards Board, which was followed by F. J. Schlink's more sweeping demand for a Department of the Consumer with representation in the Cabinet.

To defeat the raid of the New Deal reformers on the advertising business, the food, drug, cosmetics and advertising interests concentrated in Washington a lobby reliably estimated to be from three to four times as big as any other Washington lobby in history. Yet in spite of this huge effort the Copeland Bill, after successive revisions by the Senate Commerce committee, emerged with a number of its smaller teeth still intact, and conceivably it may be passed by the time this book appears.

An ironic aspect of the matter was the dual rôle played by Senator Copeland, as broadcaster for Fleischmann's Yeast and Nujol, and as sponsor of a bill which would, if passed, have definitely limited the advertising activities of his commercial employers. On March 31st, Arthur Kallet, Secretary of Consumers' Research, who, with F. J. Schlink, had ably and energetically defended the consumer interest in Washington in connection with the Tugwell and Copeland Bills, the censorship and suppression of the Consumers' Advisory Board, etc., signed a circular letter urging the defeat of the emasculated Copeland Bill and the mobilizing of consumer support of the Consumers' Research Bill (H.R. 8313). Enclosed was the following statement by the Emergency Conference of Consumer Organizations.

> "The Fleischmann Yeast Company, probably to an extent greater than almost any other national advertiser, would be affected adversely

by the original Tugwell Food and Drug Bill. This bill has been twice revised by Senator Royal S. Copeland, who is employed by the Fleischmann Yeast Company at a high fee in connection with its weekly advertising broadcast.

"The original Tugwell Bill was far too weak to afford adequate consumer protection, and the Copeland-revised Bill is so much weaker from the consumer viewpoint that it should be thrown out entirely and new legislation substituted. This cannot be accomplished unless it is driven home to the public that there is probably only one man in Congress who is and has been employed by manufacturers of dubious drug products, and that this person has, for some curious reason, been placed in charge of food and drug regulatory legislation. The twice revised bill shows that Dr. Copeland has taken excellent advantage of the opportunity thus afforded him to emasculate the original bill.

"The Tugwell Bill was introduced by Dr. Copeland at the last session of Congress. It was turned over to a sub-committee of the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee (where consumer-protective legislation certainly does not belong). The sub-committee consisted of Senator Copeland as chairman, Senator McNary (a fruit grower who would also be adversely affected by the bill) and Senator Hattie Caraway. This sub-committee held public hearings early in December. During the two-day hearings, Senators Copeland and McNary's antagonism to the best features of the bill was manifest. Moreover, while representatives of the manufacturers whose fraudulent and dangerous activities were to be controlled were given every opportunity to attack the proposed bill, not a single consumer was given a hearing until within two hours of the close of the session. Senator Copeland's commercial connections were pointed out by representatives of Consumers' Research, and new hearings under an impartial chairman were demanded, but this demand was ignored. It is noteworthy that at the end of the first day's session, Dr. Copeland went from the hearings to a broadcasting studio to speak on behalf of Fleischmann's Yeast.

"The Senator is now and has in the past been employed by other advertisers who would be adversely affected by the Tugwell Bill, among them the Sterling Products Company, and the makers of Nujol.

"The broadcasts for Fleischmann's Yeast were begun after the Senator introduced the Tugwell Bill. For a Senator to accept compensation from an organization affected by pending legislation is a violation of a criminal law, if there is any intent to affect the legislation. While intent cannot in this case be proved, there is clearly a violation of the spirit of the law."

Supplementing this statement, it may be noted that a business organization known as the Copeland Service, Inc., occupies the office at 250 W. 57th Street adjoining the office of Senator Copeland. The president of this organization is Mr. Ole Salthe, who in an interview with the writer on April 5th undertook to describe the nature of this business. A brief advertising folder issued by Copeland Service, Inc., offers the following services:

Laboratory Service

> Including chemical and bacteriological examinations. Clinical and biological tests, particularly in relation to the improvement of present products or the development of new products.

Radio Programs and Lectures

> Dr. Royal S. Copeland and a staff of experienced radio speakers are available to manufacturers of meritorious food and drug products. These speakers can talk authoritatively on health, food, diet and nutrition, and insure broadcasts that are interesting and productive of sales.

Labels and Printed Matter

> Wide experience in the revision and preparation of labels and printed matter concerning claims made for food and drug products so as to conform to municipal, State and Federal Laws.

Special Articles

> Relating to health, food, diet and nutrition written in a popular style for general distribution.

Market and Field Surveys

> Staff of experienced investigators in the food and drug industries are available.

