

# **Corporate Classrooms: Sponsored Film and the Shaping of the American Curriculum.**

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## **Declaration:**

“I, Kieran McCluskey Wakeley confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.”

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

22.03.2024

## **Abstract**

This thesis reconstructs an archival history of the sponsored educational film industry and its role in shaping both students and the U.S. political economy. It scrutinises the institutions and agendas that informed its growth and investigates the consequences of government and business using film to shape the conduct of populations under the guise of educational practice.

From the end of the Great Depression to the early years of the Cold War a confluence of new technologies, ideological imperatives, and business opportunities attracted the attention of the U.S. government, the most powerful industrial corporations in the world, and the influential advocacy groups that represented them. Capitalising on the capacity of film to standardise and widely disseminate simple and effective messages, industry and government extended their policy objectives to include the ideological management of school children. While economic hardship led school boards and local government to turn to film to help ease the strain on an expanding education system, films were produced that visualised a model citizenry largely in the interests of sustaining industrial capital.

This research aims to achieve several significant objectives: To examine classroom film beyond an understanding of educational utility, analysing how it was being used to influence the thoughts and behaviours of American youth. To explore the historical entanglement of corporate sponsorship, and the role it played in bridging the gap between advertising and educational film. And to situate classroom films within the context of America's burgeoning global power by examining the motivations of government in dovetailing educational initiatives with, and for the benefit of foreign policy.

At the core of this thesis is an argument that the overt endorsement by these films of consumerism, individualism, nationalism, free enterprise, and anti-communism, aided in the radicalisation of liberalism, and contributed to the later emergence of neoliberalism as an economic-political reality.

## **Research Impact Statement**

This thesis explores the ways in which the classroom became an essential location for the dissemination of propaganda, and through film, a generation of children were placed on the front line of campaigns to shape ideas about the American political economy. It draws attention to the ways in which history, culture, and media intersect, contributing key insights to scholarly debates that situate the classroom as a critical exhibition space, linking the history of film to broader historical moments.

From the three core chapters there is potential to edit down some of the themes into papers that will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals. These in turn will form the basis of conference papers at which the ideas and arguments can be disseminated to the wider academic community. The extensive archival research which forms the basis of this thesis could be beneficial to scholars studying audio-visual education more broadly. Alongside the motion pictures, which are the primary concern of this study, slide films played a significant role in industrial pedagogy and the research here could be of great use to those looking to expand the field of knowledge on this type of media.

Parts of the thesis, particularly those that closely scrutinise the films themselves have the potential of being reinterpreted in documentary form. Much of the work of this thesis has been premised on the availability of restored and digitised educational films. However, many films remain either unrestored or awaiting digitisation. This thesis could lead to restoration and archival projects that would open up new avenues of research and make available lesser known and previously inaccessible works. This kind of project might be especially applicable to local history projects, reconstructing narratives that link industrial history to local media producers. A restoration project could be achieved by building partnerships with archives, local historians, and intuitions to link the research with restoration work that would enrich community histories.

Outside of academia, lessons from the history covered in this thesis could be developed for teachers in contemporary learning environments, leading to frameworks and policy for the use of educational film in schools. This could aid in the safeguarding of schools from the kinds of undue influence that are examined at various points in each chapter. There is potential to present some elements of this thesis before schoolteachers as part of talks on the use and hazards of visual media in education. This might incorporate or develop a basic program of media literacy training that would have practical applications to the field of communications and media studies.

Furthermore, the research could be developed into talks to students at school or undergraduate level on the history and function of propaganda – especially relating these lessons for use in a ‘post-truth’ media climate. It could be used to develop awareness of fake news and artificial intelligence as applied contexts for understanding the importance of the veracity of information and the ways in which sponsorship can affect the quality of public education.

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## Introduction

In 1936 the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), America's largest industrial lobbying group, 'proud capitalists,' and evangelists for a free enterprise economy inaugurated a 'systematic motion picture program' to extend their public relations campaigns to screens, large and small across the country.<sup>1</sup> As would become standard practice, NAM would make 16mm reduction prints of their films accompanied with guides and supplementary materials available for free to schools through a national network of rental libraries and mail order catalogues. Their first in a series of sponsored films, *Men and Machines* (1936), would remain in circulation, advertised, and promoted for school usage through film catalogues until at least 1956, before being officially retired from active distribution to remain available by mail order request only.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, prints would remain in school film libraries until obsolescence and degradation consigned them to the archive, or more often than not, landfill.

*Men and Machines* had been adapted for the screen from a series of slide film presentations developed by NAM in 1935 for use in schools. It formed part of an expansive drive to communicate to the public during the Great Depression in simple and digestible ways, a pro-business defence of free-enterprise and opposition to the economic restructuring of the New Deal.<sup>3</sup> These films were also intended to restore public faith in industry's civic authority. They promoted an idea of the corporation as an indispensable component of the distributive function of the economy by which industrialists like the CEO of General Motors, Alfred P. Sloan, believed that large corporations 'discharge [their] responsibilities to the community in the form of an advancing standard of living.'<sup>4</sup> As William Bird has noted, what defined the new

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<sup>1</sup> Delton, *The Industrialists*, 1; Oaks, "List of Motion Pictures," 1.

<sup>2</sup> Oaks, "List of Motion Pictures," 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 1. The other titles in the series included *There Goes an American*, which compared the average American home to one fifty years ago; *We the People*, which described the checks and balances of power in U.S. government; and *Your Money's Worth*, which defined the role of money, wealth, and capital in the economy.

<sup>4</sup> Sloan, Letter to Larsen, 1.

strategy of directly appealing to audiences through entertainment focussed public relations was the ‘ratcheting up of its personal focus into a comprehensive political claim.’<sup>5</sup> In the case of *Men and Machines* the claim was simple: new labour-saving machines, by increasing productivity, would lower consumer prices and bring prosperity to the average worker by necessitating less work, providing cheaper goods, and above all, more leisure time to enjoy the fruits of modern living. Fears of technological redundancy, it claimed, were simply unfounded, and any desire to return to the ‘good old days’ plainly naïve. Instead, the film argues that life in America is vastly better for the average person. As explained by the film’s wise fatherly figure to a sceptical youth who believes that machines are ruining the country: ‘all this progress has come because the machine has given us mass production.’<sup>6</sup> The film’s entry in the annual *Educational Film Guide*, which graded it as suitable for junior and senior high school children, described it as a ‘frank and free discussion,’ which ‘riddles the technological unemployment myth with a barrage of facts.’<sup>7</sup> Barrage is an appropriate way to describe the rhetorical style used by NAM. Any contradiction, or opposing opinion, is arrested in the film as the narrator reels off a stupefying deluge of bold statistics. To even question the veracity of its claims is dismissed as childish hearsay, as the narrator affirms:

You see here in America we have always worked on the idea that the best way to get ahead is to follow one simple rule; multiply wealth, use more of the world’s goods so that everybody can have bigger share. Mass production, and that means more machines and bigger ones. Bigger factories and more men on the payroll than we have ever seen before.<sup>8</sup>

In the life span of this one educational film, a roughly twenty-year period which bookends the chronological scope of this thesis, profound changes in American education were taking place. NAM professed to be ‘vitaly interested in cooperating with educators ... because the social,

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<sup>5</sup> Bird, *Better Living*, 133.

<sup>6</sup> *Men and Machines*, 1936, 09:22.

<sup>7</sup> Cooke, and Rahbek-Smith, *Educational Film Catalogue*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Men and Machines*, 1936, 09:40.

as well as economic well-being of the nation depends upon education to impart concepts and knowledge.<sup>9</sup> NAM, like many who sponsored films about industry, recognised in educational film an efficient way to communicate their economic beliefs by exploiting a growing educational film industry, one that had been developing in tandem with commercial cinema since the earliest days of the medium.<sup>10</sup>

Despite efforts to combat the incursion of advertising into schools, the steady growth of the educational and sponsored film industries throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, along with the popular adoption of visual instruction, created opportunities for shrewd advertisers to position their products in the American classroom. A confluence of new technology, business strategy, and the increasing demand for the standardisation of educational practices began to open up school districts to the inclusion of an eclectic range of films, many of which had not been created with the intention to educate, but to influence. Public relations expert Edward Bernays noted that: ‘It was, of course, the astonishing success of propaganda during the war that opened the eyes of the intelligent few in all departments of life to the possibilities of regimenting the public mind.’<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there existed a conventional wisdom that motion pictures, properly used, could generate ‘standardized understandings.’<sup>12</sup> A belief, as the head of General Motors’ Frigidaire division noted that made it unsurprising that ‘business organizations, the military, government, schools, and religious groups alike use projected pictures to transmit ideas to develop attitudes, transmit ideas and information, and shape attitudes both within organizations and among the general public.’<sup>13</sup> *Men and Machines* was

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<sup>9</sup> Gullander, “The Critical Ingredient,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> The interwar years witnessed a boom in the production of sponsored films as businesses sought to capitalise on the popularity of motion pictures to communicate directly with the public. For more on the early history of educational film see: Paul Saettler, *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (2004); Oliver Gaycken, *The Cinema of the Future: Vision of the Medium as Modern Educator, 1895-1910* (2012); Wendell Johnson “A Happier way of learning”: *The Visual Instruction Movement, 1918-1928* (2015); Frank Freeman, *Visual Instruction: A Comparative Study of Motion Pictures and Other Methods of Instruction* (1924).

<sup>11</sup> Bernays, *Propaganda*, 54.

<sup>12</sup> Handy, Letter to Bernard Dickson, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, Women's Round Table, 1.

typical of a new form of cinematic public relations, sponsored films that incorporated the classroom as an essential part of their campaign strategy. In doing so, as Rick Prelinger has argued, the greatest contribution of sponsored film producers was to ‘link educational concerns and strategies with corporate and institutional objectives.’<sup>14</sup> It is from this consideration of the hybridisation of educational film and sponsored public relations that this thesis draws its arguments.

## **Arguments**

This thesis explores how educational film has been employed by various sponsors including progressive social planners, the U.S. government, and industrial manufacturers to advance specific (and at times overlapping) agendas as part of efforts to influence the thoughts and behaviours of American school children. This thesis argues that this reshaping of education played a significant role in the response of large corporations to the economic effects of the Great Depression, both as a way of shaping narratives about the economic crisis in the short term, and as a protracted campaign of resistance to New Deal legislation. In addition, this thesis also explores the efforts made by New Deal government officials and social progressives in similar crusades to shape the culture and economy of the United States as it emerged from this financial catastrophe and entered into the global crisis of the Second World War. These actions are evident of a generational commitment to rescue a system that even before the Wall Street Crash, as Howard Zinn has stated, was ‘unstable, unpredictable, and blind to human needs.’<sup>15</sup> The impact of these strategies, it is argued, contributed to a fundamental reshaping of ideas about the individual and political economy of the United States. A process that would culminate in the ascendancy of a new economic paradigm, one that would, in the years that followed,

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<sup>14</sup> Prelinger, “Smoothing the Contours,” 341.

<sup>15</sup> Zinn, *A People’s History*, 387.

come to be known as neoliberalism. In order to explore this argument, it is necessary to investigate how technology and the political economy of the United States changed over time by mapping through education, shifts in rhetoric, policy, and practice to reveal how educational institutions, the government, and big business utilised public education as a gateway for shaping culture.

In order to explicate this history, I will seek answers to three interrelated questions: Firstly, what organisations and institutions began to use sponsored films in educational contexts and for what purposes? Secondly, how did the classroom become integrated into the distribution circuits of these sponsored films? And third, what recognisable impact might the inclusion of these films in the classroom have had on the political landscape of post-war America? Accordingly, the following chapters will examine classroom films beyond a conventional understanding of educational utility to analyse how they were being used to perform specific ideological functions.

This thesis does not presuppose that schools in the United States were ever apolitical, quite the opposite. As Michael Apple has suggested, schools act as ‘institutions of cultural preservation and distribution’ through which a form of cultural capital is sustained in the population.<sup>16</sup> An understanding of how ‘schools create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without resorting to overt mechanisms of domination,’ is crucial to understanding how ideology, culture, and economic formations, particularly unequal economic formations, are reproduced.<sup>17</sup> From this perspective, the arguments in this thesis regard the school as a contested space of ideological management, one in which multiple, influential forces were staking a claim. Power, or hegemony, as Raymond Williams has noted, is often not simply a political expression of the state but a ‘complex

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<sup>16</sup> Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces.’<sup>18</sup> To warrant a greater understanding of the social and political transformations within which the films this thesis is concerned with were operating, it is necessary to scrutinise their use and deployment from an ideological perspective. The purpose of this thesis then is to explore who some of the key actors in this process were and how they were attempting to influence the function of the school as a way to direct the reproduction of cultural and economic formations, and the power structures that govern them.<sup>19</sup>

The research centres on an analysis of primary materials including the numerous educational films that were produced in addition to archival documents, trade magazines, educational board notes, government policy documents, and company missives. These will be used to explicate a relatively understudied history of classroom film and examine the motivations behind the production and distribution of sponsored film to reveal how it was being used to shape the political economy of the United States. Though a considerable amount of the materials necessary for this research have been made available online (particularly the films themselves), much of the associated historical documentation has been retrieved from several archives in the United States. These include the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland, the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., the Walter P. Reuther Library and Detroit Public Library, the Hagley Archives in Wilmington, and the New York Public Library. It is from these archival records that much of the detail of the production and intent of producers, politicians, and corporate directors is drawn. These documents provide a window onto the world of an industry that has been otherwise hidden or overlooked. One which

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<sup>18</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 108.

<sup>19</sup> I am here briefly alluding to Bourdieu’s arguments about social reproduction in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1990) that educational institutions tend towards the preservation of social hierarchies and inequalities over time. Though the study of the specifics of cultural reproduction through education is not the primary focus of this research, the idea frames much of the analysis of the individual films considered. This thesis is concerned with what specifically was being reproduced and by who, rather than offering a broad analysis of the reproduction of hegemonic structures.

existed in parallel with some of the most important historical moments in modern American history. Together with this archival research, this thesis engages with contemporary scholarship on educational media concerning the period from the Great Depression to the mid 1950s. It builds from existing research and incorporates a range of disciplinary approaches from the schools of cultural studies, and film history.

## Definitions

Rick Prelinger's definition of 'sponsored film' provides a concise impression of the nature of this specific category of motion picture. He offers a description which 'implies the packaging of information from a particular corporate or institutional perspective.'<sup>20</sup> This concept can be extended to define a type of media that disseminates information that substantiates or enforces the ideological convictions of a sponsoring agent. One must also consider the motion picture itself as a technology considered inherently ideological, as Bernays believed: 'The American motion picture is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world today. It is a great distributor for ideas and opinions. The motion picture can standardize the ideas and habits of a nation.'<sup>21</sup> Bernays noted this to be true of commercial motion pictures acting as passive propagandists: 'because pictures are made to meet market demands, they reflect, emphasise and even exaggerate broad popular tendencies, rather than stimulate new ideas and opinions.'<sup>22</sup> However this is not necessarily true of motion pictures made specifically for the intention of influencing public thought. In this case they are by their nature designed to introduce and disseminate specific ideas and opinions, and in many cases counteract prevailing iterations of the public consensus.<sup>23</sup> Bernays, although not the focus, is a reoccurring character in this thesis,

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<sup>20</sup> Prelinger, *The Field Guide*, vi.

<sup>21</sup> Bernays, *Propaganda*, 166.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 166.

<sup>23</sup> Bernays himself was deeply involved in this kind of practice while working for the Committee on Public Information (CPI), drumming up public support for American intervention in the First World War and demonising isolationism.

acting as he did as the first port of call for many agencies, institutions, and industries wishing to capitalise on his expertise in the ‘conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits of the masses.’<sup>24</sup> Despite his conviction that propaganda should play a positive role in the democratic process, his centrality to many of the projects is in itself an indication of the desire to manipulate public opinion and moderates an understanding of many of the campaigns as propaganda work. Whether his clients were as concerned with the preservation of democratic values or merely enamoured with the near mythical belief in propaganda to influence behaviour is debatable. As this thesis argues, particularly in chapters two and three, there was a conscious effort to use propaganda to change the public understanding of democracy itself, reconstituting its broad political connotation as a value system based on economic liberty.

The focus of the research will be on the specific ideological messaging within the films themselves rather than an investigation of the ideological ‘apparatus’ of the motion picture.<sup>25</sup> Instead, drawing from archival material, this thesis scrutinises the history of the institutions and agendas that were reshaping public education in this period in order to advance the political, economic, and ideological imperatives of powerful and influential segments of society. Furthermore, it is an exploration of the intentions of these efforts and an analysis of their role in the expansion and maintenance of America’s post-war consumer society.

To explore these ideas this thesis regards its selected educational films as ideological artifacts. Each chapter will explore the institutions, critical moments, and key processes through a material analysis of archival records, and the content and form of the media itself. Two significant barriers present themselves when attempting to analyse the history of sponsored educational film. Firstly, the sheer quantity of sponsored films that were produced in any given year, and secondly the considerable loss of stock that has characterised the format

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<sup>24</sup> Bernays, *Propaganda*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> See Baudry *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus* (1974).



obsolescence of 16mm and 35mm film as it was superseded by video tape from the 1970s onwards. Exact figures for the number of films remain elusive, though scholars including Rick Prelinger have estimated the output to be somewhere in the region of three hundred thousand films, a staggering volume to even begin to approach.<sup>26</sup> Considering just one single sponsored film producer results in a similar volumetric obstacle. The Jam Handy Organisation (JHO), one of Detroit's leading sponsored film producers, for example, produced as many as seven thousand motion pictures, with an estimate from one of the company's former staff members putting their total output of sponsored and training films at twenty-five thousand.<sup>27</sup> Prior to their wartime commitments they were producing seventy films and as many as 800,000 slide films in a single year.<sup>28</sup> As with the scale of production, the scale of loss of prints is equally staggering. The preservation of what remains has largely been determined by chance; what remained in film libraries long enough and in good enough condition not to be discarded, and the politics of archiving determining which criteria, be it social, cultural, or aesthetic is worth the investment of preservation. In chapter three for example, one of the films produced by NAM, *Crisis in Lindenville* (1958) currently has no extant physical or digital copy available for viewing, therefore its analysis is drawn from production notes, scripts, and publicity material. As such, the selection of films to examine for each chapter has been determined in part on the availability of accessible digitised versions of original prints. Where there has been the option to choose between a large selection of possible films for analysis, films have been selected that best represent the rhetorical and aesthetic norms of the given sponsors to draw out an analysis that is broadly representative of a given period or subject. As more and more of these films, especially from the collection bequeathed to the Library of Congress by the

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<sup>26</sup> Prelinger, *Field Guide*, vi.

<sup>27</sup> Prelinger, "Smoothing the Contours," 342; Eberwine, "The Contributions of the Jam Handy Organization," 82.

<sup>28</sup> The Jam Handy Organisation, "Your Job and Your JHO," 41.

Prelinger Archive are restored and digitised, new avenues of inquiry will become available to future scholars.

### **Motion Pictures as Educator.**

Belief in the affective potential of motion pictures had become a ‘common place idea’ in the 1930s.<sup>29</sup> Edgar Dale, an early pioneer of audio-visual education at Ohio State University, was a firm believer in the power of motion pictures to communicate ideas: ‘The bottle neck through which ideas must travel ... is the communicating medium, be it gestures, words, or pictures.’<sup>30</sup> Motion pictures he argued, could eliminate the bottleneck, through which ideas travel from producer to consumer.<sup>31</sup> Dale had authored two of the Payne Fund Studies, a series of studies in large part responsible for a popular, if not robustly scientific, understanding of cinema as an affective medium. The popular legacy of the Payne Fund studies helped to enculturate a way of thinking about motion pictures that reflected contemporary beliefs about the effects of media technologies on emotional stability and mental development. Not simply the ability to generate affect, but also the ability to capitalise on that affect. The Committee on Public Education for Crime Control (CPECC), for example, advocated a belief that educational motion pictures could have enormous social influence. Describing a series of short films they had been developing with *The March of Time*, their Chairman, Frederick Thrasher, argued that films could act in an interventionist capacity to police the early stages of youth delinquency by dramatically illustrating ‘the importance of the prevention of criminal careers by nipping them in the bud.’<sup>32</sup> They could, it was believed, alleviate social problems, change an individual’s behaviour, and shape society. Thrasher, a Professor of Educational Sociology at New York

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<sup>29</sup> Malin, “Mediating Emotion,” 367.

<sup>30</sup> Dale, Letter to James Hart, 1.

<sup>31</sup> For more on Dale’s contribution to audio visual technologies and the classroom see Charles Acland, “American AV: Edgar Dale and the Information Age Classroom.” 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Thrasher, Letter to Michael Hare, 3.

University (NYU), was widely known for his studies on juvenile delinquency and had published an authoritative tome on the subject, *The Gang: A Study of 1313 Gangs in Chicago*. His study, among other sociological factors, linked delinquent behaviour and imitation of criminal techniques including safe cracking, blackmail letters, and the use of chloroform in robberies to the wayward Chicago youth imitating their ‘movie heroes.’<sup>33</sup> Movies were ‘furnishing a pattern of crime’ his study claimed, a very different kind of filmic pedagogy, but nonetheless one that reinforced a belief in the power of movies to teach.<sup>34</sup> Like Dale, Thrasher had conducted research for the Payne Fund Study. His contribution, *Boys, Movies and City Streets*, co-authored with Paul Cressey, focussed on inner city, and particularly immigrant communities. It analysed the emotional states of boys who had watched crime and horror films including *Phantom of the Opera* (1925, and re-issued with sound in 1930), *Little Caesar* (1931), and *The Cat Creeps* (1930). Their observations heavily implied a causal link between movie attendance and youth social disorders, claiming: ‘there is a persistent tendency toward higher emotional instability on the part of those who attend the motion pictures most frequently [and that] excessive motion picture attendance creates emotional conditions and attitudes which in turn contribute to more movie attendance.’<sup>35</sup> Not only were movies bad for children they argued, but they were also apparently addictive.

Thrasher’s preoccupation with the ‘mimetic and deleterious’ effects of film spectatorship were typical of growing concerns about the ‘emotional stimulation’ effects of mass communication technologies.<sup>36</sup> The Payne Fund Studies had been sponsored by a philanthropic organisation whose concerns centred on social and moral reforms that it was hoped would lead to regulatory legislation in the early cinema industry.<sup>37</sup> They produced

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<sup>33</sup> Thrasher, *The Gang*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> Forman, *Our Movie Made Children*, 258.

<sup>36</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 240; Malin, “Mediating Emotion,” 374.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed examination of early cinema’s regulatory and legislative governance see Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America*, 2004.

multiple conclusions but little consensus. Of the many, often alarmist narratives that emerged from the study, most were concerned with the need for some articulation of education for both the individual and wider social groups to combat social problems. These suggestions, including Thrasher's, implied that the solution might be found in films themselves, and pointed towards a disciplinary application of motion pictures that might correct the behaviours of delinquents, and facilitate the governance of 'undisciplined' subjects.<sup>38</sup> In doing so, Lee Grieveson suggests the fledgling study of cinema had become concerned with social control and behavioural management. These qualities would have been appealing to like-minded social reformers seeking to create an ordered society, or advertisers wishing to imprint new patterns of social behaviour. A simplified assessment of the Thrasher and Cressey study by Henry Forman, whose abridged account of the Payne Studies was published as *Our Movie Made Children* offers an insight into the direction of thinking that emerged from the studies: 'If ... as appears, the movies act as a system of education for large portions of the population, then we must not delay in taking the necessary measures to treat them as a system of education.'<sup>39</sup> Educational motion pictures then were not simply viewed as a medium to communicate facts and figures, but regarded as having an affective quality that could perhaps be harnessed to alter the perceived downward trajectory of undesirable elements of society. How this belief came to be used by liberal progressives will be explored in detail in chapter one.

Rather than focussing on a particular mode of educational film, this thesis figures the classroom itself as a contested space for ideological sublimation and acknowledges the plurality of competing forms of media that entered school libraries alongside films made explicitly for the purpose of education. From the earliest years of educational film use it was widely encouraged that final discretion in selecting films as educational aids lay with teachers.

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<sup>38</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 240.

<sup>39</sup> Forman, *Our Movie Made Children*, 272.

This provided a convenient excuse for some sponsors to distance themselves from any obligation to provide material of substantive educational value by putting the emphasis on the teacher to make the footage educational. As Nelson Greene, chief editor at *Educational Screen* described:

At first these films were direct advertising and hence more or less offensive in classrooms. But this advertising soon became extremely indirect, leaving practically nothing but an informational content which can be made truly educational by proper handling by the teacher.<sup>40</sup>

Subsequently the definition of ‘educational’ became a matter of interpretation. A variety of films could be advertised as educational provided they could be made applicable to a lesson by the teacher. In many cases these types of films were offered for free as part of film library catalogues and were therefore more likely to be selected for exhibition in schools with limited budgets for their film library. Despite overcoming lingering doubts about the suitability of film as a medium for teaching children, educators were still keen to keep the classroom free of commercial influence. However, regional school film libraries that had struggled to fill their shelves with purely educational material began to incorporate the films made available for free by deep-pocketed sponsors. These included sponsored films, documentaries, social guidance, person hygiene films, industrial process films, newsreels, animation, and civil defence films as a collective educational oeuvre. Educational film, or classroom film, will thus be defined as any films that have, for reasons that will be explored in the following chapters, been used within an educational framework, and it is argued, used to shape the thoughts and behaviours of American youth.

A rich body of scholarship exists on the history of American education. Germaine to this thesis is a body of work that criticises developments in educational history as a function of ideological management, paying close attention to how ‘political and economic forces shape

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<sup>40</sup> Greene, “Motion Pictures in the Classroom,” 125.

the dissemination of ideas.’<sup>41</sup> Joel Spring’s analysis of the American school as a production base for ‘human capital’ has revealed insights on the debates surrounding the purpose of education in which emphasis on ‘education to serve economic and social needs’ shaped the development of the high school curriculums across the country.<sup>42</sup> Spring’s work reinforces claims by Edward Krug in volume two of his study *The Shaping of the American Highschool* in which he explores historical debates surrounding how best to organise school curricula to serve the future social needs of the pupil. Krug frames these debates about the purpose of education in the twentieth century as a method of social control, drawing attention to the rise in popularity of ‘militant and easily repeatable slogans’ describing education for ‘social efficiency.’<sup>43</sup> This might be broadly understood as an education focussed on adjusting the child to the economic or political needs of the society in which they develop which are necessarily dictated by the powers that govern the economy or political philosophy of the day. A society structured around the practical demands of an industrial economy, such as the United States in the twentieth century, therefore might make reasonable demands on education to orientate the student to facilitate greater efficiency in the workforce. A society that fixes its ideological position on the belief that the character of America is defined by its semi-mythologised past characterised by a rugged individualism and progress through competition, might make similar demands of its educators.

These views were generally opposed by progressive educators, who in the tradition of John Dewey stressed the importance of child centred experiential learning, critical thinking, and group activity, to orientate education as a social force for cultural and political renewal: ‘Unless the outcome is to be chaotic, we must take hold of the organic, positive principle involved in democracy, and put that in entire possession of the spirit and work of the school.’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Spring *The American School*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 213.

<sup>43</sup> Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Dewey, “Democracy in Education,” 203.

In this way education would act as a force for ‘cooperative democratic social organisation.’<sup>45</sup> As the first chapter explores, these progressive ideals were infused with utopian beliefs about the capacity of technology to liberate the individual and society from civilisational disaster by reframing the machine as a facilitator of progress.

