

The Division of Pictorial Publicity in World War I

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When America entered World War I, Washington quickly realized that the successful prosecution of the war would require a sustained effort of a magnitude and an intensity hitherto unimagined. The need for men, supplies, and self-sacrifice on the home front was totally unprecedented. What is particularly interesting to an art historian is the government's decision to bring home this message through the visual arts.

On April 13, seven days after signing the joint Congressional resolution that declared war on the Imperial German Government, President Wilson issued Executive Order No. 2594 that created a Committee on Public Information (CPI) which was to act as an agency for releasing news of the government; issuing information to sustain morale in the United States, administering voluntary press censorship, and, later, developing propaganda abroad. Three of the ex officio directors of the Committee were members of President Wilson's cabinet: Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, and Robert Lansing, Secretary of State.¹ The fourth director and Chairman of the Committee was George Creel (1875–1953), a forty-one-year-old journalist, editor, magazine writer, and zealous advocate of reform causes. As the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, Creel had advocated Wilson's nomination for the presidency as early as 1911, and had corresponded with Wilson during his first administration.²

At first, there were several meetings of the full committee, but Creel soon took charge and the CPI was, essentially, George Creel and his staff. He had no illusions about the difficulty of his job, and he knew that, in spite of Congress's overwhelming support of the war resolution, the country was deeply divided over the war. Looking back on his work, he wrote:

During the three and a half years of our neutrality, the United States had been torn by a thousand diverse prejudices, with public opinion stunned and muddled by the pull and haul of Allied and German propaganda. The sentiment of the West still was isolationist; the Northwest buzzed with talk of a "rich man's war," waged to save Wall Street loans; men and women of Irish stock were "neutral," not caring who whipped England; and, in every state demagogues raved about "warmongers...."³

1 Frank Hardee Allen, *Classification Scheme: Records of the Committee on Public Information, 1917–1919* (Washington, DC: Division of Classification, The National Archives, 1938), vii.

2 For Creel, see *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White & Company, 1956), 41, 575–576, and Creel's autobiography, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947).

3 Creel, 1947, 157.

- 4 The Committee's work was cut back after July 1, 1918. Its domestic activities ended after the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, but its foreign operations continued until June 10, 1919. The fundamental studies of the Committee are James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information 1917–1919* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939); and Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980). See also *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information, 1917–1918: 1919* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; G. Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920); henceforth cited as Creel (1920); and *A Report Concerning Papers, Films, Records, Public Property, and Liabilities, etc. of the Committee on Public Information. Made by the Director of the United States Council of National Defense in response to Senate Resolution 323 of the 65th Congress, Second Session, adopted March 5, 1920* (Washington, DC: National Archives). See *Records of the Committee on Public Information, Record Group 63, CPI 1 - D2, Box 1, Entry 23*, and the hearings in the House of Representatives at which some CPI personnel were questioned. U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations in Charge of Sundry Civil Appropriations Bill for 1919, Part 3, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 1918*.
- 5 Creel (1920), 133–134.
- 6 On Gibson, see Fairfax Downey, *Portrait of an Era as Drawn by C. D. Gibson* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936); and Nick Meglin, "Charles Dana Gibson and the Age of Exclusivity," *American Artist* 39: 392 (March, 1975): 62 ff.
- 7 Creel (1920), 138.

The mission of the CPI, as he saw it, was to unify the country and to fight for "the verdict of mankind." To carry out this task, he created a large number of subcommittees, or "divisions," as he called them. By the time the CPI went out of existence, Creel had created twenty-one divisions devoted to domestic propaganda, including the News Division, the Film Division, the Advertising Division, and the Women's War Work Division. There also was a Foreign Section with sixteen divisions which dealt with the foreign press cable service, foreign mail service, and a Work with the Foreign Born Division that had nine national bureaus.⁴

One of the most successful of these divisions was the Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP). Creel understood that posters could have an important role in influencing public opinion. He wrote:

Even in the rush of the first days ... I had the conviction that the poster must play a great role in the fight for public opinion. The printed word might not be read; people might choose not to attend meetings or to watch motion pictures, but the billboard was something that caught even the most indifferent eye What we wanted—what we had to have—was posters that represented the best work of the best artists—posters into which the masters of the pen and brush had poured heart and soul as well as genius.⁵

Creel chose Charles Dana Gibson (1867–1944) to head the Division of Pictorial Publicity.⁶ Gibson was the president of the Society of Illustrators, an organization of professional artists that had been founded in 1901 to promote the art of illustration and to hold exhibitions of its members' works. He was one of the best known and highest paid artists in America, and in the decade before the war, the elegant and attractive "Gibson Girl" had become a national institution.

