

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Undergraduate Theses and Professional Papers

2017

They Called It Patriotism

Darla C. Shelton

University of Montana, Christine.shelton@umconnect.umt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/utpp>



Part of the [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Shelton, Darla C., "They Called It Patriotism" (2017). *Undergraduate Theses and Professional Papers*. 165.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/utpp/165>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Theses and Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

In his Political Observations, James Madison warned,

Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it compromises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all of the means of seducing the minds, are added to those of subduing the force, of the people. The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes, and opportunities of fraud, growing out of a state of war, and in the degeneracy of manners and of morals, engendered by both. *No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.*¹

War expands political power, ensures profits for private businesses and bankers, and destroys families. World War I demonstrated the very behaviors Madison warned about. Though the United States declared neutrality at the start of the Great War, merchants were free to do business with the Allies and the Central Powers. Congressman Henry Vollmer of Iowa stated the United States is, "...the arch hypocrite among nations...praying for peace...while furnishing the instruments of murder to one side only."² While bankers and merchants of war materiel made millions, and even billions, of dollars during the war, Americans were forced to sacrifice their sons, food, money, and civil liberties under the guise of patriotism and receiving little measurable benefit for their efforts. The real cost of war is life and liberty.

President Woodrow Wilson declared the United States' neutrality August 4, 1914.

However, business men were not asked to withhold trade from the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire or the Allies, made up of England, France, Belgium, Serbia, and Russia. The British's greatest strength lay with their navy, but their standing army

¹ James Madison, "Political Observations," *Founders Online*, April 20, 1795, 4, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-15-02-0423>. Emphasis added.

² "The Great War | American Experience - WGBH | PBS," accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/great-war/>.

numbered only 200,000 soldiers. Their munitions factories could not keep up with the demand of their needs so they required the assistance of the United States to provide rifles, bullets, shoes, and explosives, to name a few. Colonel Edward G. Buckner, vice-president of military sales for Du Pont, said, “We can produce the explosives you need and we think we can produce them in time, but only if you assume the financial risks of an emergency expansion... It’s your war, and the risks must be yours.”³ In 1915, the British reluctantly agreed to pay \$100 million for that expansion, from funds loaned by J.P. Morgan’s bank. Armaments dealers also had countries at war over a barrel; they needed war materiel, and the United States merchants had the capacity and willingness to provide it, for a price.

In 1915, the Du Ponts earned \$57 million. In 1916, their profits soared over \$82.1 million, without having to pay the bill of constructing new factories. By war’s end, the Du Ponts had accumulated \$1.245 billion in sales. The Central Leather Company, shoe makers, accrued \$15 million, and US Steel claimed \$105 billion of war profits.⁴ Along with astronomical profits came waste. Major General Smedley D. Butler recounts in his book, *War is a Racket!*, that 4,000,000 American soldiers needed shoes. The government purchased 35,000,000 during the war, resulting in eight pairs per soldier; but they did not receive all those shoes. Approximately 25,000,000 were left in a warehouse, bought and paid for with no one to wear them. “Profits were recorded and pocketed,” by the manufacturer.⁵ Butler also wrote that the United States purchased mosquito nets, and did not use them. They never left their warehouse.⁶ The United States paid their bill anyway.

³ Gerard Colby and Mark Crispin Miller, *Du Pont Dynasty: Behind the Nylon Curtain*, Kindle (Amazon Digital Services LLC: Open Road Media, 2014). Loc 4162.

⁴ Smedley Darlington Butler, *War Is a Racket!* (Folsom Press, 1932).

⁵ *Ibid*, loc 135.

⁶ *Ibid*, loc 135.

Manufacturers not only called on patriotism as a motive for selling their wares to the government, they also contributed to the reduced unemployment rate. The Allies required soldiers, and industry required employees to meet their needs. At the start of the Great War, the United States was in a recession, by war's end, they had become a creditor nation and the breadbasket of the world. "Industry overall prospered so handsomely under the government's wartime regimen that more than a few of its leaders hoped they would not have to revert to the prewar system when peace was restored."⁷

Bankers staked their claim as well. Eager to take advantage of the "state of emergency." J.P. Morgan, for example, extended credit to the Allied countries. Partial to England, he refused commerce with the Germans. But even with his affinity for the British, he still dictated the terms of credit because they needed war materiel to supply their militaries. The United States did not restrict trade or discourage moneylenders from doing business with any belligerent nation.

