

Mobilising Manpower, Minds, and Money: Thematic Messages in the Four Minute Men Speeches

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Introduction

Following the decision to take the United States to war, President Wilson created the Committee on Public Information (CPI) on 14 April 1917 and appointed George Creel as director. The CPI launched a grand propaganda programme that used posters, motion pictures, pamphlets, university talks, the most prominent of these mediums being speeches by the Four Minute Men.¹ The division of the Four Minute Men was initially a separate entity that operated outside the framework of the CPI, with Donald Ryerson having started the group before President Wilson's declaration of war. Shortly after the inception of the CPI, on 20 April, 1917, the Four Minute Men was placed as an official division under the CPI which was tasked with relaying government ideas and information.² The Four Minute Men delivered speeches from 1917 until the end of the war and revolved around the need to mobilize American manpower, minds, and money. The Division of the Four Minute Men reinforced American attitudes and perceptions about the First World War through public speeches posted in their bulletins. They did so by highlighting three distinct themes: the need for military enlistment; the moral justification of fighting the Germans; and the duty of ordinary Americans to financially endorse the war. These speeches acted as a medium of relaying and reinforcing government policies about the war, as well as served a propagandist purpose by selling the war to Americans through specifically curated images and ideas. Images exploited people's fears about Prussianism and German atrocities, while ideas about patriotism and national duty underlined urgency in taking action in the war effort.

¹ Nick Fischer, "The Committee on Public Information and the Birth of US State Propaganda," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 35 (2016): 54-5.

² The History Committee, "The Four Minute Men of Chicago," *History Committee of the Four Minute Men of Chicago*, 1919, 9-13.

Mobilizing Manpower: Washington's Enlistment

In order to promote enlistment, the Four Minute Men directed their speeches towards men of fighting age, immigrants, and labourers, and coincided with Washington's conscription mandate. Not only did this act as a powerful persuasive tool, but it also legitimised the speech's main message; enlistment was every man's national obligation.

In the initial days of the Four Minute Men, before joining the CPI, Ryerson aimed at using public speeches to promote military enlistment. He urged his orators to use images and ideas that targeted their audience's desire to help their country and support the war effort. This was especially prominent during early 1917 amidst the U.S. Senate's debates over the Chamberlain Bill, a piece of legislation that would create a munitions ministry and ensure military and naval training for American citizens in preparation for war.³ Despite the imperativeness of this bill, it was left undecided and replaced with a greater ambition to conscript men instead of relying on volunteers.

President Wilson wanted to raise a three-million-man army to fight in Europe. To do so, he introduced the Selective Service Act, initiated on May 18, 1917. This act required men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register for military enlistment. Four Minute Men speeches focused on the draft in their 1918 bulletin titled, "Register!" It is important to note that by the time of this bulletin, published on August 21, 1918, the government had amended the Selective Service Act to expand its mandate and incorporate a larger age bracket. Now, the government required men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to register for the military, raising the quota of conscripts from nine million to

³ 54. U.S. Congress, Senate, Military Affairs Committee. *Universal Military Training*, 64th Cong., 2d sess., 1917. S. Rep, 2980 <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GPO-CRECB-1917-pt3-v54/GPO-CRECB-1917-pt3-v54-14-1>; Frederic L. Paxson, "The American War Government, 1917-1918," *The American Historical Review* 26 (1920): 69-70.

thirteen million.⁴ President Wilson entrusted the Four Minute Men to reach out to every man possible and convince him to register and fulfil the government's needs.

In the bulletin, before the main text of the speeches were displayed, the text instructed speakers to address “the men between 32 and 45 rather than to the boys.” According to the bulletin, older men were in need of a more rigorous and extensive persuasive effort because they “weigh the facts and consider the evidence before arriving at judgement.”⁵ They were also more likely to think about their families and their financial situation if they, the breadwinner, were shipped off to fight. Although this detail was minute, it was quite relevant in examining the extent to which the CPI went to in ensuring their message would be specially curated. In this case, the speeches that followed emphasised the importance of manly duty and national service, traits that resonated with older men as opposed to young boys who did not need any convincing on “why they should fight their country's foes.”⁶

The first speech, titled “The Fiery Cross,” appealed to a specific demographic; male, middle-aged, and of Gaelic ancestry. The speech's opening line was as followed, “If I had come before you carrying crossed sticks, soaked in seed oil and blazing brightly in the form of a fiery cross; those of you who are of Gaelic birth or ancestry might have guessed my mission in a moment. I come to summon you to the service of your Nation.”⁷ Although Gaelic ancestry was not exclusive to older men, it held more significance to them in terms of heritage and honour. This recurring theme of Gaelic imagery was intertwined with the obligation for national service, and was reemphasised at the end of the speech when the speaker addressed the men in the audience as privileged to pledge themselves in the service of their

⁴ Susan A. Brewer, “Crusade for Democracy: Over There in the Great War,” in *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55.

