

PROGRESSIVISM'S LAST CRUSADE:
RAYMOND FOSDICK, GEORGE CREEL,
AND THE MORAL MOBILIZATION OF AMERICA
IN WORLD WAR I

Alexandra Petri

For many Americans, World War I hinged far more essentially on what was going on “over here” than on the fighting “over there.” The military aspects of United States engagement took a back seat for some to the war effort, and there was a vast home-front campaign to support the troops and improve American character on Progressive lines. Leaders in the Wilson administration saw the war as the perfect opportunity to put the ideals and methodologies of Progressivism into practice. Using the techniques of advertising, George Creel, head of the newly founded Committee on Public Information (CPI), promoted the war as a national crusade. Creel recognized that this was a “fight for the minds of men, for the ‘conquest of their convictions.’” and, as a consequence, that “the battle-line ran through every home in every country.”¹ The battle-line also ran through the tents of thousands of soldiers bivouacked in camps across the nation, where Raymond Fosdick, head of the Federal Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA), set forth to “make a new environment for the soldier...that will...return him finally to his

Alexandra Petri is a Senior at the National Cathedral School in Washington, DC, where she wrote this paper for David Zimand's AP United States History course in the 2004/2005 academic year.

artists across the nation spread Creel's gospel of this new, just, and thoroughly Progressive war. "We were fighting for ideas and ideals," Creel noted, "and somebody who realized that, and knew it, had to say it and keep on saying it until it was believed."³⁰ Say it he did. So did 75,000 others, in movie theaters and public spaces across the nation—the Four-Minute Men.³¹

The Four-Minute Men formed one of the most successful and broad-ranging branches of Creel's Progressive propaganda machine. Originating outside the CPI, this organization of patriotic speech-givers sprang spontaneously from the impulse to community engagement in the population at large. A young Chicagoan, Donald Ryerson, and his friends had been experimenting with the idea of patriotic speech-giving in Chicago. Their first efforts met with success, and Ryerson hastened to Washington to lay his idea before Creel, who saw quickly that he could tap this volunteer impulse to serve the promotion of the war. Creel readily accepted Ryerson's plan and set about putting it into practice. As it turned out, he was not a moment too soon. June 5, 1917 was the date of the first draft registration, under the recently passed Selective Service Act, and some feared this measure might provoke some riots. Thus, when talented speakers, according to Creel, "volunteered by the thousand in every state," the first topic on which they were assigned to speak was "Universal Service by Selective Draft." Their audiences, in movie theaters across the country, proved receptive—when it came time to register, the draft proceeded without a hitch. The Four-Minute Men served not merely as a manifestation, but also as an agent of patriotic feeling, and Creel maintained as much control over his Army of speakers as was practical. His appointed leaders issued weekly to monthly bulletins of speaking points, with encouragements to add a personal touch. Those speakers who failed to hold their audiences were dismissed.³²

The sheer scale of the Four-Minute Men's efforts and success bore witness to the power of the Progressive notion of direct community engagement. The Four-Minute Men expanded to address churches, fraternal organizations, lodges, and labor

unions. Some communities even went so far as to arrange speakers in Hungarian or Yiddish to address gatherings in ethnic neighborhoods. Squads of College and Junior Four-Minute Men also formed, and the youth organization proved especially successful. Many high schools held contests in which students submitted speeches on the assigned topic of the Four-Minute Men. The winners received special certificates from the government, "commissioning them as four-minute speakers upon the specified topic of the contest."³³ Overall, Creel estimated that a million speeches—heard by 400,000,000 individuals—were given over the 18-month existence of the Four-Minute Men, at a cost of only \$101,555.10 to the government. Each of the 75,000 speakers, as Creel noted, "gave not only his time, but had to foot his own bills, no matter what the amount."³⁴ Those who delivered stirring speeches across the nation spoke *gratis*, revealing the power of the volunteer spirit—a spirit which perhaps mingled with the desire for exposure, but which nonetheless produced an unprecedented public display of patriotism at a remarkably low cost.