Gustav Krupp, a German manufacturer who provided armor plating for U-boats, also provided plating for British naval vessels. He made a commitment to further his own interests when, "...[he] decided that a strict interpretation of patriotism was injurious to business and he embarked on a program of world-wide sales."⁸ The only requirement to make obscene profits is fear. "The arms makers need do no more than to point out the increasing armaments of the 'enemy' and the virtual 'helplessness' of the 'threatened' country and before long there is vigorous action for 'preparedness,' which in turn means business for the arms merchants. Sometimes it is sufficient to sell to the 'enemy' the latest engines of war and then to apprise the

⁷ GJ Meyer and Jeffrey Ward, *The World Remade: America in World War I* (New York: Bantam Books, 2016).

⁸ H.C. Engelbrecht and F.C. Hanighen, *Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1934). Loc 1221.

other government of that fact.”⁹ By doing so, they prove the point that they encourage the war for profit. “[A] curious paradox arises that an embargo on arms is everywhere considered an act of international politics, while the international sale of arms, even in war time, is merely business.”¹⁰

These dealers rely on their relationships with the politicians in Washington D.C. to win contracts that fill their coffers. The Du Ponts for example enjoyed a close relationship with American politicians since the days of Thomas Jefferson’s presidency. They supplied gunpowder during the War of 1812 and set the standard by which all companies sought to attain. By World War I, they controlled the market. Buckner, Du Pont’s vice-president of military sales, saw to it that the United States and England paid for expansion of their factories to supply explosives and gas to the Allies. They avoided problems with the unions because they could afford to pass the expense of higher wages and shorter work days onto the bills of the purchasers.

To curb profiteering, President Woodrow Wilson established the War Industries Board, assigning “...the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating production on a nationwide scale.”¹¹ However, the standing policy of keeping production as top priority contributed to the waste of resources, money, and profiteering that filled the pockets of arms dealers and bankers. The expense fell onto private citizens who paid the government’s bill in the form of liberty bonds and taxes that went on for many decades after the war ended. Social pressure was used to influence affluent members of communities to buy liberty bonds, first by a friendly visit from

⁹ Ibid. loc 2103.

¹⁰ Ibid. Loc 222

¹¹ Meyer and Ward, *The World Remade: America in World War I*, 348.

their neighborhood banker. Then, often, in the night, they again received visitors who were not so friendly.

Social pressure also applied to the informal rationing taking place all over the country. The 1916 and 1917 harvests had turned out disastrously, creating a shortage at home and limiting what could be sent abroad. President Wilson appointed Herbert Hoover to the United States Food Administration to lead the nation in voluntarily rationing wheat and meat products. Working with no more authority than “patriotic opinion,” Creel and Hoover created a campaign that shamed anyone who did not participate in some manner to limit their own intake of food so that soldiers abroad could have more. Slogans such as, “Go Without So They Won’t Have To” and “Save the Wheat and Help the Fleet, Eat Less Bread” became popular. They encouraged children to do their part with ads demanding they do their part by leaving nothing on their plates. Every age group was targeted. Newspapers published recipes that did not include the necessary commodities for use by soldiers. Neighbors who did not comply were ostracized and harassed. Many posters included the question, “Are you doing your part?”¹² Pressure to participate in supporting the war effort was found everywhere, and was effective. The sale of liberty bonds was carried out in the same way. Public opinion demanded people buy them to demonstrate their patriotism and support of the troops abroad.

George Washington warned in his farewell address that:

Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It also leads to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions, by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained and by

¹² “Wake Up, America! - World War I Propaganda Posters,” accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/>.

exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) felicity to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country without odium, sometimes even with popularity, gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.¹³

Manufacturers and bankers proved his point. Each, "...are engaged in an industry where the death of human beings is the logical end and objective of their activity."¹⁴ When the Germans initiated unrestricted U-boat warfare a second time during the war, the United States neutrality began to falter. When the Allies intercepted Arthur Zimmermann's telegram encouraging Mexico and Japan to align with their forces, neutrality was broken. Zimmermann promised the Mexicans, "...a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona."¹⁵ Wilson believed the United States had a moral imperative to respond with a declaration of war on Germany. Then he began usurping power in the name of "national emergency."