All of the published accounts of the DPP have stated that it was organized in April, 1917, shortly after the country went to war.⁷ But the CPI's records in the National Archives in Washington tell a different story. They make it clear that, initially, Creel only wanted Gibson to get the Society of Illustrators to appoint a loosely organized committee of artists to help government agencies with their publicity campaigns. The committee was called "The Society of Illustrators, Subcommittee, Pictorial Publicity," and its original members were Frank De Sales Casey, the Art Editor of *Colliers*; Charles Buckles Falls (1874–1960), a well-known illustrator and designer; Henry Reuterdaahl (1871–1925), the painter and illustrator who had sailed around South America with the U.S. Fleet; Louis Fancher (1844–1944), an illustrator; Charles David Williams (1875–1954), also an illustrator; Robert J. Wildhack; (1881–1940), an illustrator and painter; and Frederick G. Cooper (1883–1961), a painter and designer. Gibson was the chairman, Fancher was the production director, and Frank De Sales Casey was the secretary. The surviving

records now make it possible to follow the various transformations of Gibson's group of artists until, in November of 1917, it emerged as the Division of Pictorial Publicity.

Creel was not pleased with the posters produced early in the war. In a letter to President Wilson dated June 20, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the posters that had been produced up to that time:

Posters are only effective when of the highest class. For four months, I have been trying to get some effective posters from the artists of America and I have not yet seen a single one that appeals to me as the real thing.⁸

It was not until the fall of 1917 that Gibson began to reorganize his group. On November 8, Creel wrote to Gibson that:

It is stupid to assume that the artistic genius of America has yet received effective expression. Some of the work done has been hopelessly bad, much of it mediocre, and only in rare instances has the product been something in which pride could be felt May I suggest a more aggressive attitude in the interest of American art, and a more complete appeal to the imaginations of the American people. State just what it is you are willing to do, and let me put this explicit offer of service up to each department of the government that is concerned with posters, cards, and other forms of pictorial appeal. Form some committee that will distinguish between mere willingness and real ability, so that the drawing will represent effectiveness as well as individual patriotism Art is to be conscripted no less than manhood, and every man and woman who puts paint or brush to paper must get the feeling that neither time nor energy may be denied when the country calls. There is a great work for you to do, and you know, as well as I do, that the full obligation has not been discharged. There must be an organized enlistment, marked, if necessary, with the utmost sacrifice. These things I urge are not only in the interest of government, but in the interest of the art and artists of America.⁹

Gibson wrote to Creel on November 13, telling him that he was "glad to be able to read your good letter to the Committee last Friday night." He also reported that:

...the men are entering with more and more enthusiasm into the work as they begin to see results and see their efforts count.

They show a fine spirit and I often regret having said in a letter to you some time ago that I thought it might be necessary as time went on to pay a man if all of his time was taken. I couldn't have been further off the truth.

8 George Creel Papers, Container 16, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

9 National Archives, Record Group 63, CPI 1 - A1, Box 9. Henceforth, material in Record Group 63 will be cited as CPI, followed by the reference number. CPI 1 contains the records of the Executive Division.

Not one of them would listen to such a thing.
So please forget that I ever brought the subject of money
in connection with this work. It's a privilege to be of use
and for the opportunity. We all feel that we have much to
thank you for....¹⁰

Two days earlier, on November 11, Gibson had sent a telegram to Creel telling him that it was:

Not necessary to call it commission [stop] A short letter
from the President would do the trick [stop] We want some
men whose word the government will take [stop] Put
fresh heart into the men who must do the work by letting
them feel their efforts will be judged by competent men and
we promise results [stop] Would suggest Cass Gilbert as
one....¹¹

In an undated draft of a memorandum to government department heads, Gibson pointed out that:

If time were of no object, artists capable of making good posters could no doubt be found through a system of holding competitions and offering prizes, but they would be few and far between, and it would take years to locate them.... The National Committee of Pictorial Publicity is composed of men whose business it is to know who the reliable poster makers are, where they are to be found, and under what conditions they are likely to do their best work. Three of the department heads at Washington have shown a disposition to trust this committee.... I would respectfully suggest that the heads of all departments needing posters keep in mind that, as final judges, their work will be simplified if, instead of making selections from a countless mass of inferior work (among which a good thing could be easily overlooked), they only have put before them the best.

Gibson asked that the muralist and illustrator Edwin Howland Blashfield (1848–1936), President of the National Fine Art Foundation, Herbert Adams (1858–1945), a sculptor and President of the National Academy of Design, and the noted architect Cass Gilbert (1859–1934) be put on this committee, in addition to the members appointed by each department. He sent a copy of this notice to Creel, adding in his own hand that "Here are some of the things I want your advice on Monday. I have made it as short as possible so if you will read it over we will get that much of a running start."¹²

The Division of Pictorial Publicity officially came into being in November, 1917, and by the beginning of January, 1918, Gibson was able to send Creel a summary of the Committee's work for December, 1917.¹³ This was the earliest of the surviving reports of Gibson's committee. It was typed on letterhead which still had the

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 The statement called for in Senate Resolution No. 323, adopted March 5, 1920 (see Footnote 4) gives the date of the organization of the DPP as November, 1917. For Welsh's report, see CPI 1 - B1, Box 2.

logotype of the Society of Illustrators, but also identified the organization as the Division of Pictorial Publicity. The Division now had office space in Room 1203, 200 Fifth Avenue, in New York City. The report was entitled "Summary / Division of Pictorial Publicity for December 1917," and it had been prepared by Horace Devitt Welsh (1888–1942), the Assistant Secretary of the DPP. Welsh worked out of the CPT's Washington office, and was the "contact man" who went to the government offices to determine what sort of publicity they needed. He then would pass this information on to Gibson, who would choose the artists. Welsh's report began:

I submit herewith summary of the work of the Art Department which was previously formed and has now branched out into a Division of Art for Pictorial Publicity.