By September of 1918, the *Four-Minute Men Bulletin* contained another manifestation of the Progressive fervor that Creel's efforts were helping to fan: publicly orchestrated patriotic singing. Selected songs—from popular tunes of the day such as "Saving Food" and "Helping On" to patriotic classics "America" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"—were issued to the speakers, who were either to lead group singing themselves or to appoint a suitable song leader and join in heartily. The *Four-Minute Men News* noted that "the human mind responds most readily to music and song. Stir us with inspiring song and there is no task too great for us to attempt."³⁵ According to Creel, the innovation was "forced by a general demand...People seemed to want to exercise their voices in moments of patriotism."³⁶ Like the Four-Minute Men organization itself, the program of mass singing in movie theaters and public spaces arose out of patriotic impulses within the population at large. Singers across the nation needed no prodding from Creel to burst into song.

Creel's mobilization of visual artists, by contrast, revealed a more conscious effort to place Progressive forces squarely behind the war effort. Seizing on the patriotic fervor and enthusiasm of visual artists such as Charles Dana Gibson, of "Gibson Girl" fame,³⁷ Creel cultivated a fountainhead of artistic inspiration which wed patriotic and Progressive idealism. By May 20, 1917, Gibson had taken charge of a committee of artists and illustrators who would form the CPI's Division of Pictorial Publicity. The very formation of this committee typified the institutional approach to social issues characteristic of the era. Gibson sought to coordinate the needs of government departments for poster designs with the artists likely to provide them. "It is the greatest opportunity the artists have ever had to serve their country," Gibson observed to the *New York Times*.³⁸ Yet, as Gibson made clear, this collaboration would not consist of artists engaged in:

the picturization of coal, wheat, ammunition, clothing, and the thousand other things that must be conserved to bring victory against Germany. These were not the things with which to fire the imagination and stir the heart of the great American people.³⁹

Gibson and his committee undertook to do more than illustrate. They sought to inspire.

Few set forth the uplifting character of the Progressive war effort in such glowing words and images as Gibson, who proved an ideal—and idealistic—ally in Creel's efforts to enlist the minds and hearts of the American people. Gibson conceived the war in visionary terms, terms born out in his posters and in the influence he brought to bear on the other artists involved in the war effort. "We have been looking at this matter heretofore too much from the material side," he noted. "We must see more of the spiritual side of the conflict. We must picture the great aims of this country in fighting this war."⁴⁰ Money could not have bought such publicity. Gibson could well appeal to great aims and spiritual elements of conflict because America's war effort had become, in the hands of Creel and other home-front Progressives, not a military but a moral undertaking, an effort to mobilize the whole nation in the service of Progressive ideology.

Gibson's idealistic appeals generated a vast outpouring of support. Images from his campaigns entered the collective psyche—even contemporary poetry, where poet Wallace Irwin wrote of “the Christy Girl wishing that she was a boy...the Montie Flagg guy...[inviting] the public to Tell the Marines.”⁴¹ As Creel himself noted, “I had the conviction that the poster must play a great part in the fight for public opinion. The printed word might not be read, people might not choose to attend meetings or to watch motion pictures but the billboard was something that caught even the most indifferent eye.”⁴² Creel calculated that, over the course of the war, the Division of Pictorial Publicity accounted for 1,438 separate designs for 58 separate departments. These were not merely displayed on city walls and windows, however. The posters “represented the best work of the best artists,” and Creel showed them proudly in exhibitions of originals.⁴³ In his campaign to win the public over to the war effort, Creel drew on the idealistic support of Gibson and other artists for all they were worth.

The support of Gibson and the other “fighters that trooped from the studio door,” again in the poet Irwin's words, testified to the ideals engaged by Creel's efforts to sell the war.⁴⁴ A remark of Gibson's to the *New York Times* expressed the extent of Creel's success:

I am amazed at the way in which my viewpoint has been changed by this war, and I take it that the viewpoint of every other man has been similarly changed. We can no longer be content with the things and conditions we formerly accepted. We are beginning to be more unselfish. We are not so grouchy, nor impatient...There can be no peace of mind to any artist unless he can find a way to contribute to the country.⁴⁵

This was the essence of the idealism which Creel used to rally Americans—a large number of artists among them—to the flag during World War I. The dissatisfaction with formerly accepted conditions, the desire to contribute, and the increased altruism which Gibson found in his engagement with the war were all fundamentally Progressive. World War I's success at home marked not merely the successful mobilization of Progressive impulses but also the triumph of Creel and the Wilson administration in making the cause of war the cause of Progressivism.