First, the Espionage Act of 1917 was passed "...to root out subversion, prohibit the dissemination of information useful to the enemy in times of national security, and to punish acts of interference with the foreign relations and the foreign commerce of the United States."¹⁶ Charles Schenck and Elizabeth Baer tested the veracity of the law when they publicly challenged the Selective Service Act of 1917. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes claimed that

¹³ "Our Documents - President George Washington's Farewell Address (1796)," accessed May 1, 2017, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=15>.

¹⁴ Engelbrecht and Hanighen, *Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry*. Loc 69.

¹⁵ "Our Documents - Zimmermann Telegram (1917)," accessed May 1, 2017, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=60>.

¹⁶ United States Congress, "Espionage Act of 1917," June 15, 1917, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/espionageact.htm>.

their opinions were not protected by the First Amendment because their comments represented a “clear and present danger” to the recruitment and enlistment of soldiers for the war. He likened it to a person shouting “fire” in a crowded theater that would incite a dangerous and deadly situation for patrons trying to escape in a panic.¹⁷

The Sedition Act of 1918 made it a crime to dissent in any way to the United States participation in World War I or any activities that aided the war machine. Objections to the United States involvement in the war led to prosecution. At least 877 people were convicted of sedition in 1919 and 1920. The Supreme Court upheld the rulings because in times of war, nations must protect the country from “clear and present dangers” that could undermine their national security. War propaganda posters appeared everywhere claiming such things as, “Wanted! For Murder: Her careless talk costs lives.”

The Selective Service Act of 1917 demanded that all men ages 21-30 register for military service. Later, the age limit was extended to 45. Conscientious objectors were initially released from obligatory service. The propaganda machine gave the impression that a discriminating process would take place, only the most able would be sent overseas. Yet, when the selection took place, the draft board placed the names of men in their district into a large bowl, blind-folded one of their members, and drew names. The men needed only to pass the physical so that they could serve in the army.

Further pressing on American civil liberties was the American Protective League. Sponsored by the Justice Department, the League was given badges and armbands signifying their authority. They engaged in illegal searches and seizures, arrested and detained men without

¹⁷ Oliver Wendell Holmes, “Schenck v. United States (249 US 47, 1919)” (United States Supreme Court, 1919), http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/initiatives_awards/students_in_action/schenck.html.

charges, and intimidated “disloyal” Americans. In the fall of 1918, they held “slacker raids” where they converged on subway and train stations, rounding up all men of draft age. Twenty thousand agents detained and interrogated approximately 500,000 civilians in New York. Only 199 of them were legitimate draft dodgers. Commenting on the waste of resources, President Wilson claimed it was necessary, “...to put the fear of God into shirkers.”¹⁸

As American civil liberties were sacrificed to the war effort, bankers like JP Morgan extended credit to England and France. This changed the United States’ role in the global economy, switching from a debtor nation to a creditor nation and pulling the them out of a recession. Morgan extended credit to England and France so that they could purchase war materiel from the United States. The British relied heavily on their navy and in 1914, only had 200,000 soldiers in their army. Their munitions factories could not produce enough bullets and rifles to meet the demand of the massive increase in the number of soldiers fighting the war. They turned to the United States for aid, and made fortunes for the bankers and suppliers. “[War] is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many.”¹⁹ Out of war a few people make huge fortunes.”²⁰ Not only does the average American soldier bear the burden of engaging in war, he also bears the financial and psychological obligation. “If wars can no longer make any considerable constructive contribution to human life, they have become increasingly potent in their capacity to dislocate society and to destroy civilization.”²¹

Interestingly, a former German instructor from Harvard, Erich Muentner, chose to attack JP Morgan, not President Wilson. Muentner believed that if he could stop the flow of money, he

¹⁸ “The Great War | American Experience - WGBH | PBS.”

¹⁹ Butler, *War Is a Racket!* Loc 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Loc 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, loc 47.

could stop the war. He pushed his way into the Morgan home, claiming he only wanted to talk with them. He intended to hold the family hostage until the shipments of war supplies stopped. He drew his gun and when Jessie Morgan rushed at him, Muentner fired two rounds that hit JP Morgan. The formidable banker recovered from his wounds, and Erich Muentner committed suicide two weeks after his arrest.²² This incident demonstrates that it was common knowledge that money was a greater factor in the decision to wage war than ideology.