Welsh then listed the officers. Gibson was the Chairman, and Frank De Sales Casey was the Vice Chairman and Secretary. The Board of Associate Chairmen consisted of Adams, Blashfield, and Gilbert, as well as the painter and etcher Joseph Pennell (1860–1926). There also was an Executive Board composed of fourteen artists: the painter William Jean Beuley (b. 1874), Frederick G. Cooper, Charles Buckles Falls, Louis Fancher, the sculptor Melvina Hoffman (1885–1966), the illustrator Wallace Morgan (1873–1948), the painter and illustrator Herbert Paus (1880–1946), the painter and illustrator William Allen Rogers (1854–1931), the illustrator and painter John E. Sheridan (1880–1948), the painter and print maker Harry Everett Townsend (1879–1941), the illustrator and writer Frank J. Sheridan, Jr., and Adolph Treidler (1886–1981). Casey and the illustrator Charles David Williams had been appointed to "secure for the government work of the highest merit along artistic lines."

The report outlined the way the Division intended to function. Government departments would contact the committee when they needed artwork, and the Division would provide it at no cost, since most of the artists, Casey pointed out, were volunteering their services. The Division would not be involved in printing the work, since this would be the responsibility of those who had commissioned the work. "The coordination of the various artistic resources," Casey wrote, "should do a great ways [sic] in enabling the United States to be in the front rank of artistic patriotic appeals for the duration of the War."

Casey then summarized the work accomplished during the month of December:

...We have procured for the Red Cross Committee, from the various cartoonists of the country, a series of cartoons for the drive for membership. We have assisted the Liberty Loan by sending a jury composed of Messrs. Gibson, Casey, Adams, and Gilbert to Washington to pass on their draw-

ings, besides which we added to those drawings already there a group of seven which we considered to have a great deal of merit.

At the present time, we are working on drawings for the Aviation Branch of the service under major Stiever. We are also making posters for the United States Boys' Working Reserve, which is a part of the Department of Labor. Work is being done for the Food Committee, Fuel Committee, and a drawing is being made for a Mr. Paterson referred to us by Mr. Creel.

Although by January 1, 1918, Gibson's Division had spent only \$277.51 for salaries and \$49.61 for expenses, a good deal of work had been accomplished. In an article that appeared in the *New York Times* on January 20, 1918, Gibson stated that:

It is the greatest opportunity the artists of America have ever had to serve their country We have a meeting every Friday night. This takes place at our headquarters, 200 Fifth Avenue, where we meet men who are sent to us with their requests by the different departments at Washington. The meeting is adjourned to Keene's Chop House, where we have dinner. Suppose we have with us someone from the Food Administrator's office sent to us so that we can get more clearly in mind the needs of his division through personal contact. Casey, once having got the suggestion, picks out two of the best men he thinks can be found for the work and, at dinner, places them on each side of the official emissary. In the course of the dinner, views are exchanged on all sides, and we come to understand each other pretty thoroughly.

Gibson shared the President's vision of the war as "making the world safe for democracy." He felt that the posters produced up to this time had been too literal and, as examples, cited posters with illustrations of food and inscriptions such as "Food will win the war," or posters in which a garbage can was presented with the injunction to housewives to cheat the garbage man and beat the Kaiser. He wrote:

We must see more of the spiritual side of the conflict. We must picture the great aims of this country in fighting this war. They have already been pictured in words by the President, and I want to say now that he is the greatest artist in the country today, because he is an idealist. He is the great Moses of America.... The work of the artist will be made easy by putting into pictorial form the last message of the President.... At any cost ...the artists of America must visualize the needs of the country so vividly that they would be seen at all times—in the country village and along Broadway, and everywhere else in America.

The message to which Gibson was referring was the President's address to Congress on January 8, 1918, in which he put forward his famous fourteen-point program for world peace.¹⁴

A week after the article appeared in the *New York Times*, another article on the DPP appeared in the *Philadelphia Record*.¹⁵ In the article, H. Devitt Welsh added some details to Gibson's account of the DPP's work. Requests for pictorial publicity were turned over to a newly formed Board of Associate Chairmen who would pick two or more artists for the job. "Then the ideas are thrashed out, one of them finally decided on, and the work assigned to the man who can, in the judgment of the committee, execute it best."

Gibson told the interviewer that he felt that American posters to date had not been really "vital or epic," and that when the casualty lists began to appear, they would be the "horror for which we are waiting, knowing it will soon come. And when it comes, it will electrify the country into an energy capable of all the things of which America is capable." Artists, the men of imagination, will supply that enthusiasm.

"It is to them that we look for the posters that will shake out of their lethargy the thousands who clutter our streets, smug in the safety granted by 3,000 miles of water One cannot create enthusiasm for war on the basis of practical appeal. The spirit that will lead a man to put away the things of his accustomed life and go forth to all the hardships of war is not kindled by showing him the facts We are being purged with fire, and the work of the artist will be to catch the new spirit of the people, to blow on the new flame."

