

to defend the rights of workers. When those pleas went unheeded, working folk expressed their disappointment by seeking out more hospitable religious homes, at times in dramatic fashion. In the midst of the Pullman strike, for instance, workers at Pullman Presbyterian, the company-supported church, staged a walkout in response to the pastor's praise for Mr. Pullman and his defense of the company's decision. Their actions made it clear that no church could ever possess a monopoly on religious loyalty.

By the 1890s, Carter observes, Chicago's religious establishment was "gripped by a sense of full-fledged crisis" (136). Confronting by a rising tide of criticism, including an increasing number of voices from within their own ranks, church leaders worried that it was not only working-class loyalty that was slipping away, but their cultural authority as well. Social surveys and denominational studies confirmed declining religious membership among the working class and their growing alienation from organized religion. These realities forced a moment of reckoning, one that prompted reform-minded ministers and their churches to take up the cause of labor as their own. The principles of Social Christianity thus emerged in reaction and response to decades of working-class activism that took place not only on the picket lines, but in the pews as well.

In recovering these working-class voices, Carter makes a significant scholarly contribution to the field of American religious history while also deepening our understanding of the labor movement during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. More than just recasting the origins of Social Christianity, he reminds us of the profound moral debates that surrounded the rise of industrial capitalism and reveals how workers campaigned for justice as forcefully and ardently within the religious sphere as they did in the political and economic arenas. Theirs was a struggle to redeem the soul of the church and, by extension, the nation.

Carter is careful, though, not to overstate these "union made" victories. He notes that churches continued to withhold their support from labor when their protests turned violent and that Social Gospel policies still faced considerable opposition from church members and denominational leadership. Institutional expressions of the Social Gospel likewise had a tendency to temper its most radical elements. For the most part, however, the internal debate and wrangling that took place as churches sought to formalize these principles and practices fall beyond the scope of this study and its focus on working class actors. By giving them their rightful due, Carter's book offers an evocative account of Social Christianity's emergence and brings to light the story of those whose struggle against inequality has deep resonances today.

NOTE

¹Among them, see Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1907); *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1912); and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1917).

AUERBACH, JONATHAN. *Weapons of Democracy: Propaganda, Progressivism, and American Public Opinion*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. 220 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4214-1736-3.

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Propaganda has emerged as a topic of public and scholarly concern for each generation since the arrival of mass communication at the end of the nineteenth century. Despite being a mainstay of

criticisms of media performance, propaganda analysis has not produced a stable set of definitions or norms. A new thing—a crisis, or a technology, or a political movement—will provoke accusations of propaganda, then will become familiar and domesticated; at some point in the conversation, some will argue that it is impossible to really draw a line between propaganda and other forms of persuasion, and provocateurs will embrace propaganda as a neutral or positive term. And a center of gravity will develop around a possible solution, such as media literacy. The eternal relevance of this discourse suggests that the age of mass democracy is also the age of propaganda.

Jonathan Auerbach has written a thoughtful history of a defining cycle of discussing propaganda in the United States, centered on World War I, and covering a half century from the mid-1880s to 1934. At the center of the book are two familiar objects: George Creel's Committee on Public Information, and Walter Lippmann's and John Dewey's nuanced interrogation of the role of public opinion in democracies. At either end are less familiar, but often interesting, moments and characters.

Auerbach begins his story with three works of speculative fiction: Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*; Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*, and Colonel Edward House's *Philip Dru: Administrator*.¹ The first is a utopian vision of a frictionlessly-led public opinion, the second a dystopian fantasy of a recalcitrant public, and the third a parable of effective leadership that a modern reader finds proto-fascist. These novels stake out the borders of Progressive Era imaginings about the relationship among the press, the public, and governance, and neatly frame the specifically political commentaries of figures such as John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Woodrow Wilson, and William James.

Progressivism involved anxiety about how public opinion forms. One position pointed to Gustav LeBon's notion of crowds and saw a many-headed beast; another pointed to the actually existing press and saw a shadow game of special interests. In any case, it seemed that healthy public opinion would not emerge organically; it had to be actively shaped by enlightened men and women, such as Julia Lathrop at the Children's Bureau and Gifford Pinchot at the U. S. Forest Service.