“...The war had many diverse results and one dominant one transcending all others: disillusionment.”²³ Glory did not exist in their return to civilian life. They had been duped into believing that their patriotism would make them heroes to everyone back home. Major General Smedley D. Butler asked:

How many of these war millionaires shouldered a rifle? How many of them dug a trench? How many of them knew what it meant to go hungry in a rat-infested dug-out? How many of them spent sleepless, frightened nights, ducking shells and shrapnel and machine gun bullets? How many of them parried a bayonet thrust of an enemy? How many of them were wounded or killed in battle?²⁴

Butler visited many veterans in various hospitals after the war. He found broken men, empty shells, shadows of who they used to be.

In the World War, we used propaganda to make the boys accept conscription. They were made to feel ashamed if they didn't join the army...No one mentioned to them, as they marched away that their going and their dying would mean huge war profits. No one told these American soldiers that they might be shot down by bullets made by their own brothers here. No one told them that the ships on which they were going to cross might be torpedoed by submarines built with United States patents.”²⁵

²² Ron Chernow, *The House of Morgan: An American Banking Dynasty and the Rise of Modern Finance* (New York: Touchstone, n.d.), 193–194.

²³ Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August: The Outbreak of World War I* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962). 483.

²⁴ Butler, *War Is a Racket!* Loc 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Loc 268

No one told them they would be wounded in battle and abandoned in a hospital. “This bill renders a horrible accounting. Newly placed gravestones. Mangled bodies. Shattered minds. Broken hearts and homes. Economic instability. Depression and all its attendant miseries. Back-breaking taxation for generations and generations.”²⁶

The propaganda machine led by George Creel portrayed war as all glory and medals. They encouraged families to send their young men to war out of patriotism, making the world safe for democracy as President Woodrow Wilson claimed when he appealed to Congress on April 2, 1917.²⁷ Then they asked Americans to buy liberty bonds to finance the war and sacrifice their food staples to the soldiers abroad. Life in the trenches was never described by the propagandists. Hunger and disease did not receive any attention from newspaper reporters. Families learned of the egregious sacrifice their young men were making when they came home. Newspapers reported casualty lists, but did not include photos or stories of life in the trenches. Soldiers did not find the glory and heroism purported by Creel’s propaganda machine. Instead, they found themselves knee deep in murky water, covered in lice, suffering from trench foot, dysentery, and typhus and plagued with the smell and sight of death all around them. They shared their trenches with their dead comrades and rats looking for a warm, dry place to sleep. They were also exposed to a new and frightening condition that came to be known as shellshock.

Soldiers claimed the sound of whizzing bullets and the groans of the dying were not nearly as disconcerting as the constant shelling that seemed to have no end. Men were found huddled in the fetal position, or crouched in a trench with glassy eyes and disturbing smiles on

²⁶ Ibid, loc 38.

²⁷ Amos Perlmutter, “Making the World Safe for Democracy: A Century of Wilsonianism and Its Totalitarian Challengers,” *University of North Carolina Press*, 1997, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807863848_perlmutter.

their faces. Misunderstood as cowardice, hundreds of soldiers were shot for dereliction of duty before doctors realized this was a new illness. The symptoms include perception abnormalities, loss of hearing, loss of sight, loss of balance, headache, fatigue, uncontrollable crying, and the inability to speak.^{28, 29} Effective treatment, when finally diagnosed, included prompt attention and a therapeutic environment. Later named post-traumatic stress disorder, soldiers were sent home to doctors who had little more than their own instincts to use as a guide on how to treat them.

Many men came home disfigured, missing limbs, emotionally and psychologically broken without the medical expertise to heal them. Major General Butler wrote that many of the soldiers returned more dead than alive. Trained to think of nothing but killing the enemy, they returned with few options to support themselves. Veterans Affairs did not exist until World War II and neither did the GI Bill. Many of the soldiers did not get their pay until 1936. They returned with psychological wounds that medical professionals had no experience with. Butler claimed that, “Many, too many, of these fine young boys are eventually destroyed mentally because they could not make that final ‘about face’ alone.”³⁰

The solution requires the sacrifice from the upper echelons of society first. The government must take the profit out of war. Major General Butler suggests:

- 1) Conscript capital and industry and labor before the nations manhood can be conscripted.
- 2) Everyone in the nation [must] be restricted to a total monthly income not to exceed that paid to the soldier in the trenches.
- 3) Give capital and industry and labor thirty days to think it over and you will find, by that time, there will be no war.