In the article, a number of the newly formed DPP's posters were illustrated: *Over the Top* by Harvey T. Dunn (1884–1952), *Over There* by Albert Edward (1863–1946),¹⁶ *Hunger* by Henry Patrick Raleigh (1880–1944),¹⁷ Frank Brangwyn's *Help Your Country/Stop This*,¹⁸ Charles Buckles Falls's *Premiers au Feu/Mean in French/ First to Fight/in English/U.S. Marines*,¹⁹ Gibson's *House Manager*,²⁰ and Herbert T. Paus's *Save Your Child/From Autocracy*.²¹ On Paus's poster, below his signature, is the "S of I" logotype of the Society of Illustrators. This would soon be replaced by the DPP's own logo, the superimposed letters "DPP" inscribed in a square.²² On most of the Division's posters, though, it was omitted.

On February 1, Gibson wrote to Creel, enclosing a copy of a letter that he was sending "to every artist in the country, chiefly for the reason that we do not want anyone to feel that he or she has not been asked." The letter was typed on DPP letterhead and announced:

This national committee has been organized with the intention of giving the United States Government the best work that can be produced by artists throughout the country, to be used for posters, etc., and we are, therefore, desirous of enlisting the cooperation of every artist in the country.

- 14 *New York Times Magazine* (January 20, 1918): 11.
- 15 Louis J. F. Moore, "Win the War: The Poster as Power," *Philadelphia Record* 3 (January 27, 1918): 1 ff.
- 16 Walton Rawls, *Wake Up, America! World War I and the American Poster* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998), 80.
- 17 Gary A. Borkan, *World War I Posters* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2002), 63.
- 18 Rawls, *Wake Up, America!* 80.
- 19 Libby Chenault, *Battle Lines: World War I Posters from the Bowman Gary Collection* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Rare Book Collection, 1989), 133.
- 20 George Theofilis, *American Posters of World War I: A Price and Collector's Guide* (New York: Dafran House, Inc., 1973, No. 106).
- 21 Borkan, *World War I Posters*, 135.
- 22 See Rawls, *Wake Up, America!* 186–187; and Borkan, *World War I Posters*, 56.

If you have any ideas that can be used for this purpose, please send them, if only in rough preliminary form, to the above address. The different Governmental Departments are constantly requesting posters, sketches, or cartoons; and we would like to have on hand ideas for their immediate needs. Thinking you could not fail to be interested in a letter Mr. Herbert Adams, President of the National Academy of Design, wrote me, I am quoting it to you below: "The present time offers the artists of the country a glorious opportunity such as they have never had before and probably never will have again. There is to be a great campaign of pictorial publicity to emphasize the needs of our government. What more important or patriotic service could any man do than to create a war poster so striking, so beautiful, or so impressive that it drives its message home to every eye, and makes an indelible impression on the millions of people who will see it. May we have your cooperation in this service and receive from you, not only now, but from time to time, such sketches as you may conceive that will help and inspire the patriotism of our country?"²³

After the DPP's report of its activities during December, 1917, there are no more reports until July 23, 1918, when Casey and Gibson sent Creel a report of the Division's activities during the months of May and June. A report for March was sent to Creel, and he acknowledged its receipt in a letter dated April 5, but this has not been located. There also is a report dated August 5 for the month of July, a report dated August 22 for the week ending August 22, a report dated September 16 for the activities during the month of August, a report dated October 24 for the activities during September, and a final report dated November 18 for the work done during the month of October. These reports not only document the activities of the Division, they give us a good picture of the way the Division functioned.²⁴

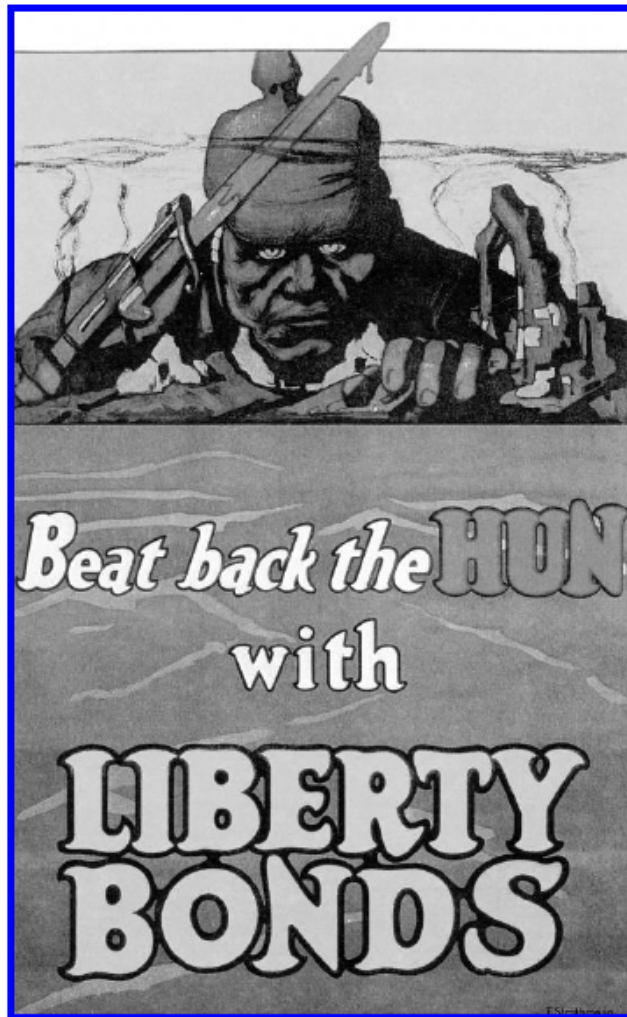
The reports are quite extensive, some of them as long as fifteen pages, and they list the governmental departments that had commissioned pictorial publicity and the artists who carried out the work. However, since the captions or slogans on the posters are seldom listed, it often is impossible to identify individual posters.