“Return To Normalcy”

On the whole, both Fosdick and Creel met with great success in their campaigns. In this “fight for the minds of men,” Fosdick on the military front and Creel on the civilian front, sought to fuse the nation into a “white-hot mass,” which would emerge from the crucible of war united behind the cause of Progressivism.⁴⁶ Yet their very success in wedding the cause of Progressivism to the cause of war contributed to the weakening of the movement. When the war ended before many of the troops had seen action, disillusionment with Progressivism set in swiftly.

With the war over, there was no need for Fosdick to shape the morals of America’s soldiers and civilians or for Creel to advertise the war effort. After the end of hostilities, Congress ceased support of Creel’s propagandizing efforts and cut off his funding. Creel watched from the sidelines, his machine for public opinion dismantled, as Wilson’s proposal for the League of Nations failed for want of support. Without Creel to advertise it, there was little hope for this application of Progressive idealism on an international scale. The public that had responded so readily to his appeals throughout 1917 and 1918, now turned against the war. Signs went up in the nation’s theaters prohibiting the singing of war songs at intermission.⁴⁷ The war’s great popularity had produced a sharp backlash. With the dismantling of the machine that had engaged them in the national crusade, the public became determinedly indifferent. The Four-Minute Men, which had grown to become a vast and diversified body of volunteer speakers by war’s end, ultimately found themselves inextricably tied to the home-front campaign. While they expanded their talks to include topics unrelated to war such as fire prevention, they nonetheless disbanded almost immediately after the war ended, rallying one last time in support of the Red Cross Christmas Roll Call Campaign. The speakers ceased their service along with the soldiers themselves, and Woodrow Wilson sent them a letter accompanying their “honorable discharge from the service,” commending

"the patriotic co-operation and assistance accorded me throughout this period...in the achievement of our aims."⁴⁸ The Four-Minute Men, like so many other Progressive initiatives of the Wilson administration, were too deeply entrenched in the war effort to survive the Armistice.

Fosdick faced similar issues of disillusionment as the men poured back from France. Although free of venereal disease, the troops had caught the post-war malaise which paralyzed the youth of Europe. Fosdick's edifice of virtue based on prohibition and the suppression of "vice" crumbled as young veterans across the nation plunged into the delights of the Jazz Age.

With the 1920 election of Harding to the rallying cry of a "return to normalcy," a chapter in American history drew to a close. The success of Creel and Fosdick in linking Progressivism to the war effort had in fact hastened the end of the movement they supported. Their mobilization of America, though wildly successful while the war lasted, brought about the end of Progressive dominance in American social and political life.



¹ George Creel, How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920) p. 3

² "Making Vice Unattractive in Soldiers' Camps," New York Times Magazine (20 May 1917)

³ "US Army Morals and Recreations," New York Times (4 August 1918)

⁴ Part of a headline from an August 4, 1918 article in the New York Times reporting Raymond Fosdick's comments after a visit to the troops. "US Army Morals and Recreations: Raymond B. Fosdick, Just Back from France, Says It Is Up to This Nation to be Worthy of Its Army," New York Times (4 August 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. 41

⁵ "Making Vice Unattractive"

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "US Army Morals and Recreations"

⁸ "Barring Sex Disease from the American Army," New York Times Magazine (28 October 1917) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. SM6

⁹ Ibid., p. SM6

¹⁰ Ibid., p. SM6

¹¹ Ibid., p. SM6

¹² Ibid., p. SM6

¹³ Ibid., p. SM6

¹⁴ Ibid., p. SM6

¹⁵ "Homes Dry to Soldiers," New York Times (2 July 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. 5

¹⁶ "Making Vice Unpopular in Camp," New York Times (16 December 1917)

¹⁷ Edwin Marcus, "Let 'er burn! We come first," (cartoon) New York Times Magazine (16 December 1917) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 12 February 2005, p. SM3

¹⁸ "Making Vice Unattractive"

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "The War and the Screen" New York Times (14 July 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-1995) [online database]: accessed 18 March 2005, p. 35

²¹ Ibid., p. 35

²² Ibid., p. 35

²³ "Real Theatres in Every National Army Camp," New York Times Magazine (4 November 1917) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-1995) [online database]: accessed 18 March 2005, p. SM3. Perhaps the Commission had been getting ahead of itself. The new Liberty theaters seemed to fit in so naturally with its campaign to make clean entertainment readily available to the soldiers that Klaw later had to dispel "an erroneous impression that the camp entertainments are free. That is not so, although the price will be kept as low as possible to make them self-sustaining."

