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Winning the Peace: American Planning for a Profitable Post-War World

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Shortly after the end of World War II, on 11 December 1945, James Webb Young, Chairman of the Advertising Council and Director of the J. Walter Thompson Company, spoke to the annual meeting of the American Association of Advertising Agencies at the Continental Hotel in Chicago. The title of his speech was, "What Advertising Learned From the War," and in it Young talked about an immediate post-war period that was, by most accounts, an exuberant time for an America flushed by a victory that finally marked it as a true global power. The American government proclaimed it, the American people believed it, and American business stood ready to sell it through an advertising industry that itself had come of age during, and because of, the war.

In his speech, Young reflected on the actual and perceptual changes that had happened to the advertising industry through the previous four years. During the war, Young and the J. Walter Thompson Company had been central figures as producers of propaganda for the Office of War Information under the direction of Elmer Davis. However, before the war, both the public and the government held advertising and its professionals in the lowest of esteem and tagged it as an industry of pernicious influence. There was even something of an anti-advertising "consumer movement" of considerable size beginning to form, "giving many earnest souls the jitters."[1] By the war's end these feelings would change and advertising would be seen in a new light, one which shown

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[1] James W. Webb to American Association of Advertising Agencies, 11 Dec. 1945, J. Walter Thompson Archives, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

brightly on an industry which came to be heralded by a public which recognized advertising's significant war-time propaganda and fund-raising service. As Young reminded his audience:

> In the beginning [of the war] we advertising men had very little standing anywhere in Washington … . But little by little, we found that all the things we learned to do in promoting our wares … produced the same kind of results in the public service that they had produced in our private service … we found that what we knew about emotionalizing facts, and about other devices for getting action, would bring results that agencies of government had despaired of achieving … . In short, as a result of such wartime experience with 100 different government programs, we who buy, sell and produce advertising learned that we are the possessors of facilities and techniques which can be used to solve problems in the public domain as well as in the private domain.[2]

Indeed, while advertising agencies such as J. Walter Thompson, Leo Burnett, and N. W. Ayer were pressed into war-time service by the government for the purposes of military recruitment, victory bond sales, and home front defense mobilization, their corporate clients such as DuPont, Remington Arms, Boeing, and Gulf Oil dedicated the bulk of their manufacturing output to the combat effort for its duration. However, as victory seemed all but certain in the spring of 1945, advertising agencies and their clients began to consider the transition to a peace-time economy. In an address to a gathering of Shell Oil executives on 18 April 1945, Vergil D. Reed, the preeminent Associate Director of Research at the J. Walter Thompson Company, stated that both industry and the government must work together to create the greatest feeling of post-war economic security possible, to create "the climate for prosperity."[3] As historian Bruce Lenthall suggests, these skills of governmental and commercial marketing rhetoric would be part and parcel of a larger post-war media message of prosperity that would create a "single, clean vision of the nation" by "cropping out anything that could blur the picture."[4]

In this article, I will examine some of the contemporaneous thoughts and actions of American government, advertising, and magazine media regarding post-war economic planning. The intention is to locate the intersections of these superstructural institutions insofar as they indicate a certain intentionality within the post-war worlds of both government and business vis-à-vis their citizen-consumers – new ways of doing business and reaching audiences engendered by new economies resultant

[2] Ibid. [3] Vergil D. Reed to Shell Oil Company, 18 Apr. 1945, ibid.

[4] Bruce Lenthall, "Outside the Panel – Race in America's Popular Imagination: Comic Strips Before and After World War II," *Journal of American Studies*, **32**: 1 (1998), 39.

of socioeconomic (as well as military) victories both home and abroad. Unlike most of Europe and Asia, advance planning with an assumption of victory provided a unique post-war advantage to the structurally interlocked American commerce and government, ultimately solidifying a global cultural and economic dominance by the United States that would last for nearly the rest of the twentieth century.