The amount of work produced by the DPP was astonishing. During May and June, the Liberty Loan Committee for the Fourth Liberty Loan Drive, which opened on September 28 and closed on October 19, 1918, requested some posters. More than fifty designs were submitted by forty-eight artists. All the designs were shipped to Liberty Loan Headquarters in Washington. After the Liberty Loan

23 CFI 1 - A1, Box 9.

24 CFI 1 - B1, Box 1, Entry 13.

Figure 1
Fred Strothmann, *Beat Back the Hun*,
Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University.

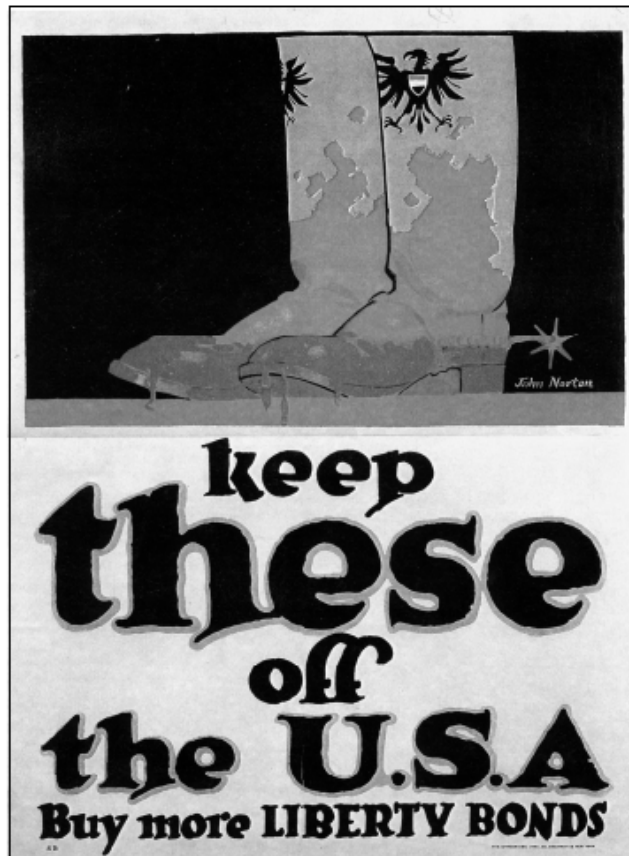


- 25 *New York Times* (September 20, 1918): 4; and the DPP report for the months of May and June (CPI - B1, Box 1, Entry 13).
- 26 Fred Strothmann (1879–1958) was a pupil of Carl Heckler, and then studied in Paris and at the Berlin Royal Academy. He had wanted to be a portrait painter, but shifted to comic illustration. He was a regular contributor to the old *Life Magazine*, *Harper's Monthly*, *The Century*, *Hearst's International*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*; and also worked as a political cartoonist and a book illustrator. See Walter Reed, *The Illustrator in America 1860–2000* (New York: The Society of Illustrators, 2001), 124; *Who Was Who in American Art 1564–1975: 400 Years of Artists in America*, Peter Hasting Falk, ed. (Madison, Connecticut: Sound View Press, 1999), 3, 3207; and the *New York Times* (May 14, 1958): 33.
- 27 John Warner Norton (1876–1934) studied and later taught at the Chicago Art Institute, and was active as a muralist and as an easel painter. In 1926, at the Institute's annual exhibition, one of Norton's works won a bronze medal and a \$300 prize and, in 1931, he won the Architectural League's Medal of Honor in painting for his paintings in the Tavern Club of Chicago. See *Who Was Who in American Art 1564–1975: 400 Years of Artists in America*, Peter Hasting Falk, ed., 2, 2440–2441; and the *New York Times* (January 8, 1934): 17.

Committee had selected the designs for the drive, nine of which were chosen from among those submitted by the DPP, the Food Administration then chose five more. The remaining designs were sent back to New York. Eventually, ten of the DPP's designs were used.²⁵

Most of the ten designs chosen by the Liberty Loan Committee confronted the public with the horrors of a possible German invasion. The lowering Hun in Fred Strothmann's *Beat Back the Hun* with his blood stained fingers and bayonet, still wears the *Pickelhaube* (spiked helmet), which Americans understood as a symbol of Prussian militarism, even though German forces had switched to the *Stahlhelm* (steel helmet) in 1916 (figure 1).²⁶ The bloody boots in John Norton's *Keep These Off the U.S.A.* were a grim warning of what Americans could expect from an invading Germany army (figure 2).²⁷

Figure 2
John Norton, *Keep These Off the U.S.A.*
Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University.