Dr. Salthe was for twenty years in the employ of the New York City Department of Health, being director of the division of foods and drugs when he retired in 1924. In 1925 he became president of Copeland Service, Inc., with which Royal S. Copeland Jr. is also now connected. Dr. Salthe declared that aside from broadcasting services for Fleischmann's Yeast and Stance, makers of Nujol and Cream of Nujol, Copeland Service, Inc., had no clients. Did I know of any prospects? Dr. Salthe earnestly denied any connection whatever between the Senator's sponsorship of the food and drug bill and his rôle as a radio artist for Yeast and Nujol. Copeland Service, Inc., he said, was trying to put on a sustaining program over N.B.C. stations in which the Senator would give "constructive educational talks on food buying, including the mentioning of worthy products."

Consumers of foods, drugs and cosmetics are invited to decide what is wrong with this picture and to extract whatever wry amusement they can from it.

Obviously, neither the emasculated Copeland Bill, nor the original Tugwell Bill, nor even the Consumers' Research Bill represent a direct functional approach to the economic and social problems involved,

because no such approach is possible within the framework of the capitalist economy. All that is possible is to set up more and more rigid legal and administrative controls over the exploitative activities of business. The Consumers' Research Bill goes the limit in this direction. Under its provisions manufacturers of drugs and cosmetics, and of food products potentially dangerous to health, would be licensed and bonded; only approved products could be manufactured; all labels and advertising claims would have to be approved by a board of experts.

The bill is well calculated to freeze the blood of the ad-men, drug men, vitamin men and cosmeticians. Incidentally, it constitutes an *excellent reductio ad absurdum* of the whole idea of progress by reform, capitalist planning, etc. Obviously, it would be much simpler to socialize pharmacy, medicine and the production and distribution of foods, and, also obviously, no such socialization could be achieved without a social revolution.

The most serious challenge to advertisers, and to the advertising business is, of course, embodied in the agitation for government grading conducted by the Consumers' Advisory Board, the Consumers' Counsel of the AAA, and from the outside by Consumers' Research. Here, too, the maximum result to be attained within the framework of the capitalist economy would still leave untouched the major contradictions of capitalism. The agitation is none the less important and fruitful. The demand for government grading of consumers' goods cannot be successfully argued against, even from the premises of competitive capitalism. The promulgation of quality standards and their control would be necessary government functions in any economy. Significantly, the agitation for standards has brought to light serious cleavages between the vested interests affected.

Between the manufacturers and the consumer stand the big distributors, the mail order houses, the department stores, and the chain stores. They tend increasingly to sell house products rather than advertised brands. They represent the more nearly efficient and functional agencies of distribution under capitalism. They are powerful, and they object to being squeezed by manufacturers, either through high prices or lowered standards.

In the course of General Johnson's field day for critics last March, Irving C. Fox, secretary of the National Retail Dry Goods Association, in addition to protesting against price rises, revealed that within a week or two after the codes went into effect, with provisions prohibiting returns after five days, the quality of merchandise became much lower than prior to the adoption of these provisions. Chain store, mail order and department store buyers, and buyers for municipal, State and Federal departments, have been, in all probability, the

most effective allies of the Consumers' Advisory Board in the fight against high prices and lowered standards. Not that the consumer standards movement has got anywhere to date. In one of the reports of the Consumers' Advisory Board, Prof. Robert Brady testified that

> "Of the first 220 codes, which cover the most important American industries, only about 70 contain clauses having anything to do with standards, grading or labeling. Most of these clauses are absolutely worthless from the point of view of the consuming interests. In some cases they are so vague that they permit anything and condone everything. In some cases they are positively vicious in that they may be used covertly for price fixing purposes and even practically to compel the lowering of quality. In four cases, for example, the code authority is instructed to declare that the giving of guarantees beyond a certain point is an unfair trade practice, whereas most of the industries affected have long been accustomed to give and live up to guaranties far beyond these points."

For confirmation of this statement we have only to turn to the *Journal of Commerce* for April 13, 1934, from which the following quotation is taken:

> "Substitution of lower quality for standard products continues on a substantial scale and prevents consumers from realizing the full import of price increases that have taken place.
>
> "Retail prices in many lines have been arrived at after study and experience with mass buying habits. Merchants conclude, therefore, that they must preserve these established price levels even at the cost of sacrificing quality, to maintain their physical volume of sales.
>
> "This reasoning has been found so practical and effective in many instances that manufacturers of branded and trade-marked merchandise have been adopting the same policy in increasing numbers, it is reported. In some cases, manufacture of the previous standard quality is being given up altogether. In some other instances goods meeting the old specifications are being sold under a new branded name at a higher price."

2.

In the light of all these developments, the advertising profession is bound to contemplate its future with alarm and foreboding. Where business in general fears the still remote prospect of social revolution, the advertising business faces deflation through the inevitable and already well-begun processes of industrial cartelization, of capitalist "rationalization," which here, as in Italy, Germany, and in England are bound to enforce a lower standard of living upon the masses of the population.