Even before the United States had been drawn into the conflagration that would come to be known as World War II, American business was considering the economic and social conditions which would be enveloped by a world at war. In the minutes of an 18 September 1941 meeting between the advertising managers of the DuPont Corporation and Maurice Collette, their account manager at the premier Madison Avenue agency of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn (BBD&O), Collette remarked:

> In 1942 we are faced with the most awesome set of new conditions that has ever faced anybody, anytime. When we approach next year's planning, we must use every ounce of graymatter at our disposal. Boys, if ever we planned, let's plan next year! We can do great harm to DuPont if we don't think clearly and take long-haul views instead of shortsighted makeshifts to dodge nasty problems .... The only sure thing about the present war is that it will be over some day. Paul [Sampson] said June 16, 1942. I hope he is right.[5]

Of course, "Paul Sampson's" prediction missed the mark. Less than three months later the United States herself would be called to arms. Despite any social fears which may have been associated with going into battle, America's entrance into World War II, and the concomitant financial mobilization it produced, proved to be a much-needed economic shot in the arm for a nation just coming out of the Great Depression. The federal government led the way by increasing spending for public works projects to new heights.[6] For example, total public works spending before 1938, including New Deal programs, never did reach pre-crash levels. After 7 December 1941 such spending proceeded unabated. Public works expenditures grew over 33 percent in the span of one year, rising from $16.9 billion in 1941 to $51.9 billion in 1942, and then to $81.1 billion by the end of 1943.[7] This translated into 50 percent decreases in

[5] Maurice Collette to DuPont Corporation, 18 Sept. 1941, DuPont Advertising Department Papers, The Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA.

[6] For more on the use of public expenditures by the state for purposes of ideological social control, see P. Bandyopadhyay, "Theoretical Approaches to the State and Social Reproduction," in J. Dickinson & B. Russell eds., *Family, Economy, & State: The Social Reproduction Process Under Capitalism* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 192–200.

[7] Robert Heilbroner, "Anti-Depression Economics," *The Atlantic*, **271**: **4** (1993), 102.

unemployment over 1938 levels and a gross national product which rose from a moderate $91 billion in 1939 to nearly $213 billion by the end of 1945. Economist Robert Heilbroner represents a majority view in observing that participation in the war proved to be economically fortuitous for the nation, and "was an extraordinary vindication of Keynesian economics. The Depression had been banished not only in theory but in fact."[8]

Moreover, the Roosevelt administration did not wait long to begin considerations of what a post-war scenario might entail for the United States. As H. J. Lowe points out, prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor most governmental agencies had made only cursory plans based upon any cessation of hostilities in the European theater, and these were principally economic ones.[9] The August 1941 *Atlantic Charter* between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill is certainly one such example of the considered reordering of the global systems of trade through economic expansionist philosophies. However, as the United States became an active participant in the war, Washington was equally determined to form an agenda of political, economic, and security measures to commence on a global scale immediately upon cessation of hostilities. Within 15 days of Pearl Harbor, on 22 December 1941, Secretary of State Cordell Hull expressed these thoughts in a letter to President Roosevelt in which he announced the formation of a panel to anticipate "the vast and complicated problems of international relations which will confront us and the world after the final defeat of the forces of aggression."[10]

The result was the formation of the Advisory Committee on Post-war Foreign Policy, which met for the first time on 12 February 1942. Under the guidance of its members (which included, among the many federal officials, Anne O'Hare McCormick, an editor with the *New York Times*), a list of directives was put forward which stated in part that "peace and security are achieved by preparation [and] the groundwork must be done now," and "security is not alone a military problem, but also an economic, social, and political problem. Peace is not assured by the status quo."[11]

Even in the American hinterlands, people from all walks of life were considering what sort of efforts would be necessary to solidify a peaceful (and profitable) global post-war posture. In a 10 August 1943 meeting of

[8] Ibid.
[9] H. J. Lowe, "The Planning and Negotiations of U.S. Postwar Security," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia (1972), 3.
[10] Ibid., 1.
[11] Ibid., 54.

the members of the Minnesota United Nations Committee, discussions turned to the formation of a "Win-the-Peace Committee" which had the backing of many prominent individuals, including Governor Harold Stassen. To win the peace in a post-war world, committee member T. L. Greer argued for the necessity of using "the methods of mass communication that commercial advertisers use. What are these mediums? Magazines. Radio. Newspapers."[12]