⁵ Committee on Public Information, “Register!,” *Division of the Four Minute Men* 37, 21 August 1918, 11.

⁶ Committee on Public Information, “Register!,” 11.

⁷ Committee on Public Information, “Register!,” 11.

country and follow the “fiery cross of freedom.”⁸ The specificity of this speech also pointed to the reluctance of certain ethnic minorities in regards to enlistment. Irish-Americans were vehemently opposed to supporting Britain in the war due to the colonial experience.⁹ Therefore, the “Fiery Cross” speech, in hindsight, had two major objectives; convince older men to enlist, and persuade Irish-Americans that the war was worth fighting for.

“The War Message” speech relayed facts from the government to the audiences about changes in the Selective Service Act. Although the orators anticipated some hesitation from certain members, as mentioned previously, they countered this by ensuring that the government would only need “about one in five” men for immediate military service. The rest would wait and stay ready for Washington’s call.¹⁰ Central to the effort of recruiting was the reiteration of phrases such as “patriotism,” “national duty,” and “service” in order to elicit a deep-rooted obligation in every man. There is an area of inconsistency in the speech where the orator talks about the government’s proposal to raise the number of conscripts. The government proposed to either cancel military deferments/exemptions or to enlarge the draft in terms of age range, with the latter coinciding with the Selective Service Act.¹¹ However, cancelling or violating military deferments actually took place when conscripting labourers and non-essential workers under the “Work or Fight” order.¹² The illusion of choice presented in the speech reflected the government’s overarching wartime control and restrictions on freedoms.

Amidst the nation-wide conscription process was a concern about enlisting immigrants into the army. Before the United States’ entry into the war, President Wilson relied on volunteerism for

⁸ Committee on Public Information, “Register!,”

⁹ John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 108, 163.

¹⁰ Committee on Public Information, “Register!,” 11.

¹¹ Committee on Public Information, “Register!,” 11.

¹² Chambers, *To Raise an Army*, 193-5.

supplying manpower and troops for military training. However, when he pledged a three-million-man army, mass mobilization was the only route available to achieve such a feat. And while the Selective Service Act managed to conscript Americans, immigrants and foreign nationals needed more convincing. The Four Minute Men spent most time addressing their speeches to a generic audience, never really singling out immigrants, but one speech stood out. This was Franklin K. Lane's "The Answer to the Foreign Born," a speech written for the Four Minute Men for their bulletins.

In his speech, Lane described American values, such as democracy, justice, liberty, and equal chance as being worth fighting for. His words directly acknowledged immigrants who left their homelands behind to live the American dream and stated that "we, the foreign born, are here now to do our part, our full part, in the making of America."¹³ The speech even went as far as denouncing certain aspects of one's homeland, such as the lack of opportunity for public service and the military system wherein a soldier "had no part in choosing, under a flag that gave him bounty, not opportunity."¹⁴ However, this speech downplayed the role that immigrants had to play in the war. Where it was portrayed, that military service offered choices and opportunities, in reality, immigrants were just as obliged to serve as American citizens.

The speech was published just two months before President Wilson announced the expansion of the Selective Service Act in August 1918. Months before the act was introduced in 1917, there were concerns from both the government and the people about immigrants, their loyalty, and their position on military enlistment. Irish Americans had reservations about the United States' support of Britain due to the Empire's colonial crimes. The Jewish population, almost two million in 1917, were not eager to join the fight alongside Russia, with memories of Pogroms and persecution still fresh in their minds. Some

¹³ Franklin K. Lane, "The Answer of the Foreign Born," in *The Meaning of America*, Division of the Four Minute Men 33, 29 June 1918, 16.

¹⁴ Lane, "The Answer," 16.

immigrants fled their homelands to escape mandatory military service only to end up in the same system under the Selective Service Act.¹⁵ Despite opposition to the draft, the guidelines set by the government were clear; immigrants, what they called “aliens”, would be classified in four categories in regards to military service.