"Smileage Book Campaign," New York Times (30 January 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. 7

²⁴ "Musical Shows in Camps," New York Times (3 May 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. 13

²⁵ "Making Vice Unattractive"; "Real Theatres in Every National Army Camp"

²⁶ "Want Men Entertained," New York Times (7 May 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. 14

²⁷ "US Army Morals and Recreations"

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Woodrow Wilson, "To all the Four-Minute Men of the Committee on Public Information" (29 November 1918) printed in George Creel, How We Advertised America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920) pp. 97-98

³⁰ Creel, p. xiii

³¹ Ibid., p. 85

³² Ibid., pp. 84-98

³³ Ibid., p. 92

³⁴ Ibid., p. 95

³⁵ "Four-Minute Men News," Edition E, quoted in Alfred E. Cornebise, War as Advertised—The Four-Minute Men and America's Crusade, 1917-1918 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1984) p. 146

³⁶ Creel, p. 93

³⁷ C. D. Gibson's "Gibson Girl" graced the covers of many magazines of the prewar era with her pinned-up hair and feminine appearance; she was for the pre-war period what the flapper would be for the "Roaring Twenties."

³⁸ "C. D. Gibson's Committee for Patriotic Posters," New York Times (20 January 1918)

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Wallace Irwin, "Thoughts Inspired By a War-Time Billboard," quoted in Creel, pp. 140-141

⁴² Creel, p. 134

⁴³ The New York Times announced on February 25, 1918 that "an exhibition of war poster art opens this afternoon at the Hotel Ansonia." "To Exhibit War Posters," New York Times (25 February 1918) in ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) [online database]: accessed 5 February 2005, p. 5

⁴⁴ Wallace, quoted in Creel

⁴⁵ "C. D. Gibson's Committee for Patriotic Posters," New York Times (20 January 1918)

⁴⁶ Creel, p. 5

⁴⁷ David Ewen, The Life and Death of Tin Pan Alley: The Golden Age of American Popular Music (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1964) pp. 246-247

⁴⁸ Wilson quotation from November 29, 1918 letter of Wilson "To all the Four-Minute Men of the Committee on Public Information" cited in Creel. Other information on the Four-Minute Men from Creel, in the chapter "The Four-Minute Men" (pp. 84-98) in How We Advertised America.

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home a better man than when he left it.”² The Army provided an ideal venue for reform, granting Fosdick and his Commission a measure of supervision which made it possible to implement Progressive measures on an unprecedented scale. Once they had established that such initiatives would benefit American servicemen, men like Fosdick received *carte blanche* to carry their campaigns into the civilian arena. Summoning Progressive impulses to community engagement, cohesion, and social control, Fosdick and Creel made the cause of war the cause of Progressivism.

Both Fosdick in his reforms, and Creel in his advertising campaign, met with what seemed to be great success. The Great War was very popular while it lasted. The American soldier, Fosdick declared, was the best-taken-care-of, most moral soldier to be found in France.³ Creel and Fosdick both drew legions of volunteers to bolster their campaigns. People across the nation rallied behind the war effort, singing patriotic songs, listening to patriotic speeches, and joining their communities to the efforts of Army commissions suppressing vice. When the war ended before half of the troops had seen action, however, disillusionment spread across the country. Wilson’s legacy and Progressivism met with resounding defeat in the elections of 1920. Americans plunged into the Jazz Age and largely abandoned the moralizing impulses which had often characterized the war effort. Ultimately, Fosdick and Creel’s vision of an America transformed by war proved as transient as America’s part in the war itself.

“It Is Up To This Nation To Be Worthy Of Its Army”⁴

Heading the Federal Commission on Training Camp Activities, Raymond B. Fosdick crafted programs of moral improvement for American soldiers and civilians that gave expression to the impulses of Progressivism. The Progressives’ anti-corruption, pro-reform stance had become political orthodoxy by the 1912 elections, in which all three major parties ran on some variant of a Progressive platform. The movement drew its main

"The War and the Screen," New York Times 14 July 1918, p. 35. Database online. Available from ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-1995) accessed 18 March 2005

"To Exhibit War Posters," New York Times 25 February 1918, p. 5. Database online. Available from ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) accessed 5 February 2005

"US Army Morals and Recreations: Raymond B. Fosdick, Just Back from France, Says It Is Up to This Nation to be Worthy of Its Army," New York Times 4 August 1918, p. 41 Database online. Available from ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) accessed 5 February 2005

"Want Men Entertained," New York Times 7 May 1918, p. 14. Database online. Available from ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2001) accessed 5 February 2005

support from the rising middle class, then coming of age and dissatisfied with the moral and social results of industrialization. Progressives favored governmental and institutional solutions to social ills. Outside the political arena, they relied on direct engagement to solve problems in their own communities.