As the war progressed, so too did corporate plans for a successful post-war recovery. In the absence of any belligerencies taking place directly on American soil, business men from New York to Los Angeles were envisioning a brave new world for the mass production and sales of both innovative and traditional products.[13] Indeed, while virtually the rest of the industrialized world was scrambling to keep most of its citizenry alive amidst the chaos of conflict, daily corporate concerns in the relatively quiescent United States ranged from war-time protocols for advertising motifs to potential post-war distribution and demographics. In a memo dated 25 August 1943, DuPont Corporation advertising executive J. J. Landy predicted that:

> Post-war production isn't going to be much of a problem, but post-war distribution, particularly the cost, will be probably one of the most important factors in sales. There is no doubt that pre-war distribution methods will have to be revamped to meet the post-war situation. What was done about this in the days [after] the First World War might give us some ideas which can be applied.[14]

By mid-1944, both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank emerged from Bretton Woods and would become the foundations for the economic post-war reconstruction and development of war-ravaged Europe and Japan, effectively "producing" future trading partners for United States commerce. American business understood the

[12] T. L. Greer to Minnesota United Nations Committee, 10 Aug. 1943, J. Walter Thompson Archives, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

[13] I will be using the term "business men" to refer to an American corporate culture of the 1940s that was, realistically and predominantly, male. This is not to say that women did not make significant contributions in the American corporate domain. However, in nearly all the primary documents researched for this project, every major actor was, indeed, male. In any case, this issue is outside the scope of the present text and is discussed at length in other works. For example, Thomas Frank's, *The Conquest of Cool* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), offers insights into the masculine corporate culture, especially that of the advertising industry of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

[14] J. J. Landy, DuPont Corporation Advertising Department Internal Memo, 25 Aug. 1943, DuPont Advertising Department Papers, The Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA.

importance of these issues in terms of profitability, which in turn meant potential standards of living exceeding pre-war levels. However, the consensus of most business men was that the messages of consumption necessary for the realization of American capitalist success, both home and abroad, would not be spread from Bretton Woods by the chief economists of the United States and British Treasuries – Harry Dexter White and John Maynard Keynes – but through the artillery of advertising. In an address made closer to the end of the war, DuPont Vice-President J. W. McCoy exhorted his corporate troops with the bellicosity of a four-star general:

> Our advance to new goals will not come through the planning of a few men in Washington. It will come through the efforts of business men, who constitute the trained professional army of peace that fights for a higher standard of living and against want. When the economic D-Day comes, with the unconditional surrender of Japan, that peacetime army must have its plans made and its forces ready. I must point out that military victory is not enough. It must be won, but it is only a major episode in a continuing struggle. The battle of peace will be just as important, and if we do not win it, we shall see our military triumph turn to ashes in economic and social catastrophe. This planning is particularly the province of the advertising man, because he is … the spearhead in this peacetime war … we can win the peace as surely we are winning the war.[15]

Personal plans for a post-war world were also a constant consideration for many of the millions of Americans serving their country during the war. Career placement and occupational advancement, education, the re-establishment of personal relationships, and G. I. benefits were just a few of the many elements which could potentially shape the destiny of the returning veteran. As the end of war approached, these uncertainties were echoed in the messages sent home by many service men and women. For example, the captain of a United States Navy materiels ship located in the Pacific in February of 1945 recorded that:

> Big noise right now is up at Iwo, which many of us knew it would be. Tough sledding at the moment, but it will be well worth it all when those air bases start boomeranging on the Jap goal-line … . Out here on nights like these one certainly thinks a lot. My thoughts often turn to the future, and I am wondering what it might hold for me?[16]

When Japan surrendered there were more than 12,000,000 American

[15] J. W. McCoy, "The Job Ahead Presents a Direct Challenge to Sales and Advertising: A Glimpse Into the Future of Your Business," 2 Aug. 1945, ibid.

[16] T. Eichtman to Earl Yeomans, 24 Feb. 1945, The Earl Yeomans Papers, The Conwella–Templana Collection, Temple University Archives, Paley Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

men and women serving in the military. Of this number, nearly 7,000,000 were standing-by to be demobilized from overseas duty.[17] By most accounts these draftees and volunteers were quite anxious to escape the rotting remains of former battlefronts and to return to the coveted comfort of their familial environs. Typical is this letter home from a Marine lieutenant stationed in the central Pacific. It is dated "Monday morning, 3 September, 1945."