Firstly, immigrants who were diplomats or held similar positions would be exempt from military service on the basis that they represent a foreign country and work towards the United States’ relations with said country. Second, declarant immigrants, who were permanent residents and professed their intentions of becoming citizens, were obliged to serve. Anyone who refused to do so were seen as reaping the benefits of the government without “sharing the burdens.”¹⁶ Lane’s speech implied that his audience were declarant immigrants given the fact he listed out all of the benefits America has to offer. Next, non-declarant immigrants were straightforwardly exempt from military service. Lastly, “alien enemies” were given special consideration and exempt from service because otherwise, they would be forced to fight against their own country.¹⁷ A notable example were German-Americans whose loyalty was called into question, exacerbated by the fact that the government passed the Espionage Act and the Sedition Act in 1917 and 1918 respectively. Some Four Minute Men speeches followed Washington’s general rhetoric about Germans and employed racist stereotypes which further solidified people’s perceptions about any foreign-born individual. As a whole, the Four Minute Men linked together government policy and preconceived notions about immigrants, consequently producing speeches that re-affirmed the importance of enlistment, both for Americans and non-Americans.

¹⁵ John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 108, 163.

¹⁶ “Second Report of the Provost Marshal General to the Secretary of War on the Operations of the Selective Service System to December 20, 1918”. *United States of America War Office*, 88.

¹⁷ “Second Report of the Provost Marshal,” 88.

Bridging the gaps in labour and the workforce during mass mobilization was a top priority for the government and businesses. The strains put on the agricultural and industrial sectors prompted President Wilson to introduce the “Work or Fight” order on May 17 1918. Anyone who requested an exemption from the military and refused to work would immediately lose their deferment and be forced to enlist.¹⁸ Although this order was introduced months before the August 1918 conscription changes, its obligatory nature and inherent ‘authoritarian’ undertones paved the way for the government to comfortably expand conscription without a severe reaction from the public. To ease the people into this new labour shift, the Four Minute Men emphasised the significance of American work in helping the troops overseas.

The “Mobilizing America’s Man Power” bulletin addressed concerns about mandatory work in the service of supporting the war effort. The convincing argument used was that all of America’s mines, farms, factories, and businesses were at war with the enemy. One of the speeches stated, “the men in the trenches are as dependent upon our assistance as their rifles and their cannon are dependent upon the supplies of ammunition that are brought to them from the rear.”¹⁹ Not only did the Four Minute Men credit weapons manufacturers, but they also acknowledged ordinary labourers who saw their work as mediocre and insignificant. They conveyed a sense of national duty that Americans have a much bigger role to play, whether they were aware of it or not. Connecting the home front to the front lines created a direct link between workers and their products (artillery, machine guns, helmets, and mortars); “It’s work that digs trenches and it’s work that makes shovels to dig those trenches.”²⁰ Not only did this instil

¹⁸ Chambers, *To Raise an Army*, 193-5.

¹⁹ Committee on Public Information, “Mobilizing America’s Man Power,” *Division of the Four Minute Men* 34, 29 July 1918, 22.

²⁰ Committee on Public Information, “Mobilizing America’s Man Power,” 22.

a sense of pride in working Americans, but it also ensured people that their hard work was being recognised by the government.

After addressing workers' concerns, the Four Minute Men shifted the focus to what the government intended to do in terms of organising the workforce. The United States Employment Service was credited as being the solution to the sudden labour shortage in the country.²¹ The service centralised employment by setting up offices to coordinate job placement efforts, created sub-divisions to address infrastructure issues, and coordinated efforts with military personnel. Some of the sub-divisions focused on providing employment for women under the Women in Industry Division, incorporating the youth in agriculture (The Boys Working Reserve), and created the Division of Negro Economics in which employers placed Black Americans in jobs, found housing for them, and tackled workplace racial discrimination.²² Combining the efforts of the Employment Service and the requirements under the Work or Fight order, the Four Minute Men cultivated a concrete message that labour in the name of national duty was the ultimate display of patriotism. In reality, several organisations expressed their opposition to the forced labour order, the most prominent being the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People who called on the President to condemn the selective mobilization of black women only into the workforce.²³ However, speeches either ignored these concerns or reiterated the same government-fed information, further proving that the Four Minute Men were simply mediums of propaganda.

Overall, throughout their speeches in convincing people to mobilize, whether for the military or the workforce, the Four Minute Men employed ideas of loyalty and patriotism to cement their arguments

²¹ Henry P. Guzda, "The US Employment Service at 50: It Too Had to Wait Its Turn," *Monthly Labor Review* 106 (1983): 15.