These debates were compounded by an intensification of the political and social relations between government and schools that developed under New Deal programs and greatly expanded the role of the federal government in determining educational policy and infrastructure. These consisted of federal aid programs aimed at providing equal opportunities in education, as well as enormous sums of money towards school construction directed by New Deal agencies such as the National Youth Administration (NYA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). M. Charles Wallfisch has argued that these developments framed educational opportunity in the language of social and economic relief.<sup>46</sup> Naturally this understanding of education was antithetical to the long-held beliefs about self-reliance, individual liberty, and minimal government espoused by fiscal conservatives, low tax campaigners, right-wing groups, and industrial lobbies such as NAM. Subsequently, debates surrounding the appropriate level of government intervention in public life spilled out of the political realm and into the classroom. As is examined further in chapter three, these arguments would define a generational battle that pitted states’ rights political conservatives against New Deal liberals for control of American education, a sort of proxy war that staged the classroom as the field on which to pitch its battles. This thesis focusses on the moments where these battles intersect with histories of educational film production. It interrogates the methods by which canny organisations such as NAM, were able to exploit the perennial problems of funding for public

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<sup>45</sup> Spring, *The Sorting Machine Revisited*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Wallfisch, “Franklin Roosevelt,” 51-56.

schools to transmit their own ideological beliefs and institute policies to serve the economic demands of their client industries.

### **Scholarship**

Much credit is due to Rick Prelinger, who, in the early 1980s began collecting, preserving, and cataloguing ‘ephemeral’ film, and without whom much of the scholarly work listed here would not be possible. Supported by the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF), the Library of Congress, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and non-profits organisations including the Film Foundation, and Academic Film Archive of North America, the Prelinger Archive has ensured the preservation of tens of thousands of films, making them available to scholars, and precipitating a growing field of academic research. A considerable portion of films discussed in this thesis have been accessed through the Prelinger Library Collection at the Internet Archive and my research owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the ongoing preservation efforts made by these institutions.

The increasing availability of primary material has attracted the attention of film scholars and those from backgrounds in cultural studies who have taken the opportunity to re-evaluate these films, sometimes included under the umbrella term ‘orphan cinema,’ as culturally significant objects linked to the institutional practices, and ideology of particular social formations. As Heide Solbrig pointed out in *Orphans No More: Definitions, Disciplines, and Institutions*, the ‘orphan film movement fits well into a historical film studies project that has refigured itself in the last 30 years away from stories told through “great works” and towards analysis of ideology and culture.’<sup>47</sup> The analysis of the usage of films here aims to achieve as much. They reveal both the coherence and the dissonance in attempts to regiment the public mind that reflected and contributed to the internal transformations that were

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<sup>47</sup> Solbrig, “Orphans no More,” 102.



happening in America as it underwent its ascendancy to global hegemon. They shed light on the processes by which powerful groups, through media, facilitated and were reactive to those changes. Certainly, as chapters two and three reveal, motion pictures were used as much to shape the thoughts of children towards a coherent ideology as they were to ward off and disrupt competing cultural narratives.

Patrick Vonderau and Venzenz Hediger's collection *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* includes chapters by Faye E. Riley and Rick Prelinger detailing the history of industrial/educational film producers Centron, and the Jam Handy Organisation. Both reveal insights into sponsored film producers that catered their productions in such a way that they might be easily used in the classroom. I offer a correction to Riley's assertion that 'Centron was unique in that it produced both educational and industrial films,' for the precise reason that it highlights a critical blind spot when thinking about these kinds of media.<sup>48</sup> As was the case with the majority of sponsored films, and in particular a company like the Jam Handy Organisation, their motion pictures were produced with multiple sites of exhibition in mind. One of their sales training films demonstrates this clearly claiming: 'We are going into the dealer's community and reaching the young people of America in the high schools and universities that have so much influence in deciding what car the family will buy.'<sup>49</sup> The film describes the JHO's targeted approach to film distribution aimed at four key audiences to encompass what it refers to as 'the circle of community influences,' these being the high school, manufacturing associations, family cinemas, and factories, to show 'entertaining pictures that

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<sup>48</sup> Riley, "Centron," 239.

<sup>49</sup> *Helping You Sell*, 1937, 04:18; The series which ran from 1935 to 1941, consisted of 115 films made for theatrical distribution in addition to travelling shows, radio promotion, and print advertising. The DMSS was designed to raise the profile of Chevrolet whilst communicating the hidden values of Chevrolet products. The prevailing attitude that advertising to children during school time was acceptable provided that there was some educational context to the advertisement seems to have satisfied most of the sponsors. Bernays' opinion on the matter indicates that he was in favour of such methods: 'The fact that a commercial concern may eventually profit ... does not condemn the dissemination of such information, provided that the subject merits study on the part of the student.' (Bernays, *Propaganda*, 167)

give them an educational selling on exclusive Chevrolet engineering features.’<sup>50</sup> These sales films for Chevrolet products were designed in such a way that they appeared to be conventional education films, including scenes imitative of science lessons to explain, for example, the refined aerodynamics of a Chevrolet motorcar chassis. This approach, as Prelinger asserts, was done ‘precisely in order that their sponsors could arrange showings in schools.’<sup>51</sup> This consideration problematises easy categorical definitions. Sponsored films such as these films were made for theatrical release on 35mm print but also made available on small gauge formats specifically to target multiple sites of exhibition, primarily the school classroom, but also civic groups, churches, and film clubs. To categorise them as non-theatrical then, negates their presence in the primary film market, whilst considering them solely for their advertising potential as sponsored film masks their deliberate formative properties that were designed to make them acceptable as educational films. Prelinger has drawn attention to the school-mindedness of these sponsored film producers, who kept one eye on the classroom whilst the other was on the salesfloor, noting that ‘the ubiquity and reach of sponsored films merits a more thorough investigation than has thus far occurred.’<sup>52</sup> It is from this consideration of sponsored film *as* educational film that the core arguments of this thesis are developed, for when scholars discuss these films it is often in the context of describing educational or sponsored films as discreet categories. This thesis, however, proposes the exhibition context as the determining factor in their taxonomy and bases its analysis, and consideration of the consequences on the fact that the exhibition practice of these films was pluralistic by design.

One of the most valuable anthologies on educational film that demonstrates their plurality of use is *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States*. Devin and Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible have collected a comprehensive series of investigations

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<sup>50</sup> *Helping You Sell*, 1937, 04:57.

<sup>51</sup> Prelinger, “Smoothing the Contours,” 351.

<sup>52</sup> Prelinger, “Eccentricity,” 215.

that illustrate the diversity of educational film scholarship that includes critical dissection of industrial citizenship, museum spaces, sponsored film, race relations, and health management. This collection joined Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson's *Useful Cinema* in surveying the multiplying fields of scholarship that had begun to focus on specific types of non-theatrical and educational film, looking beyond historical accounts to dialogue with contemporary cultural theory and analysis. Wasson's work on the portability of small gauge projectors and their role in decentring the movie theatre in *Everyday Movies: Portable Film Projectors and the Transformation of American Culture* is essential for understanding the significance of non-theatrical exhibition in the study of cinema history. Lee Grieveson, whose writing has had a profound influence on this thesis, has scrutinized the use of educational media which he argues has been used to 'supplement and facilitate liberal practices of governance and political economy.'<sup>53</sup> In *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations* Grieveson details the spread of networks of pedagogic film distribution in the early twentieth century, and equates the practices of visual education with the industrial modernisation of the United States as precursors to, and integral for the globalisation of liberal capital. Indebted to, and building from this diverse body of scholarship, this thesis explores how educational film has played a specific historical role in mediating ideas about the centrality of consumerism, the 'fundamentals' of business, and the purpose of democracy between those that were shaping the country's future, and those being moulded to perform a functional role in its post-war economic order. Exploring the production context of these films and analysing their aesthetic and rhetorical style, I will assess their structural, cultural, and symbolic value in relation to the core arguments of the thesis, not just as cultural products but as efforts to reshape the political economy of the U.S. by some of its most powerful institutions.

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<sup>53</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 8.

## Capitalist Realism

This thesis proposes an interpretation of sponsored film which makes use of the term ‘capitalist realism,’ an expression used by several scholars and commentators to approach both the aesthetic qualities of advertising and sponsored film, as well as the implied cultural affect that accompanies their use. In 1996, Rick Prelinger released a collection of restored industrial and educational films from the Prelinger Archives as part of *Our Secret Century* a set of interactive CD-ROMS that introduced sponsored and social guidance films. Prelinger titled the second volume of this collection ‘Capitalist Realism’ to draw formal and thematic comparisons between their style and that of the art of Russian Socialist Realism, citing the depictions of workers in American industrial factories as embodying similar aesthetic traits. It is from this American rendering of Soviet aesthetics, particularly their depiction of and appeal to the working class, that I draw part of my definition of capitalist realism from. Michael Schudson described his own interpretation of capitalist realism as it relates to advertising. In *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion*, Schudson sought to link the aesthetics of commercial advertisements to the ‘political economy whose values they celebrate and promote.’<sup>54</sup> Schudson similarly made the comparison to Soviet art, which he argues it most closely parallels, and is most easily understandable in contrast to. He describes the abstraction of reality in advertising as being ‘essential to the aesthetic and intention of contemporary national consumer-goods advertising,’ in comparison to the ways in which Soviet art was intended to service of demands of the state through the simplification and embodiment of sanctioned socialist ideals.<sup>55</sup> I also draw on Mark Fisher’s use of the term from his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Fisher’s concept of capitalist realism defines it as: ‘the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine

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<sup>54</sup> Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion*, 214.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 214.

a coherent alternative to it.<sup>56</sup> Fisher's interpretation of neoliberalism describes the seemingly inescapable omnipresence of capitalism, one in which any attempt at subversion or resistance is pre-incorporated into its cultural landscape, to the extent that it has become impossible to think outside of its logics. He argues that because of this, 'capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable.'<sup>57</sup> Fisher draws heavily on Frederic Jameson's often cited assertion that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism, using a series of pop-cultural references to explore and make digestible some of Jameson's theories. Perhaps the most relevant to my articulation of capitalist realism is Fisher's description of its plasticity; that it is 'capable of reconfiguring itself at any moment.'<sup>58</sup> In this context and keeping in mind Prelinger's recognition of the aesthetics of Socialist Realism, I use the phrase 'capitalist realism' to identify both the entanglement of industrial capitalism with American cultural identity, and the aesthetic modes through which this process was manifested. The films, I argue, perform a specific ideological function, deliberately absorbing and reconstituting identities, aesthetics, and social-political positions that might otherwise provide an alternative to capitalism in order to nullify their oppositional potential.

Where my definition diverges from Fisher is in its temporality and its agency. Fisher describes the inescapable and perpetual present-ness of capitalist realism, exacerbated by the lack of real-world alternatives in the globalised present. However, I sketch out its definition as an organised and deliberate process of securing a dominant ideological position through the use of persuasive media. Developing from a specific period during the Great Depression where this thesis begins and combating both federal intervention of the New Deal and a popular flirtation with socialist institutions by workers across the country, cinematic examples of capitalist realism were produced to unambiguously appeal to workers and school children.

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<sup>56</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

These efforts to demonstrate the virtues of a capitalist system that had been in crisis since the Wall Street Crash in 1929 were birthed out of a capital crisis. They were not inevitable or a logical evolution of extant media forms, but reactive to the instability of economic crisis, and sought to reshape public attitudes to the near collapse of the economic system. Capitalist realism in this sense can be understood as a form of reactionary public relations, or systematic propaganda campaign whose media was designed explicitly to mask a contemporary lived experience. This I argue is achieved by abstracting reality, as Schudson has suggested, through the reconstitution of familiar and ‘real’, but none the less staged and idealised assemblage of scenes depicting families, workers, factories, neighbourhoods, and the practice of everyday activities, especially work, leisure, and consumerism. These reconstitutions, or aesthetic appropriations, are performed in the pursuit of crafting a narrative of capitalist realism, an idealised, aesthetic mode that celebrates and propagates a certain ideological rendering of American life.

Warren Susman identified that it was at this period in the 1930s that the phrase ‘the American Dream’ came into frequent use, and argues that ‘Americans then began thinking in terms of patterns of behaviour and belief, values and life-styles, symbols and meanings.’<sup>59</sup> The exploration of these films, this thesis argues, will demonstrate how industry began to figure the ‘American Way of Life’ as a syncretic shared sense of belonging which equated industrial manufacturing with the fabric of American identity. Through these patterns of behaviour, lifestyles, and symbols, industry promoted participation in this social environment through consumerism as a patriotic cultural-economic practice.

To illustrate this idea in more detail, I will briefly examine two films produced for the Chevrolet division of General Motors, *Triumph of America* (1933), and *From Dawn to Sunset* (1937) that demonstrate this process. Released in the same year that President Roosevelt signed

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<sup>59</sup> Susman, *Culture as History*, 154.

the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) which aimed to protect the rights of labour unions and facilitate collective bargaining, *Triumph of America* beatifies the automobile industry in a twenty-two-minute piece of institutional advertising. It manages to obscure the day-to-day reality of industrial labour relations and assert the industry's vitality, despite the ongoing national economic catastrophe. More pertinent to this strategy is the establishment of a particular connection between Chevrolet as a cornerstone business in the economy and the symbolic imagination of America. Opening with a brassy fanfare and accompanied by a jubilant narrator the film boldly proclaims, 'America! Industrial miracle of the century!'<sup>60</sup> The film tells the story of raw material extraction and the manufacturing process at the Chevrolet plant in Detroit. It emphasises the centrality of auto-manufacturing in the American economy, and most importantly its alignment with the industrial labourers who populate its factories. From the opening shot of the bald eagle to the vistas of the Grand Canyon, the idealised suburban family, and the harmonious production line, projections of material abundance and national iconography are incorporated as constituent parts of an irreducible industrial system. Manufacturing, economic prosperity, and the American nation itself are interlinked in a series of scenes that illustrate the construction of a typical (to be specifically interpreted as Chevrolet) automobile. The messaging firmly interlaces notions of mobility, freedom, and prosperity as essential qualities of the automobile. Rather than being merely a mode of transportation, automobiles are re-configured as both emancipatory machines, enabling access to the quintessential American tourist destinations inaccessible to 'the house-tied generations of former times,' and as physical embodiments of America's material abundance.<sup>61</sup> The narrator states that: 'Every man earns more because of the machine that helps him in his work.'<sup>62</sup> However, the reality for industrial workers in in the early 1930s was far from this idealised

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<sup>60</sup> *Triumph of America*, 1933, 00:33.

<sup>61</sup> *Triumph of America*, 1933, 03:12.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 08:35.

vision of mechanical efficiency. The timing of the film's release is crucial to understanding its ideological message.

The fatal Ford Hunger March of 1932, and Briggs Manufacturing Strike of 1933, both of which were organised on the doorstep of the auto industry in Detroit, brought into dramatic relief the gulf between industry and labour that had only been widened by the mass lay-offs and factory closures during the Depression. Just one year before *Triumph of America* was filmed, the average auto-industry wages had fallen by 54%, resulting in 223,568 unemployed workers in Detroit alone.<sup>63</sup> The surge in popularity of union membership, growth of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) and other left-wing organisations, as well as the mass discontent wrought by the Depression presented an existential threat to the large auto-manufacturers. The factory owners nervously regarded the Soviet Union's recent history and resolved to quell worker unrest at home. In the case of the Ford Hunger March, the brutal retaliation resulted in the death of four protesters and injury to as many as sixty. According to a photographer for the *Detroit Mirror*, police and Ford private security opened fire on the crowd with machine guns after an officer had been injured during an altercation with protestors who had been doused with tear gas.<sup>64</sup> Despite the danger, similar strikes and protests would multiply across the country and across sectoral boundaries to include agriculture, freight, mining, and port workers, intensifying the frequency and resolve of labour demonstrations in the following years as well as the violence with which they were met.

The fawning appeal to the workers that permeates *The Triumph of America* is vital to understanding the industrial ideology being promoted by General Motors and demonstrates the malleability and willingness of industry to absorb oppositional perspectives in order to sustain themselves. Discussing the necessity of propaganda to maintain power, Edward Bernays wrote

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<sup>63</sup> Maurice, *The Ford Hunger March*, 106-108; Rector, "Detroit Reassembled," 59.

<sup>64</sup> Baskin, "The Ford Hunger March," 338.



that: ‘those whose position or ability gives them power, can no longer do what they want without the approval of the masses, they find in propaganda a tool which is increasingly powerful in gaining that approval.’<sup>65</sup> As a piece of industrial propaganda, the film makes overtures to the common worker whilst negating their real working conditions, lauding the industrial labourer as a ‘master’ and ‘guardian’ to placate any real desire for autonomy. *Triumph of America* offers the worker an illusory position of power within a capitalist framework to dissuade them from considering acquiring mastery themselves by controlling the means of production, as they might otherwise be encouraged. As a work of capitalist realism, it offers a simulacrum of individual power by equating mastery with productivity, a warping of the protestant work ethic that obscures the structural imbalance of power, and replaces it with a celebration of individual efficiency, embedding class solidarity in the logic of the assembly line.

In contrast to General Motors’ rosy view of worker contentment, their own labour force had been pushed to collective action to address a litany of abuses, resulting in the Flint Sit Down Strike that lasted from 1936 into 1937. Most prominent among the contributing factors of the strike were worker discontent with unfair salary caps, hostile policies of labour spying, and unjust dismissals at GM plants to counter union activity. Meanwhile, according to Joshua Murray and Michael Schwartz, by 1936 General Motors had returned to near pre-depression profits without a similar reflection in worker compensation.<sup>66</sup>

Notwithstanding the small but visible improvements in hourly wages for all workers and annual wages for some workers, autoworkers in 1936 were essentially working harder, producing more, and receiving less annual income than they were before the Great Depression.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Bernays, *Propaganda*, 54.

<sup>66</sup> Murray & Schwartz, “Moral Economy,” 220.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 222.

Sidney Fine's account of the Sit-Down Strike supports these claims, clarifying that 'the irregularity of employment in the automobile industry meant that the well-publicized high hourly wages of the auto workers did not necessarily become translated into equally high annual earnings.'<sup>68</sup> Compounding the pay disparity were GM's anti-union tactics that had led to the dismissal of workers who had attempted to unionise and bargain collectively. According to testimonies given during the *Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor* session of the 74<sup>th</sup> Congressional Hearings in 1936, General Motors had gone to great lengths to inhibit, intimidate, and infiltrate labour organisations and collective bargaining groups at their plants. This included paying \$167,586 to the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in 1935 for the surveillance of its employees.<sup>69</sup> The testimony of company director Robert A. Pinkerton described the placement of private detectives in the fledgling unions wherever possible and surveillance of key union members including former vice president of the United Mine Workers of America Adolph Germer.<sup>70</sup> Evidence given later in the hearing also showed that the Pinkerton Agency, GM plants, Bethlem Steel, Du Pont, and Goodyear Tyres (among many other manufacturers), various state National Guard units, and local police departments had been stockpiling tear gas, ammunition, grenades, and riot clubs.<sup>71</sup> In Chevrolet's case, they had been purchasing tear gas since at least 1933, and having it delivered anonymously. According to one sales invoice: 'they do not want it advertised or generally known that they are buyers.'<sup>72</sup> The success of the strike would result in membership of the UAW increasing from 20,000 in December of 1936 to over 400,000 by October of 1937.<sup>73</sup> The UAW would go on to achieve similar victories with Chrysler and Ford, strengthening the voice of labour and safeguarding collective bargaining agreements for its workers.

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<sup>68</sup> Fine, "The General Motors Sit-Down Strike," 61.

<sup>69</sup> *Violations of Free Speech and Labor*, 525; Roughly \$3.83 million adjusted for inflation.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 525.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 565-609.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 610.

<sup>73</sup> Fine, "The General Motors Sit-Down Strike," 327.

These hard-won victories would however not be registered by General Motor's public relations department, whose depiction of labour management at its factories bore little resemblance to the events that had transpired only months before. *From Dawn to Sunset* (1937) masterfully reimagines labour relations at GM's Chevrolet division as a harmonious ecosystem of workers, factory managers, and the wider community all benefitting from the hard work and generous salaries at the factory. Ever keen to control their own narrative, Chevrolet's film creates a fantasy to simultaneously rehabilitate its public image as a socio-economic institution, reconfigure the labour/management hierarchy as a harmony of symbiotic economic relations, and visualise a new role for its workers as agents of economic redistribution. In one shot workers can be seen linking arms as they make their way to the factory, strolling merrily through leafy suburbs. The narrator's upbeat tone reinforces this communal optimism claiming that: 'The neighbourly workmen hail each other with the salute of fellowship.'<sup>74</sup> Again, any notions of class consciousness and worker solidarity are subsumed and reconstituted as palatable simulacra. The narrator refers to the workers as 'a mighty army of builders ... each day serving better, earning more, and building greater values than can be found in any other nation of the world.'<sup>75</sup> The twin themes of abundance and consumption are repeated over and over as the film visits GM plants in cities across the country, with less time spent showing the manufacturing work as space is given to depict the consumption habits of the workers. This is a distinct tonal shift from *Triumph of America*. Whereas *Triumph* frames the worker as key component in the industrial machine and abstracts the flow of capital as an intra-industrial network, here the practice of consumption is depicted as a behavioural demonstration. The workers are implored to spend their wages and participate in consumerism as lifestyle. This notion is reinforced again by the narrator who describes: 'The pleasure of buying, the spreading

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<sup>74</sup> *From Dawn to Sunset*, 1937, 03:32.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 01:00 – 01:35.

of money, and the enjoyment of all the things that pay-cheques can buy are making happy all the thousands of families.’<sup>76</sup> Promoting this rendering of the American public became a strategic element in industrial public relations. A year after the release of *From Dawn to Sunset*, in a speech to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, GM’s Director of Public Relations Paul Garrett outlined this strategy:

The challenge that faces us is to shake off our lethargy and through public relations make the American plan of industry stick. For, unless the contributions of the system are explained to consumers in terms of their own interest, the system itself will not stand against the storm of fallacies that rides the air in this era of easy, world-wide, and instantaneous communication.<sup>77</sup>

*From Dawn to Sunset* goes still further in its vision of consumerist practice, incorporating an appeal to white-collar workers. A noticeable difference from *Triumph of America* is the inclusion of office workers and non-labour workforce in its depiction of Chevrolet’s staff. Much like the industrial labourers they are depicted arriving to work, receiving their pay, and proceeding to spend it. The sub-text is easily discernible, Chevrolet facilitates material wealth, but the role of the worker lays not just in the exchange of labour to bring Chevrolet profit, they must also participate in the wider consumer society. Commodities synonymous with the projected affluence are promoted alongside the behaviours expected with this lifestyle, consumerism as social practice has become the theme. The film ends with the narrator assuring the audience: ‘As the lights blink out, a day of work, a day of fulfilment, of happiness, and of peace merges into the assurance of a fuller life in the great American way.’<sup>78</sup>

Lizabeth Cohen has argued that this film illustrated the new economic strategy that General Motors and other manufacturers were beginning to deploy, claiming that:

It was the buying power of consumers in the aggregate, not the protection of individual consumers in the marketplace, that manufacturers like General Motors, along with a growing number of economists and government officials by the late 1930s, thought

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 22:13.

<sup>77</sup> Garrett, “Public Relations,” 13.

<sup>78</sup> *From Dawn to Sunset*, 1937, 23:40.

would bring the United States out of depression and ensure its survival as a democratic nation.<sup>79</sup>

Cohen argues that during this period in the late Depression two competing visions of the public were emerging: one which she defines as the ‘citizen consumer,’ responsible for ‘prodding government to protect the rights, safety, and fair treatment of individual consumers in the private marketplace.’<sup>80</sup> The other, and arguably the vision most favourable to manufacturers, was that of the ‘purchaser consumer,’ whose societal input was valued for being a de-politicised purchaser of goods. This characterisation of the public as purchaser consumer is unmistakable in *From Dawn to Sunset*, in which the working public are rendered more as necessary consumers, than as employees. It depicts mass consumption alongside mass-manufacture. Modernity, productivity, and abundance are all portrayed as parts of the same ecosystem. The working public within this ecosystem have taken on new responsibility. They are petitioned to abandon the frugality traditionally associated with, and encouraged, for the working class, to ignore the economic realities of the country around them, and to participate in a new economic configuration that would primarily benefit the manufacturers.

While the film was being produced workers barricaded themselves in factories, and a sharp downturn in the recovery from the Depression rippled through the economy. Detroit suffered a forty percent downturn in production and two million workers were laid off nationally.<sup>81</sup> Despite, or perhaps because of the dire reality, Chevrolet and their sponsored film producers the Jam Handy Organisation founded a mobile film library which distributed the film to as many as 259 schools and colleges in addition to being seen by an estimated 8.3 million Americans in theatres.<sup>82</sup> Given that these were only two films produced for a single organisation, the sheer scale of this investment in an attempt to obscure the dynamic realities

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<sup>79</sup> Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 20.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>81</sup> Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 350.

<sup>82</sup> Bird, *Better Living*, 131.

of labour activity in America becomes apparent. They illustrate just how much faith industry placed in sponsored film to communicate its business ideology, and the lengths they were prepared to go to suppress and undermine left wing articulations of labour solidarity. In doing so, they aimed to entrench the virtues of business through a cinematic rendition of capitalist realism as a form of pedagogic orthodoxy. It is because these, and many similar sponsored films, were used so thoroughly in education that this thesis seeks to investigate their production contexts and distribution practices. Doing so I argue will reveal a much-overlooked history, one which this thesis proposes was instrumental in shaping post-war thought and culture.

Each of the following chapters examines a specific transformational period in the history of sponsored classroom film production, approaching their use from the perspective of different institutional motivations. Together they reveal how classroom film was being used by some of the most powerful elements in American society to pursue individual agendas and shape the thoughts and behaviours of children, the public perception of education, and develop foundational cultural values that would have generational consequences. As the chapters progress, in the background of the specific analysis, will be a consideration of how these films and educational initiatives contributed to the process of building capitalist realism. It will go on to explore how these films modelled a concept of citizenship on adherence to market values and liberal selfhood, promoting personal behaviours and attitudes that would teach a generation of children not just what to consume, but how to be consumers.

The first chapter explores the various ways education was figured across the 1939 New York World's Fair, and specifically how it was being rendered through cinema at the Science and Education pavilion. Like many of the ambitious promotional devices of the fair, motion pictures portrayed conflicting visions of the future. They promised a streamlined future of abundance and good living whilst depicting the squalor and suffering of the Depression. They assured a better future and showed the peaceful cooperation of nations, as well as delivering

updates of a downward spiralling conflict in Europe and near inevitable end to America's isolationism. They promised a future of leisure and automation whilst assuaging the fears of technological redundancy. Above else they were employed in educational contexts. The Director of the Newsreels and Films Department, Claude Collins, boasted that by virtue of the sheer number of films available in the international pavilions, one could learn more about those countries from seeing their films than from an extended period of travel within them. The combined volume of films shown at the fair were, he claimed, 'a liberal education in themselves.'<sup>83</sup> This chapter questions what the fair's cinematic productions reveal about the way education was being reconceptualised by both liberal progressives and industrial manufacturers whose proprietary attitudes to science as the facilitator of progress clashed with liberal aspirations about the utopian trajectory of mankind. At stake at the largest public relations event in America was the opportunity to define the contours of public education and the role of the motion picture in communicating the values of a resurgent American economy. Because so much of the rigorous scholarship on the fair has focussed on the central attractions of the industrial exhibitors, it became pertinent to this thesis to closely examine the educational dimension of an otherwise seemingly commercial affair. The fair's legacy, as the chapter explores, is a dynamically rendered microcosm of broader shifts in American culture on the eve of the Second World War where science, education, and cinema were subordinated to industry, infused with the slick salesmanship of advertising, and reconstituted as a set of consumerist cultural values.