> Today is a holiday in observance of the victorious V. J. day of yesterday, which we welcomed with open enthusiasm … . I don't believe it will be too long before I shall be mustered out of the service and into civilian clothes once again! That will be the day of victory as far as I'm concerned.[18]

Half-way around the globe, in La Haute, France, another demobilized foot soldier wrote home with his own speculations about what it would take to be counted among the successful in the post-war United States:

> At present we are ready to embark for England and then to good old America, we expect to arrive around September 10. I don't know what will become of us, [but] I am so happy both wars are over. Now we can plan for our future. I was thinking it over and the man with the best education and background is going to be the man of tomorrow.[19]

These sorts of personal attitudes and corporate preparations contributed to America's emergence from World War II with a remarkably unscathed infrastructure, and an overwhelmingly successful and stable economy. Indeed, America stood practically alone in these terms when measured against the rest of the world, including even the other "victors" of the war such as Russia (with nearly 24 million dead), France (a shattered political base), and Great Britain (its economy in ruins). Historian Dana Polan concurs, adding that the war was planned for not just victory, "but a very particular monopoly capitalist kind of victory."[20] Thus, the planning by the Roosevelt administration and by American business, brought about not only United States' military supremacy, but a financial dominance that would be realized in the reconsolidation of consumer markets for American products at home and abroad.

[17] For example, see John Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army*, Department of the Army Publication, 20–210 (July 1952), Washington, DC, USA.

[18] G. R. Sutch to Earl Yeomans, 3 Sept. 1945, The Earl Yeomans Papers, The Conwella–Templana Collection, Temple University Archives, Paley Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

[19] Rogers to Earl Yeomans, Aug. 1945, ibid.

[20] Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 41.

To be sure, Americans were quite ready to take full advantage of their exceptional position in an otherwise desolate world. In the years between the attack on Pearl Harbor and the destruction of Nagasaki, Americans progressed from a shortage of purchasing power to an excess of it.[21] This was reflected in the incredible amount of liquid savings amassed by Americans during the war years. Between 1941 and 1945, savings accounts in United States banks grew over 160 percent from $54 billion to more than $140 billion.[22] Psychologically, such an economic cushion would provide the support and security necessary for the spending of post-war earnings if not the actual savings themselves.[23] As early as December of 1944, Vergil D. Reed suggested, in a speech to the Society for the Advancement of Management, that plans should start to be considered for a post-war government de-control involving a "selective process of removing price and rationing controls … as soon as possible," and that the Office of War Mobilization be expanded and renamed the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion.[24]

These eventualities came to fruition as the demand for all sorts of consumer goods increased tremendously after the war. For example, while the total United States personal consumption expenditures for 1940 were $72 billion, by 1947 annual consumer spending had more than doubled to $166 billion.[25] This translated into a general trend of annual expenditures for consumer durable goods showing a phenomenal average increase of more than 8 percent per annum from 1946 though the mid-1950s.[26] As J. W. McCoy of the DuPont Corporation pointed out in his address on 2 August 1945, four days before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima:

> We can approach the post-war era, then, with the comforting knowledge that production will stand ready to fill all orders. The market is there too. We have of course, a great backlog of unfilled wants in the country. Automobiles, washing

[21] Vergil D. Reed, 18 Apr. 1945. [22] Ibid.

[23] Many economists agree that large accumulations of liquid savings are always valuable to any consumer market, whether the funds end up being spent or not. They point out that the situation usually provides a substantial increase in the supply of consumer goods, while at the same time offering such goods at markedly lower prices to stimulate spending. For more see, T. J. O'Shaughnessy, "Modeling Economic Recovery," in P. Dunne, ed., *Quantitative Marxism* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1991), 186–205.

[24] Vergil D. Reed to the Society for the Advancement of Management, 2 Dec. 1944, J. Walter Thompson Archives, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

[25] Historical Statistics, Series G 191, 192, & 202 (1960).