²² Guzda, "The US Employment Service at 50," 16.

²³ Shillady, John R, "Telegram Regarding forced labour of Women," National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 26 September 1918.

in people's heads. This ensured that all of their speeches were connected by a common idea, as well as provided a concrete justification for the government's policies. Despite the somewhat 'authoritarian' appearance of conscription, the Four Minute Men managed to downplay the extent to which it hindered personal liberties by focusing on the benefits it would bring to the war effort.

Mobilising Minds: Propagandising the Enemy

Convincing people through ideas and images were as important as conscripting them, maybe even more so. Through government rhetoric, the Four Minute Men were able to convince Americans that the ultimate enemy were the Germans, that Prussianism had to be stopped, and that America's allies and democracy were in need of saving.

Throughout the CPI's existence, exploiting the fears and anxieties of Americans was the fundamental basis for their propaganda posters, speeches, and movies. Men were told to fight for their country's honour and freedom, children were encouraged to tell their parents to buy war bonds, industrialists and businessmen were ordered to provide manpower and munitions, and so on. Women in particular were the subjects of numerous propaganda campaigns when the focus landed on German atrocities and crimes. Horrors of the Belgian invasion and the killing of American women on the Lusitania paved the way for the Four Minute Men to do two things; dehumanise the enemy and make emotional appeals to continue the war effort.

The dehumanisation of Germans began with their infamous nickname, "the Hun." Speeches referencing Germans or the German Army would almost always use "the Hun" in lieu of their country's name, evident in "America Will Remember." Coupled with this were verbs that described Germany's actions against victim nations such as Belgium. These included, "ravished [Romania]" and "ravaged and

burned.”²⁴ Language such as this was intentionally chosen to elicit strong emotions from the audience which would then lead up to the speakers convincing them to ‘do something about it.’ Atrocities propaganda by the CPI was one of the most striking aspects of selling the war to Americans, alongside the Four Minute Men speeches. Images of violence waged upon women and children motivated Americans to take revenge or to defend the innocent. Racist depictions of German soldiers as apes or brutes manifested in several posters, the most famous one being Harry Hopps’ “Destroy this Mad Brute!”²⁵

One of the most peculiar details of American atrocity propaganda during the war was the decision to speak about the 1914 invasion of Belgium in propaganda posters, speeches, and films, despite the incident having taken place almost three to four years ago. There were several reasons for this. The first was prolonged American isolationism and neutrality from the beginning of the war up until April 1917. Despite witnessing the horrors unfolding in Belgium, President Wilson declared that the country would remain neutral “in fact as well as in name.”²⁶ This sentiment was coupled by the overwhelming anti-war stance that most Americans subscribed to. However, by 1917, the government had to initiate a pro-war movement in order to support the fight in Europe. Thus, propaganda revived the memories of the “Rape of Belgium” and kickstarted a wave of pro-interventionist rhetoric that allowed for an easier transition from peacetime to wartime.

The second reason was to fuel an already xenophobic and anti-immigrant society into making Germans the scapegoat for past, present, and future crimes. In 1915 President Wilson engaged in heavy anti-immigrant speech, even publicly announcing in Congress that foreign-born Americans were “the

²⁴ Committee on Public Information, “America Will Remember,” In *A Tribute to the Allies*, Division of the Four Minute Men 46, 24 December 1918, 19.

²⁵ See Appendix A.

²⁶ Barnett, Richard J., *The Rockets' Red Glare: When America Goes to War, The Presidents and the People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 140, 144.

poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life.”²⁷ The Four Minute Men used these ideas in their speeches to warn Americans about lurking German spies and to treat every single one of them as suspicious. Even government policy hinted at suspecting anti-American activity, coded as ‘foreigner’ activity, in the Espionage and Sedition Acts.²⁸ Both the government and propaganda divisions worked in tandem to curate the perfect blend of Washington-sponsored xenophobia and disseminated it in posters and speeches.