Chapter two examines the wartime activities of the U.S. government whose propaganda and civilian morale campaigns led to a dovetailing of educational initiatives with, and for the benefit of national defence. As the chapter explores in more detail, educational films became an essential component in the intelligence and security operations of several government

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<sup>83</sup> Collins, "Introduction," 1.

departments including the State Department, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and the Office of War Information. Examining the films and distribution networks established by these departments, this chapter explores the wartime co-option of the educational film market to service military and hemispheric security operations, the use of film to transmit cultural values abroad, and the remodelling of the high school to service armed forces induction.

Exploring the impact that accompanied the normalisation of propaganda, these defence-oriented films are examined in relation to the networks of investment and distribution controlled by government information services, patriotic organisations, and cultural institutions. As the chapter will reveal, the delicate balance of producing effective propaganda had not yet been perfected and establishing the most effective aesthetic and rhetorical strategies proved difficult. This chapter offers insight into the reorganisation of educational film library networks across the country to become explicit organs of national governance under the auspices of war time civil defence where educational films became essential to project America's self-image both domestically and overseas. By comparing the propaganda work being done in both foreign and domestic spheres, this chapter seeks to draw attention to the ways in which educational film at home was fulfilling a similar if not identical objective, in essence, using education as an institutional tool for national identity crafting.

Chapter three returns to peacetime to focus on the National Association of Manufacturers, exploring how they were attempting to frame post-war education in the United States. Before the war had reached its conclusion, NAM were already planning to capitalise on what had developed into a healthy domestic educational film market to assert their free enterprise economic philosophy and promote the idea of industry as the saviour of democracy. The legitimatising effect of wartime propaganda and the perceived threat of communism gave new impetus to the Association to make its voice heard in the classroom. Lowell Thomas who



had been the voice of NAM film campaigns of the 1930s stated in one film from 1937 that ‘the frontiers of the future are not on any map; they are in the minds of men.’<sup>84</sup> This proved to be remarkably accurate. As this chapter reveals, NAM were already deeply entrenched in post-war planning, attempting to capture that mental frontier and shifting a significant amount of its finances towards moulding young minds so that by the early 1950s ‘a million dollars [were] spent daily by the Association to make the American people believe that what is good for business is good for them.’<sup>85</sup> The reframing of the Soviets from ally to nemesis granted NAM perhaps their greatest boon, projecting on to an external enemy an existential threat around which to form a narrative of militant economic vigilance that positioned the ‘moral element of free enterprise’ against the ‘total threat of world communism’.<sup>86</sup> In doing so, NAM justified their political tactics as a form of patriotic defence, mirroring the institutional hard-line positions of public figures like the director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover:

The defense of the cherished freedoms secured and handed down to us by our fore-fathers is the responsibility of each American. Knowledge of the enemy, alertness to the danger, and everyday patriotism are the brick and mortar with which we can build an impregnable fortress against communism.<sup>87</sup>

Public statements like these provided justification for NAM to crush domestic opposition in the form of already weakened unions, and strangle federal aid to public school teachers, against whom accusations of treachery and subversion were increasingly being levelled.

Sponsored films constituted a significant portion of the educational film market in the United States, their deeply imbedded and sustained usage in school systems across the country warrants serious investigation. ‘Full education’ Dewey argued, ‘comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the social groups to which he belongs.’<sup>88</sup> Through the use of sponsored film,

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<sup>84</sup> *Frontiers of the Future*, 1937, 01:00.

<sup>85</sup> Geis, “NAM in the Schools,” 1.

<sup>86</sup> Hayek & Barnett in NAM, “Blueprint for American Strategy,” 1-6.

<sup>87</sup> Hoover, Letter to All Law Enforcement, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 209.

precisely the opposite was taking place, the aims and policies of social groups were being shaped, as Bernays said ‘by men we have never heard of.’<sup>89</sup> Many of the producers of the films examined in this thesis claimed that their investment in education was nothing more than a commitment to the educational welfare of the nation. Evident, they would argue, of a sincere commitment to what Joel Spring describes as ‘corporate progressivism.’<sup>90</sup> However, as the following chapters reveal, the use of sponsored films in the classroom primarily benefitted the sponsoring agencies who were trying to dramatically realign the public school to service their own political, cultural, or ideological demands. In the words of Lowell Thomas, the narrator of *Men and Machines*, ‘it’s amazing how a few facts will break up an argument.’<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Bernays, *Propaganda*, 37.

<sup>90</sup> Spring, *Corporatism*, 44.

<sup>91</sup> *Men and Machines*, 1936, 1:50.

## Chapter 1: Education at the 1939 – 1940 New York World’s Fair

### 1.1.1 The Shape of Things to Come

The way to ward off state capitalism is to re-establish belief in free competition and private enterprise – inseparable parts of our present democratic system. Let me give one example of how such a revitalised belief in the present system of private enterprise and democracy might be built up: The New York World's Fair might be utilized to teach the millions of Americans who will visit it or hear of it, dramatically, graphically, effectively how our democracy works and what its key values are, by injecting into the fair the keynote of the relation of every aspect of American life to America's essential democratic system by presenting the exhibits in terms not of themselves alone but of their relation to the American system.<sup>1</sup>

Two years before the grand opening of the 1939-1940 New York World’s Fair (NYWF) Edward Bernays, the man widely regarded as the father of public relations, delivered a keynote address to a meeting of the New York Merchants Association at the Hotel Pennsylvania in Manhattan. The purpose of the lunchtime address was to communicate to the assembled business community of New York the central themes that would be transmitted to the public during the two-year run of the fair, and emphasise their importance to those gathered, ideas he would later make public in an article titled *Public Education for Democracy* (1938). Realising that the fair presented what would come to be known as ‘the greatest single public relations program in industrial history,’ Bernays implored the Merchants Association to grasp the opportunity to tell their story to the American public.<sup>2</sup> Setting forth his challenge, he pleaded: ‘Let us make the values of America real to America again ... let us sell America to Americans.’<sup>3</sup> The challenge laid out in Bernays’ speech was twofold. Firstly, the business community needed to re-establish and ‘revitalize’ the relationship of the capitalist system following the Great Depression in order to restore the faith of the so called ‘common man’ in the economy.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, and more

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<sup>1</sup> Bernays, “Public Education for Democracy,” 126.

<sup>2</sup> Lichtenberg, “Business Backs New York,” 320.

<sup>3</sup> Bernays, *A Symbol for Democracy*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> The earliest planning stages of the fair were focussed on the idea of appealing to this figure of the common man describing the ‘fair for the people,’ and ‘everyman’s fair.’ (Committee on Theme, “The Theme of the Fair,” 3); (Teague, Letter to Kohn, 1)

importantly, he stressed that it was the duty of the fair's participants to advocate for the freedom of economic institutions from government regulation by making their role in securing and stabilising democracy explicit. Bernays insisted that the 'institutions, industrial, economic, social and political, that have made America, must be translated into new values, showing their relationship to the American system – to our freedom and our liberty.'<sup>5</sup> The goal of which was to make free enterprise inseparable from what the National Association of Manufacturers had been successfully touting as the 'American way' of life.<sup>6</sup> The fair, if it were handled correctly, could inscribe these business values in the national consciousness and use them to promote a new definition of the American system of government.

The NYWF has received a considerable amount of attention from scholars who have examined its position in the cultural and political history of the United States, arguing for and against its cultural significance at a crucial turning point of the mid-twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Cultural historian Warren Susman, more than most who have written on the fair, laments the occasion as an opportunistic and empty promise of a potential future, delivered by a lacklustre industry, and accepted uncritically by a public who were happy to believe the promise of consumer capitalism so presented in all its theme park spectacle. His principal claim is that the fair 'became a rather generalized advertisement for something the 1930s had begun to call the

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<sup>5</sup> Bernays, *A Symbol for Democracy*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the NAM's national poster campaign see Wendy Wall *Inventing the American Way* (2008), Jennifer Delton, *The Industrialists* (2020).

<sup>7</sup> Some have criticised its lack of cultural relevancy, which David Nye has argued stemmed from the design, themes, and aesthetics being determined by a small 'cultural elite,' hand-picked and approved by bond holders and corporate sponsors. (Nye, "Ritual Tomorrows," 5) Instead, Nye asserts that the fair was caught somewhere between the cynical self-promotion of 'powerful corporate interests ... [and] ... quixotic and irrelevant idealism.' (Ibid, 1-19) Others have argued that the ambitious displays of companies such as General Motors, whose 'optimism about the capacity of private industry to promote prosperity,' were ultimately prescient - pointing to the expanded highways, commuter suburbs, and automobile-oriented society emerging in the post-war boom as reflective in eerily accurate ways of the future community concepts that saturated its Futurama attraction. (Marchand, "The Designers Go to the Fair," 29) Marco Duranti has argued that the fair was an attempt to 'reconstitute a national narrative of progress,' one that had been undermined by the Great Depression and the social divisions that defined it. (Duranti, "Utopia, Nostalgia and World War," 663) Christina Cogdell, however, has argued, that submerged in the streamlined aesthetics of the Walter Teague, Norman Bel Geddes, and Henry Dreyfuss designed fair architecture lurked a eugenicist impulse to propagate societal order and bodily conformity. (Cogdell, "The Futurama Recontextualized," 193-245)

American Way of Life.’<sup>8</sup> In this criticism, Susman alludes to a lack of forward momentum in the cultural production of the 1930s, such that by the decade’s close, a raft of established advertising conventions were recycled with a futuristic sheen to be presented at the fair.<sup>9</sup> These polarising opinions reflect the multiple and overlapping regimes of meaning that emerged from the fair’s many competing interests, simultaneously presenting a visage of social, economic, and technological stability while embodying at every level from construction to display the contradictions and conflicts that had defined the troubled 1930s.

Yet to dismiss the fair on its perceived cultural or ideological shortcomings is to overlook several significant developments that emerged from this amalgamation of advertising, entertainment, and education. This chapter proposes that far from being a bookend of the 1930s, or just a mass public relations exercise for the city of New York, that the fair, beneath its streamlined futurism, slick salesmanship, and corporate fanfare, embodied a collective commitment to the serious work of reshaping public attitudes.<sup>10</sup> A deliberate renegotiation of the power relations between the individual and the political economy of the United States that would make use of education in facilitating shifts in cultural identity. Essential to this renegotiation was an ambitious plan to re-educate the public to effect a new understanding of words such as freedom, democracy, and prosperity. Reconfiguring the meaning of these polysemous ideas would require an investment in education, one focused on translating ideological concepts into common sense beliefs, and in doing so, integrate them into a self-reinforcing public discourse. In this sense the bold claim of the NYWF president that ‘the fair itself contributes to the building of the World of Tomorrow’ can be viewed less as a cynical promotional slogan to sell consumer goods and jumpstart a sluggish New York economy, and

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<sup>8</sup> Susman, *Culture as History*, 228.

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed exploration of the idea of cultural lag see Joseph Cusker, “The World of Tomorrow.”

<sup>10</sup> For the NYWF and tourism see “*Selling New York State to the Nation*” – *The 1939/40 New York World’s Fair* Mary Ann Borden (2011).

more as a serious mission statement.<sup>11</sup> The fair planners did not wish to return to business-as-usual as it had been before the Great Depression, instead, as this chapter will demonstrate, the business community's efforts at the fair reveal a desire to take an active role in reshaping the economy, the country, and the public themselves.<sup>12</sup> Susman, despite his cynicism towards the fair's achievements never-the-less believed that 'the fair in the eyes of its planners proposed not only to invite the people but to *create* the people in the most ideal sense of the concept.'<sup>13</sup> It is from this perspective, that the fair was actively trying to change not just public perception, but the public itself, that the following chapter draws its fundamental arguments.

Although I have characterised the NYWF as 'cultural event' I would also like to clarify some assumptions before considering its significance and themes. In order to effectively analyse the NYWF and the media that it produced it is necessary to navigate assumptions about the American public. Lawrence Levine warns against categorising the public as a 'purely passive mass audience,' an uncritical and homogenous entity that accepts whatever ideological message is directed at them.<sup>14</sup> Doing so he argues creates two critical fallacies: the first being the belief in the naïve, vulnerable, and 'all-absorbing' ideal subject of propaganda, the helpless consumer. The other, by extension of this logic, is that of the all-powerful propagandist, whose persuasive productions are so precise and targeted that they are 'impervious to reinterpretation by the audience.'<sup>15</sup> Neither of these imaginings is useful for serious critical work. Rather than

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<sup>11</sup> Whalen in Seldes, *Your World of Tomorrow*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> In his thesis on the New York World's Fair, Joseph Cusker distinguished between two broad groups who comprised the fair's organisational body, the administrative wing who mostly controlled the finances, and the designers who oversaw and implemented the fair's themes. This way of separating the financial backers and industrial lobbyists from the architects of the fair's design is useful and I use a similar distinction for different elements of the fair corporation. Firstly, those who would provide the funding and political support, hailing largely from New York's financial and corporate elite, including the fair president, who I will call the *fair executives*. A second group comprised of a diverse community of architects, designers, science promoters, journalists, and social theorists, who were primarily occupied with designing and expressing the themes and cultural mission of the fair shall be referred to as the *fair planners*. Elsewhere I mention the industrial exhibitors to mean specifically the companies such as General Motors or Westinghouse who sponsored their own dedicated pavilions. (Cusker, "The World of Tomorrow," 12)

<sup>13</sup> Susman, *Culture as History*, 214.

<sup>14</sup> Levine, *The Unpredictable Past*, 296.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 296.

imply that the fair messaging and media were imbued with some sort of indelible potency, capable of mesmerising and wholly converting the viewing public to its creed, this chapter is chiefly concerned with demonstrating that the fair was reflective of a society in transition. It traces a wider shift in American culture from being a producer capitalist society to a leisure-based consumer society, whilst exemplifying attempts that were already underway on a much larger scale to shape and influence the public through sustained education-focussed media campaigns.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter will look first at the building of the World of Tomorrow, how the fair organisers and industry leaders conceived of a world's fair to lift business, and to a lesser degree the American people out of the Great Depression. It will focus on the many tensions and contradictions of the fair's organisation, and how these shaped its themes and development. Expanding from these ideas, the second section will look at how these uneasy alliances, compromises, and tensions were expressed most thoroughly in the dynamic between education and commerce. This section will concentrate on the role those progressive educators played in educational outreach, and the subsequent co-option of education to communicate corporate science to the public through school funding and science themed demonstrations. This was achieved largely through a hybrid of education and spectacle. A harmonising of the showmanship tactics of the fairground and the didactic logics of the schoolhouse through which the definition of 'educational' was expanded to incorporate the prerogatives of the exhibitors and used to legitimise and promote large industrial companies at the expense of educators. The messaging of the fair was eventually distilled, and its shelf life extended by passing into the practices of the classroom. Motion pictures played a pivotal role in this process. The third

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<sup>16</sup> Such thinking was central to Walter Lippmann's sociological outlook in which he believed the 'bewildered herd' of society needed a 'specialised class,' of technocrats and analysts to guide an otherwise incapable public. (Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, 145); (Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 195) This way of thinking was indicative of a worldview that believed it was possible to impose a rational order on complex and often irrational systems and people in the belief that a well-informed member of the public will make rational decisions in their lives, political choices, and purchasing decisions.

section will examine how motion pictures became an ever more strategic technology in industrial public relations. To do this I will survey a selection of films produced for the fair and highlight one of its key filmic texts *The City* (1939). Focussing on the ideological and financial underpinnings that inspired and sustained its production, this third section will demonstrate how film was used to visualise the various fair planner's economic and social philosophies, and question what its wide distribution to school film libraries signified for the future of the educational film industry.

Sponsored films were used as a form of capitalist realism during the Great Depression to mask reality, suppress labour movements, and distil the economic orthodoxy of industrial elites into the classroom. This was achieved through a combination of subtle marketing and strategic economic opportunism on behalf of the resurgent business community using what Edward Bernays described as the 'intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses,' or 'propaganda,' to use the contemporary description.<sup>17</sup> Building from this history, the following chapter will look at how the use of ideologically inflected films in education became standardised, not just as a force to promote individual businesses, but to shape entire social narratives, guiding the attitudes of the audience, and realigning their understanding of their place in the wider political economy. Although these films were made for multiple audiences, it is their use within a wider educational context, as the following chapter will explore, that indicates how ideas about the practical value of education, how a curriculum should function, and what purposes education should serve, would be pushed further in the direction of servicing industry. To illustrate how these developments came into being I will figure the 1939 New York Worlds' Fair as many of its own designers intended it,

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<sup>17</sup> Bernays, *Propaganda*, 37; Businesses were already becoming wary of using this term in their marketing and promotional discourse. As pointed out in a *Business Week* article 'This war in Europe has had just one good result so far: it has made people propaganda-conscious, has put up their guard against words until those words are confirmed by deeds.' ("Business Propaganda," 56)



as a national classroom in which the American public, and particularly its youth would be given an education in economic literacy, the freedoms of depoliticised consumerism, and above all else the sovereignty of American industrial power.

### **1.1.2 Business Builds its World of Tomorrow**

Accounts of the fair's inception point to Joseph Shadgen, an engineer from the borough of Queens who had proposed to an associate, Edward Roosevelt, a member of the prestigious Roosevelt family and a distant relative of the President, the idea of hosting a celebration to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington.<sup>18</sup> The idea was quickly seized upon by a group of prominent New York businessmen and civic leaders including George McAneny, a former City Comptroller and President of the Regional Planning Association (RPA), Percy Straus the President of Macy's department store, and Grover Whalen the mercurial former police commissioner of New York. Whalen had dedicated much of his life to civic service in New York, he had been praised for his instrumental efforts in the development of New York's WNYC radio station as well as publicly derided for his heavy-handed response to unemployment marches in the early 1930s at which time he was serving as New York police commissioner.<sup>19</sup> The trio were quick to bring together some of New York's most powerful figures to help realise their ambition. Among them the popular mayor of New York Fiorello LaGuardia, and the influential urban planner Robert Moses, who had overseen construction of much of New York's urban infrastructure and redevelopment. With this support they were able to attract the kind of financial sponsorship that would make such a project

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<sup>18</sup> Shadgen would later sue the Fair Corporation for a million dollars claiming that after they took his idea all they gave him was 'a job sharpening pencils and coloring maps.' ("Sues for \$1,000,000," 8)

<sup>19</sup> In response to an unemployment demonstration on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1930, Whalen had ordered armed police to attack the crowd of men, women, and children who Whalen called 'communist rioters.' ("35,000 Jammed in Square," 1) The *New York Times* described the scene in graphic detail, noting: 'from all parts of the scene of battle came screams of women and cries of men with bloody heads and faces.' (Ibid, 1) Whalen would retire from the post shortly after.

possible. Wealthy backers including Nelson Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Felix Warburg, Alfred Sloan, and Walter Chrysler, among a host of New York's wealthiest business and financial leaders who eagerly signed up to form the New York World's Fair 1939 and 1940 Corporation (NYWFC). Whalen was appointed its president, with McAneny as Chairman of the Board of Directors, and Strauss as Chairman of the Committee on Architecture and Physical Planning.<sup>20</sup>

When it came to promoting the fair, the charismatic Whalen was ruthless and single-minded, promising that the fair would deliver all things to all people. To the business owners of Brooklyn, it was a chance to reap incredible profits from tourism, to the Homeowners' Associations of New York and New Jersey it was an opportunity for regeneration and regrowth, to educators he promised that the fair would be the single most significant educational opportunity in history.<sup>21</sup> He courted politicians, teachers, businessmen, and families, shook hands with royalty, secured the international pavilion endorsement of Stalin, and according to some reports, enthusiastically gave fascist salutes during promotional tours of Italy, all done in the name of securing endorsements for the fair.<sup>22</sup>

A sentiment promoted at the time in the popular press proposed that the NYWF would distinguish itself from fairs of the past by focussing not on selling products, but by selling ideas.<sup>23</sup> The New York World's Fair would not simply be a sales pitch for domestic commodities or the grandstanding industrial showmanship of the nation's largest businesses.

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<sup>20</sup> The considerable enthusiasm of the financial incorporators was no doubt encouraged by promises of a repeat of the financial success of the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, which had made considerable profits despite being hosted during some of the worst years of the Depression. Whalen would often cite the revenues of the Chicago exposition and upscale the potential out-of-town attendance that might be possible for an Atlantic coast World's Fair. (Whalen, "Chamber of Commerce," 2-4)

<sup>21</sup> Speaking to the Downtown Brooklyn Association he eschewed the usual grandstanding and praise for the fair's aesthetic and conceptual designs in favour of hard financial projections stating: 'I am not going to take your time today with a lengthy discussion of the social philosophy underlying our Theme, nor will I attempt to outline to you the physical design and architectural unity of the Fair.' (Whalen, "Downtown Brooklyn Association," 1) Instead he promised them that fifty million people visiting the fair would spend in the region of one billion dollars with forty-four million spent on accommodation in Brooklyn alone. (Ibid, 1)

<sup>22</sup> Rydell, "Selling the World of Tomorrow," 967.

<sup>23</sup> Lichtenberg, "Business Backs New York," 314.

At its core was a desire to shape a robust American economic landscape that would at all costs relate the essentials of a business led economy to the public. Whalen stated as much himself from the earliest days of the planning process announcing that: ‘The Fair will show not merely manufacturers and merchandise, but their social consequences and implications. It will portray the significance of the materials, ideas and forces which affect our lives and wellbeing.’<sup>24</sup> The fair presented an opportunity for the largest industrial manufacturers in the country to vividly capture the public imagination and make a case for what they promoted as their indispensable role in American life. As a forum for promoting its own narrative of America’s economic vitality, the fair would allow for a totalising environment in which to deliver a pro-business message with an uninterrupted clarity and rigour. This fact was not lost on Whalen either:

Today, because of the increased power of public opinion, it has become an all-important factor in building sales. The New York World's Fair offers a most effective medium for creating that good-will ... What could be more helpful to business than the Fair's purpose of telling Mr. Consumer that industry is his servant and contributes to his fuller and richer life; for it is common knowledge that the more materials and comforts that are supplied to man, the more time will he have to pursue those endeavours which will bring him happiness.<sup>25</sup>

This specific formulation of success and prosperity was essential to the fair’s messaging. The industries represented at the fair, as well as NAM had helped to propagate this idea through advertising campaigns throughout the 1930s.<sup>26</sup> The NYWF was yet another theatre of deployment in which their crusade would pitch its battles.

### **1.1.3 Free Enterprise Evangelism Against the New Deal**

The fair executives needed to ensure that the public understood the NYWF and its theme of building a better world were the exclusive domain of a business led free market economy. To

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<sup>24</sup> Whalen, “American Association of Advertising,” 2.

<sup>25</sup> Whalen, “Downtown Brooklyn Association,” 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> For NAM’s national radio campaign promoting their indivisibility thesis see *The Disinformation Age*, chapter four, Oreskes, Conway, & Tyson (2020); Elizabeth Fones-Wolfe – “Creating a Favourable Business Climate: Corporations and Radio Broadcasting, 1934 to 1954.” (1999)

do so they would need to downplay the perception of the federal government's role in public life. Choosing his words carefully, Whalen proudly declared in the *New York Times* that there would be no 'centralisation' of design or architectural work.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the fair would employ the best independent and private architects and construction firms which he claimed would bring work to 150,000 people.<sup>28</sup> He spoke without pretence when addressing those who he believed would be the primary benefactors of the fair. For all of the progressive sentiment about the upward trajectory of humanity that characterised much of the fair's promotion, Whalen declared at one of his many luncheon addresses that 'it is my sincere belief that among the many benefits that the New York World's Fair will bring, the greatest will accrue to the businessman.'<sup>29</sup> To deliver on this promise, the fair would need more than a sales pitch, marketing gimmick, or spokesperson. The public would need to be convinced that the very idea of democracy and the freedoms it entailed were under assault, and that only a militant defence of American private enterprise would deliver the public from the dangers that threatened it. It was of the utmost importance, argued Edward Bernays, that the public be made to 'understand and accept the vital part which private enterprise has played ... in preserving democracy.'<sup>30</sup> This publicity campaign would hinge on linking private business concerns and the free enterprise system with democratic process in such a way that the public would understand and internalise their inseparability from it such that 'fully aware of its real values to them ... they may be ready and eager to fight for its maintenance.'<sup>31</sup> This necessity underpinned the ideological and economic logics of the fair executives. The vitality of the economy as an existential crisis required immediate action on behalf of those citizens in positions of economic and industrial influence, or else business might fall further under the sway of New Deal

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<sup>27</sup> "Plans for World's Fair," 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Whalen, Downtown Brooklyn Association, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Bernays, "Public Education for Democracy." 125.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 124.

organisation. A ‘drift’ towards state capitalism, Bernays insisted, would bring about the kind of power concentrations that would lead to an erosion of the safeguards of democracy, and with it the freedoms of the individual citizenry so cherished in the classical liberal traditions of John Locke and Adam Smith.<sup>32</sup> The public would need to be educated at every level to appreciate and adopt this simple lesson, it would need to pass into the culture to secure its longevity and become a vital part of the belief system of the nation. The World’s Fair in New York, as Bernays suggested, was the perfect opportunity to deploy this lesson and preach the gospel of free enterprise. This understanding would not be lost on business leaders, especially those seeking an opportunity redress the balances of the New Deal’s political and economic policies. Some saw the fair as the perfect moment to push back against what they believed to be the overreach of Roosevelt’s New Deal government. A particularly telling article to illustrate this point can be found in a 1938 volume of *Public Opinion Quarterly* which speaks of the ‘opportunity to mould public opinion though the fair ... [to counter] ... New Deal Propaganda.’<sup>33</sup> This was not simply about reassuring a purchasing public of the legitimacy and stability of American industry, but, as Lichtenberg’s article points out, using the fair as a public relations exercise would be the ideal counter to the New Deal coalition’s widely successful adoption of press photography, radio, motion pictures, and stage shows. World’s Fairs, as several scholars have noted, not only created platforms to fix contemporary public discourse, but were capable of framing ‘attitudes toward technical change and political choices.’<sup>34</sup> At stake was a chance for business to push back against the emergency measure and planned economic strategies of FDR’s government by convincing the public that a centralised control of the economy was a debilitating attack on their individual freedoms. To do this the fair would need to deliver to the

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<sup>32</sup> Such thinking was foundational to the works of Friedrich Von Hayek who would at length make similar arguments for the rejection of centralised planning in his work *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). A treatise on economics that would come to dominate the thinking of American conservative political discourse in the coming decades. See chapter three for how his ideas would impact educational film in post-war America.

<sup>33</sup> (Lichtenberg, “Business Backs New York,” 315.

<sup>34</sup> Kargon et al., *World’s Fairs on the Eve of War*, 61.

public what William Bird described as the ‘personal meaning of corporate enterprise.’<sup>35</sup> Free enterprise, they promised, guaranteed the average American a greater opportunity to share in the wealth of the nation.