[26] William Butler, "Consumer Durables: Stocks and Expenditures," in *Consumer Behavior in 1961: A Research Report* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Foundation for Research on Human Behavior, 1961), 17.

machines, radios, all kinds of things … will be in great demand. What makes it important is that people all over the country will, through their savings, have the money with which to satisfy these desires … . Germany has crashed into ruins. Our total strength is being deployed against the Japs and when Japan collapses, as collapse she must, we shall then see *the war for a prosperous America get underway in earnest*.[27] [emphasis added]

One major result of this critical post-war capital movement by a restless public was the rebounding of a troubled stock market. As occurred with the rationing of general consumer provisions and the complete absence of many commodities during World War II, the withholding of stock purchases created a backlog of desire for stock acquisition which was consummated after the war's end. According to economist William Butler, from 1945 to 1947 net stock ownership in the makers of American durable goods more than doubled in each household.[28] This was realized, in terms of dollars invested, by increased stock purchases of more than 6 percent per year.[29]

Contributing to this spending spree was the fact that between 1943 and 1947 there occurred the greatest number of marriages (the high rate of divorce not withstanding) and the highest levels of employment ever realized in American history. For example, records indicate that marriages in the 1940s averaged nearly 2 million annually, a figure that was almost double the average of the 1930s.[30] Historian James Gilbert observes that between 1944 and 1948 the United States recorded the highest marriage rate of any country in the world, with the exception of Egypt.[31] Furthermore, the two years between 1946 and 1948 saw the number of new households (i.e., marriages with children) grow to over 3.5 million, with a "decided increase in the minimum level of income" for most households.[32]

These social and economic conditions provided for an unprecedented United States domestic expansion of commerce, as well as unique boundaries by which economists and historians could mark it. Advertising and marketing executives also realized they were in the midst of an American society, an American economic culture, the likes of which had never been seen before in the brief history of the country. For example, in 1947 marketing analyst Kenneth Phelps pointed out in *Printers Ink*:

[27] J. W. McCoy, 1945. [28] William Butler, 1961, 14. [29] Ibid., 14–15.
[30] United States Census Bureau, PM-1, no. 3 (1947).
[31] James Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America, 1945–1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 58.
[32] Kenneth Phelps, "The Demand for New Household Goods," *Printer's Ink* 14 Mar. 1947, 50.

"What gives these particular families in this particular decade their marketing significance is the fact that they will have come into existence during this period of war, population migration and product scarcities."[33]

By the same token, American commerce was now in the desirous position of being able to enhance a growing consumerist consciousness in this very large, yet newly created segment of their markets. They would perform this seduction through the molding of product desire and subsequent buying habits. Indeed, marketing research had matured beyond the mere analysis of sales numbers. Public relations executive Alan Bennett suggested in 1945 that proper investigation into the "framework of thinking" taking place within the psyche of the consuming public would allow businesses to be able to "see into the minds" of consumers of every 'sex, age, income bracket, occupational group, educational level, and social standing."[34] Most important, however, is that this framework of consumer thinking would be the "pulse of the present and a peek into the future, regardless of the past."[35]

During a private meeting of DuPont Corporation advertising executives on 7 June 1946, one of those executives, J. D. Danforth, spoke openly about the current and future market conditions, suggesting that:

> There has been a tremendous development of market study and analysis in recent years. Every plan should include a program for continuous market research. *Nothing* can be taken for granted today. There have been too many new marriages, too many stores, too many shifts in population.[36] [emphasis in original]

In other words, American mercantilism had set its mark on, and had developed the means to capture and consolidate the vast American consumer market; there would be no looking back, and no stone left unturned.

Naturally, such thinking on the part of commodity producers resulted in increased spending in general advertising activities for their products. It is in this area where we find some of the most telling indicators that there was, most assuredly, a determined effort on the part of the American commerce to take charge of the public's way of thinking about commodities. According to the *Printer's Ink* Advertising Indexes, total advertising volume in 1945 was $2.4 billion. This figure reflected a gain

[33] Ibid.,

[34] Alan Bennett, "The Framework of Consumer Thinking Need No Longer Be a Mystery," *Printer's Ink*, 5 Oct. 1945, 105.

[35] Ibid.

