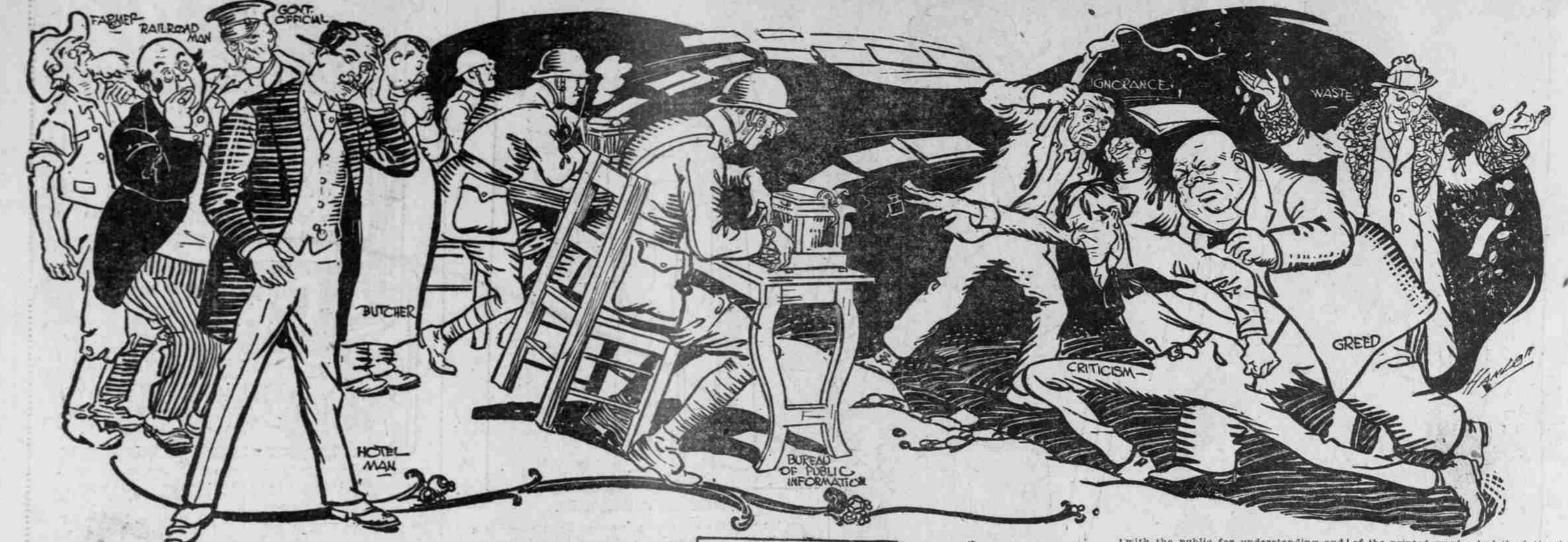


SOLDIERS OF THE PRINTED WORD HELPING TO WIN THE WAR

Trained Writers All Over the Nation Volunteer in America's Publicity Battalion and Render Indispensable Service



BY JAMES H. COLLINS

In a crowded little emergency office in Washington from half-past 5 in the morning till far into the night very often sits an American author who before the war had a reputation for his careful work and painstaking style.

The conscientious five hundred words that he wrote in a morning was then considered by him a satisfactory output. Today a morning's work may easily run to several thousand words, for he keeps two secretaries busy with dictation.

At home all his surroundings had to be harmonious before he could write. In Washington his cluttered little office, a third floor back room in an old residence, looking out onto an alley full of cats and cans, is noisy with the din of the typewriter and the bustle of clerks coming and going. Had he been told a year ago that it would be necessary for him to write under such conditions the feat would have looked impossible. But today he writes in his work and in rendering indispensable service to one of the Government departments as a publicity man.

There are many soldiers of the printed word in Washington these days, both men and women. They were among the first volunteers to mobilize, hurrying to the capital while the declaration of war was pending, because they knew that the national crisis would make Washington a center of affairs, and a place where they foresaw the part that publicity must play in arousing the American people to the big issues of war.

And Washington was waiting for them. One woman writer arrived filled with the spirit of service, willing to do anything, as she expressed it, even if it were only to carry a chair. Within a week she was given a chair—as chairman of one publicity committee and a worker on two others.

Correspondents who came to cover the news for daily papers and magazines, found themselves leading a hand with the problems of this department and that bureau, problems of explanation which called for the trained writer's knack at presenting facts in interesting ways, problems of explanation beyond the ability of the standard technical and scientific workers in Government service.

Words, Vs. Amusements.

The soldier of the printed word was among the first volunteers, and he will not demobilize until the war is over, every printed word is as much a part of modern war equipment as aircraft, tanks, heavy guns or submarines.

Of all the war measures passed by Congress during its Summer session that providing finances for the aircraft programme went through in the least time and with least opposition. There was hardly any debate in the Senate or House of Representatives, and the Nation's sentiment was solidly behind the measure.