At the last convention of the Association of National Advertisers, Dr. Walter B. Pitkin, Professor of the School of Journalism at Columbia University, played Cassandra to the assembled ad-men by adding up the costs of the depression to advertising. "To begin with," said Dr. Pitkin, "we are left with between 60 and 64 million people at or below the subsistence level." These are "extra-economic men" as far as the advertising business is concerned. The arts of "creative psychiatry" are wasted on them because their buying power is negligible. The average annual per capita income is down to $276. If from this is subtracted an average of $77 for fixed debt charges, we are left with an average of per capita expendible income of $199. Multiply this by four and we have $800 as the family average.

But Dr. Pitkin had worse horrors than this to reveal. He believes that even if we have recovery sufficient to bring about a return of the pre-depression income levels, this recovery will not be accompanied by similar spending. Not only are there between 60 and 64 million "extra-economic Americans—outside the money and profit system," but they don't want to get back into this system. Dr. Pitkin cited examples of middle class professional people, who, having become adapted to the shock of having to live on eighteen dollars a week, were content with what they had; at least they were unashamed, since so many of their friends were in a similar condition. Dr. Pitkin sums up the problem confronting the advertising profession as follows:

> "You have got not merely the problem of scheming to get people's income up, but you have got the problem of breaking down what you might call a degenerate type of social prestige, and that is a new problem in advertising and selling, it is a new problem in merchandising which not one manufacturer in the United States has yet attempted to face."

In passing it might be noted that as a result of the "scheming to get people's income up" as conducted by the industrialists who wrote the codes, some of whom were in Dr. Pitkin's audience, the volume of goods sold in February, 1934, was apparently from 6 to 8 per cent less than in February, 1933.

The assembled advertising men fired questions at Dr. Pitkin. They begged this earnest savant for some hope, for some way of "meeting the issue." This is what they got:

> "We have seen advertising in the last twenty-five years develop from local commodity advertising, next to trade advertising, then institutional advertising of a whole domain of businesses....Those are merely the first movements in a direction toward which we must go a long way further. You have got to go beyond institutional advertising to some new kind of philosophy of life advertising. I don't know any

> better expression for it than that, but what I mean is that you have got to sell an enormous number of people in the United States, people of power, people of intelligence as well as the down-and-outs; you have got to sell them the conception very clearly of the American standard of living as we used to think of it, and have a return to it with all that it implies."

If this seems fantastic under the circumstances, I can only point out that among advertising men in general, Dr. Pitkin is regarded as a top-leader intellectual. The ad-men were made pretty unhappy on this occasion, for they couldn't see how they were going to carry out Dr. Pitkin's recommendations. In effect, what he said was: "What you need is more advertising." And they knew that before.

Advertising men are indeed very unhappy these days, very nervous, with a kind of apocalyptic expectancy. Often when I have lunched with an agency friend, a half dozen worried copy writers and art directors have accompanied us. Invariably they want to know when the revolution is coming, and where will *they* get off if it does come.

The other day I encountered a very eminent advertising man indeed, emerging from an ex-speakeasy. He hailed me jovially and put the usual question: "How's the revolution coming?"

"Rather badly," I replied. "Although I think you and your crowd are certainly doing your bit."

"You're damned right," replied this advertising magnifico. "I've got a big white horse. I call him 'Comrade.' And when the revolution comes, I'll be right out in front: 'Comrade Blotz'."

With a sudden chill I reflected that, given the sort of mass moronism which the advertising business has been manufacturing for these many years, something of the sort might conceivably happen. What that eminent ad-man thought of as "revolution" was, of course, Fascism. I venture to predict that when a formidable Fascist movement develops in America, the ad-men will be right up in front; that the American versions of Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment Goebels [*sic*] (the man whom wry-lipped Germans have Christened "Wotan's Mickey Mouse") will be both numerous and powerful.

media studies/advertising/sociology

"I was an ad-man once," James Rorty writes in this classic dissection of the advertising industry. Steeped in Rorty's leftist politics, *Our Master's Voice* presents advertising as the linchpin of a capitalist economy that it also helps justify. The book set off tremors when it was published in 1934, perhaps because its author so decisively repudiated his former profession. But Rorty and his spirited takedown of publicity were all but forgotten a decade later. The book is a neglected masterpiece, republished in this mediastudies.press edition with a new introduction by Jefferson Pooley.

"Vigorous, athletic, witty, and in parts profound analysis of and attack upon the advertising game in its broadest aspects."

The New Yorker (1934)

"Some advertising men will denounce it; others, I suspect, will welcome it. And the general reader will find it exceedingly informative."

Bruce Catton (1934)

James Rorty (1890–1973) was an American poet, journalist, and sometime advertising copywriter. *Jefferson Pooley* is a professor of media and communication at Muhlenberg College.

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