28 Joseph Pennell (1860–1926) was one of the leading American illustrators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and during World War I he created illustrations of the war production efforts in Britain, France, and the United States. He also was the author of a number of books including a biography of his friend, Whistler. See Reed, *The Illustrator in America 1860–2000*, 60; and *Who Was Who in American Art 1564–1975: 400 Years of Artists in America*, Peter Hasting Falk, ed., 3, 2567–2568. Pennell's poster is one of the best documented of the war. He wrote that "The idea came into my head on my way back from New York, where I had attended a meeting of the Committee on Public Information at which the loan was announced and posters asked for. See Joseph Pennell, *Joseph Pennell's Liberty Loan Poster: A Text Book for Artists and Amateurs, Governments and Teachers and Printers, with Notes, an Introduction and Essay on the Poster by the Artist* (Philadelphia and London: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1918), 9 and 18.

29 Elsworth Young (1866–1953) was an illustrator and landscape painter who had come to Chicago in 1895 to work for *The Chicago Tribune*. Later, he did illustrations for *Popular Mechanics*. See *Memorial Fielding's Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors & Engravers 2nd Newly-Revised, Enlarged, and Updated Edition*, Glen B. Opitz, ed. (Poughkeepsie, NY: Apollo Books, 1987), 1068; and the *New York Times* (September 27, 1952): 17.

But for dramatic effectiveness, none could match Joseph Pennell's striking portrayal of New York City under attack: *That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth*. Pennell wrote that "My idea was New York City bombed, shot down, burning, blown-up by an enemy," and his original idea for the caption was "BUY LIBERTY BONDS OR YOU WILL SEE THIS" (figure 3).²⁸

Ellsworth Young's *Remember Belgium*, of which more than a million copies were printed, played on American outrage at the atrocities committed by the German army in Belgium in 1914 (figure 4).²⁹ And the choice offered to Americans by the prolific magazine and book illustrator Henry Patrick Raleigh's *Hun or Home?* reminded Americans that only their dollars stood between them and an onslaught of merciless barbarians (figure 5).³⁰

While it may seem absurd to us today that Americans could actually believe that a German invasion force could land on American shores, there were millions of Americans who thought that a German invasion of the continental United States was not only possible, but quite likely and possibly even imminent. In 1915, Bernard Walker, an editor at *Scientific American*, had written

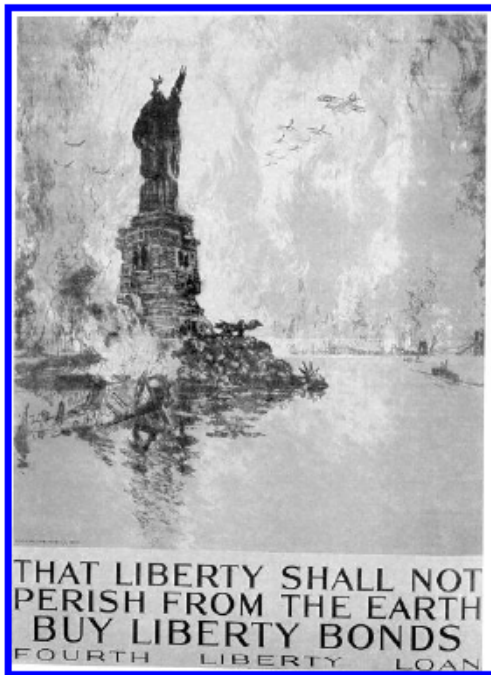


Figure 3
Joseph Pennell, *That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth*, Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton, New York.

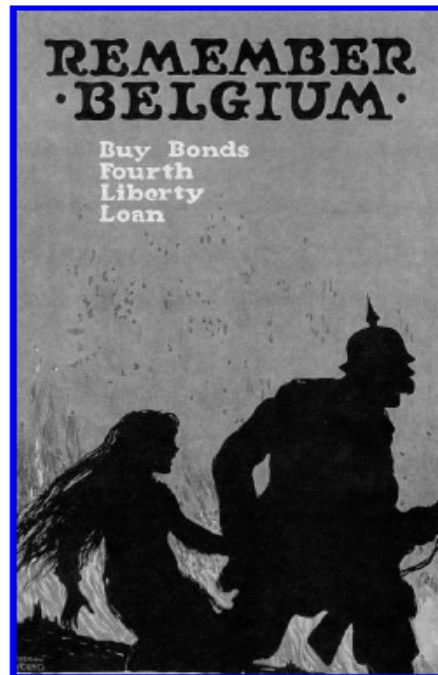


Figure 4
Ellsworth Young, *Remember Belgium*, Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University.