And the aircraft bill was a typical achievement of the volunteer publicity man. Realizing the urgent need for mobilizing public opinion in charge of the technical details of the aircraft programme called upon the soldier of the printed word, and the latter's trained news achievements on the part of the American people quickly and dramatically. Accustomed to presenting facts from the angle of his readers' personal interests, he saw that aircraft, besides the hold they already had upon the imagination of the public as a result of the birdlike machines in the western front, also offered an especially easy way to win the war. Trusting to the experts' judgment in technical matters, the soldiers of the printed word laid aircraft before the American people from this standpoint and got the popular support that the technical men desperately needed.

Food Administration, the Fuel Administration, the Council of National Defense, the committee of public information, the War, Navy and Treasury Departments and auxiliary war organizations like the Red Cross, the Y. M. C. A., the Boy's Working Reserve, the Boy and Girl Scouts. In some cases workers are paid, but many are volunteers, drawn from the ranks of authors, journalists, advertising men and publicity experts of the country. And day by day the professional explainer's job grows more definite and important.

Uncle Sam himself had comprehensive publicity organizations in peace times. Thousands of bulletins and press stories went out from Government departments, giving results of technical investigation in agriculture, chemistry, mining and like activities. But much of this Government publicity has been dryly technical, carefully phrased by the scientific expert, who kept in mind first the sanctity of his own professional standing and after that the formalities of the official statement of fact. Human interest, news value and succinctness were not in his line.

War put upon the newspapers and periodicals of the country an enormous pressure. Statements, reports and dispatches from Washington piled up on editors' desks to such an extent that drastic condensation and elimination were necessary to get them into the space available. This situation not only set up an interesting competition between the volunteer publicity man and the departmental expert, but put the best writers in Washington on their mettle to secure space through their journalistic skill.

As the daily releases multiplied in number, and the different departments and bureaus set up rivalries to see which could secure a place in the headlines, the dry official statements, characteristic of Government action, had to be made more interesting and shaped so that they had easy points of contact with the average reader, and were then infused with direct news interest and also sharply condensed.

Among the volunteers on the publicity organizations were many sober, technical workers from the colleges and schools. As the battalions of the printed word were licked into shape, these conservative investigators found special desks in connection with the preparation of material for college instructors, teachers and technical workers in their own fields, while publicity for the general press was handed over to trained journalists and authors.

It is difficult to realize that hardly ten months ago public sentiment throughout the United States was solidly against participation in the war, and that our war President had just been re-elected in recognition of his ability in keeping us out of hostilities. Since then public opinion has been turned right about face. During the summer, through the printed word, the Nation has been enlisted solidly behind the big war issues, giving not only men, money and food, but making sacrifice and changes in its daily work. In the big war issues the publicity worker has done his job well. But that is only a beginning, for skillful

professional explanation is now needed to smooth out difficulties in many minor matters, and to solve knotty little problems that are by-products of the big war issues.

Talking to the Public.

It is amazing to sit in Washington, for instance, and see how inarticulate many of the business interests of the country have been, despite the fact that this is the greatest reading Nation in the world. For years railroad men have pleaded



with the public for understanding and co-operation. Millions of dollars were spent to increase the capacity of the freight car so that it would carry 60 and 80 tons instead of 30, and to provide locomotives which would haul longer trains, and reduce grades, and develop our transportation system along lines of large scale, low-cost hauling. Technically, they succeeded in building a transportation machine capable of hauling a ton of freight at a lower cost than was possible in any part of the world. Yet, while the capacity of the freight car increased to 60, and 75, and even 100 tons, the average load carried showed virtually no increase at all—when the war began it was less than 15 tons per car. Then suddenly there came the war crisis and the new publicity backed by public co-operative spirit. Within a few months, through skillful printed appeals and the movement for heavy loading with new schedules governing the shipment of small freight, the big American freight car has been loaded to something like its actual capacity, and many of the railroad man's problems have been permanently solved. The soldier of the printed word has shown him how to talk to the public.

For years the hotel man has found the public solidly behind him as a customer for everything costly and extravagant. The greater his ingenuity in devising new forms of luxurious service, the greater his patronage. Then, suddenly, almost in a week, the public goes in for food conservation and economy and denounces the hotel man for his extravagance, while he is hastening to bring his establishment around on the new tack. His waiters carrying out plates of partly eaten food and write to the newspapers to advertise him as a slacker.

Or, if they find persons who do not see the needless days being observed, they want to know why he does not reduce his prices, as well as the portions. In the midst of his protest, while trying to save the new demand for economy in the face of difficulties such as rising costs and scarcity of help, the hotel man all at once realizes that he has many of the business interests of the country have been, despite the fact that this is the greatest reading Nation in the world.

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CONFISCATED LIQUOR IS TRANSLATED INTO FOOD CROPS IN THE STATE OF OREGON

BY BEN HUR LAMPMAN.

D RATH VALLEY stretched before him—limbless, gray, menacing, and shuddering in heat so fluid and fiery that the horned toads ceased their frolics to lean panting against the dwarf cactus. He was lost, irremediably given to the desert, and he lunged forward without hope—without any sensation save a blazing thirst. It twisted at his throat, and thrust his tongue forth in the crinige of a masque.