On a similar note, but a separate idea, was the battle between Americanism and Prussianism. The government encouraged the CPI and the Four Minute Men to fearmonger the public into ushering behind the war effort. This tactic was used extensively when producing anti-German propaganda, as mentioned previously, and was used again when comparing democratic America to autocratic Germany. The Four Minute Men used two key arguments that highlighted President Wilson’s ultimate objective; to put an end to Prussianism. The first was that Prussianism was dominating Europe through conquest and aggression. The second was that Prussianism allowed fierce propaganda to spread anti-American messages.²⁹

Linked to the first argument was Germany’s aggression towards Belgium, Romania, and other conquered territories. In their speech, the Four Minute Men list out attributes of what the Germans think of themselves, mainly pertaining to strength and the idea of “might makes right.” They state, “she [Germany] tells us and the world that the weak have no rights against the strong... between states, there is only one force of right, the right of the strongest. The weak is always the prey of the stronger.”³⁰ This

²⁷ Barnet, *The Rockets' Red Glare*, 146.

²⁸ Committee on Public Information. “The Second Liberty Loan of 1917.” *Division of the Four Minute Men* 17, 8 October 1917, 11.

²⁹ Committee on Public Information. “The Danger to Democracy.” *Division of the Four Minute Men* 24, 18 February 1918, 11.

³⁰ Committee on Public Information, “The Danger to Democracy,” 11.

kind of imagery fed into people's pre-existing conceptions of Germany's pre-disposition to autocratic rule, aggression, and disregard for the sovereignty of smaller states. These ideas stemmed from decades of witnessing Prussianism in Europe, now spilling over into the twentieth century. To support this view, the speech included quotes from Kaiser Wilhelm from his "Proclamation to his Eastern Army" in 1914.³¹

While describing Germany's overarching control within Europe, the Four Minute men exploited people's fears and suspicions of Germans, a consequence of a culmination of factors; the rape of Belgium, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, President Wilson's anti-foreigner comments, and anti-German sentiments across the country. They stated, "already the Kaiser has overrun Middle Europe, Mittel-Europa he calls it. You see he has a German name for it, as if it were already a German province."³² This only reinforced Americans' existing distrust for anything that sounded remotely German, whether that be words, people, or ideas. An attack on German 'aliens' manifested in different ways, but almost all of them cited the Espionage and Sedition Acts in some way, shape, or form. State surveillance targeted 250,000 Germans and Americans of German descent under the auspices of 'protecting America.' Censorship of German newspapers, editors, and even teachers were put in place to protect "clean and pure American boys and girls."³³ This also tied in with the juxtaposition in propaganda posters between the innocent American woman or child and the brutish Prussian.

The claim of anti-American propaganda disseminating in German society did much to portray Germans as easily manipulated by state rhetoric. In their "What Our Enemy Really Is" speech, the Four Minute Men convey the idea that false admiration for Germany is rooted in the Kaiser's intense propaganda scheme.³⁴ This is an ironic point considering Washington's approval of the CPI, the Four

³¹ Kaiser Wilhelm II, "Proclamation to his Eastern Army," In *Thus Spake Germany*, 1941.

³² Committee on Public Information, "The Danger to Democracy," 11.

³³ Charles Johanningsmeier, "World War I, Anti-German Hysteria, the 'Spanish' Flu, and My *Ántonia*, 1917-1919," *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review* 59 (2017): 34.

³⁴ Committee on Public Information, "What Our Enemy Really Is," *Division of the Four Minute Men* 14, 27 August 1917.

Minute Men, and their propaganda programme. The contrast between America's justified propaganda and the Germans' unreliable one lies in the belief that Americanism was superior to Prussianism. Coupled with the anti-German movement was the '100% Americanism' movement, fuelled by government propaganda and encouragement. Americans felt compelled to publicly display their loyalty, whether this entailed putting up an American flag in their house or more extreme measures, such as lynching Germans.³⁵ Americanism was regarded as an idea sans ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Instead, it revolved around social (personal rights, freedom) and political ideas (national unity, strength).³⁶ This was yet another piece of irony or inconsistency within government and CPI policy; to claim Americanism did not bear allegiance to a single nationality, but at the same time, single out Germans and immigrants who professed their loyalty to the United States.

The Four Minute Men made appeals to the people in their support for America's European allies who had been fighting the war much longer than they had been. And while most speeches up until this point referred to threats to American society, the "A Tribute to the Allies" bulletin emphasised the efforts of Russia, Britain, and France in hopes of mobilizing more Americans into supporting the war.