Industrialists and New Deal progressives alike would attempt to ground their economic philosophies in the legitimacy of America’s heroic past. Both seized on the idea to fix meaning to contested notions of freedom and democracy. At his 1937 renomination acceptance speech in Philadelphia, a city steeped in the traditions of the American War of Independence and struggles for liberty, FDR invoked the country’s revolutionary past as a metaphor for the financial trouble of the great depression. He promised to ‘restore to the people a wider freedom; to give to 1936 as the founders gave to 1776 - an American way of life.’<sup>36</sup> In his speech he identified the perpetrators of the economic crisis in bold terms, speaking of a ‘new industrial dictatorship,’ and of ‘privileged princes,’ that had conspired to rob the working man of his economic liberty and pressed him into economic servitude.<sup>37</sup> ‘Private enterprise ... became too private,’ he declared, ‘It became privileged enterprise, not free enterprise.’<sup>38</sup>

Along with the animosity he projected towards the ‘economic royalists’ that he had blamed for the country’s economic woes, FDR made efforts to frame his New Deal Government as the only rational stewards of the economy.<sup>39</sup> At the opening of the Golden Gate Exposition three years later, he claimed that the exposition was a ‘success far beyond even the imagination of its builders, for the Federal government is in close partnership with this national enterprise.’<sup>40</sup> He was sure not to miss an opportunity to promote the considerable federal investment of money and unemployment relief that the New Deal had contributed to the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge. Using his speech to emphasise the permanence and

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<sup>35</sup> Bird, “Enterprise and Meaning,” 25.

<sup>36</sup> Roosevelt, “Acceptance Speech,” 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Roosevelt, “Opening the Golden Gate Exposition,” 1.

physical legacy that his New Deal government had contributed to the Golden Gate Exposition and the people of California he claimed: ‘It is an instrument of international good will as well as an expression of the material and cultural progression of our own West and of our Pacific Ocean neighbours.’<sup>41</sup> San Francisco had been a demonstration of what government, directing and managing business, and working for the relief and economic interest of the people could achieve. It is perhaps unsurprising that his speech at the opening of the New York Fair was less enthusiastic. It centred on the nations of the world, and shied away from any mention of the economy, industry, or even the technological presentation except to mention the title of its theme – building the World of Tomorrow. Instead, he emphasised the peaceful cooperation of nations, and the sesquicentennial premise of the occasion.<sup>42</sup>

Framed within this ideological struggle between the New Deal government and industry, and against a backdrop of fragile economic reconstruction, industry had started drawing together ideas that would shape the messaging of their attractions. Much like the conflicts that surrounded their enterprise, the fair’s content, themes, and delivery would be hotly contested, at stake was the chance to frame the ideological discourse of the largest public relations event in America.

#### **1.1.4 Industry’s Technological Utopia**

Much of the early publicity for the fair anticipated the event with a tone of utopian optimism. In 1935 the fair’s theme solidified around the idea of ‘building the World of Tomorrow,’ an expansive concept that framed the design of the fair in idealistic, progressive, and perfectionist terms. Like the imaginary island in Thomas More’s 1516 novel, the idea of utopia, as a perfectly

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>42</sup> FDR was perhaps refraining from praising the NYWFC, whose membership included a substantial number of wealthy industrialists who he, and members of his cabinet had openly accused of launching a ‘capital strike’ and precipitating the double-dip of the recession in 1937 to dislodge him from power. (Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 352.

ordered society with a complementary perfect population, was echoed in the fanciful ambitions of the fair design. The idea that a World's Fair could project a rational, ordered, and idealised version of America provides an insight into the what the fair represented on a purely philosophical basis to its designers, demonstrating the faith they had in their own abilities to translate that idealised vision into a concrete reality. Whalen indicated such a belief that 'by setting forth what has been beside what is, the Fair of 1939 will predict, may even dictate, the shape of things to come.'<sup>43</sup> This sentiment that an ordered, rational society could be created permeated design of the fair.

Howard Segal has written extensively on the tradition of technological utopianism in American culture. He categorises it as a 'general American belief in inevitable technological progress.'<sup>44</sup> Technological utopianism in his formulation is expressed as an 'extreme' rendering of various reform movements from the 1830s through to the 1940s. Although not a singular set of principles, it encompassed the scientific management of Taylorism, the industrial precision and standardisation of Fordism, and the bureaucratic organisation of expanding corporations. It was expressed by a shared zeal for an organised society, one modelled above all else on efficiency as expressed through the precision of machines and technology. Capturing the public imagination had become an essential strategy for those companies who wished to weather the economic turmoil of the 1930s. This would motivate the lavish design and spending that characterised the focal exhibits of the large industrial manufacturers. The larger corporations committed early, and in force to building spectacular pavilions within their respective zones, investing heavily in the belief that modern design, technological marvels, and the promotion of science as a redemptive social force would captivate the fair going audience.

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<sup>43</sup> Whalen, "New York City Invites You," 1. One of several ironies of the fair executives' pro-business philosophy can be seen here with Whalen making this statement in the spirit of promoting private enterprise whilst seeking federal funding and government authorisation to proceed with fair planning and invite the foreign nations. (*Authorising Federal Participation*, 13)

<sup>44</sup> Segal, *Technological Utopianism*, iv.



The industry pavilions focussed their mission on modern design, new materials, and streamlined aesthetics, hiring the most prominent designers and architects to interpret the fair's themes. Industry placed enormous trust in these architects and their ability to communicate with and inspire the public. As Joseph Cusker has argued, the leading industrial designers including Henry Dreyfuss, Gilbert Rhode, George Sakier, and Russel Wright, were believed by the fair executives to be more in tune with both the public and technology. As such it was believed that they were better placed to interpret the 'machine age to the masses.'<sup>45</sup> Art, as David Gelernter has pointed out 'made technology beautiful, made technology speak to the public not only pragmatically, but emotionally.'<sup>46</sup> By investing in art and design, industry were able to communicate to the public a benevolent self-image that was characterised by technological progress and enlightenment reasoning. Beauty and harmony were fused with technology and offered to the public as a reprieve from the hardship and ugliness of a decade-long struggle for stability. In the façade of the fair was a promise of a brighter future, well designed and ordered, planned in such a way as to dispel the memory of the chaotic and unpredictable recent past. Industry would demonstrate that they could deliver a rational and ordered society in which the individual would thrive with the machine as their servant. In aligning themselves with the rationality of the machine, industry attempted to counter the prevailing understanding of the irrationality and instability of market forces that the public knew all too well. A prevailing theme in this outlook was the essential role of the machine in improving the lives of ordinary people, a repeated techno-utopian idea that tied the advancement of civilisation to the improvement of technology and people's closer interaction with it. Segal has argued that 'every serious expression of utopianism – even as conservative a variety as technological utopianism – simultaneously reflects and criticises the society that

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<sup>45</sup> Cusker, "The World of Tomorrow," 58-59.

<sup>46</sup> Gelernter, *The Lost World of the Fair*, 168.

produces it.’<sup>47</sup> Taken from this perspective, the desire for the fair planners and industry leaders to make the machine more relatable to the public by emphasising its beneficial role in facilitating better ways of living demonstrates at least some understanding of the alienating effects of technological modernity brought about by an increasingly machine-based society.<sup>48</sup> To resolve this problem the fair planners rooted much of their educational philosophy in finding ways to better relate the human to the machine: ‘How can we give our pupils a vision of the greatly improved standards of living that modern science and technology make possible? How can we make them see that all these problems are not merely things to be read about in a book but vital parts of their own lives?’<sup>49</sup> As such, science and technology framed with an aspirational cocktail of sleek modernity and social progress would take centre stage in expressing the supposedly educational potential of the fair. Humanity’s proximity to and alignment with the machine would be equated with mastery and improved living conditions. One contingent part of this message implied that the more man became like the machine the closer they would come to a rational and well-ordered society in which they could live.

The speed and enthusiasm with which industry took to investing in the fair and shaping its meaning did not go unnoticed however, and very quickly a vocal pushback on the fair corporation’s ceding of power to its sponsors emerged to counter industry’s plans. An influential group of designers and social planners would emerge, committing themselves to converting the fair into an educational environment, one that extolled progressive ideals about the capacity of education to instil democratic virtues and realise the potential of the human spirit.

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<sup>47</sup> Segal, *Technological Utopianism*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> For more on industrialisation, the machine, and alienation see Karl Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

<sup>49</sup> New York Board of Education, “Teaching the New York World’s Fair,” 2.

### 1.1.5 The Progressives' Educational Utopia

The most obvious expression of the progressives' educational mission can be found in the articulation of the theme of the fair which began within months of the fair's announcement. Concerns regarding the amount of influence that the large industrial exhibitors would be able to exert over the layout and public experience of the fair were voiced by renowned sociologist and urbanist Lewis Mumford. In December of 1935 Mumford had been asked to speak at a dinner meeting of a group prominent architects and urban planners who had labelled themselves 'The Progressives in the Arts.' His speech addressed concerns that should civic minded progressives like those gathered fail to take an active part in leading the design of the fair, it would become nothing more than shallow imitation of past fairs, driven by the deep pockets of industry, and once again celebrate what he described as 'the dead story of how wonderful the machine is.'<sup>50</sup>

Mumford hinged his concerns for the fair design in terms of civilisational rescue. His speech claimed that only through rational planning and the leadership of a new generation of civic minded artisans acting as a cultural vanguard could society be saved from the inevitability of collapse. He insisted that 'only dullards are unaware of the fact that we are living on the brink of a civilization which will either have to learn to plan itself, plan its industry, plan its environment and plan its cities, or which will be before we know it in the midst of chaos and death.'<sup>51</sup> His criticism was directed at the likely scenario in which those industry pavilions with more generous budgets, if left to their own devices, would dominate the layout of the fair:

Now, one of the obvious ways of making a blunder is to have no rational program for the fair at all and to permit it to design itself according to the bids of the highest bidder, the industry that has the most capital to spend, the industry which has the loudest mouth advertising man to do the barking; the industry which can afford to splurge in one particular department because it is making a lot of money there, will have the dominating place; others will accommodate themselves to that fact. There will be no coherent design whatever, and in order to fill up the yawing vacancy, in order to quiet the boredom of the

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<sup>50</sup> Mumford, *Progressives in the Arts*, 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

spectators, there will be naturally the usual number of lewd shows to occupy the minds of the visitors.<sup>52</sup>

Mumford's apprehension was remarkably prescient. The larger industrial exhibitors were able to secure the most prominent real estate on the fairgrounds through the fair corporation by bulk purchasing fair bonds. However, the attendees of the Progressives in the Arts dinner managed to secure a considerable amount of power for themselves. By forming a lobbying group called the Fair of the Future Committee they were able to build enough public pressure through endorsements from universities, public figures, and the press to convince the NYWFC of the need to implement their recommendations. Seven members would eventually go on to work directly for the fair in various key planning and design departments. Architect and designer Walter Teague, would co-chair the Theme Committee, sit as a member of the Board of Design, as well as designing the Ford and U.S. Steel Buildings. The Fair of the Future Committee looked towards a new projection of the fair, rejecting the classicism of previous fairs to avoid a glorification of the 'archaeological touch.'<sup>53</sup> Instead, they insisted that the fair must express through a consistent fair-wide theme, a projection of organised life that demonstrated the relation between all aspects of modern living:

What will be projected at the fair if such people have an opportunity, and if there is any rational programme in back of the fair, is not merely the new machine, although it is important, but we will find the new school, the new theatre, the new museum, the new playground, the new community ... you will be projecting a pattern that will be fulfilling itself in the future in a whole civilisation.'<sup>54</sup>

Mumford's address reveals a glimpse of the philosophical attitudes of the members of the Fair of the Future Committee, principally a keen awareness that for the fair to succeed in any meaningful sense, both symbolically and financially, it would need to embody an optimism about the emancipatory potential of technology and capitalise on 'America's deep-rooted love

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 4.

affair with progress.’<sup>55</sup> Specifically this would require coordination between the private exhibitors and the fair sponsored exhibitions to produce a coherent and interlinking theme. All the exhibitors in the themed zones such as agriculture or transportation would demonstrate how materials, scientific methods, mechanical processes, and technology achieved the common goal of serving humanity and contributed to building the World of Tomorrow.

Robert Kohn, the former President of the American Institute of Planners was appointed Chairman of The Committee on Theme, an eminent position within the NYWFC hierarchy charged with outlining a theme for the fair and then coordinating through the other departments to implement it across the fairground.<sup>56</sup> Such a centralised and commanding position within the administration indicates the level of influence the Fair of the Future Committee was able to achieve. In its most basic form, the committee arrived at the decision to steer the fair in the direction of civic uplift through education: ‘We suggest that the theme and aim of this fair better show the citizen of the United States how he may better his life through the coordinated use and appreciation of all this country’s resources, industrial and cultural.’<sup>57</sup> Almost immediately these aspirations ran into financial roadblocks as the imbalance between what the Fair Corporation could allocate to realise the theme diverged from what the large exhibitors could produce in their own pavilions.

In 1938 the Theme Committee had to ask the Board of Design for a ‘reconsideration of the amount of support devoted to this program.’<sup>58</sup> This became a constant uphill struggle to have the cultural elements of the fair supported financially without becoming eclipsed by the

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<sup>55</sup> Kargon, et. al., *World’s Fairs on the Eve of War*, 57.

<sup>56</sup> Kohn was also a member of the Regional Plan Association of America (RPAA) a group of social theorists and urban planners committed to transforming the lives of ordinary Americans through planned communities. Formed by Clarence Stein, members also included Lewis Mumford, Catherine Bauer, Frederick Ackerman, Russell Van Nest Black, and Charles Whitaker – editor of the American Institute of Architecture Journal. Many of these eminent individuals would subsequently work on some aspect of the fair either directly or through association with Kohn. As the chapter will explore shortly, Kohn’s influence over the motion picture presentation would be significant.

<sup>57</sup> Committee on Theme, “The Theme of the Fair,” 1.

<sup>58</sup> Bonney, “Public Presentation of the Theme,” 5.

designs of the larger exhibitors. Louise Bonney, another former member of the Fair of the Future Committee, and Director of Feature Publicity noted that: ‘Largely because of this emphasis upon facade rather than upon ideas, the Fair is beginning to be accused of ruthless commercialism and disregard of cultural and educational interests. Many influential agencies have become openly hostile or indifferent.’<sup>59</sup> Bonney had been instrumental in advocating for and securing funds for the fair-sponsored cultural and educational exhibits. In a letter to Kohn, Bonney pointed out the considerable resources that had been afforded to cultural exhibitions at the 1937 International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life in Paris the year before, drawing comparison to the relatively modest commitment from New York. Urging them to push the board for more investment she wrote: ‘If the Paris exposition authorities with their extensive experience in exposition planning put so much emphasis on this type of exhibit, we can only conclude that such exhibits have a beneficial effect on gate receipts.’<sup>60</sup> The progressive’s utopia would teeter on the brink of disaster and fair planning would be constrained by financial reality. Though they may have dictated the overall theme of the fair, planted their ideas at the central axis of the fairground, and taken up residency within the administrative division of the NYWFC, the struggle for the progressives to realise their cultural mission would depend on concentrating their resources into a few key locations.

So far we have seen how the struggle for control of the fair’s meaning and design has revealed some of the many contradictions that were being worked out in the wider culture of the pre-war United States between the New Deal and big business. Bold ambitions were haunted by both the decade long economic crisis that the country was still unevenly emerging from and overshadowed by an escalating conflict in Europe.<sup>61</sup> All invested parties, the fair

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Bonney, Memo to Voorhees and Kohn, 1.

<sup>61</sup> A war that if entered into, would necessitate a level of government intervention and control over the economy that would undermine the deregulatory campaigns that had characterised the business community’s efforts to resist and degrade New Deal regulation and market interventions throughout the 1930s. Not only could the potential for America to be drawn into that conflict radically affect the export potential of American automotive manufacturing

executives, the New Deal Government, the fair planners, and designers shared a belief in the potential for the fair to shape the national discourse. Embedded in the foundations of the NYWF were a multitude of sometimes contradictory narratives, from whose tension the fair's ideological and aesthetic structures would be determined. Fairgoers would look to the future while celebrating the past, stroll through a new high-tech built environment that promised a return to a pastoral idyll, and witness the advancement of industrial productivity, facilitated by the machine, whilst consuming narratives of leisure time and luxury. The conflicting priorities of the idealistic fair planners and the financial leverage of large industrial corporations would be played out in a struggle to define an uncertain future in which technological advancement promised either a guarantee or a reprieve from disaster. These factions would use the pretence of education to assert their beliefs, turning the fairground into a pseudo-classroom where the lesson (as Bernays had insisted) that private business and a free enterprise economy were better suited for the task of building a better world would be taught to forty-five million Americans.<sup>62</sup> As the next section will explore, these groups would develop pedagogic strategies to advance their competing narratives as they attempted to define the meaning of education in the World of Tomorrow.

### 1.2.1 Business Facts and Science Fictions

The Committee on Education plans to dramatize the function of education by showing it in H.G. Wells' phrase, "as the only preventive of catastrophe." In all of the exhibits the drama will be heightened by showing success in sharp contrast with catastrophe. ... The educator will be shown as a forthright militant leader whose aim is to promote progress

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to name but one industry, but the potential loss of the German subsidiaries of Ford and GM which constituted as much as 70% of the German automotive market would have been devastating to their parent companies. (Dobbs, "Ford and GM Scrutinized," 1) Isolationists in America as high up as then Ambassador to the United Kingdom Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. had weighed in on the great cost to the American people and business community that war would entail both through taxation and government control of the economy. To some, this echoed too closely the planned economies of totalitarian states across the Atlantic. Kennedy, an ardent isolationist declared in 1940 that 'democracy is finished' in England.' (Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 78) George Orwell believed this sentiment referred less to an immanent invasion of England, and more to Kennedy's personal distaste at the thought of losing market freedoms. In the *Lion and the Unicorn* Orwell noted that 'by "democracy", of course, he [Kennedy] meant private capitalism.' (Ibid, 78)

<sup>62</sup> Weglein et al., *Worlds Fair Records*, vii.

through the spreading of light as opposed to the inflexible forced advance of those who use violence and darkness. The free thinking, free inquiring educator will be contrasted with the propagandist. Naturally, in this focal exhibit the means [of] science will be opposed to the means [of] violence.<sup>63</sup>

At the forefront of the fair planners' minds was a sincere conviction that the fair should be an educational endeavour. Building the World of Tomorrow would, in line with their broad philosophies on the duty of the civic-minded citizens to guide society away from its own self-destructive impulses, require an investment in education to relate the material and scientific contribution of industry to the public for the betterment of society. For the fair planners, the delivery of this message through education and scientific reasoning would often take on an existential urgency. The progressive scientific community that had witnessed a growth in the 1930s regarded science as having an active, even interventionist political and social consciousness. Peter Kuznick argues that members of this emergent social force were 'especially convinced that scientific rationality represented the best antidote to fascist irrationality.'<sup>64</sup> With daily updates of the conflicts in Europe escalating, and the noticeable absence of war-torn countries from the fair's international zone, they were particularly keen to have their presence at the NYWFC elevated.<sup>65</sup>

So much of the scholarship on the fair to date has focussed on its commercial and aesthetic significance that its educational endeavours have been almost entirely overlooked. Certainly, the Science and Education Exhibition and the Model School mentioned later in this section are barely mentioned in scholarly literature that has tended to concentrate on the history of the industrial displays such as General Motor's Futurama exhibit.<sup>66</sup> By overlooking the

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<sup>63</sup> Slesinger, Memo to Kohn, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Kuznick, "Losing the World of Tomorrow," 342.

<sup>65</sup> As conflicts spiralled in Europe, the fairgrounds themselves became physically reshaped. The Czechoslovakian pavilion represented a country that had just been annexed by the conspicuously absent German government and no longer existed as a nation. China was unable to organise a pavilion due to the on-going Japanese invasion (although Japan's pavilion was still present), and Spain being locked in a civil war were also noticeably absent.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the Futurama see Christopher Innes, *Riding into the Future*, Chapter Seven (2005); Paul Fotsch, *The Building of a Superhighway Future*, (2001); Nathaniel Walker, *An Intimate View: General Motors' Futurama Exhibit and the Mass Production of Consumer Compliance*, (2009); Roland Marchand, *The Designers*



significance of the educational context of the fair, much of the organisation and intent of the fair planners has gone unnoticed. This section aims to redress this oversight and reveal the ways in which the fair contributed towards the reshaping of education in the public mind.

The fair marked a turning point in industry's appropriation of education as a platform to promote its products, and more importantly its political and economic philosophies. As the following section will demonstrate, ideas about the social purpose of education were in a state of transition. The turbulent decade of the 1930s had been marked by leaps in technological progress that had failed to prevent economic discord and social disunity. Now industry would look to the future to re-establish itself in the public consciousness. As previously mentioned, industry had continued making forays into education on a piecemeal basis throughout the Great Depression. Most of these efforts had been focussed on building brand salience among its young audience with subtle product placement and the association of a company's identity with the qualities associated with its machines. This section will look at how education and science promotion became key strategies in the fair's public relations campaigns. Beginning with the fair education programme, what follows is a survey of the evolution of the progressive fair planner's educational strategies. It focusses on their combative insistence on an educational program of merit to counter the industrial pavilions' appropriation of science, and its transformation into spectacle as a form of public relations. While industry turned to science to promote its mastery of technology and the machine, progressive educators would attempt to reconstitute the social function of education to embed civic values as part of efforts to establish education as a 'bulwark of democracy.'<sup>67</sup> As this section shall explore, at the fair, substantial efforts were made to reconstitute the meaning of education and science and infuse them with ideological agency. In tandem with these developments, this section will reveal how the battle

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*go to the Fair II: Normal Bel Geddes, The General Motors "Futurama," and the Visit to the Factory Transformed*, (1992).

<sup>67</sup> Dept. of Science and Education, "A Focal Exhibit on Science and Education," 1.

between the progressive fair planners and the commercially minded industrial exhibitors began to frame education as a saleable commodity, one that would embody new democratic values. As a result, this section will demonstrate how science was pressganged into commercialism and education reimagined as a social force, first to adjust the child to society, and then society to the machine.

### **1.2.2 Education in the World of Tomorrow**

With the publication of the fair's mission statement in 1935, a consensus had formed in the Committee on Theme that unlike in previous fairs, art, science, and education should not be isolated in separate buildings but instead diffused throughout the fair in every element of its design and presentation so that they would be 'permeating all exhibits.'<sup>68</sup> What follows is a revealing look at the progressives' attempts to shape the fair into an educational space. In doing so they demonstrated how they perceived education broadly as a strategy for elevating their own sociological beliefs, using a combination of close influential professional associations and mass media to appeal to the public.

Initial plans for the educational dispersal called for an information centre in the Community Building that would provide pamphlets and guided tours for interested visitors, highlighting the educational theme across the fair's focal exhibits. The fair planners, concerned with the social up lift of education would figure learning as an ambient experience, a kind of educational osmosis such that the fairgoer, immersed in rich surroundings would be captivated, inspired, and passively enlightened. The educational tour guidebooks assumed that the fair goer (and the excitable schoolchild) would take a logical route around the grounds, moving from one interlinked exhibition to another, connecting the trail of pedagogic clues to comprehend their interrelation. However, it was quickly realised that such plans would be insufficient and

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<sup>68</sup> Kohn, Memo to Flanigan, 1.

a dedicated focal exhibit on education would be needed. In its earliest stages however, the NYWFC looked inwards to their planning committee to establish its educational themes.

Feeling that they had been largely side-lined by the fair executives, members the New York Board of Education declined to visit the NYWFC offices at the Empire State Building. Realising the need to foster good will with the schools, Kohn appointed Donald Slesinger to collaborate with the Board to produce a series of educational guides to be used as joint promotional and learning texts.<sup>69</sup> This decision was taken to both pacify criticism of what the educational community considered a purely commercial venture, and to build links with the local school systems whose reserve of potential ticket holders could be called on to boost attendance. From the Committee on Theme, Donald Slesinger, formerly an advisor on education, was installed as Director of the Education Exhibit, and Dr Gerald Wendt, a former advisor on science was made Director of Science and Education.

Still there were barriers that would need to be overcome for the fair's educational aspirations to be realised. The minutes from a meeting of the Education Steering Committee note rather flatly that professional educators showed little interest or enthusiasm for the fair or its value as an educational space.<sup>70</sup> Public concerns that the fair would have little educational or social benefit were not helped by the presence of lewd attractions in its entertainment zone, with some commentators suggesting the NYWF was in danger of losing credibility.<sup>71</sup> As much as fair planners valued entertainment and showmanship to draw crowds, the mounting pressure

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<sup>69</sup> As with many members of the administrative team, Slesinger would occupy several roles for the NYWFC, he began as a Consultant on Education before becoming Director of the Education Exhibit in June of 1938, as well as being Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Education under Harry Woodburn Chase. As Director of the Education Exhibit, he was one of five members of the Committee on Theme, answerable to Robert Kohn. The other members being Louise Bonney (Director of Feature Publicity and Director of Cultural Promotion), Holger Cahill (Director of the Department of Contemporary Arts), Gerald Wendt (Director of the Science Exhibit) and Philip McConnell (Consultant on Social Science, Executive Assistant to the Committee on Theme, and Assistant to the Department of Science and Education.) (Simpson, Memo to Jo Millard, 1).

<sup>70</sup> Bonney, Minutes of Steering Committee, 2.

<sup>71</sup> Attractions included *Living Magazine Covers*, erotic dance ensembles, as well as an animal freak show dubbed 'Nature's Mistakes.' Morality and nudity problems would continue to plague the fair throughout its two seasons, as would public calls for a 'higher moral tone,' and crackdowns on the many stripteases, and nude shows that popped up in the entertainment zone. ("Higher Moral Tone of Fair Fun Urged," 1.)

of both fair sponsors and the popular press encouraged them to redouble efforts to present the fair as a serious undertaking. Oliver Wolcott Roosevelt, the prominent New York banker and one of many wealthy incorporators of the fair, indicated in a letter to Whalen that for the fair to be successful in its mission to sell the American public on the idea of a business led future, the fair would need to present a ‘necessary front’ of legitimacy.<sup>72</sup> In return for the auspicious endorsements and financial endowments of the fair incorporators, this front of legitimacy would need to be finessed throughout the exhibits to draw in as wide an audience as possible. Roosevelt, a cousin of the former President Theodore Roosevelt, and descendent of the founding father Oliver Wolcott urged Whalen to return to the fair’s early incarnation marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Washington’s inauguration as President. This he believed would present a stable historical base from which to advertise the future of America. Dramatizing the fair as an educational experience, particularly for the sake of the fair going children was at best a secondary consideration, one intended to compliment the economic and industrial stimulation and in Roosevelt’s words, ‘give this great number of people an additional valid reason for coming.’<sup>73</sup> Responding to these criticisms, the Education Steering Committee began releasing regular updates and articles on the fair’s merits and progress in educational trade journals. They also attended national teaching conventions to win over educators, using the professional education circuit as a promotional vehicle for the fair. The acrimony that had built up was not helped by the particularly negative attitudes towards teachers held by several of the fair planners. Louise Bonney, the Director of Feature Publicity, and a former teacher herself, wrote to Kohn expressing her view that: ‘seventy-five percent of the teaching staff in the country are social misfits. ... Until we ‘re-orientate’ the teacher we can hardly expect the teacher to relate the child to the community.’<sup>74</sup> This gives some indication that the fair planners,

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<sup>72</sup> Roosevelt, Letter to Grover Whalen, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Bonney, “The Problem of Modern Education,”1.

progressively minded as they proclaimed to be, often regarded public education either as resource for their own purpose, or as an inconvenience that would need to be negotiated. One strategy readily adopted by the planners was to lean on their professional acquaintances at educational institutions to help promote the fair.