With the Progressive commitment to social justice also came the impulse for social control. The institutions founded by Progressives to address social problems also acted as agents of moral uplift, influencing those who entered their doors according to ideals of unity, volunteerism, and probity. This moral imperative fueled reforms and fortified the Progressive struggle against governmental corruption and the evils of industrialization. It also inspired a commitment to investigative journalism and the application of scientific methodology to solve human problems.

With America's entry into the World War, the Wilson administration recognized that the Army provided an ideal proving ground—and justification—for Progressive reforms, and Fosdick and the CTCA set about implementing cherished anti-alcohol and anti-vice programs among servicemen. Otherwise referred to as the "Commission that Will Try to Banish Camp Temptations," the Commission on Training Camp Activities set itself two goals to keep the training camps for the armed forces as "free from vice and drunkenness as it is humanly possible to make them" and to stimulate "rational recreational facilities."⁵ It coordinated with the YMCA, the YWCA, and amateur and professional theater companies to provide the troops with clean and healthful forms of entertainment, while at the same time working with the communities in five-mile restrictive zones around the camps to blot out vice and alcohol. According to Fosdick, the draft made these steps to protect the morals of American soldiers incumbent on the government. "A man might volunteer for service and run his chance with vicious surroundings," he noted. "When conscription comes into play, however, the Government itself must assume the responsibility for eliminating these evils."⁶ Neither "vice" nor alcohol clearly harmed the morale of American soldiers; prostitution and intemperance, however, had long been objects of Pro-

gressive ire. The campaign to keep "vice" and drunkenness out of America's training camps thus simply continued, on a larger scale, ongoing efforts at social reform. The CTCA created five-mile zones around the camps, under the control of the federal government, from which prostitutes and alcohol were vigorously excluded. It sought to enlist the support of neighboring communities, and it invoked national organizations such as the YWCA to provide alternative forms of amusement. By 1918, Fosdick could boast of an Army whose morals he had reshaped on Progressive lines: "It is not a question of whether our fellows overseas are worthy of us and our traditions. The question is whether we are worthy of them."⁷

Under Fosdick's aegis, the anti-vice campaign proved an especially successful marriage of Progressive ideals and methods to the war effort. At its helm stood William Zinsser, Chairman of the Sub-Committee for Civilian Co-operation in Combating Venereal Disease of the Council of National Defense. The very name of this committee bore testimony to the institutional Progressive approach to reform. Zinsser divided the campaign against "vice" and venereal disease into three major parts—the work within the Army camps, the work in the government-controlled five-mile zones around the camps, and the work beyond the five-mile limit. Especially within the camps, the campaign sought to give exposure to the sensitive subject of venereal disease. "This war is doing one good thing," Zinsser remarked. "It is making people speak out loud about a subject that before was either ignored or dealt with in whispers."⁸ Soldiers now found themselves subjected to testing, and those who were afflicted with VD received specialized medical treatment, treatment before offered by only a few hospitals in the entire United States.⁹ Both Zinsser's exposure of VD to the public as a serious issue and his application of medical expertise echoed typical Progressive methodologies.

Moving beyond the camps themselves into the five-mile radius, the anti-vice campaign continued the Progressive moral platform. The CTCA's zones around each camp were, in Zinsser's words, "directly in the charge of the Federal government, and prostitutes and alcohol are rigorously excluded from them."