By framing the efforts of the allied powers in a sympathetic way, the Four Minute Men were able to convince the public that the struggles of America were the struggles of France and Britain, in the sense that each country was in a war to save the sanctity of democracy and freedom. One of the speeches, "America Will Remember," showed the collective efforts of all of the allied powers in fighting against the "Hun." It recognised Britain's naval efforts, France's fight at Verdun, Russia's victories, and Italy's prompt declaration of war, and in doing so, implied that Americans were indebted to these nations.³⁷ The idea that America had to honour their 'debt' and fight in Europe tried to reverse some of

³⁵ Johanningsmeier, "World War I, Anti-German Hysteria," 33-35.

³⁶ Chambers, *To Raise an Army*, 94.

³⁷ Committee on Public Information, "A Tribute to the Allies," *Division of the Four Minute Men 46*, 24 December 1918.

the anti-war and isolationist perspectives that still resonated with some people. The “Things to be Remembered” speech follows similar ideas and reiterates the importance of understanding that America’s fight was nothing compared to Europe’s fight: “We do well to be proud of America’s achievement- but what of those who endured four years what we were only beginning to experience!”³⁸

One interesting element in the first speech is the inclusion of Russia in the list of trusted and loyal allies, despite the events of the Russian Revolution having taken place alongside the civil war. The speech states, “we owe a debt to Russia which her present plight invites us to discharge.”³⁹ Sympathies for a communist Russia were hard to come by during the first Red Scare, however, the Four Minute Men’s attempt to portray Russia as a victim of Prussianism alludes to Wilson’s joint address to Congress, just days leading up to his declaration of war. In his speech, he linked the ongoing political unrest in Russia as the product of Prussian autocratic influence.⁴⁰ This connected with some of the other speeches by the Four Minute Men that condemned Germany’s overreliance and overproduction of false propaganda.

“Whenever you hear any argument that is contrary to the avowed policy and military program of the United States Government you can rest assured that it serves no purpose to spread it.”⁴¹ In essence, this was the underlying message of every speech that aimed at justifying the war through supporting anti-German concern, reinforcing American ideas in opposition to Prussianism, and creating a sense of obligation in defending the allies who helped ward off Germany until this point. There was simply no room for questioning government directives.

³⁸ Committee on Public Information, “A Tribute to the Allies.”

³⁹ Committee on Public Information, “A Tribute to the Allies.”

⁴⁰ Woodrow Wilson, “Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany,” *Records of the United States Senate*, 2 April 1917.

⁴¹ Committee on Public Information, “What Our Enemy Really Is,” 7.

Mobilizing Money: The Financial Homefront

Financial endorsements and investments were a crucial aspect of the government's wartime policies. War saving stamps, the Liberty Bond, and the Red Cross served as the gateway to direct involvement in the war without having to serve or fight. Ordinary Americans, especially women and children, were encouraged to give their money to the government under the guise of 'defending democracy.'

The strongest selling point for the Liberty Loan was the connection between buying a loan and saving an American soldier in the front lines. The Four Minute Men acted like a "life insurance agent" who was tasked with getting their audience to purchase government bonds and loans to ensure a soldier had 'life' insurance.⁴² The play on words was intended to convey the severity of the situation but not scare or put the audience on edge. Similarly, some speeches made the same connections between an American individual and the front lines by advocating for the material benefits the loans brought. Just as speakers encouraged workers to keep manufacturing equipment for soldiers, in this case, the speakers encouraged every American to fight against the "barbed-wire entanglements... that waste the precious minutes in the crisis of the attack... the hidden machine guns that open point blank on our charging lines."⁴³ Making a personal connection with the war helped incentivise Americans to happily give away their money to the government in hopes of saving more American troops. The creation of a "financial front" resulted in a total of \$21.4 billion being raised through the loan campaigns.⁴⁴ As evident, the strategy pressed by the CPI and the Four Minute Men managed to yield success.

⁴² Committee on Public Information, "Fourth Liberty Loan," *Division of the Four Minute Men* 39, 12 September 1918, 26.

⁴³ Committee on Public Information, "Fourth Liberty Loan," 26.

⁴⁴ Jennifer D. Keene, "Mobilization: New Powers for the Government," in *The United States and the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 34.

Continuing this cycle of gathering investments were war bond posters. There were two broad themes/images that promoted government bond schemes. The first was using Germans as motivators for investing and the second was using children to encourage parents to buy into these schemes. In relation to beating the Germans, it was implied that the act of buying a single bond or war stamp could ultimately push America closer to victory.⁴⁵ While there were no official statistics in the speeches that supported this point, it was the moral encouragement that mattered the most in ensuring investments would increase. The need to invest was not exclusive to a single class; all working and earning members of society were informed to set aside some money and give it to the government. In return, they were promised their fair share plus interest. Most speeches about government schemes focused on encouraging adults to contribute, while posters depicted innocent children as the propagators of financial support. The War Savings Stamps were introduced to encourage children to earn money, as well as understand why giving away their money was important.⁴⁶ In addition to this, parents felt obligated to protect their innocent children from the terror of the Prussians, thus, incentivising them further into investing in bonds.