Lester Dix, principal of the Lincoln School and Clyde Miller, Associate Professor of Education at Columbia University, who had been working closely with the education and promotions department both endorsed the fair for its educational potential. These endorsements would subsequently be used by the Promotions Department to persuade school boards further afield from New York to attend the fair.<sup>75</sup> Letters to school principals signed by Gerald Wendt would assure sceptical school boards that the elite progressive schools of New York viewed the educational opportunity of the fair favourably.<sup>76</sup> Wendt was effectively piggybacking the prestige of New York's top schools to win over teachers. The education committee themselves were well placed to do this through their institutional connections, but also sought to expand their sphere of influence to include other professional groups. Kohn recommended that their educational endeavours should not be guided solely by educators, but instead, much like the rest of the fair, should be subject to the additional 'constructive criticism of a committee of laymen.'<sup>77</sup> Kohn provided a list of suggestions for what would eventually become the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) with Harry Woodburn Chase, the Chancellor of New York University as its Chairman, whilst a separate Science Advisory Committee (SAC) was developed.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Hickok, "School Promotion Circularization," 2.

<sup>76</sup> Specifically, the Lincoln School, and the Horace Mann School, both of which had been founded and operated as experimental units of Teachers College at Columbia University.

<sup>77</sup> Kohn, "Tentative Draft," 3.

<sup>78</sup> The committee, as per Kohn's suggestion, was drawn from a range of influential figures within higher education institutions and professional bodies including NBC, the New York Board of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York University, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), Purdue University, the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, Fordham University, Yale University, University of North Carolina, The American Film Centre, and the Carnegie Foundation. From the list it is apparent how integral both higher education institutes, and media producers were to the success of the fair. The absence of educational

With the Committee on Theme headed by Robert Kohn and Walter Teague overseeing the development of the fair, attention was now given to developing the various focal exhibitions. Science and education would at first be channelled through different pathways, developing their own themes, and pursuing their own objectives before eventually being reunited in the later development of the Focal Exhibit on Science and Education. Before this development would emerge, the Committee on Theme would first need to find a way to integrate education through the focal exhibits and industrial pavilions. Again, the attitude of the fair planners themselves appeared to be as much of a hinderance as the enormity of the project. Some believed that it was ‘impossible to underestimate the intelligence of the average citizen.’<sup>79</sup> However, as the publicity department made clear, dumbing down the educational elements of the fair would reflect badly on all involved and potentially undermine their objectives: ‘The Fair cannot afford to have the intelligent minority alienated or even made indifferent because among other things, this minority is the most articulate group in the community and has influence upon engines of public opinion, far beyond its numbers.’<sup>80</sup> A healthy balance between legibility and credibility would need to be found by both the industrial exhibitors who needed the public to validate their economic ambitions, and the fair planners who wanted to present the vast public relations exercise as an educational endeavour.

### **1.2.3 The Educational Mission**

The central issue facing the education committee was how to integrate the theme of the fair with their educational mission. The problem was outlined in their report to the fair board: ‘How can each exhibitor show his contribution to the education of youth so that they, too, know the tools and materials for building tomorrow's world? How can each exhibitor show his concern

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publishers, teachers’ unions, and the National Education Association (NEA) is also notable in that it indicates the preference for institutions and funding bodies over the community level teaching concerns.

<sup>79</sup> Lovett, Letter from Massachusetts Advisory Committee, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Bonney, “Public Presentation of the Theme,” 3.

for and contribution to the problems of age and youth?’<sup>81</sup> Having gained the influence to steer the direction of the fair towards their utopian aspirations, the Committee on Theme would now decide how the theme would be distilled throughout the fair, the Education Department arrived at the idea to create a unified scheme whereby all promotion would embody aspects of the building the World of Tomorrow mandate:

All exhibits, whether concessions or commercial displays, should emphasize a few basic concepts such as the inter-dependence of man, the control and direction of the machine for human values and welfare, and the education of man to use the possibilities of modern industry and science as servants for his purposes. These ideas must be stressed repeatedly in all exhibits. Each exhibitor, individually and by trade group, should be asked to show how and in what way his materials, his products, his business, are the tools, the materials for building the world as man would have it.<sup>82</sup>

Taking on this challenge, the Education Steering Committee had, by 1938, consolidated a multi-pronged plan for education into six key proposals. Firstly, a dedicated educational focal exhibit would ‘dramatize the story of American education ... using moving exhibits, motion pictures ... sound and colour.’<sup>83</sup> A program of educational motion pictures procured from educational film makers, industry sponsors, and the government was to be shown in the education focal exhibit (plans that would later emerge as the Little Theatre).<sup>84</sup> A proposed model school, given tentative approval by the Board of Education, and awaiting the green light from Mayor LaGuardia, would demonstrate the best educational practices currently being used in schools. The study material written by Slesinger whilst working as the fair’s liaison to the New York Principals Association was developed into a series of as many as fifteen books on the focal exhibits.<sup>85</sup> In cooperation with other fair departments and exhibitors, motion pictures

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<sup>81</sup> “Education at the 1939 World’s Fair,” 2.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Slesinger, Letter to Whalen, 1.

<sup>84</sup> The use of motion pictures in the Little Theatre during the fair is examined in more detail in the following section.

<sup>85</sup> The NYWFC had them placed on the New York Board of Education approved reading list with profits being split evenly between the Fair Corporation and the Principals Association. Despite the questionable educational quality, they were planned for distribution throughout the country. The promotions department were particularly keen on these books as not only were they bringing in revenue to the fair ahead of its opening, but they were as Hickok describes, ‘very valuable promotional material.’ (Hickok, Letter to the President, 1)

would be widely distributed across the country for ‘promotional work in schools.’<sup>86</sup> Lastly, these proposals, it was stressed, would need to be finalised to promote the fair during the National Education Association (NEA) annual convention in June of 1938. Here the proposal would demonstrate the fair’s potential as an educational experience ahead of a subsequent visit by the NEA to the fair grounds. Targeting the NEA convention would provide a ‘spectacular project for promotion for the fair in the classrooms of the United States.’<sup>87</sup> Hickok hoped to ‘send these teachers back to their classrooms next Fall as salesmen for the New York World’s Fair.’<sup>88</sup> Education would be used to sell the public on the idea of attending the fair by reframing it as a learning environment, increasing attendance, and elevating its prestige above what would be expected of an international trade show.

#### **1.2.4 The Expanded Classroom.**

The committee’s proposals were implemented by Gerald Wendt, the Director of the Department of Science and Education. His recommendations formed the basis of an educational mission statement for the opening of the 1939 season. Wendt called for:

The maximum exploitation of all aspect of the Fair as an educational stimulus to all visitors. The maximum direct utilization of the Fair as an educational medium by teachers and classes of students. The interpretation of the Fair, its theme and methods, to professional educators and professional scientists. The optimum integration of science in and through all exhibits and activities of the Fair.<sup>89</sup>

The key developments that Wendt made were firstly to reframe the entire fair as an educational space, a sort of open classroom in which the teaching community and the general public would learn rather than be entertained. Education would be an active process with fairgoers being taught rather than passively observing the wares and displays of industry. Secondly, the

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<sup>86</sup> Slesinger, Letter to Whalen, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Hickok, Letter to the President, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Wendt, “Services Available,” 1.



platform through which this active pedagogy would take place would explicitly be the presentation of science.

While Wendt was trying to consolidate the educational schemes within the fair, Hickok outlined programs for promotion in schools, one for the immediate New York City area, and one to reach out to schools across the country. In New York, twelve lesson outlines were distributed directly to teachers to demonstrate how they could use the fair itself as a learning space, with over forty thousand of each lesson plan being printed.<sup>90</sup> The series of guides titled *Teaching the New York World's Fair* offered teaching instruction, lesson plans, student activities, and above all, assurances that the fair was indeed an opportunity for learning. The first issue of guide titled *Why Study the World's Fair* went to great lengths to stress this point.<sup>91</sup> The guide insisted that the majority of classroom learning was unsuitable, inefficient, and that the opportunity for a field trip would prove to be a more constructive enrichment experience for the children. These sentiments were echoed by Slesinger who outlined in a letter to Kohn that the fair should emphasise a multitude of educational strategies if it were to be effective: 'The school is only one of the agencies of education. The radio, motion picture, printing press and conversation will be portrayed in terms of their influence on youth. Independence is the goal of education, incompetence, and insanity the catastrophe.'<sup>92</sup>

Having insisted on the educational benefits, the guide stressed the counter-intuitive claim that the fair was 'not a money-making enterprise,' to reassure the sceptical teaching profession.<sup>93</sup> However, nearly half of *Why Study the World's Fair* was concerned with details regarding the fair's financing, how the profits are expected to benefit New York City, the bonds that were sold to finance it, and the employment opportunities that the fair had enabled. As a document meant to reassure teachers of the educational benefits of the fair, it struggles to

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<sup>90</sup> Hickok, "Promotion Program," 1.

<sup>91</sup> New York Board of Education, "Teaching the New York World's Fair," 1.

<sup>92</sup> Slesinger, "Educational Exhibits," 1.

<sup>93</sup> New York Board of Education, "Teaching the New York World's Fair," 2.

convince. The prevailing attitude of the fair planners towards teachers and school visits remained surprisingly uneasy, despite insisting that it would one of the best education opportunities ever presented to the public they nonetheless claimed that: ‘What they get out of their visit to the Fair depends upon what they know about it before they go.’<sup>94</sup> Similar schemes would be used in higher education institutions. The Department of Research led by Dr Frank Monaghan of Yale University planned a full series of lectures themed on the fair to be delivered at Hunter College. This promotional endeavour was conducted primarily to raise public awareness of the NYWF, establish it as an educational event worthy of academic attention, and in doing so, ‘secure the prestige of higher education.’<sup>95</sup> Close cooperation with the New York and regional public-school systems was essential to the Youth Promotion Division who went to great lengths to ensure their attendance. Parent teacher associations across the east coast were petitioned to promote the fair and encourage pupils to visit with their parents during school terms, effectively replacing regular school curriculum with the fair experience. In anticipation of its opening on the April 30, 1939, the NYWFC sought to maximise the attendance of schoolchildren. Harry Woodburn Chase, the Chancellor of New York University and chairman of the education committee reached out to various boards of education across the country to secure their attendance. He boasted of the fair as a ‘first rate educational instrument,’ suggesting the best dates for school children to attend and promoted a world’s fair printed syllabus that had been in use at the Lincoln School and across the New York public school system.<sup>96</sup>

A letter to the head of the New Hampshire PTA requested that schools, ‘particularly in some of our larger industrial areas ... permit school children to accompany their parents to the Fair without their absence from school being counted against them.’<sup>97</sup> This was despite the fact

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Lichtenberg, “Business Backs New York,” 318.

<sup>96</sup> Chase, Letter to the President, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Hickok, Letter to Mrs Ayer, 2.

that many school systems, particularly in areas with less access to funding, were reliant on state aid which itself was dependent on attendance figures.<sup>98</sup> The fair-commissioned educational programs boasted that the experience would help teachers to ‘vitalize their classroom work with the material of the foreign, industrial, and state exhibits.’<sup>99</sup> The priorities of the fair planners to shepherd children into the fair were at odds with the fiscal restraints on many of their target audience. Increasing pressure to boost attendance figures, particularly by the fair’s second season pushed the fair planners to ever more creative ways to reach out to schools. By the 1940 season special measures were taken to maximise attendance by offering one free admission to every eligible pupil in New York city’s five boroughs. Estimates from the Department of Public Education (DPE) indicated the cost of the fair corporation covering the admission price could run up to eighty thousand dollars.<sup>100</sup> Even so by the start of the 1940 season the DPE were anxious to get the attention of school officials across the state, appealing as broadly as possible with fair related education material, slide reels, motion pictures, teaching aides - pleading with school superintendents to let them know which subjects they would like covered, and offering to organise trips to the fair on behalf of the school.<sup>101</sup> All this was to be paid for, it was suggested, by groups of wealthy citizens and businesses ‘interested in fighting through the schools any growth of communism or fascism among our young people,’ and offering them ‘the very best possible means of selling America to the children.’<sup>102</sup> This decidedly ideological turn should come as no surprise considering the ‘forthright militancy’ with which Slesinger had characterised the fair’s science focussed educational mission. Peter Kuznick astutely points out that ‘the equation of science and democracy, once so central to the progressive scientists’ fight against fascism, would be gradually transformed into an essential

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<sup>98</sup> Brister, Letter to Hickok, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Kagey, Letter to Teachers, 1.

<sup>100</sup> Ferrarini, Outline of Regulations, 1.

<sup>101</sup> Kagey, Letter to School Superintendents, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Hickok, “Proposal by Mr Manny Strauss,” 1.

component of the ideology of Cold War anticommunism.’<sup>103</sup> At the fair, these progressive leanings had begun to turn towards a militant approach to education, particularly in the sciences.

Educators, regardless of their political leaning shared a common belief that schools played an important role in shaping and preserving society. A more conservative opinion from the Board of Education, reiterated this belief: ‘We may not all accept the dictum of the left-wing educational reformers that it is the job of the schools to build a new social order, but we must admit that the children of today will be the citizens of tomorrow.’<sup>104</sup> What this indicates about the Board of Education was a growing recognition of the social function of education. Even if they did not agree with progressive educators such as John Dewey when it came to the particulars of curriculum, they at least understood education at large played role in shaping culture and the character of the nation. If they wanted to have a say in the direction that the national character might take, they would need to take a controlling interest in education. With this in mind the educational department sought to exemplify science as integral to the democratic continuity of the country, however, as will be explored next, industry viewed science as their proprietary domain.

### **1.2.5 Corporate Science Becomes Public Education**

The department of Science and Education created specialised tours for visiting schools to maximise their fair experience, offering both two and three-day tours for elementary and high school aged children. The department designed what it described as general tours as well as themed tours emphasising particular subjects such as government, science, and one which they described as ‘commercial education’ focussing on the large companies and their contributions

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<sup>103</sup> Kuznick, “Losing the World of Tomorrow,” 367.

<sup>104</sup> New York Board of Education, “Teaching the Fair,” 1.

to the economy.<sup>105</sup> These tours however were virtually identical to each other and regardless of core subject they were all front loaded with visits to the large industry exhibitions.<sup>106</sup> The tour emphasising science proceeded as follows: The first stop was General Motors' *Highways and Horizons* exhibition along with its research laboratories and Casino of Science, then on to the Ford pavilion featuring their step-by-step automobile manufacturing process and safety testing laboratory. Then on to Westinghouse with its mechanical man Electro, a boxy automaton that smoked cigarettes to the crowd's delight. Westinghouse featured a Playground of Science where children could interact with science equipment in a laboratory themed hall. Next was General Electric, whose Steinmetz Hall and House of Magic most clearly emphasised the harmony of science and spectacle for entertainment. Here, a ten-million-volt electrical generator created arcs of artificial lightning, and demonstrations of X-rays allowed the visitors to peer inside an Egyptian mummy. Last before lunch was Du-Pont and its Wonder World of Chemistry, a mock-up of a research laboratory demonstrating the chemistry giant's many patents and their various applications in modern living. After lunch, the children would visit the individual state buildings, the food manufacturing focal exhibition and the towering, marble-adorned Soviet Pavilion whose grandiose propaganda celebrated the many 'heroic episodes and the vast scientific, industrial, and cultural progress in the Soviet Arctic.'<sup>107</sup> Despite insistence from some elements of the education department that education at the fair would act as a barricade to the influence of fascism and communism, the Soviet pavilion was one of the most popular locations, receiving praise from *Time* magazine and 'glowing reviews' from the *Associated Press* and *New York Times*.<sup>108</sup> The second day of the tour was directed at the remaining national pavilions as an opportunity to practice language, with the afternoon off

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<sup>105</sup> Burdick, Letter to Charles Green, 1.

<sup>106</sup> Dept. of Science and Education, "Two Day Tour," 1-3.

<sup>107</sup> Timonina, "Pavilion of the USSR," 6.

<sup>108</sup> Swift, "The Soviet World of Tomorrow," 373. Its inclusion in the educational tours suggests a surprising ideological ambivalence, with a focus on the scientific relevance of the exhibit rather than the not-so-subtle subtext of Communist achievements in the sciences and arts.

to explore the rest of the fair, having experienced the core of what the fair planners considered essential to the educational experience.

For the large industrial exhibitors, the objective was more direct, having invested in the fair as a grand public relations exercise by purchasing exhibition space, recouping expenses on tickets was not a direct concern. Instead, their task was to re-establish the public's faith in the individual as beneficiary of technological progress at large. To a society that Howard Segal argues was receptive to the idea that 'unprecedented technological progress as the panacea for unprecedented social problems,' the technologically based future of America would need to be presented in relatable terms to demonstrate its benefits to the average member of the public.<sup>109</sup> It would be essential to stress technology's vital presence in an imagined future where science would go hand in hand with consumer luxury, labour saving, and increased leisure time. The lesson that the machine was in service to man, and science in service to the machine would be key. The public needed to view the machine's relative value to themselves if their doubts were to be assuaged, and the future of a technocratic order accepted as an aspirational road map for living. In this sense the industrial exhibits seemed to anticipate that the future of American power and prestige, as Kuznick has argued, 'would rest, in large part, on the superiority of American science and technology.'<sup>110</sup> To achieve this the industrial exhibits boldly foregrounded science in the form of technological spectacle, dispelling the social and economic immiseration of the recent past and transporting the American people from the conditions of economic hardship to a wonderland of material abundance. At the fair, industry promised that they, not government, would create this World of Tomorrow, its vast superhighways, electrified farms, ordered settlements, streamlined transport, and automated luxury. In selling this bold vision of the future, industry would present technology as a kind of magic show, featuring tricks

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<sup>109</sup> Segal, *Technological Utopianism*, 7-8.

<sup>110</sup> Kuznick, "Losing the World of Tomorrow," 367.

and spectacles, with their scientists and technicians as showmen intermediaries, there to interpret the mysteries of science to awestruck crowds:

A show's the thing, of course. Pure science was served to the public as unalloyed entertainment in General Electric's House of Magic. Not many in the packed audiences understood the significance of the tricks they saw performed with thyratrons and stroboscopes. But they came away thrilled, mystified, and soundly sold on the company.<sup>111</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s advancements in scientific and industrial processes had accelerated the pace of life for many Americans. Technologically driven automation, once promised to ease the burden of work and grant an increase in leisure time was now tempered with the fear that technological redundancy would follow in the wake of the new machines that made manufacturing more efficient, and the human labour further obsolete.<sup>112</sup> As David Harvey has argued, 'the general effect ... is for capitalist modernization to be very much about speed-up and acceleration in the pace of economic processes and, hence, in social life.'<sup>113</sup> The detrimental effects of this progress had defined much of the negative public opinion of industry in the previous decade. Industry needed to rekindle a public image of corporate benevolence and promote an idea that industrial leadership could deliver for America. It needed to inspire faith in progress once more by reinterpreting the negative effects of technological modernity. To do this industry would stake a proprietary claim on the public understanding of science and appropriate its progressive image.

Robert Rydell categorises the repeated efforts of the scientific community to popularise science education during the interwar period as an attempt to shape an American culture imbued with scientific values and a rational understanding of the world, but one that also 'affirmed the hegemony of the corporate state.'<sup>114</sup> So too at the New York World's Fair the

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<sup>111</sup> "What Shows Pulled at the Fair," 23.

<sup>112</sup> This very problem had been the inspiration for NAM's *Men and Machines* (1936).

<sup>113</sup> Harvey, *The Condition of Post Modernity*, 230.

<sup>114</sup> Rydell, "The Fan Dance of Science," 525.

harmony of science and industry would feature as an integral theme, however, its execution would drift from the harmonious cooperation of industry, science, and government to reflect industry's increased social and financial prowess. Unlike at previous fairs where the Scientific Advisory Council (SAC) and National Research Council (NRC) had been instrumental in promoting the scientific community and orienting the themes and design, initial planning and integration of science promotion had for the most part been delegated to the exhibitors.<sup>115</sup> The larger exhibitors proceeded without the council of scientific advisors who they deemed unnecessary when it came to the 'science' of public relations. This was certainly the case from the perspective of the General Motors. In a memo to Robert Kohn in 1936 addressing the Fair Corporation's endorsements from industry, Louise Bonney noted that 'Mr. Paul Garrett of General Motors, their Public Relations Counsel and spokesman for Mr. Sloan, said that Industry was so far ahead of fair technique that unless the New York World's Fair adopted a plan of this nature ... industry would not be interested.'<sup>116</sup> Westinghouse, DuPont, Ford, and General Motors were no longer reliant on an external scientific community to validate their scientific prowess. They maintained their own research and development laboratories and science departments to service the needs of their consumer product ranges. Partnering with university departments and public science bodies grew increasingly redundant as they turned to their own public relations and advertising teams to demonstrate their scientific competencies. This is evidenced in the design of their pavilions which looked to the best available architects and designers rather than scientists as a preference to communicate their corporate stature through impressive and iconic design.<sup>117</sup> As some scholars have suggested, the promotion of

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<sup>115</sup> Cochrane, *The National Academy of Sciences*, 308-310.

<sup>116</sup> Bonney, "Endorsements by Industry," 5.

<sup>117</sup> At the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition Westinghouse and General Electric displayed their technical achievements alongside other vendors in the Hall of Electricity. Now in New York, their respective buildings dwarfed the themed pavilions and housed their own science and technical displays; an indication of how their influence had grown in the twentieth century and how important public perception of their power had become. (Flinn, "Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition," 53-55)



science, and the scientific method in this fashion, was an attempt to adapt the civic culture of the United States to an increasingly corporate directed politics, one in which technological progress required the science backed leadership of large corporations.<sup>118</sup> The fair was a public display of this shift in corporate strategy, one which left the scientific community side-lined and industry in a position to dictate public scientific discourse.

In each of the large commercial attractions, special emphasis was placed on ensuring the displays manifested some inherently scientific or educational quality. Exhibits became laboratories, displays became experiments, and the simplest of manufacturing techniques were demonstrated as technical marvels performed by showmen of science. As a fair-wide strategy, science and all things that could be classified under the rubric of the scientific were enacted as facilitators of progress through which to understand and rationalise the world. The Fair Information Service, offering guidance on general policy stated that: ‘In many cases the word education or educational is used as a comprehensive term and is meant to include science and the scientific.’<sup>119</sup> This gave perhaps the clearest indication of the fair’s policy on education. Science in the broadest sense was to be made interchangeable with education, anything could be made into a learning experience provided it was presented with the patina of scientific legitimacy, absorbing the authority, precision, and rationality that it conveyed. This wholesale adoption of science to express the core theme of the World of Tomorrow gave the exhibitors carte blanche in their approach to communicating with the public, provided they address both the theme of the fair and in some way incorporate a scientific rationale into their exhibits. This remit was extended beyond the core industrial zone to virtually every offering, such that even

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<sup>118</sup> Rydell, “The Fan Dance of Science, 540-542; In his examination of science presentation at the Westinghouse pavilion, Sevan Terzian identifies a pattern of industry appropriation, and even coercion of the scientific community as a part of an ongoing struggle over the ‘societal worth’ and ‘civic priorities’ of science and progressive science educators. (Terzian, “Transformation of the American Science Extra curriculum,”1-23)

<sup>119</sup> Information Service, “Plan for the Information Service,” 1.

the national pavilions and entertainment district stressed elements of science in their attempts to codify Whalen's building the World of Tomorrow theme:

Educational and scientific activities are to be interpreted to include not only the formal institutions and organizations specializing in the fields of education and science but also the arts - music, film and theatre – and such institutions as the medical centres and broadcasting companies which are of outstanding interest.<sup>120</sup>

As such there was a deliberate attempt to use science, in the broadest possible sense, to bridge the gap between industrial advertising and education. What distinguished these exhibitions is not so much the foregrounding of science as a subject of entertainment, or of the 'scientific' framing of their presentation, but the appropriation of the scientific as inherently educational. Science then, was to be used by nearly every exhibitor at the fair both large and small to satisfy the vague educational mandates of the fair planners portraying modernity as a technological spectacle and invoking a liberatory forward momentum. Lorena Hickok, the director of Youth Promotion, detailed how this fusion of science to industrial publicity was repackaged as a form of educational experience in promotional material. In describing agriculture as an opportunity for learning Hickok stated:

Agricultural exhibits at the fair are concerned primarily with two subjects - the application of modern science to farming and the products of various regions, States, and foreign countries. The wonders of The Electrified Farm are fascinating to city-dweller and farmer alike. Here electricity does all the chores from washing the dishes to milking ... while on the farm sponsored by the Firestone rubber company rubber helps to make many farm implements more efficient.<sup>121</sup>

Similarly, the educational potential of GM's Futurama exhibit was offered as an example of how economics might be taught to children:

If economics is defined as the science which deals with the production and distribution of wealth, then almost all of the fair is economics. Every industrial exhibit is concerned with the production of wealth ... perhaps the General Motors Futurama Highways and Horizons of Tomorrow belongs under economics. Hear the student may see the America of 1960 with its farms and factories brought closer together through improved methods

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Hickok, "School Promotion Circularization," 2.

of transportation and with life of its people made richer and fuller through wiser use of the inventions of modern science.<sup>122</sup>

New technology would bring prosperity, wisdom, and the good life. Science would provide a plan for living, and everything that could be understood would be done so rationally. Wealth too was a science, and through technology, made knowable and attainable. A similar treatment was given for art, sponsored by IBM, chemistry sponsored by Du Pont, home economics sponsored by Standard Brands and General Foods, physics sponsored by GM and GE, and so on with photography, geography, astronomy, electrical engineering, and health. In each instance the uniting theme, as in the Futurama example, was a stress on the centrality of the educational potential of science. A chain of sequential relations was thus established in the presentational style of the fair exhibits. Industry and manufacturing were shown to the fair goer through their various forms as essentially scientific traditions, or, as being couched in the precision, professionalism, and rationality of the field of science as a whole. Given that these exhibits, rides, motion pictures, and spectacles were to some degree scientific they can be passed off as educational and therefore were, not only suitable for, but recommended as substitutes for conventional educational practice. Science became useful in that it lent a rational credibility to the largescale salesmanship of fair displays. It could be passed off as educational much in the same way that the films of the Jam Handy Direct Mass Selling Series had been whilst disguising the banality of mechanical, chemical, and industrial process with a glamour of futuristic entertainment. In essence, industry *was* science, science *was* education, and education (as Slesinger continually stressed) *was* the only preventative of catastrophe. Education focusses industrial public relations were therefore promoted as essential to the maintenance of democracy and its associated freedoms. However, the degree to which the

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 3.

fair's largest exhibitors took any of the educational mandates of their science presentation seriously is debatable.