[36] J. D. Danforth to DuPont Corporation, 7 June 1946, DuPont Advertising Department Papers, The Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA.

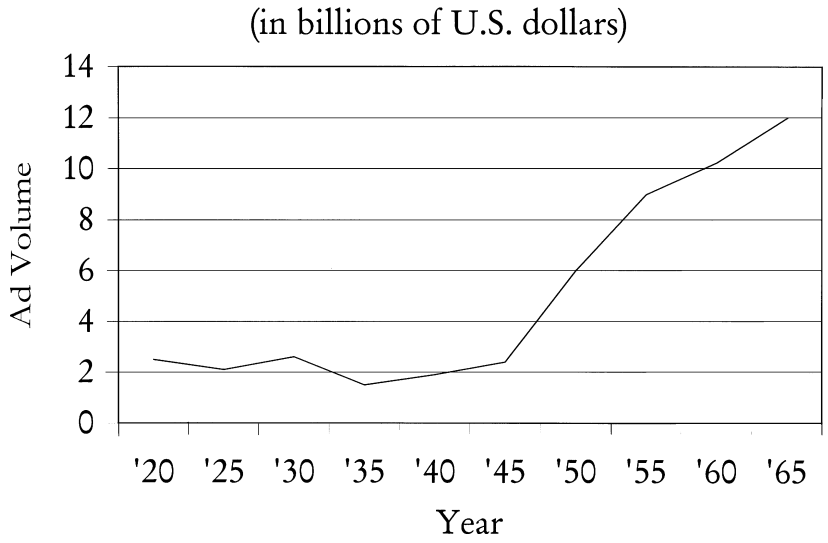

Figure 1 Total US Advertising Volume, 1920–1965 (*source*: McCann–Erikson, Inc., 1966).

of over 5 percent for 1944 and was the largest annual volume of advertising since the peak year of 1929, when the total reached $2.6 billion.[37]

However, 1945 would pale in comparison with the following year when the advertising volume would prove to be the greatest ever in the history of the United States to that point. Indeed, the total advertising volume for all media in 1946 was $3.2 billion, reflecting a gain of almost $500 million, or an unprecedented 17 percent over the level marked for 1945.[38] Though he was the Advertising Manager for Canadian Industries Limited, B. W. Keightley recounted in his personal notes what was also the general post-war advertising attitude of his corporate neighbors to the south in the United States.

> When the [post-war] plans were laid we faced such factors as sudden termination of very large war contracts, demobilization and re-absorption into civilian life of a very large number of men and women out of the armed forces, the necessity for attempting to re-establish as quickly as possible markets, both domestic and foreign, and many unknown quantities such as relaxation of war-time controls .... Yet, in spite of all these uncertainties, I have felt that the Company's general

[37] L. H. Weld, "1945 Advertising Volume $2,386,000,000," *Printer's Ink*, 15 Mar. 1946, 21.

[38] Hans Zeisel, "1946 Advertising Volume Greatest in U. S. History," *Printer's Ink*, 28 Mar. 1947, 34–36.

approach to post-war was one of confidence in the eventual outcome and I base that upon such factors as new plant construction and enlargement, and upon *the approval by Management of such large increases in the advertising budget*.[39] [emphasis added]

Figure 1 illustrates this point, indicating that the period comprising the years 1945 through 1946 can clearly be seen as the point of departure for this headlong and massive invasion of the public mind. It was an assault which did not abate for nearly 15 years, and one which helped commercial institutions gain control of the consumption habits of a commodified post-war American public.

In terms of the approaches and protocols advertisers adhered to in their messages during the 1940s, most divided the period into its logical historical parts and played to the consciousness of their audiences accordingly. For example, in an August 1943 inter-office memo between the Advertising Section Manager of the Remington Arms Company and their advertising agency, BBD&O, there is concern expressed about being behind other advertisers in the attempt to realize when one logical part in contemporaneous history ends and the other begins.