The CPI combined the benevolent leadership of Lathrop and Pinchot with the unruly passion of Creel's earlier muckraking work. Creel was a remarkably combative journalist before he was any kind of administrator, making his mark in Colorado's labor wars by trying to enlist federal authority on the side of workers and against industrialists like Rockefeller and their hired publicity men (notably Public Relations pioneer Ivy Lee, who figures prominently in the book's denouement). Creel urged the government to use the same publicity techniques, which he called the "weapons of democracy" (66).

Auerbach's choice of this phrase as his title underscores the agonism of the Progressive notion of public life, and places it on a continuum that ends among the Nazis. He lays the groundwork for this connection by using Carl Schmitt to explain Creel's political philosophy. He completes the circuit when he quotes Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler also using the phrase "weapons of democracy" in what he calls "grotesque twists" on Creel's coinage (164). But the line from Creel to Goebbels is hardly direct. Auerbach's treatment of Creel's tenure as head of the CPI is rather sympathetic. He credits Creel with creating a pragmatic and effective structure, simultaneously centralized and dispersed; he notes the penetration and saturation that Creel achieved through press releases and other forms of outreach, especially the Four Minute Men initiative, but at the same time finds nothing to indict in the content of the news flow, which he says "reveals little that was sinister or even very interesting" (82). Creel is not the father of Goebbels.

But many thought so. Auerbach doesn't go into much of the political backlash against the war generally and the CPI specifically, but he is characteristically acute in analyzing the objections of intellectuals such as Randolph Bourne and John Dewey, who began to criticize what he called the "conscription of thought" (89). After Versailles, they would find an ally in Walter Lippmann.

People who study the media have long considered the publication of Lippmann's *Public Opinion* as a founding moment for their field, and have accepted James Carey's argument that

John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* answered Lippmann, setting up parameters for a debate about the normative role of the media in democracies.² Recently, Sue Curry Jansen and Michael Schudson have challenged the narrative of a "Lippmann-Dewey debate," pointing out the large area of agreement between their positions. Auerbach's treatment of Lippmann and Dewey politely nods to that argument and then, it seems to me, proceeds to refute it by outlining the "key points of divergence" (95) between their approaches. He is on target in identifying the basic premises on which Dewey disagrees with Lippmann's understanding of how people think together, and I think he is also on target in distinguishing the differences in their solutions to the problem of the public. Lippmann proposed organized intelligence—more the Federal Reserve Board than the CPI. Dewey argued more abstractly for an active public emerging from new forms of living together in the industrial age. We live in Lippmann's world, though each new media technology promises us Dewey's.

The book's final act features the inventors of the modern art of public relations, especially Ivy Lee, Edward Bernays, and Carl Byoir. All three wound up having some truck with the Nazis, ironically. Ivy Lee was the most implicated, involved enough to be forced to testify to Congress about it. His main mission was to improve I. G. Farben's image in the United States; his advice to them and to Goebbels, apparently, was to tone down antisemitism. Insert your own wisecrack about the banality of evil.

So what is the point of connecting Progressivism to fascism under the sign of propaganda? I find Auerbach suggestive but elusive on this point. Clearly Lippmann is not a fascist in his reading, even though others might disagree. But the problem of the public will always invite a fascist response. Hence his gesture, in closing, to the Iraq War, and one might add the natural reemergence of anxiety about propaganda in an age of technological innovation, media consolidation, digital surveillance, and terrorism.

One answer to the problem is politics. Auerbach invokes Teddy Roosevelt's famous speech about the man with the muckrake, but doesn't follow Thomas Leonard in understanding it as a defense of politics—the kind of ground-game politics in which policies create a middle ground. Before journalists understood their role as unveiling corruption to enlighten public opinion, the people who operated partisan newspapers understood the role of the press as working politics by representing public opinion. Progressives had to forget this in order to reimagine the problem of public opinion. A second answer is media reform, particularly in the form of new structures for journalism. The age of propaganda, from Creel through Goebbels to Berlusconi and beyond, lived off of systemic concentrations of media power; professional journalism was supposed to secure some of that power for the people. As the media reorganize around digital technologies, those concentrations are in play. Neither of these answers reassures me that the next generation won't have its own panic over propaganda, however.

This is a very good book. You should read it.

NOTES

¹Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (Chicago: Packard, 1887); Mark Twain, *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1889); and Colonel Edward House, *Philip Dru: Administrator* (New York: N. W. Huesch, 1912).

²Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1922); John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1927).