Though supposedly diffused throughout the fair, education, or at least the formal presentation of information in an educational context, was evident but of questionable worth. The adopted style and rhetoric of education in the form of scientific demonstrations, lectures, and laboratory style auditoriums were numerous, but often at the periphery of the commercial spectacles that housed them. General Motors' exhibition for example included an amphitheatre where fair goers exiting the Highways and Horizons ride could view GM's Preview of Progress, a stage show set on a revolving platform in the air-conditioned comfort of the GM auditorium.<sup>123</sup> The show, sponsored by the General Motors Research Laboratories would in its own words demonstrate 'true science, served with a dramatic impact that delights all ages and tastes.'<sup>124</sup> True science, as the brochure describes it, consisted of a selection of technical demonstrations of 'scientific wonders' including a talking flashlight, a device that could freeze or cook food at the flick of a switch, and a type of flexible glass that could be moulded to almost any shape. Fairgoers could also visit the 'Casino of Science,' an exhibition space behind the Frigidaire attraction that featured short lecture style presentations on scientific principles such as friction and elasticity as well as interactive displays that visitors could operate.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The GM auditorium version of *Preview of Progress* had been adapted from their mobile *Parade of Progress*, a travelling exhibition caravan of custom made "Future Liners" that in 1936 visited over two hundred and fifty towns across the country. The parade was revived after the World's Fair and then again in 1953 incorporating elements of the Futurama exhibition. The 1953 caravan was indicative of the changes that would occur in the intervening years, as the cheery optimism of technological progress had by 1953 been reframed in terms of a new militancy. A personal endorsement from Alfred P. Sloan himself in the 1953 brochure reframed the mission of the Parade from a whimsical travelling demonstration of scientific gadgetry to one of hawkish Cold War pragmatism stating that: 'through a broad understanding of the means at our command and through the cooperation of all, we can not only raise impregnable ramparts of defence, but we can secure and ultimately advance our way of life for tomorrow.' (Sloan, "Parade of Progress Brochure," 4) A remarkably vivid example of how much the ensuing decade would reshape the character of the nation and its industries' attitude towards the civic application of science.

<sup>124</sup> General Motors, *Futurama*, 22.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 22. The use of novelties and scientific invention for entertainment purposes was typical of world's fair exhibits. X-ray photography had been popularly used in travelling fairs, and previous expositions since their discovery, as had the antecedents of motion pictures, light bulbs, motor cars, and other modern technologies.

These displays were, for the most part consistent with the style and presentation of trade shows, focussed on demonstrating a new product or gadget by drawing attention to its practical qualities or ease of its functions as a useful way to communicate corporate mastery of applied sciences. Wendt was well aware of this, and in a letter to Kohn he noted that: ‘The industries are featuring their competence in science and research as their chief claim to public trust and prestige.’<sup>126</sup> It has been suggested that the tendency of industry to rely on spectacle and showmanship to promote science at the cost of educating the public in scientific methods and critical evaluation distanced the public from an engagement with the principles of scientific enquiry.<sup>127</sup> The industrial display of science at the fair attempted to ingrain a public understanding of science as the domain of corporate and industrial research departments. Industry would shrewdly utilise spectacle, wonder, and the carnival barker logics of the amusement park to entertain, while attempts to educate the public took a backseat to showmanship.

General Electric’s House of Magic, a stage show that had first been shown to the public at the 1933 Chicago World’s fair, would concentrate on a visitor focused, immersive spectacle that emphasised the simple pleasures of fairground amusements. Though tentatively meant to demonstrate scientific principles and technologies employed by GE, their interactive elements featured fairground-like rides and magic shows. Children could operate radio-controlled boats and voice directed model trains. One attraction showed the use of radio waves used to make popcorn. The central attraction focussed on a stage show where a man described as a ‘lecturer’ would demonstrate an ‘array of weird-looking scientific apparatus,’ much as a magician would conduct a magic show.<sup>128</sup> Electromagnets were used to levitate a heavy metal plate ‘defying the laws of physics,’ and a stroboscopic lamp was shown to demonstrate high speed motion of

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<sup>126</sup> Wendt, in Kuznick, “Losing the World of Tomorrow,” 355.

<sup>127</sup> Terzian, “Transformation of the American Science Extra Curriculum,” 20-22.

<sup>128</sup> General Electric, “House of Magic,” 5.

gears to a dazzled audience.<sup>129</sup> The House of Magic visitor's guide pointed out, that the lecturer 'laughs at our mystification.'<sup>130</sup> Business Screen identified the appeal of such demonstrations in their appraisal: "“What some exhibitors forget,” said one veteran of previous fairs, “is that a world's fair is a social event. Folks don't come here to be sold something; they come to be entertained.””<sup>131</sup> The industrial pavilions, it would seem, were more in tune with what the public wanted than the themed pavilions. The House of Magic demonstrated most accurately the attitude of industry in appropriating science as a part of their corporate image building. Their technology wasn't there to demonstrate or educate, it was there to bamboozle and entertain, to mystify and leave the audience with a sense of childlike wonder. Knowing how it worked would spoil the trick.

Science would be a useful veneer, but the industrial exhibitions would also appeal to the fair goer with sights, sounds, and showmanship. GM's immensely popular Highways and Horizons attraction advertised itself as a 'fair within a fair,' and would feature a 'thrilling scenic ride' on 'moving sound chairs.'<sup>132</sup> It represented something more akin to an actual fairground ride as its central attraction. Seated fairgoers were transported around the enormous Norman Bel Geddes designed diorama on a travelling conveyor belt of comfy personal chairs. The viewers looked down on a series of highlighted models of highways, farms, and futuristic cities whilst a pre-recorded narration channelled through speakers in the chair's headrests described GM's vision of the far-off future of 1960. The Futurama ride shared much of its DNA with fairground dark rides like *The Trip to the Moon* at Coney Island's Luna Park, itself a product of a previous fair.<sup>133</sup> GM's go-to sponsored filmmakers, the Jam Handy Organisation, would reconstitute the ride experience as a promotional film, *To New Horizons* (1939), which would

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>131</sup> “What Shows Pulled at the Fair,” 23.

<sup>132</sup> General Motors, “Highways and Horizons,” 6.

<sup>133</sup> The ride had originally been built for the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo New York.

go on to enter circulation in school film libraries to extend the spectacle and promote GM for years to come. Lee Grieveson notes that the Futurama's immersive experience of 'filmic entertainment,' illustrated industry's emphasis on projecting a future based around 'ease of movement,' and with it a reinforcement of the idea of the automobile as a machine of liberation and an embodiment of independence.<sup>134</sup> Edward Bernays had gone to great lengths to emphasise this very point to the Merchants Association of New York stating that:

So presented, the exhibit of the automobile no longer stops at the first physical impression made upon the man who views it. It widens his horizon. He thinks of and understands the automobile in terms of a broad social philosophy that soon becomes part of his thinking, of his very being. This makes the automobile an instrument of democracy and as much a part of our democratic process considered from its broadest viewpoint, as the Declaration of Independence or any other historic document.<sup>135</sup>

Cinema and showmanship were being fused to enculturate a specific industrial ideology, attempting to impress on the viewer, the fairgoer, and the school child the idea of commodities and consumerism as agents of collective democratic citizenship and personal affirmations of liberty. Education, reconfigured as entertainment was distilled into the fabric of the fair experience, consistently impressing upon the fairgoer that their interaction with the displays was one of mediated pedagogy. The industrial exhibitors used science as a useful shortcut to express their technical mastery, the logical assumption of which was that World of Tomorrow was an idea that big business would bring into being. The techno-utopia made real by the leadership of a constellation of industries, and the free enterprise system which was fundamental to their operation.

Against the well-honed public relation skills and seemingly unlimited reserves of funding, the progressives would have an uphill struggle to make their appeal to the public. With limited finances, and a mission to interpret the civic importance of education, they concentrated

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<sup>134</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 315.

<sup>135</sup> Bernays, *A Symbol for Democracy*, 7.

their efforts into a single hard-won location. Plans for what would eventually materialise in the Science, Education, and Health building, would depend on a series of compromises and concessions, a struggle between what should be represented under the umbrella of education and what would justify the nine thousand square feet of premium exhibition floor space. The Science and Education Exhibit (SEE) was intended to stabilise the meaning of education, drawing together the diffuse interpretations on offer across the fairground and dramatically interpret the social, moral, and economic functions of American education, and its role in building the World of Tomorrow. What follows is an exploration of the progressive's efforts to assert their civic authority, the methods by which they communicated their social philosophy, and the fundamental shift in their attitudes about the purpose of public education.

### **1.3.1 The Science and Education Focal Exhibit**

The Focal Exhibit on Science and Education would be launched with great fanfare. Addresses were delivered by Kohn, Whalen, Wendt, and the building's designer, architect George Sakier. Between the two halves of the exhibit a single theme was to be communicated to the public, drawing together the two disciplines into a single concept which the Science and Education department described in the following statement: 'Science is the adjustment of the environment to the needs of the race, while education is the adjustment of the individual and the race to the requirements of the environment.'<sup>136</sup> The progressives believed that this interaction was 'fundamental to social progress,' and therefore its real message was 'social and far-reaching.'<sup>137</sup> As such, the idea of conforming both nature and the public to a social ideal was embedded in the philosophy of the exhibit. Social progress, as the fair planners were defining it, meant changing the patterns of living that people were accustomed to so that they might live what the

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<sup>136</sup> Dept. of Science and Education, "Focal Exhibit on Science and Education," 1.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 1.



fair planners consider to be better lives. Industry promised better living as a purchasable commodity, new machines, new devices, new luxuries, a readymade and packaged future with a modest price tag. The planner's vision of better living may have been harder to sell to the public as it necessitated the public changing themselves for the benefit of society as a whole.

Seeking funds from both the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations, the SEE planned to dramatize the meaning of science and the 'secret of its success.'<sup>138</sup> They intended to demonstrate the scientific method as applied to its relative sociological contribution.<sup>139</sup> Their solution was to represent the problems of stratospheric flight. At the centre of the room was a large model plane which would detail the scientific problems that had to be overcome in its design. From here visitors could communicate via radio to the education wing of the exhibit which would focus on the needs and the meaning of education in the speculative future era when the problem of stratospheric flight had been resolved. This section would detail the moral implications of science and whether such future scientific solutions would foster friendliness or animosity.<sup>140</sup> The mission statement put forward for the science wing claimed: 'In science the plan is not to teach science but rather to show the meaning of scientific achievement in the present-day world. It will be both appropriate and dramatically effective to present education as the force which must teach people how to live in the kind of world which science has created.'<sup>141</sup> This idea about the function of education is fundamental to the way the progressives viewed the purpose of education. To them education was a method to train the population to live in and embody the ideals of the world they would create.

Together the science and education exhibits were intended to express a deep-seated optimism about the potential for making better worlds, designed in Wendt's words to:

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<sup>138</sup> Wendt, Memo to Chairman, 1.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>140</sup> One note from Wendt suggests linking this concept to the 'recent scare concerning an invasion of New Jersey by men from Mars.' (Ibid, 2) A nod to Orson Welles' 1938 radio play of *War of the Worlds* which had garnered a great deal of media coverage and controversy just a month before.

<sup>141</sup> Dept. of Science and Education, "Focal Exhibit on Science and Education," 6.

‘culminate in some expression of confidence in the future if science lives up to its possibilities and if education keeps pace with it.’<sup>142</sup> As Cusker has pointed out, the context in which they developed these ideas was one of a society emerging from the Great Depression and characterised by both political upheaval and ‘cultural malaise.’<sup>143</sup> Their philosophical outlook he notes ‘represented a tradition that was positivist in its conception of the world and messianic in its belief in “The American Way of Life.”’<sup>144</sup> Science and education, they believed, could rescue society from its irrational and chaotic trajectory by restoring to it a rational plan of living. Education was to be demonstrated as a lifelong activity, meant to enrich the individual and most importantly adjust them to society. Crucially, this stress on lifelong learning de-emphasised the institutional role of schools and instead suggested that the educational faculties of libraries, radio, and motion pictures would form the pedagogic backbone for the constant development of the individual. This they dramatized as the ‘pilgrim’s progress of the American Citizen.’<sup>145</sup> The purpose of the SEE then was to reclaim science and education from industry and reinterpret them through the lens of a progressive tradition as a force for the restoration of democratic values, and the enrichment of an ordered society.

### **1.3.2 Education for Democracy**

The SEE would focus less on the practical side of education and more on the ‘ideals which animate it.’<sup>146</sup> These ideals would mostly be decided by the Education Steering Committee who would present their own projections of the type and social purpose of education as they saw it existing in the World of Tomorrow. Their outlook focussed on education as a process of

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<sup>142</sup> Wendt, Memo to the Chairman, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Cusker, “The World of Tomorrow,” 162.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>145</sup> Kohn, “Education Exhibit,” 1.

<sup>146</sup> Kohn, “Draft of Education Exhibit,” 1.

conforming the individual to the society, which it implied meant a defence of the political and economic system that the individual was born into:

The theme of the education exhibit is that education is the main bulwark of democracy. Ideal education is a life-long process by which the full capabilities of each person are brought out and he is trained to deal with his environment and to fulfil his responsibilities as a free citizen.<sup>147</sup>

Education as the fair planners saw it was intimately connected with the development of a nationalist sentiment and the production of a civic minded citizenry. Reflecting on this concern, McConnel outlined what he believed to be a naïve idea that a populist youth movement, imitative of the totalitarian states could be developed in America: ‘It is easy to think of youth organizations in this country being rallied to a defence of democracy just as the youth organizations in Germany are committed to the defence of Hitlerism, and the Communist youth organizations to a defence of the Soviet Union.’<sup>148</sup> Despite his doubt that something similar could be achieved, he nevertheless proposed that the issues should form part of the philosophical fabric for the SEE stating: ‘The question that we should like to raise for this exhibit is: can this desire to belong be engaged in the support of democracy and the American way of life?’<sup>149</sup> Education then was to be figured not so much as the teaching of facts and processes but the orientation of the individual to the idea of democracy, a plan that was premised on the belief that democracy and ‘the American way of life,’ were commonly understood to have a singular meaning. The desirability of science lay in its perceived capacity to master the physical environment, making the natural world knowable, categorizable, and giving it relative value based on its useful rendering as a commodity. So fundamental to the understanding of education and science was this train of thought that it was expressed in the

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<sup>147</sup> Dept. of Science and Education, “Focal Exhibit on Science and Education,” 1.

<sup>148</sup> McConnel, “Youth,” 3.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 3.

central inscription above the exhibition space questioning the arriving fairgoers: ‘We can control the forces of nature; can we use them for the good of man?’<sup>150</sup>

The education wing of the exhibit would focus on learning through the various stages of human development. In lieu of demonstrations of teaching techniques or technologies, the focus would be on the importance of adjusting the mental and emotional development of the child, such that they develop what were considered by contemporary standards to be ‘normal behaviour,’ and depicting the ‘struggle of the child to free himself of the emotional ties of infancy.’<sup>151</sup> The stages of development would be split into three sections: childhood, youth, and adulthood, each with an area depicting the issues facing the progress of the child. In all three sections the focus would be on using education to adjust the individual to their environment, normalising their behaviours and avoiding the consequences of delinquency. At the level of childhood, a stress was put on developing the psychology of the child:

Educational exhibits at this level will attempt to show the normal behavior and normal attitudes of the young child to parent and teacher. And they will deal with the possible catastrophes in the person of the unruly boy or girl, the shy mama baby where warped personalities point to the embryo delinquent or the young incompetent.<sup>152</sup>

At the youth level the emphasis was shifted to conforming attitudes to social expectations:

This level will portray the boy and girl of the childhood section laying the psychological and economic base for their future drives for family and security. The exhibit will broaden the definition of security to include emotional and intellectual as well as economic security, thus presenting the whole story.<sup>153</sup>

At the adult level there was a cautionary tale detailing the obligations of the individual to perform a functioning role in the maintenance and stability of society and the consequences should they fail to do so:

Here an attempt will be made to show that individual mistakes no longer react only upon the individual who makes them; that the citizen as a worker, voter and employer will find

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<sup>150</sup> Dept. of Feature Publicity, “Science and Education Focal Exhibit,” 2.

<sup>151</sup> Slesinger, memo to Robert Kohn, 1.

<sup>152</sup> Dept. of Feature Publicity, “Science and Education Focal Exhibit,” 3.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 4.

all of his acts having remote consequences of which he may never have dreamed ... and that failure or catastrophe is measured in unemployment, depression and war.<sup>154</sup>

The aversion of catastrophe, not just in society but in the psychological and emotion interiority of the individual were promoted as the understood wisdom of public education. Education had taken on a new and existential urgency. No doubt the war in Europe was a pressing reminder of the imagined catastrophe that could befall a nation without proper conditioning. So too the Depression lingered as a reminder of how the economic foundations of the country were too unstable to be left to the impulses of the market. Rationality and order would offer reprieves from hardship and economic malaise. Education as the fair planners understood it was a form of Americanisation for Americans. The child needed to be related to the society that had produced it by enculturating a set of national values, albeit values as imagined by a small social elite rather than the consent of the people:

By a series of projected scenes and legends above the series of scenarios the visitor will be shown that the major problem of American education is to fit citizens for life in a world which science has created ... Citizens must learn that the price of freedom is responsibility, and the reward of responsibility is freedom.<sup>155</sup>

The focus on adjusting the child to the world around it by promoting a 'normal' range of emotional and behavioural standards anticipated the shift in education practice after the Second World War where patriotism, civics, and a defence of the democratic institutions of the country would become thoroughly entrenched in teaching.<sup>156</sup> If the fair was to be as Cusker suggests a kind of 'blueprint for a new society,' the public, and particularly the youth would need to be taught how to read its contours and navigate its terrain, the World of Tomorrow would require a classroom.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>155</sup> Kohn, "Education Exhibit." 2.

<sup>156</sup> It would, as chapter three examines, also become prey to manipulation by interested parties seeking to define in their own terms exactly what democracy and freedom were.

<sup>157</sup> Cusker, "World of Tomorrow," 161.

### 1.3.3 The School of Tomorrow: Education as Commodity

Among the many suggestions put forth for the educational exhibit, the unrealised focal exhibition dubbed ‘The School of Tomorrow’ exemplified the fair planners’ attitudes towards the future of education.<sup>158</sup> In this planned space of educational spectacle, several enduring concepts converged: education as both industry and commodity; the school as marketplace instead of a public utility; and the future of education as a technological driven product that placed an exchange value on learning. Like the fair’s other futuristic social projections, the interstate highway, or the model village of prefabricated town houses, education itself was being imagined as private utility, with inbuilt potential for optimisation and commodification. Unlike the national pavilions which exhibited current practices in their home countries, the School of Tomorrow looked to what education as a market could look like. Though the project itself failed to materialise at the last moment due to insufficient funding, its designs were nonetheless crucial to understanding the direction that the fair planners were heading in when imagining the future of education.

As early as 1936 Robert Kohn had been working on developing an educational program with leading educators from New York University (NYU), the New York Public School system, and sponsors from the Carnegie Foundation. At a luncheon conference with representatives of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) ideas were discussed on how to treat the subject of education in an otherwise commercial endeavour like the World’s Fair. Among the suggestions by the PEA were the problems of delinquency and ‘the backwards child,’ the expansion of the core curriculum beyond the three Rs, and debates about the relative costs of progressive, private, and public education.<sup>159</sup> The conversation centred on one important question: ‘What is the best way of selling education to the public at the fair?’<sup>160</sup> Carson Ryan

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<sup>158</sup> Zorbaugh, Memorandum to Grover Whalen, 1.

<sup>159</sup> Bonney, Minutes of Luncheon Conference, 2.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 2.

of the Carnegie foundation put forward a suggestion based on plans by Dr Harvey Zorbaugh and Ned Dearborn of NYU for a fully functioning model school that would serve as an exhibition of the possibilities that the future might hold for educators. Zorbaugh's initial idea proposed that the model school would be the focus of wider educational zone, describing it as:

A nucleus (with dramatic possibilities as a public spectacle and an industrial exhibit) around which the educational exhibit of the Fair would revolve, supplemented by many other types of exhibit (moving pictures and other visual materials, products of school art studios and shops, etc.), and integrated with related exhibits of the Fair.<sup>161</sup>

In contrast to the typical hall of education, Zorbaugh intended the model school to be a 'vital, living experience.'<sup>162</sup> One that would far supersede the static displays, charts, and handwriting examples to be found at previous World's Fairs. Zorbaugh outlined the idea for the school as follows:

The "School of Tomorrow" plan consists, briefly, in building an actual school on, or adjacent to the Fairground. The building itself will represent the finest physical environment for education that science and industry can provide. In this building, the best teachers in America will teach children with the most forward-looking educational materials and methods that can be devised. The building will have two independent systems of circulation – one for school activities, and the other for the visiting public. The life of the school will be separated from the visiting public by one-way vision glass, through which from corridors and balconies the public can look into the school rooms. Sound amplification will bring out of the school rooms into the visitors' corridors and balconies the voices of pupils and teachers. Living children, in their every-day school activities, will dramatically tell to the public the story of the education of the America of tomorrow.<sup>163</sup>

Ethical consideration of operating the school as a kind of living human zoo were neatly dismissed as unthinkable, with Zorbaugh suggesting that 'no one who has taken the time to read the proposal carefully could seriously raise such an objection.'<sup>164</sup> His two primary concerns were spectacle and saleability, could the school attract enough public attention and

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<sup>161</sup> Zorbaugh, "The School of Tomorrow," 4.

<sup>162</sup> Dearborn and Zorbaugh, "The School of Tomorrow: A Proposal," 2.

<sup>163</sup> Zorbaugh, "The School of Tomorrow," 1.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 2

more importantly, could that attention be directed at exhibiting industry products.<sup>165</sup> With a keen understanding of the purpose and viability of fair exhibits, the proposal stressed the function of the model school as a sales opportunity in line with the other trade and industrial pavilions:

The possibilities of the “School of Tomorrow” as an industrial exhibit are equally arresting. The plan has been discussed with nearly forty of the leading industries which manufacture school equipment and has aroused great interest among them. Their interest is so great it is probable that trade associations would completely equip the building. In the corridor outside each schoolroom would appear a list of the materials in it, the name of the trade association supplying the material, and the names of firms exhibiting in the adjacent area of the Fair at whose exhibits similar materials might be seen.<sup>166</sup>

The building space would be an exhibition hall for every conceivable relatable product both educational and structural that could be advertised to the public as an idealised educational luxury, and to the trade associations as a worthy investment opportunity. Teaching methods, texts books, motion picture projectors, and the latest chemistry lab equipment would be as much on display as aluminium siding, air conditioning units, and school buses. Education then was yet another saleable commodity, a way to drive consumer trends and develop a new market. In trying to sell the idea of the model school, Zorbaugh appealed to the fair planners by pointing out the most fundamental purpose of such an exhibit:

From the industrial point of view, a fair of the future, displaying industrial products in their relationship to the possibilities of a fuller human living, has great potentiality for creating “psychological obsolescence,” dissatisfaction with things as they are, the desire for things that will make possible the kind of living the visitor envisions at the fair.<sup>167</sup>

This ‘psychological obsolescence’ as Zorbaugh put it was fundamental to the establishing a new approach to education in the U.S. Of course, education had always been reliant on

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<sup>165</sup> It is likely that the inspiration for the model school may have been a similar project at the 1915 Pan Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. There a ‘Glass Classroom’ was built in the Palace of Education. Its forty students, aged between three and six were put on display to promote Dr Maria Montessori’s child centred approach to pedagogy for all the fairgoers to see, and inspire education authorities to invest in the Montessori brand. (American Montessori Society, n.d.)

<sup>166</sup> Zorbaugh, “The School of Tomorrow,” 1.

<sup>167</sup> Dearborn and Zorbaugh, “The School of Tomorrow: A Proposal,” 3.



consumables, textbooks, stationary supplies, but in promoting their idealised school as a commodity in its own right, they were attempting to reimagine education itself as a transactional, consumable product. Zorbaugh and Dearborn, like many of the fair planners, firmly believed that the fair would change the very essence of education, as stated in their proposal: ‘The authors believe that the New York World's Fair, because of its theme, has an unequalled opportunity to assume, through the realisation of a significant educational exhibit, a leadership in the direction of the future of American education.’<sup>168</sup> In essence, they desired to corner a new market by commodifying education to a degree not previously achieved. They wanted to build their own progressive schools in which they believed an educational philosophy could flourish, provided it would have indefinite funding, idealised teachers, and homogenous well-behaved students. They believed through education their ideas could change the world; first however, they would need to create the psychological obsolescence for the present one. To live in the World of Tomorrow the public would need to reject the world of today.

Despite the popular support, promises of financing, and assurances that the project would be feasible, budget constraints and competition from other projects would side-line the School of Tomorrow and relegate its plans to the archive. Kohn ultimately made the decision to end the project, stating that: ‘It was obvious that the site of our educational exhibit on the Fairgrounds was not one where a school could remain permanently, hence for these and other reasons the great expense involved (even if funds were available) would not be justified by the results.’<sup>169</sup> In its place a more conventional exhibition space would be constructed, the centre piece of which would feature one of Kohn’s own personal projects. This space which would

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<sup>168</sup> Zorbaugh, “The School of Tomorrow,” 4.

<sup>169</sup> Kohn, Memo on Education, 1.

point prophetically to a future of motion picture orientated education would anchor the Science and Education exhibit.

The Education Steering Committee's plans for the NYWFC displayed a strand of liberal rationality which underpinned so many of the exhibits of the fair. They visualised a peaceful, ordered society where the commodified luxuries of planned modernity replaced the economic woes of reality; a walkthrough window-shopping experience of capitalist realism that shielded fairgoers from the recent realities of the Great Depression, and the developing horrors of the Second World War. Progressives like Kohn, Slesinger, Wendt, and Zorbaugh, saw education as a pathway to shaping patterns of American life. They were matching what the advertisers and corporations had known for some time, that the opportune time for shaping the personality, conduct, social preferences, and political outlook of the public was in the formative school years.

Though the fair planners were advocates of the idea of the fair-as-classroom, the real beneficiaries of the student attendance were the large industry pavilions that were given top billing on the educational tours. The excitement and spectacle of their displays were better suited to capture the public, and particularly the youth imagination, with a projection of a science led future. Their efforts were in part, if not in whole, uniform attempts to steer American thought and culture in the direction of a depoliticised free market-based society led by technocratic engineers and captains of industry. Such commercial appropriation of science and education aided in the dissipation of the politicised progressive trajectory of science in the 1930s that most clearly manifested itself in the utopian optimism of a future grounded in 'scientific rationalism.'<sup>170</sup> Instead, the peaceful potential of scientific advancement gave way to what Terzian has described as an 'emphasis on grooming high-achieving youth with

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<sup>170</sup> Kuznick, "Losing the World of Tomorrow," 341-373.

intellectual capital to defend the United States militarily and strengthening it economically.’<sup>171</sup> Education was becoming both ‘forthright’ and ‘militant,’ though not perhaps in the way that Donald Slesinger had imagined it to be when the fair’s educational programs were in their infancy. In lieu of traditional classroom setting, the fair planners, like their counterparts in the industrial pavilions would turn to motion pictures to bridge the gap between producer and consumer. As the next section will explore, the progressives would adopt motion pictures as a preferential medium for communicating their values. In the Science and Education Focal Exhibit a cinema was established to demonstrate how film could be used to educate the masses, and ideas about democracy, civics, and planned living would become cemented through sponsored film in progressive pedagogic practice.

#### **1.4.1 The Cinematic Fairground**

So far I have explored efforts by industry and the progressive fair planners to utilise science and public education at the 1939 New York World’s Fair to advance their competing agendas. Despite their resistance to the rampant corporatism on display, progressive scientists and civic minded educators were unable to compete for public attention at the same level as the corporate salesmen whose entertainment focussed approach to public relations absorbed and reconstituted science and education as promotional strategies. Both would eventually be used by industry to ratify its position as societal hegemon and convince Americans as Roland Marchand has argued that ‘large private firms, not the federal government, were best suited to lead the public into an ideal future.’<sup>172</sup> In building its World of Tomorrow, industry defined the usefulness of science and education as channels through which to communicate its supremacy.

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<sup>171</sup> Terzian, “Transformation of the American Science Extra Curriculum,” 3.

<sup>172</sup> Marchand, “The Designers Go to the Fair,” 35.