²⁸ “The Great War | American Experience - WGBH | PBS.”

²⁹ Dr. Edgar Jones, “Shell-shocked,” *American Psychological Association* 43, no. 6 (June 2012), <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/06/shell-shocked.aspx>.

³⁰ Butler, *War Is a Racket!* Loc 223.

- 4) Only those who would be called upon to risk their lives for their country should have the privilege of voting to determine whether the nation should to war...Only those who must suffer should have the right to vote.
- 5) Our military forces [must] be for defense only.³¹

George Washington and James Madison understood human nature well enough to foresee the challenges associated with war economies and the required sacrifices from the citizens of the United States. They warned of the certainty of debt when countries engage in warfare. As the United States enjoys its hegemony as the only superpower in the world, our national debt stands at approximately \$4.8 trillion.³² This estimate does not include the medical costs of treatment for soldiers returning from the fields of battle in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. It also does not include the costs of internal homeland security.

World War I saw new tools of warfare developed that brought new illnesses. President Woodrow Wilson sent America's sons to war to promulgate an ideology, democracy. He did not ask if anyone wanted it. He expanded the powers of the executive branch, trampling Americans' civil liberties. We pride ourselves on our freedom of speech. We lost it during World War I. Englebrecht and Hanighen suggest a change in our civilization to avoid war. Major General Butler's suggestion provides the greatest hope to stay out of it. Eliminating profits will require greater thought in what conflicts Americans are willing to participate in. Following our Founding Fathers' recommendation, we need to keep our soldiers at home. Build our strength from within the country and focus our resources on education and technology. As we lead by example, enriching our civilization through education, we become a beacon of light to other

³¹ Ibid.

³² Watson Institute International & Public Affairs, "Costs of War" (Brown University, September 2016), <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/economic>.

nations, maintaining strict neutrality because we can afford to do so while protecting our citizens from the wasteful loss of life that is always a consequence of war.

Bibliography

- Butler, Smedley Darlington. *War Is a Racket!* Folsom Press, 1932.
- Chernow, Ron. *The House of Morgan: An American Banking Dynasty and the Rise of Modern Finance*. New York: Touchstone, n.d.
- Colby, Gerard, and Mark Crispin Miller. *Du Pont Dynasty: Behind the Nylon Curtain*. Kindle. Amazon Digital Services LLC: Open Road Media, 2014.
- Engelbrecht, H.C., and F.C. Hanighen. *Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1934.
- Holmes, Oliver Wendell. "Schenck v. United States (249 US 47, 1919)." United States Supreme Court, 1919.
http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/initiatives_awards/students_in_action/schenck.html.
- Jones, Dr. Edgar. "Shell-Shocked." *American Psychological Association* 43, no. 6 (June 2012).
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/06/shell-shocked.aspx>.
- Madison, James. "Political Observations." *Founders Online*, April 20, 1795.
<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-15-02-0423>.
- . "Virginia Resolution." *Madison Papers*, December 21, 1798.
<http://founders.srchives.gov/documents/Madison/01-17-02-0128>.
- Meyer, GJ, and Jeffrey Ward. *The World Remade: America in World War I*. New York: Bantam Books, 2016.
- "Our Documents - President George Washington's Farewell Address (1796)." Accessed May 1, 2017. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=15>.
- "Our Documents - Zimmermann Telegram (1917)." Accessed May 1, 2017.
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=60>.
- Perlmutter, Amos. "Making the World Safe for Democracy: A Century of Wilsonianism and Its Totalitarian Challengers." *University of North Carolina Press*, 1997.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807863848_perlmutter.
- "The Great War | American Experience - WGBH | PBS." Accessed May 1, 2017.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/great-war/>.
- Tuchman, Barbara. *The Guns of August: The Outbreak of World War I*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962.
- United States Congress. "Espionage Act of 1917," June 15, 1917.
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/espionageact.htm>.
- "Wake Up, America! - World War I Propaganda Posters." Accessed May 2, 2017.
<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/wwI/posters/>.
- Watson Institute International & Public Affairs. "Costs of War." Brown University, September 2016. <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/economic>.