Tinkle—just like that. And, again, tinkle! tinkle! tinkle!

Surely the bells of water, mountain-born, cold, clear, dropping in music on chill, wet rocks. The little lizards raced before him as he sprang toward the sound—sprawled and fell into choking darkness.

It was then that John Doe, venturer, vagrant and votary of booze, awakened. His throat remained, the desert had vanished, and reality proclaimed his habitat as a cell. Up through an air shaft and into the corridor there drifted the tinkle of breaking glass, and something more. Its pungency assailed him. Such was the incense he had offered before the festing "bar-ness holler" had hailed him to a corner and called the black wagon.

John Doe groaned, abysmally. Hunched on his bunk and powerless, he sat while the sewer drank the yellow vintage of rye and corn. In the free somewhere, down below, the police were smashing many a tidy pint, many a promising quart, at the edict of prohibition. The knell they rang with nightsticks on bottle neck and flask was the dole of the good old days—the days that come no more.

"Talk about being gassed on the west front!" gasped the Statistical Sergeant. He snote lustily at a quart of "seven-year-old," and sent it in crashing ruin to the gutter gurgling.



"Say, Bo, gimme a drink of water," said the penitent.

of the printed word. And the latter is ready to help him.

Professional Explainers.

Enlisted on the Food Administration, both at Washington and in the State Food Administration organizations, he steps in and shows the hotel man how to explain matters with statements to the press. That food which the public sees going to waste represents its own carelessness in ordering more than it could eat, and the criticism of menu prices for the reduced food saving portions is probably unjust, because prices have actually been reduced without the public realizing it, or smaller meat portions have been made up with vegetables. Perhaps this is actually done at a lower cost of raw food is less than 20 per cent of the cost of hotel service, the chief expense being for cooking and attendance.

The grocer, the butcher and the baker have all come under the same fire of public misunderstanding and without the aid of the publicity man would have found it impossible to make the radical adjustments in their business demanded by war and food conservation. Old trade difficulties, such as duplication of grocery service and liberal granting of credit, have hampered them in working out more efficient wartime methods, while they were trying to reduce the prices on staple commodities to conform to Government policies. The public has, always been willing to help by carrying home some of its purchases and paying cash and patronizing the new fish or cheese department started by the butcher or grocer to meet expenses in the face of decreasing sales on meat, wheat flour and other foods affected by conservation. But the public must understand, and this calls for skillful explanation, and as the different trades and industries have been called upon to face with their war problems they have found that they, too, were in the inarticulate class and that the aid of the professional explainer was needed.

And the professional explainer has been right on the job, enlisted already in the organizations at Washington which are directing these great business changes. He has anticipated difficulties and overcome problems by publicity in both the journal and the trade press.

Change in Trade Periodicals.

There is no more interesting study for the journalist than to compare the grocery, or hotel, or baking trade periodical of one year ago with that of today. A year ago agricultural publications were wholly occupied with dry trade matters, while today half their space is given up to war information and news from Washington, showing how to make new war adjustments and interlinking these adjustments with publicity in the general press and reflecting a fervent patriotic anxiety to serve in the trades and industries themselves.

Last Summer, while the war-revenue measure was being debated in Congress, the candy manufacturers sent representatives to Washington to attend to their interests. When they succeeded in securing equitable taxation in that bill they went back home satisfied that their chief war problem had been met. The grocers, bakers, butchers and hotel men were all busy swinging their business methods around to conform to food-saving measures, but candy men saw no cloud on the horizon. The fact that English candy manufacturers had been compelled to modify their products on a basis of 30 per cent sugar substituting other ingredients, hardly interested the American manufacturers in this line. Then overnight the candy business was eliminated as a luxury during the war. At the same time the candy man found public sentiment arrayed against him. People rightly insisted that candy was a luxury. The young man who had been in the habit of buying assorted chocolates for his best girl saw no hardship in cutting off her supply as a war measure. Gratuitous advice poured in on the candy man through the public press. If he couldn't get sugar, why not make candy out of molasses, or maple syrup, or honey, or fruit or other substitutes?

On Duty in Washington.

In this situation the service of the professional explainer was needed, and the candy man took steps to secure it by sending representatives to work with the Food Administration and set the public thinking straight about their products. They explained, first of all, that they were solidly behind the country, ready to make any adjustments in their business as demanded by war. If the Government wanted them to stop making candy they would stop. But they also demonstrated that candy is food, and thousands of tons of it are consumed by the Army and Navy. They corrected popular errors as to possibilities in making confectionery from substitute materials. Maple syrup and honey make delicious candies, true, but such products are perishable and not adapted to long-distance shipment for National distribution and the thriving export trade which we have built up in that line. Chocolate and cocoa are still plentiful and the candy man is able not only to use fruit and marmalades as substitute ingredients in his goods, but if necessary could probably divert some of his equipment to the making of preserves and like stuff.

"Say, bo, gimme a drink of water," said the penitent.

(Concluded on Page 2.)