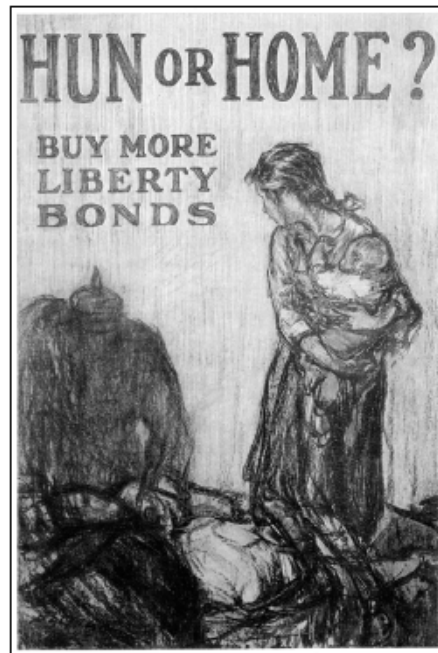


Figure 5
Henry Patrick Raleigh, *Hun or Home?* Pickering Art Gallery, Colgate University

30 Henry Patrick Raleigh (1880–1944) was one of America's most popular illustrators during the 1920s. He worked for the *New York World* and also did illustrations for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, and *Hearst*. He also was active as an etcher, a lithographer, and a portrait painter. See *Who Was Who in American Art 1564–1975: 400 Years of Artists in America*, Peter Hasting Falk, ed., 3, 2695; and Reed, *The Illustrator in America 1860–2000*, 158–159.

- 31 J. Bernard Walker, *America Fallen! The Sequel to the European War* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1915).
- 32 Hudson Maxim, *Defenseless America* (New York: Hearst's International Library Co., 1915), passim.
- 33 Edward Robb Ellis, *Echoes of Distant Thunder: Life in the United States 1914-1918* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1975), 424-425.
- 34 There is a great deal of information about the Marine Corps's recruiting campaign in *The Recruiter's Bulletin: Published Monthly in the Interests of the Recruiting Service of the U.S. Marine Corps*, 1:1914 to 5:1919.
- 35 Charles Buckles Falls (1874-1960) was a book illustrator and also provided artwork for a number of advertisements. The ABC book he designed for his daughter became a classic of children's literature. See Reed, *The Illustrator in America 1880-2000*, 141; and the *New York Times* (April 16, 1960): 17. There has been a good deal of uncertainty about the attribution of this poster, which is unsigned, but the correspondence between Mrs. C. B. Falls and Col. F. B. Diehard makes it clear that Falls was the artist. On February 22, 1963, Mrs. Falls wrote: "I have several memorabilia, snapshots of my husband painting the [*Books Wanted*] poster in front of the Library ... also the two helmets used in the *Teufel* poster, one of my favorites. (United States Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC). Apparently, the German helmet almost ended up in the hands of the Marines. On October 1, 1918, Capt. T. G. Sterrett, U.S.M.C., wrote to Falls "Here's that helmet back just to show that we are not Indian givers. Our Washington headquarters were very keen to borrow these things, but they were not so keen to return them. I just got them back this morning." Papers of Charles Buckles Falls, Chapin Library, Williams College, Falls Papers.
- 36 Alfred Emile Cornebise, *Art from the Trenches: America's Uniformed Artists in World War I* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M Press, 1991), 11-24.
- 37 *Branch Library News: Published Monthly by the New York Public Library* 5:4 (April, 1918): 53-55.
- 38 CP 1 - A1, Box 9.

America Fallen, a vivid account of a German invasion.³¹ That same year, Hudson Maxim's *Defenseless America* appeared, in which the author claimed that an enemy power could land an invasion force of from 100,000 to 200,000 men on our shores in two weeks.³² Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the influential *Chicago Tribune* was so concerned about the threat of a German invasion that he urged the government to erect a series of fortifications in Albany, Boston, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Vicksburg, and Houston, and in all the passes of the Sierra Nevadas and the Rockies. One member of Congress suggested that, since the Germans might attack the west and east coasts simultaneously, Americans living on the seaboards should retreat to safety behind the Allegheny and Rocky Mountains.³³

The emphasis on the possibility of a German invasion in the publicity for the Fourth Liberty Loan was one of the reasons for its tremendous success. The Treasury estimated that more than twenty million people, more than half of the adult population of the United States, had purchased bonds. Nearly seven billion dollars was raised.

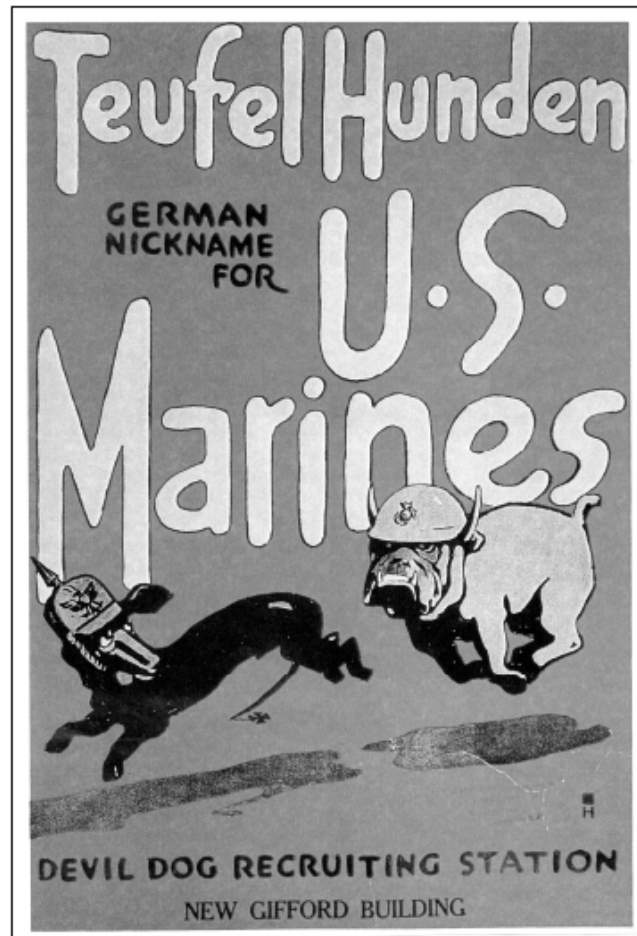
While the work of the DPP certainly was extensive, there were many other organizations and agencies that produced pictorial publicity. The Marine Corps Recruiting Bureau, the YMCA, the YWCA, the Red Cross, and the U.S. Navy all ran their own campaigns.³⁴ Charles Buckles Fall's poster entitled *Teufel Hunden*, one of the few humorous posters of the war, was commissioned from the artist directly by the Marine Corps (figure 6).³⁵ The DPP was involved in the selection of the artists who were sent to France to document the activities of the American Expeditionary Force.³⁶ They also participated in a number of promotional activities, several of which took place on the front steps of the New York Public Library.³⁷