As this section will explore, motion pictures were a vital technology in the process of this communication.

Profound changes were occurring in American culture during this period, brought on, Levine argues, by the movement towards a consumer culture, at such a pace that Americans started to identify as consumers much more easily, and organise their lives accordingly.<sup>173</sup> To facilitate this process, sponsored films were used to glorify the ‘pleasures and freedoms of consumer choice in defence of the virtues of private life and material ambition,’ their educational value now refracted back through a commercial lens.<sup>174</sup> As this section explores, sponsored films dominated the cinematic offerings on display at the fair. Their volume and variety, it is argued, were instrumental in shaping that ‘horizon of the thinkable,’ that Fisher suggests was one of the contributing factors in the process of affirming the logic of capitalist realism.<sup>175</sup> Another point that this section argues, as it relates to how sponsored film generates and sustains capitalist realism, is the ability to absorb and reconstitute aesthetics for its own purpose. As will be explored in detail later, New Deal articulations of the documentary form, familiar to depression era fairgoers, made an ideal choice for those filmmakers wishing to sell the idea of product as social panacea. At the fair this was characterised by forms of advertising that emphasised not just commodities, but new patterns of living based around their use.

Marchand has argued that advertising sustains an ideological bias towards ‘system reinforcement’ because it tends towards a fuller expression of the ‘ideals and aspiration’ of a system rather than its realities.<sup>176</sup> The strength and resilience of American capitalism in this time can be seen as simultaneously generated by and reflected in the advertising strategies that outlined the ambition and promise of America’s economy as the leaders of industry saw it, rather than as its people experienced it. With the move from radio and print based campaigns

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<sup>173</sup> Levine, *The Unpredictable Past*, 222.

<sup>174</sup> Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion*, 218.

<sup>175</sup> Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 8.

<sup>176</sup> Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, xviii

towards an increasing reliance on motion pictures, the well-practiced strategies and presentational style of advertising that had been honed throughout the 1930s, were far exceeded by the wholesale adoption of motion pictures to communicate with the public.<sup>177</sup> Through moving images, business would demonstrate its mastery of science and dominance of education, facilitating the fair in becoming a national classroom teaching the pleasures of consumerism. Motion pictures were a medium, certainly before the advent of television, that typified both the idea of a popular art form and represented a mass cultural practice.<sup>178</sup> Motion pictures were the entertainment medium of choice for what might be called the ‘average’ American.<sup>179</sup>

The use of motion pictures as the primary vehicle for their advertising campaigns indicates that industry recognised in the moving image an effective tool for capturing key demographics. However, industry would not be alone in tapping the potential of motion pictures to communicate with the public. Focussing primarily on the making of Civic Films’ *The City* (1939), this section will look first at the cinematic offerings on display at the world’s fair to demonstrate the ways in which motion pictures were being utilised in innovative ways by exhibitors to communicate their values. Following from this it will explore how the feature attraction at the Science and Education Focal Exhibit (SEE) was established via a network of aligned interests that connected industry, state and federal government, philanthropic organisations, higher education institutes, designers, architects, and skilled film makers. Drawing together these communities, the fair planners, utilising the medium of motion pictures, would produce a hybrid of corporate didacticism and New Deal documentary that would

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<sup>177</sup> For industry’s radio campaigns see William Bird, *Better Living* chapter two; Grieverson *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations* chapter nine.

<sup>178</sup> Although the Depression had affected weekly cinema attendance (dropping precipitously from an average of 90 million per week in 1930 to an average of 60 million at its worst in the crisis years of 1932 and 1933), the American box office had for the most part rebounded by the end of the decade with average weekly ticket sales of 85 million. (The Film Daily, 109)

<sup>179</sup> A semi-mythical creature that has been the object of attention of advertisers, See Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* Chapter 3

project a vision of a materially abundant future of planned communities, facilitated by miracles of technology, and most importantly, delivered by private enterprise. Through this film, and many others produced for the fair, for years after the fairgrounds had been shuttered, the legacy of the *World of Tomorrow*, and its implicit social and economic ideologies would persist in classrooms around the country. As such, this section will demonstrate that the NYWF was a key facilitator in legitimising the use of sponsored films as a preferred medium not just for public relations, but for extending those campaigns and their ideological messaging into the classroom.

#### **1.4.2 – Useful Cinemas**

The films that were screened to millions of Americans at the NYWF were created at an historical crossroads, defining, and rendering for the public the tensions between the dynamic optimism of the fair's utopian aspirations and the impending crisis of global conflict. The people were promised a future of luxury, comfort, and material abundance that would be delivered not by political ideologies, or government interventions but by the familiar stalwarts of industry and consumer manufacturing. Motion pictures became an essential tool in this process, one that is fully revealed when understood as didactic rather than promotional. Building the World of Tomorrow would first require the means to visualise it. Film was used in tandem with a range of promotional strategies to define the contours of a corporate led future, depicting not just the products that people could use but the lives they would be leading; a new consumer orientated subjectivity based around leisure and lifestyle. In order to propagate these ideas, the popularity of motion pictures was exploited to the fullest. Gregory Downey has suggested that 'realising [the] use value' of information and enabling its circulation are intimately connected: 'In what we might call a dialectical relationship each concept helps to define the other: to be useful, information must circulate through many minds and to circulate,

many minds must judge some piece of information to be (at least potentially) useful.<sup>180</sup> Motion pictures were ideally suited to perform this task. To borrow Acland and Wasson's definition of useful cinema, motion pictures became 'instruments in an ongoing struggle for aesthetic, social and political capital.'<sup>181</sup> Large manufacturing corporations were at the forefront of this drive, but they were not alone in recognising the usefulness of cinema as a public relations tool.

Across the fairgrounds motion pictures were used to tell narratives, sell products, transmit ideas, imagine futures, and write history. The fair made use of motion pictures at every conceivable opportunity, at every gauge from the enormous auditoriums to the human scale 16mm and 8mm personal and portable projectors already familiar to salesman and educators.<sup>182</sup> In their many deployments at the fair, they were integrated into exhibits with tactile, push-button operations, projected on to screens both large and small as well as ceilings, corridor walls, and rear projection displays.<sup>183</sup> Exhibitors hoping to capture the attention and imagination of fair goers pressed for the most novel and experimental formats to attract audiences. The 'machine that sells' as Wasson describes it was put to work in multiple, remarkable, integrated displays that demonstrated the diversity and versatility of cinema's technological potential.<sup>184</sup> The Democracy exhibit located at the heart of the fairgrounds featured 70mm simultaneous projection onto the inside of the giant Perisphere, covering a surface area over an acre in size to create weather and atmospheric effects over Henry Dreyfus' scale model diorama.<sup>185</sup> The Chrysler pavilion showed a mixed live-action and stop-motion film created by 3D pioneer John Norling. *In Tune with Tomorrow* (1939), depicted a Chrysler Plymouth assembling itself projected in three dimensions, a novel approach to immerse the

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<sup>180</sup> Downey, "Making Media Work," 147.

<sup>181</sup> Acland and Wasson, *Useful Cinema*, 3.

<sup>182</sup> For an extensive look at the use of small gauge projectors at the fair see Wasson, "The Other Small Screen: Moving Images at New York's World Fair, 1939." (2012)

<sup>183</sup> Whalen, "New Fields for Films," 15-28.

<sup>184</sup> Wasson, "Selling Machines," 55.

<sup>185</sup> Seldes, *Your World of Tomorrow*, 23.

audience in the industrial process, fantasising the production line with the magic of special effects.<sup>186</sup> Norling also produced a 3D film for the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1940, Pennsylvania Railroad's *Thrills for You* (1940) depicted a series of short scenes of passenger and freight trains. These speeding carriages leaping from the screen echoed the early history of film spectacles that Tom Gunning has categorised as the 'cinema of attractions,' appropriately at home in their fairground settings.<sup>187</sup> Wasson has argued that the variety of filmic modes on display exemplified a parallel to the history of cinema's diversification, one that might be considered as a precursor to Gene Youngblood's conceptions of expanded cinema.<sup>188</sup>

In the Production and Distribution Focal Exhibit the film *Three Thirds of a Nation* (1939), made exclusively for the focal exhibit, was projected on to a single curved 100ft wide screen by seven separate projectors. This 'cinematic mural,' *Business Screen* claimed, was the largest screen in the world, and on it was told a story in which: 'men, money, science and machinery will be displayed as producing goods which release consumers for leisure-hour cultural, and recreational activities.'<sup>189</sup> This theme perfectly encapsulated the prevalent technoutopian promise that the efficiency of machines would free people from the toil of labour and bestow upon them a leisurely lifestyle. The 'technocratically oriented visionaries' who promised to deliver a better future repeated this theme of leisure through automation, often at the expense, as Segal points out, of accepting the detrimental impact that technology and the machine might have on society.<sup>190</sup>

The display of films, and film-like displays in these manifold and hybrid contexts aided in legitimising industry by extolling its values, emphasising principles of technical

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<sup>186</sup> For an in-depth exploration of 3D film at the fair see Wasson, "Industrial Magic and Light: 3D at the New York World's Fair (1939)." (2013)

<sup>187</sup> Gunning, "The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," 3-12.

<sup>188</sup> Wasson, "The Other Small Screen," 82-89.

<sup>189</sup> "New Projection Technologies Used," 20.

<sup>190</sup> Segal, *Technological Utopianism*, 126.



proficiency, and selling the idea of corporate grandeur, reflecting their resurgent confidence. In this sense motion pictures had become demonstrably useful for industry in communicating corporate value with the public. In comparison to the romantic liberalism and state paternalism of the New Deal cinema, and FDR's fireside chats, industry were busy using motion pictures to rehabilitate the image of capital, presenting profit as progress, and making a virtue once more out of consumerism. Bird argues that public relation specialists were particularly fond of motion pictures because they believed that their inherent value as entertainment was a potent tool for carrying the story of business. They could, he has suggested, 're-establish the proper climate for the autonomous expansion of corporate enterprise.'<sup>191</sup> Exhibitors at the fair certainly seemed to agree. A bulletin posted after the opening of the 1939 season boasted that:

The Newsreel and Film Department, which officially reviewed and censored all films exhibited, shows a total of 612 motion pictures including every known type of production. Of these films, 404 were standard 35mm and 191 were 16mm ... Pictures were shown in 34 different auditoria, the largest of which was the motion picture theatre in the General Motors Building, seating 612. A theatre in the Russian Pavilion was second, with a seating capacity of 500. The United States Government Building rated third with 350 seats. The Chrysler Theatre, seating 339, featured a most unusual three-dimensional production. The Little Theatre in the Science and Education Building, under the Jurisdiction of the World's Fair management, seated 253.<sup>192</sup>

In previous fairs, motion pictures had been tentatively adopted by exhibitors, first as novelties and entertainment and later as technologies of promotion. With each exposition of the decade the use of film became ever more prevalent as advertisers increasingly turned to film to tell their stories. At Chicago's Century of Progress in 1933 barely forty companies had used motion pictures, but by 1939, motion pictures had become established as the medium of choice for exhibitors.<sup>193</sup> No longer a spectacle unto themselves they were now an indispensable component in the mechanism of promotion for exhibitors large and small, eclipsing the museum aesthetics, and static displays of past fairs to become an essential method of

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<sup>191</sup> Bird, *Better Living*, 122.

<sup>192</sup> Collins, "Introduction," 1. Elsewhere listed as a capacity of 299, depending on the source.

<sup>193</sup> Bird, *Better Living*, 120-125.

communicating with the public. In New York, virtually every exhibitor as well as kiosks, concession stands, information points, and restaurants would use some form of motion picture as part of their display. Susman put it succinctly, stating: ‘in Whalen’s World of Tomorrow, the screen had been converted into a fast-talking salesman.’<sup>194</sup> In the Kodak building there were films that showed how cameras, film, and lenses themselves were made. The Metropolitan Life Insurance company used motion pictures to remind fair goers how fragile and susceptible the human body was to heart disease, pneumonia, and traffic accidents with regular screenings of *Heart Disease* (c.1938), *Man Against Microbe* (1932), and *Once Upon a Time* (1937).<sup>195</sup> The Jam Handy Organisation posted full page adverts in *Business Screen* proudly stating that they had produced over twenty films for the fair alone, claiming that the fair was yet another effective way to ‘make your story live and move in the minds of millions.’<sup>196</sup> *Business Screen* noted the contributions of the studios they called the ‘majors’ of commercial film production to both fairs of 1939, listing Jam Handy alongside their largest competitors, Wilding Picture Productions, Caravel Films Incorporated, Audio Productions, and West Coast Sound Studios, between whom the majority of screen advertising was produced with innovative and lavish production and budgets matching those for stand-alone films.

In a *Business Screen* editorial, Robert P. Shaw, the Director of the New York Museum of Science and Industry described the benefits of integrating motion pictures into industrial exhibits:

Even in the small span of a single reel, it can compress a story that might require an acre or so of floor space to portray by ordinary exhibition means, while given several reels the motion picture camera can place before the eyes of the observer panoramas, processes and miscellaneous activities which he otherwise would have to travel miles and consume a great deal of time to see and to understand.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Susman, *Culture as History*, 225.

<sup>195</sup> Motion Picture Department, “Motion Pictures in Commercial Exhibits,” 4.

<sup>196</sup> Jam Handy Organisation, “More Than Twenty Motion Pictures,” 36.

<sup>197</sup> Shaw, “Visualising the Industrial Exhibit,” 30.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked uses of motion pictures at the fair, and elsewhere in the non-theatrical nodes of display was crowd attraction. Shaw describes the use of motion picture as a kind of technological carnival barker. He used motion pictures just outside the entrance to his museum, playing on a continuous display unit to attract passers-by, selling them on the idea of admission using their ‘proven attention-arresting value.’<sup>198</sup> On the page beside the article a conspicuously placed advert for such a device, the Ampro Continuous Sound Projector boasted of its success at the Century of Progress Exhibition, describing it as a ‘powerful sales medium for any display or exhibit,’ and ideal for any exhibitor at San Francisco or New York.<sup>199</sup>

The much-publicised demonstrations of television broadcasting systems by RCA however, failed to capture the imagination of the fairgoers who, it was revealed in one of Gallup’s early public opinion polls conducted at the fair, found television at the time to be an impractical commodity.<sup>200</sup> High cost and general ambivalence would hold back its potential for some years, being too expensive for the average consumer household and without the appeal of the well-established practice of cinema going. *Business Screen* astutely recognised its importance as a future technology with great potential for advertising, but conceded that its impact from demonstration during the fair was limited:

Although Television, according to such competent observers as Commander Eugene McDonald president of Chicago's Zenith Radio Corporation, is still far from ready for the market, the New York Fair ballyhoo surrounding the RCA-National Broadcasting Company exhibit has built up more interest in the commercial film angles involved. Certain it is, as we predicted some issues back that commercial pictures will be the most economical solution to present telecasting problems. For the moment, though, we believe that advertisers and producers alike can look upon this branch of the business as a “future” interest and concentrate on the very useful jobs which films can and should do in many unexplored fields.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>200</sup> Hansen, 2021.

<sup>201</sup> “Camera Eye,” 9.

Television's time would come, and with it a seismic shift in the public's media consumption habits, but for now, with broadcasting still in its infancy, the motion picture reigned supreme. If motion pictures were, as many wished them to be, a technological response to a civilisation challenge, the fair, because of its scale and the press coverage it attracted, presented the most significant platform at the time for which to promote new ideas. To men like Whalen, their volume at the fair represented what he described as: 'A new high mark in the use of motion pictures for educational purposes, for the betterment of housing conditions, for the advancement of science, for the improvement of health.'<sup>202</sup> Cinema could be harnessed for the 'betterment' of the individual. Cinema could work as civic missionary. Building the World of Tomorrow went hand in hand with building better citizens and making better films.

### 1.4.3 Non-theatrical Networks

Outside of the fairgrounds themselves, films produced for display at the fair were being used in a hybrid of pedagogic and promotional contexts that linked the endorsement of sponsored classroom films to the fair's potential as an educational environment. Here they were used by a wide network of schools, review boards, periodicals, film libraries, and studios working in partnership to extend the shelf life of films produced for the fair, and channel them into public education. One school newsletter called *Bulletin: Schools Motion Picture Committee*, made in collaboration with New York's elite private preparatory schools, began circulating thorough the New York Public School system.<sup>203</sup> *Bulletin* advertised motion picture education training courses, updates on the latest popular teaching films, and information on how to source them.<sup>204</sup> The primary source for its films was an experimental motion picture lending programme developed by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in the

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<sup>202</sup> Whalen, "New Fields for Films," 15.

<sup>203</sup> Including Riverdale Country School, Horace Mann School, and the Lincoln School.

<sup>204</sup> Schools Motion Pictures Committee, *Bulletin*, 1-4.

spring of 1937 that distributed short subject films that had previously been shown in commercial cinemas. Seven of the largest commercial film producers consolidated an initial catalogue offering a choice of five hundred short films under the umbrella of a non-profit organisation called Teaching Films Custodians (TFC), a company created specifically to resolve the multiple copywrite issues and licence distribution under a single entity.<sup>205</sup> TFC had no issue with the fact that the films were not necessarily educational in nature, and proudly advertised that: ‘school children of the country are now receiving the educational benefits inherent in a large number of films which were produced primarily for entertainment.’<sup>206</sup>

*Bulletin's* first volume was released to coincide with the NYWF. Suggestions in its first volume skewed heavily towards promoting films being shown at the fair, including a sponsored Jam Handy film from General Motors, *Modes and Motors* (1939), and U.S. Steel's four-reel technicolour *Steel: Man's Servant* (1938), one of U.S. Steel's two Technicolour, big budget offerings of the late 1930s. The other, *Men Make Steel* (1938), a one reel cut down, was showing daily in their pavilion at the fairgrounds.<sup>207</sup> The lavish production values that US Steel invested in their sponsored films were noted by *Business Screen* who described them as: ‘advances which proclaim excellence of technique, showmanship, and photography of the highest rank.’<sup>208</sup> Republic, Bethlem, and U.S. Steel were asserting a newfound confidence through their promotional strategies. Their investments in quality made the films attractive for showcasing at trade expos and national non-theatrical circuits. Looking for maximum distribution, US Steel adopted a mixed format for their national strategy with an eleven-minute, one reel technicolour version released in theatres nation-wide, a thirty-seven-minute

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<sup>205</sup> These seven are listed as Columbia Pictures Corporation, Educational Pictures Corporation, Loew's, Inc. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., Paramount Pictures Corporation, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, and Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc. (Teaching Film Custodians, *Films for Classroom Use*, 1-5).

<sup>206</sup> Teaching Film Custodians, *Films for Classroom Use*, 9.

<sup>207</sup> The 1941 catalogue also included a single reel cutdown of scenes from General Motors' Highways and Horizons exhibition titled *The World of 1960* (1941).

<sup>208</sup> “Technicolor Tell the Story of Film,” 21.

Technicolour version for schools, conventions, and theatres. U.S. Steel prioritised its highest-quality formats for steel producing regions, and a 16mm black and white cut down version for other schools nationally. The decision to distribute the long-form Technicolour version to schools in steel producing regions is worth noting. It indicates that U.S. Steel were particularly invested in building confidence in its businesses among potential future employees and the families that depended on the industry in those regions that had been hit especially hard during the depression when steel production had dropped precipitously. *Business Screen's* article notes that steel had once again turned to motion pictures in troubled times to bolster its public relations, an indication of how important these kind of media strategies had become for some of the largest and most integral businesses in the American economy.<sup>209</sup>

Subsequently, these and similar films would be shown at the NYWF and included in the *Bulletin* AV recommendations. As a result, the fair became fully integrated into the regional education system, acting as a filtering mechanism, drawing in and concentrating industrial sponsored films and channelling them into public education. Strong links between the fair planners and institutes of higher learning ensured that industrial sponsored films were incorporated into curriculums and that schools were encouraged to participate in the fair's educational and promotional services. Teaching Film Custodians was just one of many educational film distributors deeply embedded in the school/university/industry matrix. The U.S. government, through the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, had made provision for a new federal agency to assist in the distribution and screening of industrial films for 'consumer education purposes,' extending the already existing film network of the Bureau of Mines (BoM) to circulate a series of industrial sponsored films.<sup>210</sup> The BoM had over five thousand films in their distribution library which they claimed had been shown in the previous couple of years to

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>210</sup> Mercey, "Better Films in the Schools," 25. As the next chapter will show, Arch Mercey would go on to instrumentalise educational films as part of the government's wartime security policies.

as many as ten million people and were being used in ‘practically every educational institution in the country.’<sup>211</sup> Will Hays, the Director of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) had been assigned the task of forming a committee to assess educational films for the fair. Writing to Hays, the BoM, being pressed by their sponsors, requested that a selection of films be presented at the NYWF, noting that the World’s Fair in San Francisco would be using the bureau’s films extensively. The sponsored film industry that had been developing steadily throughout the 1930s reached a pivotal moment at the fair, recognising its significance to the future of sponsored film in education. Like the BoM, they inundated Hays with requests to have their own films shown.

Outside of these networks, direct order catalogues including *Educational Film Guide*, and the back pages of trade magazines such as *Educational Screen* provided ample opportunity to source fair films for a school’s AV library. One of the most prolific distribution companies, Modern Talking Picture Service (MTPS) acted as the go-to service for national industrial sponsored films. They offered distribution services to industry for club showings (including afterschool clubs), dealer training, schools, and theatrical showings. A key part of their promotional work was a promise to effectively target all four of these markets, ensuring that the paperwork and certification was handled hassle free, and that sponsors could specify which audience, and age groups, they wanted to target specifically. Regarding the school distribution market, they boasted that ‘Modern’s complete school booking service permits the industrial sponsors to reach this vast, rapidly maturing audience with maximum effectiveness and minimum cost.’<sup>212</sup> A considerable eight-page advertisement in the *Business Screen* world’s fair special edition claimed that over 3,500 school had registered with them for the distribution of educational and industrial films. In addition, they provided artwork, postage, copywriting, and

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<sup>211</sup> Bureau of Mines, Letter to Hays, 2.

<sup>212</sup> “Successful Film Salesmanship.” 28.

promotion, as well as arranging what they describe as ‘editorial cooperation’ in school periodicals, which is to say that they were directing schools to select the films that their sponsors were paying to produce.<sup>213</sup> The integrated distribution and promotion model granted Modern (and its clients) an incredible reach, and by extension, influence in the educational film market.

Modern were one of the primary distributors for Jam Handy Productions, as well as releasing the NAM’s *America, Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow* (1936), *Men and Machines* (1936), *Frontiers of The Future* (1937), and *America Marching On* (1937) in theatrical screenings to nearly thirty million people.<sup>214</sup> These NAM films, Du Pont’s *Wonder World of Chemistry* (1936), Ford’s *Symphony in F* (1940) (produced for the fair’s second season), Westinghouse’s *The New Frontiers* (1936) and *The Middleton Family at the New York World’s Fair* (1939) were all produced by Audio Productions, for which Modern acted as a distributor. In reality both were owned ‘through licensees’ by Electrical Research Products Incorporated (ERPI) a subdivision of Western Electric, itself controlled by American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T).<sup>215</sup> Modern’s service was built around ERPI’s equipment licences, giving them rights to distribute its projection and audio equipment and allowing them to stock or equip locations for screenings whether it be for school auditoriums, trade shows, or other forms of non-theatrical venue. This vertically integrated model mirrored the major studios of Hollywood and facilitated the easy dissemination of industrial sponsored films throughout school systems, incorporating them into a wider public relations network. The films themselves, as Grieveson notes, embodied the ‘complex ties between significant large corporations.’<sup>216</sup> Through distribution networks such as these, owned and operated by industry, the implicit message of industry’s supremacy was conveyed to the classroom. The economic

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>215</sup> Walker and Sklar, “Business Finds its Voice,” 322.

<sup>216</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 309.



logics, cultural values, and political prerogatives given institutional credibility and reconstituted as education. According to Walker and Sklar, through companies such as Modern, the ‘chief obstacle’ to business circulating films through the educational networks, the poor quality and limited number of projectors, was being removed.<sup>217</sup> Better quality films, using modern sound and technicolour process, wide reaching distribution networks, and technology provision were all being utilised to extend the reach of industry’s cinematic pedagogy. The NYWF acted as a lightning rod, displaying the latest and most desirable industrial films. It helped to create the ‘psychological obsolescence’ as Harvey Zorbaugh described it for the educational norms of the present and generate desire for the latest methods and technologies, which through the fair, industry had indicated were best serviced by motion pictures.

So far, we have seen how industry capitalised on the popularity of motion pictures, and the networks of schools, trade magazines, and distributors to heighten their prestige. They incorporated the fair as an essential component of their public relations campaigns and enthusiastically framed their sponsored films as educational to facilitate a smooth transition into classroom use. What follows is an account of the progressive fair planners, and their efforts to use motion pictures and their leverage at the fair to inscribe their civic values in pedagogic practice. At the heart of these efforts was a long gestating plan for a film that would depict what the planners believed was a better way of living. A close examination of this film, *The City* (1939) and its production history will demonstrate how the fair planners turned to motion pictures to educate the school child.

#### **1.4.4 Documentary Takes Centre Stage at the Little Theatre**

Competing against the industrial pavilions for the public’s attention, the fair planners in charge of the Science and Education Focal Exhibit put motion pictures to use in their own screening

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<sup>217</sup> Walker and Sklar, “Business Finds its Voice.” 322.

space. The Little Theatre as it came to be known began as a suggestion to have a ‘theatre of education,’ in the early design for the community centre that would show a selection of short films of educational processes and techniques from the best schools across America.<sup>218</sup> The Little Theatre Committee, by their own admission, claimed that it was one of the fair’s most successful educational undertakings, and were it allocated greater resources and a dedicated publicity team, could have reached many more fairgoers.<sup>219</sup> The Little Theatre found new purpose with social progressives and educational theorists who believed in the affective potential of films to change behaviour. In contrast to the bombastic style of industrial advertising, the civic minded fair planners focussed on the documentary as the basis for their educational programming. A belief that documentary formed part of socially progressive praxis was outlined in the Little Theatre programme:

Stirring controversy, they act as a forum for the discussion of public issues. Many of them have penetrated deeply into national life, and their ideas have been translated into terms of action. They are offered on these programs to show what the film medium can do and is doing to help make democratic citizenship a reality.<sup>220</sup>

The Little Theatre was advertised as the only theatre in the world dedicated solely to documentaries. Its programming schedule was committed to a better expression of the ‘deeper aims’ of documentary film itself, as was claimed, ‘for the inspirations of this kind of filmmaking are civic rather than technical.’<sup>221</sup> Documentary film programming and spectatorship then took on the character of social action and a peculiar practice of citizenship, a form of self-betterment that alluded to morality-based beliefs about the civilising effects of education.

*The City (1939)* was promoted as the star attraction of the Little Theatre alongside films by Pare Lorentz including *The River (1936)* and *The Plow that Broke the Plains (1938)*. In

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<sup>218</sup> Kohn, Memo on Education, 2.