Similar to connecting Americans to the front lines was the idea of national duty and patriotism. Although this was a common theme throughout the various speeches of the Four Minute Men, it was most frequently employed in speeches regarding the Liberty Loans, the Red Cross, and government bonds. Here, patriotism was at odds with Prussian support for the Kaiser and his aims. Americans were told to “look at the Prussian peasant who gives his all... as he has been taught, that means self-sacrifice for the common good.” and asked, “will you let that Prussian peasant prove himself more loyal to the Kaiser than you are to your flag?”⁴⁷ The explicit comparison questioned people’s dedication towards the

⁴⁵ Keene, “Mobilization,” 34-5.

⁴⁶ Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 174-6.

⁴⁷ Committee on Public Information, “The Second Liberty Loan of 1917,” 11.

war effort, in a way that invertedly questioned their loyalty to their country as well. With the Espionage Act still fresh in its inception, no American wanted their loyalty under suspicion, especially in regards to anything related to the Germans. Fears such as these were obviously exploited, one notable example being, “Do not let that German spy hear and report that you are a slacker. Don’t let him tell the Berlin Government that there is no need to worry about the people... that they are not patriots.”⁴⁸

There is also an element of conformity within the speeches that address the Liberty loans and bonds. The main message delivered was that if someone did not buy a loan, they were not an American; they were not like the rest of the “good loyal patriotic” Americans who did give away their money.⁴⁹ Additionally, in connection with the notion that buying a bond would bring the country closer to victory, the Four Minute Men brought together memories of Lusitania, images of American women and children being killed and pushed for a stronger endorsement of the war.⁵⁰ The threat of working for a “German master later on” ensured that people would be united under a common cause that aimed at protecting Americans, safeguarding democracy, and defeating the Germans.

Ultimately, what tied all of the speeches about the Liberty loans and bonds, apart from fulfilling a patriotic service, was the idea that the government was the most trustworthy institution in the entire war. From financial schemes to conscription and propaganda, the government wanted to ensure that Americans placed their trust in the President, which in turn would make mobilization for the war much easier and more efficient. The close functions of the CPI, the Four Minute Men, and the government meant that speeches and public material would paint President Wilson and his administration in a positive light. No where else is this more prevalent than in the Four Minute Men speeches.

⁴⁸ Committee on Public Information, “The Second Liberty Loan of 1917,” 11.

⁴⁹ Committee on Public Information, “The Second Liberty Loan of 1917,” 11.

⁵⁰ Committee on Public Information, “The Second Liberty Loan of 1917,” 11.

Some speeches reiterated the guarantees set by the government in regards to people's money, reassuring the audience, "we all should save- and then put our money in the safest place: and what other place is as safe as the Treasury of the United States?" Another speech states that "[Liberty Bonds] are the safest security in which you can invest in today." This message resonated well with lower class Americans, especially when considering the fact that they would not have thought about giving away any leftover money if it meant buying additional food or resources. Official tax revenue numbers show that more than seventy percent of Americans whose incomes were just over \$2,000 annually made a purchase for a government bond.⁵¹

With the Espionage and Sedition Acts in the background, Americans were steered to believe that the government had their best interests at heart. And given the degree to which President Wilson restricted civil liberties through the CPI's censorship campaign, the introduction of propaganda schemes, and mandatory conscription, it was evident that the government needed a friendly face. Otherwise, they could not have managed to convince people to give them their money on top of their boys and men, their labour, and their loyalty.