Placing control of vulnerable areas in the hands of the federal government expressed a belief in government as a force for positive social change. Simultaneously, Zinsser appealed to the power of a grass-roots movement for the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice. He sent thousands of letters to local residents to impress upon them the vital necessity of keeping their communities clean. The response was overwhelming. Thousands of people from across the country pledged enthusiastic support for his campaign. A "moral wave," he proclaimed, was flooding across America.¹⁰

Outside the five-mile zone, Zinsser seized the opportunity to reform the civilian along with the soldier. He struck not merely at the institution of prostitution but also at the governmental corruption which let it go unchecked. In his campaign on behalf of America's soldiers, Zinsser sought to undermine the crooked establishment that had long been a target of Progressive zeal. "We are not going [to] the authorities in the towns in the zones where we are working," he warned:

That would be the wrong way....As matters stand now, there may be graft among officials in some communities—some of them may even be getting a "rake-off" from the proceeds of the disorderly houses in their districts, and may be glad to have as many soldiers as possible frequent those houses—so efforts at cleaning up the communities by appeal to the authorities might strike indifference and worse.¹¹

Political corruption, in the face of Zinsser's crusade, became not merely a civic problem but an active threat to American soldiers. The CTCA took advantage of the mandate to suppress venereal disease within the Army and closed down entire red-light districts, even the thriving district of New Orleans. And these reforms produced promising results. Zinsser deployed a "young college man" to "wander through the streets of a number of Southern towns notorious for the prevalence of vice in their midst and learn about conditions by looking dapper and getting women to solicit him." Thanks to the CTCA's clean-up efforts, the young man "was solicited exactly once" in towns "where, a short time ago, it would have been nothing out of the ordinary if he had been solicited twenty times."¹²

Surveillance, informational campaigns to discourage civilians from resorting to houses of ill repute, and attempts to close down red-light districts and place prostitutes in decent employment comprised the remainder of the outside-camp campaign. All these strategies had characterized pre-war Progressive anti-vice crusades. Indeed, Zinsser attributed much of his success to the "work which has been done in past years by...similar organizations."¹³ Although Zinsser's campaign echoed these earlier efforts, it operated on a scale and with a measure of control far beyond what they had possessed. The high level of cooperation he received testified to the ascendancy of Progressive ideology in the war effort. "A few years ago," as Zinsser noted, "if we talked about starting a campaign like the one we're fighting now, people would have called us long-haired visionary reformers." As it was, Zinsser's campaign succeeded brilliantly. The red light districts in reach of the Fort Worth, Spartanburg, Louisville, Petersburg, and El Paso camps were all effectively shut down. Across the country, civilians answered Zinsser's call to "Do Your Bit to Keep Him Fit."¹⁴

The reformers' cause of prohibition also received a boost from the war effort. On July 1, 1918, regulations issued by Secretary of War Newton Baker and President Wilson forbade "furnishing liquor to officers and men of the Army within private homes."¹⁵ Saloon keepers around the camps—even those outside the dry five-mile zones—received warnings against serving liquor to the troops, with "the hint dropped early" to caution saloon keepers around Camp Upton "that it might be necessary to extend the prohibitory areas."¹⁶ Forbidding alcohol to the fighting men was by no means a necessary war measure. It even marked a departure from practices in Europe, where soldiers received special rations of rum before entering battle. This Army-wide prohibition was simply a Progressive reform granted urgency and legitimacy by the war effort. Indeed, by December of 1917, the government's efforts to institute reforms through the war effort had become so patent that a cartoon depicted the figure of Prohibition halting a Congressional fire truck dashing towards the War, with the clear implication that the actual war effort was being neglected in favor of the Progressives' other "war" for social reform.¹⁷

War-time reform also included positive measures to ensure troops' good behavior. Fosdick's belief that "too many of the evils surrounding camp life in the past are traceable to the lack of adequate amusement and rational recreation for the soldier" spurred an intense campaign to promote acceptable forms of entertainment.¹⁸ His commission offered the troops athletic sports and games—in which these "healthy, red-blooded men" could give vent to their "surplus energies"; canteens run by the YWCA—in which they could associate with women in socially acceptable surroundings, and theatricals, movies, and community song for the rest of their leisure time.¹⁹