Creel was very pleased with the work of Gibson's division. On September 24, he wrote Gibson that:

I cannot refrain from writing you a very sincere word of appreciation for the work being done by the Division of Pictorial Publicity. The report of the work accomplished during August is particularly inspiring, and the artists of the United States should feel a great and lasting pride in the contribution to the national cause that they have been privileged to make. I have always had a full understanding of the importance of this work, and I am glad to tell you that the other Divisions of Government are commencing to have the same appreciation.³⁸

When the armistice was announced on November 11, the activities of the CPI and the DPP officially ended, but the artists of the DPP were not yet ready to give up their work. On November 22, 1918, representatives of the various sections of the country held a meeting in Chicago and unanimously adopted a resolution "to continue this Division of Pictorial Publicity as certain very important work

Figure 6
Charles Buckles Falls, *Teufel Hunden*,
Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University.



has not yet been completed, and that more important work must be undertaken in the near future."³⁹ But the work of the DPP officially ended on December 15.⁴⁰

In late November, Gibson already was making plans for a gala victory dinner for the artists of the DPP. It eventually was held on February 14, 1919, at the Hotel Commodore in New York. There is a paragraph in the program that catches something of the spirit that bound these diverse temperaments together, and reveals the pride they felt in the service they had rendered to their country.

This was the first time in the history of the United States that the government used pictorial art in connection with a war, and all departments, recognizing its importance, used this direct agency in every appeal to the public. In the war, artists stood on their own feet as part of the social structure. The government wanted them, the government used them, and they made good. In so manfully

39 Ibid.

40 Letter from the Secretary of the CPI to the Reverend B. F. Cast in Tolland, Connecticut, CPI - A1, Box 3, Folder 102.

answering the roll call of patriotism, like the men in blue and khaki, the artists incidentally shattered the foolish fallacy that they were dreamers, with loose hair and still looser morals—individuals who never knew the value of time.⁴¹

During its brief existence, the DPP had produced pictorial publicity for fifty-eight governmental departments and committees, submitted seven hundred designs for posters, one hundred and twenty-two for cards, three hundred and ten pieces of newspaper advertising, two hundred and eighty-seven cartoons, and nineteen designs for seals and buttons: a total of 1,438 designs created by 318 artists. Also, during the Third Liberty Loan Drive (April 6–May 4, 1918) Henry Reuterdaahl and N. C. Wyeth had completed a 90-foot-high and 25-foot-long painting for the Sub-Treasury Building. To publicize the Fourth Liberty Loan (September 28–October 19, 1918) Reuterdaahl had painted three paintings more than twenty feet long in Washington, DC.⁴² And the total cost to the government for all this work was only \$13,170.97.⁴³

Reviewing the work of the Division of Pictorial Publicity in 1920, Creel wrote that he considered it one of the most remarkable parts of the Committee on Public Information.

At America's call, however, painters, sculptors, designers, illustrators, and cartoonists quickly and enthusiastically rallied to the colors, and no other class of profession excelled them in the devotion that took no account of sacrifice or drudgery... [their posters] called to our own people from every hording like great clarions, and they went through the world, captioned in every language, carrying a message that thrilled and inspired.⁴⁴

D. H. Lawrence once wrote that, for the generation that lived through the horrors of World War I, "all the great words were cancelled out."⁴⁵ but the posters show no sign of this disillusionment; instead, they brought the "great words" to life for millions of Americans, inspiring them to make sacrifices for the war effort. They were the words men believed in and were willing to die for, and their power still resonates across the gulf that separates the beginning of the last century from its end.

41 See the program for the dinner and a copy of an article about the dinner in *The Evening World* (February 15, 1918) (Falls's papers).

42 Creel (1920), 137–138 and the list of artists in CPI 1 - B1, Entry 13, Box 1.

43 For some time, Gibson paid the Division's operating expenses out of his own pocket. See James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information 1917–1919*, 102.

44 Creel (1920), 133.

45 Quoted in Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962), 440.