Conclusion

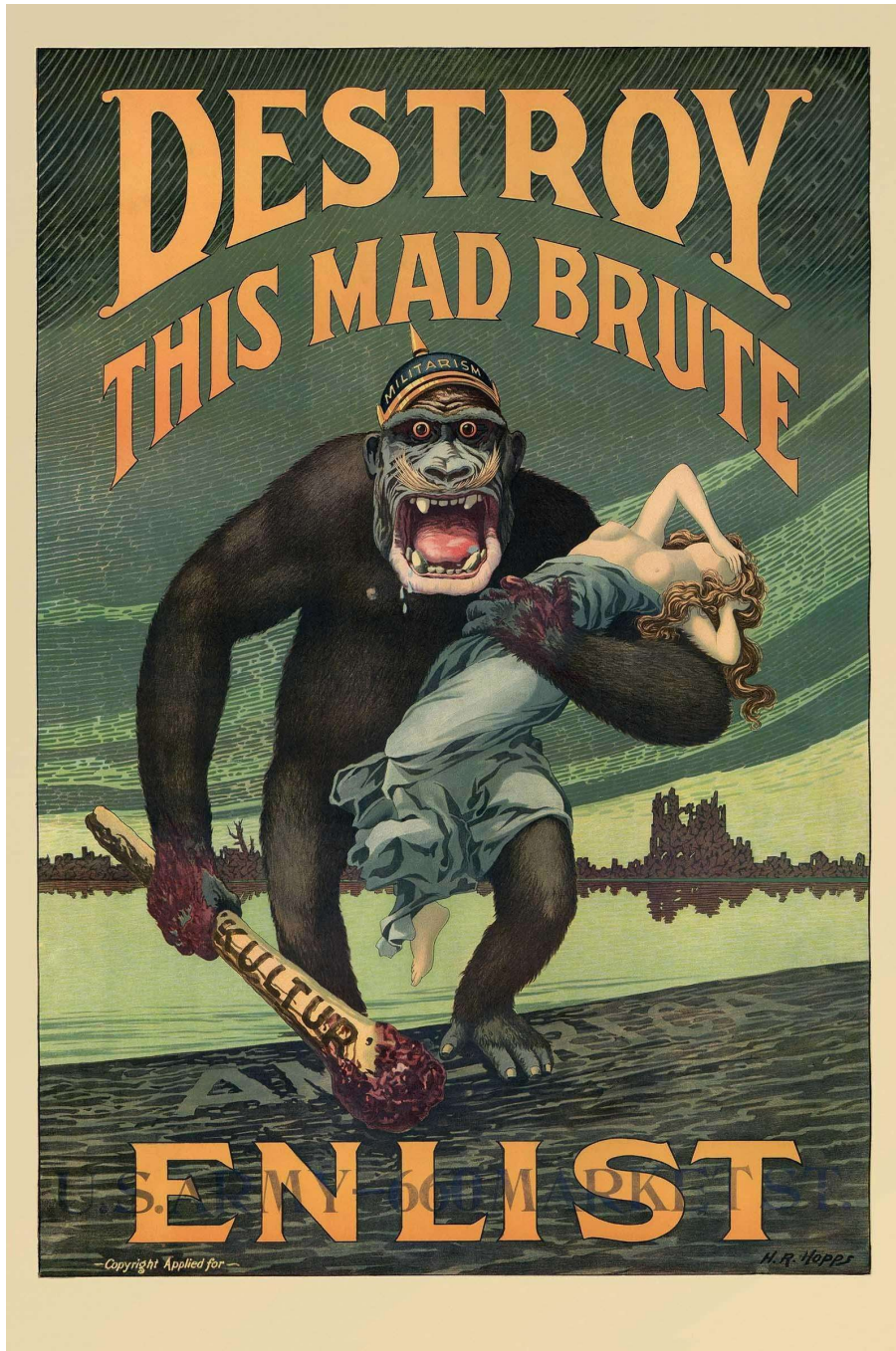
Overall, the Four Minute Men, to a larger extent, did relay government information, set the national tone, and supported whatever rhetoric was introduced. During policy implementations, speeches focused on the benefits of supporting the government, as seen during the years of the Selective Service Act and its changes in 1918. On issues that required some restrictions on civil liberties, like the "Work or Fight" order, the Four Minute Men deflected by speaking about the boys and men overseas and the severity of their sacrifice compared to the audience back home. In order to fulfil a propagandist role,

⁵¹ Keene, "Mobilization," 35.

speeches reflected pre-existing xenophobic and anti-foreigner rhetoric and coincided these images with the CPI's poster and film campaigns. What linked all of these themes together was the need to use patriotism and national obligation in the fight against the Germans, as well as follow government directive, regardless of any inconsistencies or ironies. The exploitation of people's fears by both the government and the Four Minute Men aided in ushering men into the army, women and children into government bond schemes, and everyone else into a fight against Prussianism on domestic land.

Appendix

Appendix A: "Destroy this Mad Brute"



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