The quest to promote troop virtue through the movies operated with a characteristic Progressive reliance on volunteerism. Numerous national campaigns sprang up to provide troop access to films. The YMCA and the Film Division of the CPI, between them, provided tens of thousands of feet of film to the Army, free of charge.²⁰ The *New York Times* reported that "the YMCA wants every soldier to enjoy the movies, not excepting those who are forced by wounds and illness to lie on their sides and backs."²¹ Such powerful patriotic desires resulted in ingenious devices for projecting movies on walls and ceilings simultaneously, practices which, the *Times* reported, "worked out successfully" when tried at Camp Dix.²² The Progressive crusade to get soldiers into the pictures and away from halls of vice also gave birth to the "Smileage" campaign. Marc Klaw, the member of the Commission on Training Camp Activities who represented the theatrical business, originated the concept. To raise funds for 16 Liberty Theaters in the nation's training camps, he placed on sale books of coupons entitling soldiers to admission at the movies. "We have given them the name of 'Smileage Books,'" he explained, "so many smiles for the boys in the camp, and you are to buy them with a smile, glad of the opportunity to give pleasure to men who later will make such great sacrifices for us on the battlefield in France."²³ By buying Klaw's "Smileage Books," civilians could do their share to guarantee that servicemen engaged in acceptable pursuits.

Theatricals, another approved outlet for the "surplus energies" of America's soldiers, became a source of conflict

between Fosdick and Claw's impulse to engage in social control and the desires of the servicemen themselves. Both groups frequently demanded theatrical performances, although they had different kinds of performance in mind. In May of 1918, the *New York Times* reported, "The demand for musical shows exceeds that for any other style of entertainment in the camps," but added that "the quality of the fare offered the men to date has been the cause of some dissatisfaction."²⁴ The CTCA duly arranged for the transportation of musical comedy companies to the camps, where they performed such pieces as "The Midnight Girl" and "Oh, I Say." Yet while the commissioners sated the servicemen's craving for professional theatrics, they continued to pursue amateur theater. "There should be dramatics...preferably with the boys taking part," stipulated Fosdick. Klaw likewise urged:

a special effort...to organize amateur entertainments from among the men themselves....Our plans do not contemplate supplying professional entertainment for the troops after they go abroad. All the more important, therefore, that they, while in camp here, be taught to provide their own fun.²⁵

By training the "boys" to produce their own theatricals, Klaw and Fosdick aimed not only to provide them with profitable amusement "over here" but also to safe-guard their virtue "over there." Indeed, much of Fosdick and Klaw's concern about entertainment stemmed from concerns about what the troops might do when they got to Europe. Within the 16 Army training camps in the United States, the CTCA could exercise a large measure of control. Once they were abroad, however, red-blooded American servicemen might fall prey to European vice. The system of positive entertainment had to be self-sustaining.

The entertainment measures undertaken by Fosdick and Klaw also faced challenges beyond the servicemen themselves. In May of 1918, Fosdick found himself denying that the complex array of diversions provided to the troops was sapping their fighting strength. "The time has no more come [to 'keep hands off' our men in service] than the time has come to stop conserving wheat or supporting government loans," he protested to the *New York Times*.²⁶ In order for the Americans in France to be the models

of "devotion, unselfishness, cheer under hardship... honor... fortitude and courage" that Fosdick claimed them to be, the American public had to continue providing them with acceptable entertainment.²⁷ Fosdick's vast array of "Smileage Books," cinemas, and amateur theatrics—however frivolous it appeared to his critics—was simply a means of exerting control over the mass of conscripted men.

By all appearances, this proved effective. Fosdick's 1918 visit to the troops provided fertile support for his claims that the men returned from war better and nobler than they had come to it. "Our fellows are living on a plane such as men seldom attain," he commented. "They make the people who piously condemn their morals back home look small and mean."²⁸ Indeed, troop morals were excellent. After all Zinsser's efforts, the rate of venereal disease among the troops was less than one percent, far better than in the civilian population. In Fosdick's eyes, the soldiers presented an uplifting example for the nation at large—a testimony to what reform could achieve.

"Holding Fast The Inner Lines"²⁹

It was for George Creel to carry the momentum of these reforms into the civilian arena, with a massive advertising campaign that carried the line of battle into homes across America. At the heart of this venture lay the mobilization of Progressive impulses in the service of the cause of war. An ex-newspaperman himself, Creel had long been exposed to the power of the advertisement. He now sought to sell the war by invoking Progressive ideals and methodologies. Organizations such as the Four-Minute Men and the Committee of Public Information's Division of Pictorial Publicity mobilized the volunteer spirit to weld the cause of war to ennobling Progressive reforms. Creel's immense propaganda machine encompassed the nation, overwhelming the initial reservations of a country which had re-elected President Wilson on the slogan "He Kept Us Out Of War." Speakers, singers, and