Our advertising in the future may be divided into three parts, namely war-time, transition and post-war. We are reasonably certain of our copy technique for war-time and post-war advertising, however, the transition period in our advertising presents a problem of "what to say" and "how to say it." From our point of view, copy for the transition period should be as commercial as possible yet in good taste, following the trend of public consciousness. It was mentioned … that two *Saturday Evening Post* advertisers were already using "transition copy." How far are they ahead of the parade?[40]

The reference here to the *Saturday Evening Post* is interesting because, as an important means of visual elocution for advertising messages within the home, magazines began to find themselves increasingly the medium of choice for commodity producers and their advertising agencies. In 1945, magazines, for the first time in recorded measures of overall advertising volume, passed direct-mailing to assume the third-place spot behind second-place radio and first-place newspapers.[41] That year the total magazine advertising volume of $344 million surpassed the 1944 volume by over 16 percent. Moreover, in 1946 magazine advertising volume increased by a larger percentage than any other media in the United States. In all, magazine advertising volume for 1946 was in excess of $430 million

[39] B. W. Keightley, Personal Notes, Jan. 1946, DuPont Advertising Department Papers, The Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA.
[40] Gail Evans to Maurice Collette, 26 Aug. 1943, ibid.
[41] Weld, 22.

and increased a tremendous 25 percent over the 1945 figures.[42] Some of these accumulated gains undoubtedly came from those advertisers moving away from radio, which in 1946 made only a negligible gain of 4.7 percent over the 1945 volume.

Another element favoring the rise of magazine circulation in the 1940s was the changing visage of magazines and their methods of reportage. By March of 1942, Ben Hibbs and Robert Fuoss had taken over as the editor and managing editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*. By their third weekly issue they had modernized *The Post*, transforming it from its previously stodgy appearance to one which was still congenial in editorial tone and content, yet lively in its physical design characteristics. Hibbs and Fuoss, all the while maintaining the patriotic nature of *The Post*, added more photographs (many in color) and cartoons, and shortened the length of articles.[43] In what was an apparent attempt to keep up and identify with the mercurial *Life* magazine, Hibbs and Fuoss changed the cover masthead (designed by Guernsey Moore in 1904) by emphasizing the single word "POST" in bold letters nearly two inches high while diminishing the importance of the words "The Saturday Evening," which remained in the three-quarter-inch Post Old Style type. Ultimately, according to Hibbs' own editorial policy statement made to the Curtis company upon his ascension to editorship, *The Post* was to be rejuvenated for many reasons including an attempt to purposefully attract the youth of the 1940s (and, of course, those who would advertise to them). In his editorial preamble of March 1942, Hibbs promised to "publish more material to interest younger readers – avoiding trivialities – seeking a common ground in the issues that affect and influence youth."[44]

For its part *Life* was, one could say, made for the 1940s. World War II was the venue by which *Life* flexed its muscle as the preeminent photography magazine of the day. Indeed, while *The Post* (founded in 1728 by Benjamin Franklin and purchased by Curtis Publishing in 1898) was a magazine built around editors and writers, the fledgling *Life* (which had been founded by Henry Luce only in late 1936) was centered around

[42] Zeisel, 34.

[43] Regarding the changing content and style, according to A. Halsey (*A Short History of the Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1949, 42), in 1941 the *Post* published a total of 477 feature items – 239 articles, 219 short stories, 18 serials, and a 4-part novel. After Hibbs took control, the insistence upon a more fluid style took over. By 1946, the total number of major items appearing in the *Post* rose to 675 – 412 articles, 212 short stories, 17 serials, a complete novel, 18 novelettes, and 6 book excerpts.

[44] Ben Hibbs as quoted in J. P. Wood, *The Curtis Magazines* (New York: Ronald Press, 1971), 170.

photojournalists.[45] Of course, *Life* certainly did not invent photojournalism. What did set *Life* apart, however, was its uniqueness as a glossy large-format yet inexpensive magazine – it remained 10 cents a copy throughout the 1940s. This emphasis upon the quality illustrative element, as well as the economic astuteness of its founder, was what rocketed *Life* upwards in terms of circulation through the 1940s.[46]

Life was also a magazine with a wide-ranging demographic appeal; Americans representing nearly every social and economic station were consistently exposed to its contents. As pollster Alfred Politz discovered in his landmark circulation study, by 1949 more than half of all Americans had read and could recall at least one of the 13 *Life* issues utilized in his research.[47] Most important, however, was that a majority of its readers were those people and families who seemed to emerge from the war effort with the greatest desire and fiscal capability for commodity consumption. That is to say, according to Politz, this vital demographic included men who returned from battle as educated, middle- or upper-class doctors, lawyers, and business executives. In addressing the Politz study, media historian James Baughman indicates:

> Of the four leading magazines – *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, *Life*, and *Liberty* – *Life* was the most popular among younger and well-to-do-consumers. *Life* led in every age category except that including those forty-five years and older. In the three wealthiest groups, *Life* led the field.[48]

In general, other than the newsreels which played at motion picture theaters, there was no similar popular visual access to the world of the 1940s than that offered by the weekly magazines such as *The Post* and *Life*.[49] That these and other such magazines were shifting their editorial

[45] Indeed, they were some of the best photojournalists money could buy. The four original staff photographers for *Life* were Margaret Bourke-White, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Thomas McAvoy, and Peter Stackpole.

[46] The Luce-*Time* rise to power, beginning with the first issue of *Time* on 23 Mar. 1923, is a story of perseverance, ingenuity, and extreme "networking" within nearly all venues of the American superstructure. For more, see John Drewry, *Contemporary American Magazines* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1938); Robert Elson, *Time, Inc.* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); and Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine* (New York: Ballantine, 1986).

[47] Alfred Politz, *A Study of the Accumulative Audience of Life* (New York: Time, Inc., 1950), 20.

[48] James L. Baughman, *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 95.

[49] Raymond Fielding does point out in *The American Newsreel, 1911–1967* (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), that, before and occasionally during the war, the newsreel was able to fulfill its promise as a visual window on the world. However, he makes it clear that, for the most part, the fare offered by the

and stylistic appeals toward a younger, more financially liquid commodity-conscious post-war audience is indicative of the type, purpose, and ideology of advertising that would continue to fill them. For example, in an undated and unattributed war-time memo from the DuPont advertising department, there is listed a series of "short descriptions of media not used now but which may be used in the post-war period."[50] Topping the list are "shopping news" and "comic books." In the 7 June 1947 meeting of DuPont Corporation executives, a confounded yet energized J. W. McCoy further pointed out:

> I look at the magazines, the consumer magazines that come to my home – my girl has a habit of buying them … and honestly fellows, those magazines have gotten so that, well, I think that the last Harper's was about an inch or an inch and one quarter thick. There is no fiction in it. There isn't a darn thing in it I could see except advertising.[51]

Such was the logical result of the weight of commercial influences upon mass communication systems. It was in this way that post-war audiences were sold to the producers of commodities through the ubiquity of advanced capitalist advertising messages advocating a consumption ethic often bordering on civic duty.

In their summation, these relatively unique socioeconomic factors – governmental preparedness, sharp increases in marriages, households, purchasing power, and savings, along with the eruption of general advertising volume and its influence upon the magazine format – testify to the fertile bed of commercial potential evident during the post-World War II period. That any such changes occurred at or around the end of World War II is no coincidence. In addition to being a time of weaning the economy and the nation away from rationing and state control over commercial output, this was also an opportunity to "win the peace" through the reconversion of the adult population back to the ideals of

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American newsreel during the war and post-war years was at best superficial and noncontroversial in its coverage; at worst, heavily censored, overtly staged, and dull due to sameness of content. The news presented by the newsreel was often very old news. Fielding cites, for example, that newsreel coverage of the attack on Pearl Harbor was not released for one year after the fact. *Life* provided material on the attack within one month. I might add that in an ironic twist it was the *Post* – a magazine that made no pretense of being a "news" magazine – which published Larry Keighley's historic color photograph of the Japanese surrender aboard the USS Missouri. Keighley's photograph went on to win the National Headliner's Club award as the best "News Magazine Photograph" of 1945–46.

[50] Anonymous, DuPont Advertising Department Papers, The Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware, USA.

[51] J. W. McCoy, 1946.

commodity fetishism. The post-war period also proved to be a propitious time for the introduction, conversion, and baptism of the only undeveloped consumer class remaining into the capitalist church. These last obstructionists to a national unanimity of consumer consciousness were the children of America – heirs to the then-nascent mass consumer culture.