<sup>219</sup> The Little Theatre, “The Little Theatre of the Science and Education Building,” 1.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 3.

addition, a selection of health films from the *March of Time* were shown daily in a mixed roster along with John Taylor's *The Londoners* (1939), and films of the British Documentary Film Movement including *North Sea* (1938) by Alberto Cavalcanti, and Basil Wright's *Night Mail* (1936).<sup>222</sup> Screenings during the 1939 season were sporadic at first and adjusted on an ad hoc basis depending on audience demand. *The City* was screened in up to six of the sixteen screening slots in the Little Theatre per day. It was privileged with the best time slots, most coverage on weekends, and often attracted near sell out audiences.<sup>223</sup> For the opening of the 1940 season, special slots were granted for a series of themed documentary programs. These programmes featuring several films organised around a particular theme would run for four days (Thursday to Sunday) in the afternoon and evening, with showings of *The City* at regular intervals before, between, and sometimes after the program blocks. The fourteen special documentary programs all shared the common theme of current social problems. In stark contrast to the technologically driven optimism so evident in the film programming across the rest of the fair, the programming at the Little Theatre featured an ensemble of social documentaries and health films many of which were framed as cautionary tales.

Subjects for the special programmes included youth delinquency, sub-standard housing, public health, national problems (a title which centred on the continuing social and economic issues of the Great Depression), and industry (which focussed on the negative consequences of industrial production with films including Sheldon Dick's *Men and Dust* (1940), and Willard van Dyke's *Valley Town* (1940)). The Farming programme focussed on the impoverishment of rural communities whilst the Food and Consumer special programme screened films focussed primarily on nutrition and avoiding sales scams. These featured *March of Time's Racketeers Vs. Housewives* (1938). Noticeably the industry programme did not include any sponsored

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>223</sup> Rice, "Film Schedule," 1.

industrial films, or industrial process films. A clear distinction appears to have been made between a sponsored film and a conception of documentary film as social commentary, a call-to-action reflecting John Grierson's broader interpretation of the 'creative treatment of actuality.'<sup>224</sup> Documentary film, within a certain definition of style, rhetoric, and purpose was regarded by the fair planners as a conducive medium, described as 'dramatizing facts in terms of human values ... to establish a contact between the individual citizen and the forces which govern his living.'<sup>225</sup> Documentaries, it was believed, could achieve that aspiration of some educators by relating the individual member of the public to the world around them, enlightening and informing as well as outlining a sense of civic responsibility.

Detailed breakdowns of attendance and audience reception were recorded and posted from McConnel's office to the Little Theatre Committee noting the popularity of *The City* which attracted the largest audiences.<sup>226</sup> However, despite this encouraging coverage, Frederick Ackerman, on behalf of the board of Civic Films wrote to Kohn to address their concerns that *The City* was not getting anywhere near what they considered to be enough publicity and footfall. He complained that the public were unaware of its venue and showtimes, and as such, the film which he claimed more fully expressed the ideas of the World of Tomorrow theme than any other exhibit at the fair, was going unappreciated.<sup>227</sup> Despite the popularity with audiences and apparent critical success, plans were already being made in advance of the 1940 season to financialise the Little Theatre for a modest fee in order to recoup some of the running costs. Even small adjustments would necessitate more expensive projection equipment, better quality 35mm projectors with arc lamps, and a recalibration of the 16mm equipment to avoid

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<sup>224</sup> Grierson, "The Function of the Producer," 8.

<sup>225</sup> The Little Theatre, "The Little Theatre of the Science and Education Building," 3.

<sup>226</sup> McConnel, "Summary of Film Programme," 1.

<sup>227</sup> Ackerman, Letter to Kohn, 1.

repeating the complaints about projection quality that they had received during the first season.<sup>228</sup>

The industrial pavilions would have no such issues. With operating deficits accounted for in their budgets, and a roster of films from their motion picture back catalogues, they had no need to charge extra for admission.<sup>229</sup> Once again, as the fair planners turned to civic uplift with limited resources, the industrial exhibitors moved in the direction of large budgeted, child focussed entertainment to embed their message. The planners had put their faith in the documentary form to convey their message. *The City*, they hoped, would be a large enough draw to compete with the industrial pavilions. Because of its prestigious role at the centre of the SEE, and subsequent preservation and elevation to its status as film of historical merit by the Museum of Modern Art, *The City* warrants close examination to draw out an understanding of what the planners were staking their claim at the fair on. What follows is an examination of its complex and overlooked production history from its inception as an advertisement for regional planning to its debut at the New York World's Fair.

### 1.5.1 The City Planning Film

The origins of *The City* can be traced back as far as October of 1936. At a meeting of the American City Planning Institute (ACPI) in Milwaukee, the president of the ACPI Russell Van Nest Black established a committee of planners to work on a means by which to represent the city planning industry at the 1939 world's fair. Within a year the committee had solidified a plan around producing a motion picture that would promote the social benefits of better city

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<sup>228</sup> Motion Picture Department, "Suggestions," 1-2.

<sup>229</sup> Du Pont, for example, were able to screen *Wonder World of Chemistry* (1936). General Motors, who were able to draw on their enormous back catalogue of Direct Mass Selling Series Film from the Jam Handy Organisation, screened many of their educational and driver safety shorts including *Vacuum Control* (1938), and *We Drivers* (1935), putting a particular emphasis on their Max Fleischer Technicolour children's animations including *A Coach for Cinderella* (1936), *Nicky Rides Again* (1938) and *Jumping Beans* (1937). (Motion Picture Department "Motion Pictures in Commercial Exhibits." 1-6.

planning, agreeing that this medium would be the best option to aid their cause. From the ranks of the ACPI, the committee established a board of directors for what would become Civic Films Inc., a non-profit corporation charged with delivering the city planning film in time for the opening of the fair. The board was comprised of the foremost architects and town planners in the country with famed architect Clarence Stein as President.<sup>230</sup> Stein, Kohn, Augur, and Ackerman had also been members of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) who, along with Lewis Mumford (who would provide the narration to accompany the film), had been heavily involved in promoting the garden city movement of the 1920s. Howard Gillette has argued that *The City* could be ‘viewed in large part as a propaganda piece for the garden city idea.’<sup>231</sup> His examination of the film suggests a latent anxiety apparent among the members of the various planning committees who perceived a ‘crisis of modern American civilization,’ regarded by the planners as profoundly linked to conditions of urban life.<sup>232</sup> Regionalism lay at the heart of their solutions for this modern crisis, and with it the transfer of power away from government and into the hands of local policy makers. Robert Kohn, neatly surmised the issue at hand stating: ‘There are evident conflicts of interests and of basic ideas, as to the function of private initiative and that of public agencies.’<sup>233</sup> A clear tension existed, between the regional planners, who saw in the mission of housing provision a civilisational challenge in which government regulation on planning provision was seen as an obstacle, and

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<sup>230</sup> The board of directors was comprised of Frederick L. Ackerman - Technical Director of the New York City Housing Authority and Special Consultant of the Housing Division of the PWA. Russell Van Nest Black - Consultant to the State Planning Boards of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and former President of the American Institute of Planners. Tracy B. Auger, President of the American Institute of Planners. Harold Buttenheim, President of the Citizens Housing Council of New York Robert D. Kohn Chairman of the Committee on Theme, New York World's Fair and past President of the American Institute of Architects. Lawrence M. Orton, Commissioner of the New York City Planning Commission. Clarence S. Stein, architect, and builder of Radburn, N.J., former Chairman of New York State Housing and Regional Planning Commission. Together this group represented some of the most influential individuals working in planning and urban development on the East coast, and their connections to other regional planning, governmental, and charitable organisations enabled them to exert enormous leverage.

<sup>231</sup> Gillette, “Film as Artifact,” 73.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>233</sup> Kohn, Abstract of Paper, 1.

the government's need to shore up the housing stock, banking, and mortgage markets that had been decimated by the Depression. Once again, a conflict between private industry trying to free itself of red tape and the New Deal government trying to stabilise markets through regulation would characterise the issue.

Elements of the New Deal housing program which had been established by the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932 were enlarged by the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and National Housing Act of 1934. These acts had taken shape in Federal Housing Administration projects such as the mixed low-cost Colonial Village apartment complex in Arlington Virginia and the new Greenbelt Towns.<sup>234</sup> In these new developments, in their own words the Resettlement Administration (RA) were 'trying to ... put houses and land and people together in such a way that the props under our economic and social structure will be permanently strengthened.'<sup>235</sup> Kohn on the other hand, despite having worked for the Public Works Administration (PWA) in their housing division between 1933 and 1934, believed firmly that 'our housing must be locally promoted, built, and managed. The initiative must come from us citizens else the whole project will fail.'<sup>236</sup> He echoed the fears that government would be creating 'federal islands' if over invested in low-cost housing provision.<sup>237</sup> Delays in fulfilling transfer of the title of Greenbelt City in Maryland added to these concerns. This left the ownership of the town in limbo for some time as the RA were reticent to turn over the town upon completion to private housing corporations and local political control, who they feared would raise rents above what the targeted inhabitants, the low to moderate income families, could feasibly afford.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> The eponymous greenbelt towns that were built included Greenbelt Maryland, Greenhills Ohio, and Greendale Wisconsin.

<sup>235</sup> Resettlement Administration, "Greenbelt Towns," 7.

<sup>236</sup> Kohn, Summary of Points, 2.

<sup>237</sup> Arnold, *The New Deal in the Suburbs*, 124; Gillette suggests that criticism of the RA's efforts may have influenced Clarence Stein to use motion pictures to help sell the public on these New Town developments. (Gillette, "Film as Artifact," 71-85)

<sup>238</sup> Arnold, *The New Deal in the Suburbs*, 127.

As with the large industries that wanted to put across their story to the public and sustain the persistence of its message in the classroom, an educational film illustrating their position, and the NYWF as a launch pad for its release were chosen for maximum impact on the popular imagination. Support for a film on city planning and urban development was in ample supply, with much of it coming unsurprisingly from those already heavily invested in planning and construction. Frederic Delano, the President's uncle, director of multiple railroad companies, and Chairman of the Committee of the Regional Plan Association for New York was one such individual. Speaking to Kohn in 1937 he gave his support for the film project stressing its potential as a promotional tool if distributed widely through the country. He compared it to Walter D. Moody's *Wacker's Manual* (1911), an architectural textbook aimed at 8<sup>th</sup> grade junior high school students and incorporated into the Chicago public school curriculum to promote civics, urban planning, and Daniel Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* (1909) for the redevelopment of the city's lakeshore area.<sup>239</sup> Delano called it:

The most successful thing ever done in the way of education ... we [The Commercial Club of Chicago] succeeded in teaching a generation of children the desirability of making Chicago a more beautiful ... place to live in. In other words, we "sold the idea", to use the vulgar expression, to a very large number of people, their fathers and mothers, not to mention their sisters, their cousins and their aunts.<sup>240</sup>

The city planning film, it was hoped, could have a similar effect, promoting the idea of private business-led urban development by planting the idea in the minds of the children and their families of the necessity for new planned communities. An educational film would teach a new generation how negligent, and undirected city planning and development made for poor citizens with degraded lives and prospects. New towns, developed in the green belt areas of New England envisioned by the urban planners, constructed by private enterprise, without

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<sup>239</sup> Burnham had managed the design and construction of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Though he did not live to see it, many of his urban planning ideas for Chicago would later be implemented; the popularity of the Burnham Plan having helped precipitate the redesign and expansion of South Lakeshore in Chicago by future developers.

<sup>240</sup> Delano, Letter to Robert Kohn, 1.



interference or competition from government, would deliver a new type of community life, new freedoms, and better living. Importantly, these early plans essentialised the post-fair distribution of the film to schools and educational institutes throughout the country as well as earmarking it for commercial distribution.<sup>241</sup> The group were confident that funds could be secured from one of the leading charitable foundations for a film that featured slum reclamation as well a new building, provided that it would be shown several times a day for free in a suitable theatre at the fairgrounds.<sup>242</sup> In a letter to Frederick Keppel, the president of the Carnegie Foundation, Kohn put forth his argument for the importance of such a film: ‘I am convinced that there is a chance to put the whole matter of planned city growth before millions of people by this means. Its exhibition at the Fair would be only the beginning of a country-wide demand for its reproductions.’<sup>243</sup> The Carnegie Foundation would supply funding on the condition that the film be educational in nature. Fulfilling this obligation would inform the style and content of the eventual production. In a letter to David Sarnoff at RCA, Kohn explicitly described *The City* as educational, stressing the fact that it would be used as such in the Little Theatre and that it would be later be distributed to educational institutions.<sup>244</sup> This was partly in fulfilment of the Carnegie grant which stipulated that any profits from commercial theatrical showings were to go towards furthering educational work.<sup>245</sup>

Finding the right producer would prove a more difficult task. Suggestions to partner with *The March of Time* were met with mixed results with Van Nest Black insisting that it would be an indication of failure on their part to not produce their own picture. Partnering with *The March of Time* should only be entertained as a last resort. Partly this was because he believed that an appeal to the producers of *March of Time* would involve losing focus on the

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<sup>241</sup> Stein, Memo Regarding the ACPI’s World’s Fair Committee, 1.

<sup>242</sup> Buttenheim, Letter to Kohn, 1.

<sup>243</sup> Kohn, Letter to Frederick Keppel, 2.

<sup>244</sup> Kohn, Letter to David Sarnoff, 1.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid, 1.

specifics of regional planning and having to cater the film to ‘capitalize on current conversational emphasis upon housing for our economic salvation.’<sup>246</sup> This would have distracted from their initial intentions which from the beginning had been to illustrate city planning in the hands of social progressives as a pathway to better way of life. The film was intended to be a persuasive advertisement for why the city planning industry was essential to the future for good health and good living. They were less concerned with the socioeconomic factors that produced the immiserating condition of industrial urban blight that the planners claimed the right kind of city planning was capable of reversing.

### **1.5.2 A Progressive Plan for Living**

Robert Kohn described how he and Catherine Bauer, the noted American housing reformer, had by 1937, already been working for some time on the idea of making a film that depicted the social consequences of unplanned city growth. Their idea was to depict the social problems that had resulted in contrast to what a planned city might look like.<sup>247</sup> A synopsis of their early ideas for the film reveals an epic science fiction drama, perhaps intended to mesh with the World of Tomorrow theme. In this version a brilliant young architecture professor (a conspicuous proxy for the members of Civic Films) delivers a lecture in the year 2039 outlining the history of the fictional ‘River City,’ a place where: ‘the ordinary city dweller lived in a stifling prison of dust and arid stone, the light filtering through slits in the sky, the air polluted with smoke and chemical fumes.’<sup>248</sup> This future city is destroyed in a cataclysmic earthquake and its people evacuated to be eventually resettled in a ‘green city,’ an expanded version of a garden city concept. This city is designed by a collective of heroic city planners, architects, and progressive groups who win over the public to their way of thinking by showing them models

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<sup>246</sup> Van Nest Black, Letter to Clarence Stein, 1.

<sup>247</sup> Kohn, Letter to Mr. Fordyce, 1.

<sup>248</sup> “Synopsis of City Planning Film,” 1.

of what the city would be like and how they could live better lives through better city planning. These plans are heavily opposed by the mayor and influential realty groups, however the city planners through sheer force of charisma and reason win over the public to their way of thinking. The plot then focused on the planners' designs for the various aspects of a well-planned city and how they can improve the lives of its citizens, with a focus on green space, clean living, and even a proposed endorsement from H.G Wells claiming that 'this will be the beginning of the future.'<sup>249</sup>

Though the futuristic elements of the proposal were dropped for what would eventually become *The City*, the core messaging remained surprisingly intact. A journey from a dystopic city to an idealised, green utopia, where magnanimous city planners have saved the simple folk from the horrors of unplanned city growth and the stagnant, dark confines of festering city life. Letters from Van Nest Black indicate some of the early ideas to feature a synthetic model city as a stand in for the new town in the hopes that sections of the film that demonstrated the poor living conditions would not create local resentment in any particular location.<sup>250</sup> Such plans would have harmonised the film with Henry Dreyfus' Democracy miniature in the Perisphere, and Normal Bel Geddes' enormous model work in the Futurama ride. Bel Geddes' Futurama concept appealed to GM's public relation director Paul Garrett and its president Alfred P. Sloan, because according to Marchand, they viewed 'better public relation and the effective delivery of a subtle anti-New Deal political message as a major corporate priority.'<sup>251</sup> Impressing the public with sleek design, confident showmanship, and a dedication to private enterprise driven prosperity would communicate the 'forward looking social vision of the corporation.'<sup>252</sup> It

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>250</sup> Van Nest Black, Letter to Robert Kohn, 1.

<sup>251</sup> Marchand, "The Designers Go to the Fair," 29.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 29

would also downplay the public significance of Roosevelt's New Deal government, something Sloan had no issue making public in advancing his business philosophy.<sup>253</sup>

Embedded in both the final film and its antecedents is a much less heroic imagining of what the civic planners intended for the future of city construction in the United States. One would be hard pressed to argue that the provision of safe and clean housing to a needy populace was anything other than a noble project, however this was not the primary objective that the city planners intended, and something closer to a means than an end. At the heart of the project is a rhetoric that promotes an idea of the fragility of democracy. As Kohn elaborated: 'For basically the problem is one of saving the Democracy in the process of such rebuilding.'<sup>254</sup> Repeated references to what is described as the problem of housing were aggregated with the mission of saving democracy and the enabling of undefined freedoms. What was made clear throughout the project, particularly from Kohn himself, was the belief that this democracy preserving endeavour was the responsibility of a citizenry of private individuals who, in his own words, 'must be active and cannot leave housing to government alone.'<sup>255</sup> The city planning film in its infancy then was to be as much a criticism of government efforts at social housing as it was a promotional film for the American Institute of Planners (AIP).

Much of the discussion between the film makers and city planners revolved around who would provide the solution to the woes of inadequate housing rather than what would be the best way to realize it. According to Kohn: 'Governmental agencies will have to do their part but the way to start is for us, as citizens, in each region to join forces.'<sup>256</sup> Active, socially engaged citizens, Kohn argued, were part of a new social formation that could affect change at

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid, 30; Alongside a slew of newspaper editorials throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and backing political candidates, Sloan personally financed the American Liberty League, a political organisation comprised of like-minded businessmen united in their staunch opposition to the New Deal and advocacy for a 'business civilisation.' (Rudolph, "The American Liberty League," 21)

<sup>254</sup> Kohn, "Summary of Points," 2.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>256</sup> Kohn, "Abstract of Paper," 2.

the foundational level of community planning, however, even amongst themselves disagreements clouded their lofty aspirations.

### **1.5.3 A Troubled Utopia**

Lewis Mumford had originally been intended to write a treatment for the film, however other work commitments had pulled him away. In his absence, Pare Lorentz was approached to develop an outline from the ample material and ideas supplied by Civic Films. Lorentz was at that point the head of the U.S. Film Service and had garnered a considerable amount of fame as a documentarian from his time working as one of the foremost artists of the New Deal in the Resettlement Agency (RA). There, his film work had addressed the plight of Americans displaced by the dust bowl in the West, and flooding in the Tennessee Valley. Whereas the majority of Lorentz's films had been made under the umbrella of various New Deal departments, Civic Films Inc. was a privately sponsored production company that operated as a film production wing of the AIP with funding provided by the Carnegie Corporation. From the outset the production would be subject to incredible scrutiny from its board of directors at Civic, much to the chagrin of the filmmakers who were accustomed to a greater degree of autonomy.

In a letter to Clarence Stein, Kohn wrote that: 'What Lorenz has written seems to me to be excellent - only a good part of it has nothing to do with the subject, in my opinion.'<sup>257</sup> Both Kohn and Stein were insistent on delivering the green city idea as the focus of the film and wished to deemphasise the social commentary on living standards at the expense of other considerations, namely the artistic expertise of experienced filmmakers. In one example, Kohn's inability grasp the intentions of Lorentz about the visual rhythms of certain key scenes

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<sup>257</sup> Kohn, Letter to Clarence Stein, 1.

hampered their working relationship.<sup>258</sup> The importance of an artistic rendering for the film was lost on Kohn who noted in the same letter to Stein that he thought the scene was overly long and had nothing to do with the message of the film.<sup>259</sup> Lorentz and Civic Films ultimately parted ways during the production, with the remainder of the scenario being finished by Henwar Rodakiewicz, after being brought in to help oversee the film's production. Willard van Dyke, who had previously worked as a cameraman on *The River* (1938) would subsequently be hired to direct alongside Ralph Steiner who had shot Lorentz's *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936). Kohn's reservations appear to have resulted in some of Lorentz's suggestions being jettisoned during production along with other embedded social critiques that Kohn and others at Civic Films felt distracted from the message that the film was trying to deliver, namely, as Kohn would describe: 'the mess we have is due to indifference, and ignorance and that we can only get over the mess through thoughtfulness and planning in advance.'<sup>260</sup> Lorentz's departure, and Kohn's insistence on bluntly focussing on the prescriptive solution of social planning indicate a more contentious production process bound up in executing the message of advocating for the AIP over the reformist tone of Lorentz's government films.

The disconnect between the artistic sensibilities of Steiner, Van Dyke, and Rodakiewicz, and the singlemindedness of Civic Films were not helped by the later imposition of Mumford's narration which, having been insisted upon by Stein, was met with universal disapproval from the filmmakers who regarded it as too 'on-the-nose.'<sup>261</sup> The film makers, who had all worked on Lorentz's pictures, were accustomed to a film making style that addressed and explored the problems, whereas Civic on the other hand were more concerned with promoting a solution. The production process unfolded in a contentious manner and what emerged as a result must be regarded as a compromised effort. In a letter to photographer and friend Ned Scott, whom

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>261</sup> Gillette, "Film as Artifact," 75.

he had wanted to be the official photographer for the shoot, Rodakiewicz lamented the rushed and erratic production describing inexperienced staff ‘going off half-cocked.’<sup>262</sup> The letter to Scott revealed that by the end of the production Rodakiewicz had nothing but contempt for Mumford.<sup>263</sup> As such, the film neither fully expressed the desires of Civic or held true to the vision of the film makers, especially after the departure of Lorentz, leaving it caught stylistically and rhetorically somewhere between a New Deal film and a sponsored promotion film. Certainly, it was heavily endorsed as being the former, to the extent that it was sandwiched in between Lorentz’s most notable films at the Little Theatre and heavily promoted on the strength of his reputation.

#### **1.5.4 Better Living Through Propaganda**

*The City (1939)* would be shot on more than one hundred thousand feet of film, over ten months, across more than thirty states, at a cost of fifty-thousand dollars.<sup>264</sup> Divided into five main sequences, *The City* takes an historical overview of industrial urbanisation and residential development, criticising the effects wrought by its conditions on the workers who inhabit the developing and urbanising industrial landscape.<sup>265</sup> The film begins with a bucolic fantasy rendering of a New England village complete with white steeple church, town hall, and swimming hole presenting a museum piece arcadia of imagined nostalgia. Scenes of rolling hills and open fields are complemented by Morris Carnovsky’s narration of Mumford’s heavily romanticised script, pining for a particular type of pastoral existence long since vanished from living memory and idealised beyond the point of practical replication. The narration claims:

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<sup>262</sup> Rodakiewicz, Letters to Ned Scott, 1.

<sup>263</sup> Ned Scott Archive, 1.

<sup>264</sup> Serlin, AIP Presents “The City,” 5.

<sup>265</sup> The five sections of the film were marked clearly in an auditorium pamphlet that accompanied the production. It lists the section as: In the beginning, The New England Town, The Industrial City, The Metropolis, The Highway, and finally the Green City.

‘There was lasting harmony between the soil and what we built or planted there.’<sup>266</sup> This introductory section leans heavily on a common trope of utopian fantasies, harking back to a golden age of agrarian tranquillity and social order where people had more autonomy in their lives: ‘we never let our cities grow too big for us to manage.’<sup>267</sup> The section notes the connection between communal living and democratic practice, with the townspeople coming together to make group decisions and share in collective agrarian labour. Mumford’s script establishes two conditions of this community against which the rest of the film is contrasted: Firstly, that the balance between work, play, and community was inextricably linked to the ordered way in which the simple town had been built, and secondly that this lost way of living was eminently better than present conditions, and something of an ideal to be strived for.

From the quaint scenic shots of rural life and simplified ‘industry’ of the blacksmith’s forge, the scene transitions to the industrial city with a dramatic and sinister development in Aaron Copeland’s score accompanying a montage of industrial scenes of smelters, dark factories, and pouring metals. The narrator continues, describing ‘pillars of smoke by day, pillars of fire by night ... faster and faster, better and better,’ as a shot shows smokestacks pumping black soot across the river to a nearby residential quarter.<sup>268</sup> ‘Smoke makes prosperity they tell you here, no matter if you choke on it,’ claims the narrator as the camera observes the children of the residential area comprised of ‘shacks and alleys.’<sup>269</sup> Particular attention is given to the children in this sequence, sooty faced, scrambling over train tracks and up the rickety staircases of hillside workers’ houses, they stare at the camera with ‘blank expressions’ on their faces.<sup>270</sup> This emotional appeal, the seeming hopelessness, and victimhood is noticeably contrasted to the resilience and quiet dignity in the studies of Resettlement Administration

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<sup>266</sup> *The City*, 1939, 05:23.

<sup>267</sup> *The City*, 1939, 05:38.

<sup>268</sup> *The City*, 1939, 07:00.

<sup>269</sup> *The City*, 1939, 08:27.

<sup>270</sup> *The City*, 1939, 08:36.



photographers such as Dorothea Lang, Gordon Parks, and Walker Evans. The repeated emphasis on the lives of children acts as a thematic bridge between the problem of urban blight and the solutions of the planners. The children's lives, portrayed as desperate and precarious, are used to ground the successive scenes as the comparative basis on which the reveal of the garden city concept will be sold.

From the industrial city to the metropolis, the visual and aural tempo of the film dramatically increases to dramatize the speed and frenetic energy of the big city. Towering skyscrapers block out the sky and Carnovsky's narration reaches a staccato intensity as the audience is shown crowded streets, wall to wall offices, bustling sidewalks, and once again children playing amidst the chaos. A café scene utilising fast-paced editing shows the speed and mechanisation of fast-food servicing. A Civic Films brochure described the scene as the 'lunch-hour mobs gulping food at drugstore counters ... the mad rhythm and fantastic pattern of life in the metropolis.'<sup>271</sup> From the confines of the metropolis the next sequence describes the highway, 'the endless city,' congested, ugly and ultimately fatal. We see a car plunge from a cliffside road as this sequence leads the viewer out from the squalor and inhumanity of urban living by streamlined aeroplane and locomotive to explore the core idea of the film, the green city.

Here in the green city the children are depicted playing outdoors and in grassy, community-oriented spaces, adjacent to homes, and with streets noticeably absent of cars. A sharp contrast is drawn between the children earlier in the film whose lives are depicted as unsanitary and precarious. Aerial shots show the features of the proposed new way of living with broad uncluttered interstate highways leading to leafy green belt communities. The commentary continues: 'New cities take form, green cities ... New cities are not allowed to grow and overcrowd beyond the size that makes them fit for living in ... the new city is

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<sup>271</sup> Serlin, AIP Presents "The City," 2.

organised to make cooperation possible between machines and men and nature.<sup>272</sup> The narration reflects on one of the core themes of the techno-utopian creed, that mastery of the machine would lead to greater prosperity: ‘Here science serves the worker and the work together, making machines more automatic and the men that govern them more human.’<sup>273</sup> Despite setting itself in opposition to the industrial exhibits at the fair, a common theme of technological emancipation is still present. The machine played a definitive role in the planners’ utopia, representing a harmony of function and design that the planners wished to instil when designing living spaces. The narration powerfully emphasises this as one of the planners’ primary beliefs about community design: ‘Order has come, order and life together ... all that we know about machines and soils and raw materials and human ways of living is waiting ... we can reproduce the pattern and better it a thousand times.’<sup>274</sup> In essence, better living could be mass manufactured.

A central tenant of their theoretical position was that the urban environment was ‘the chief agent in shaping culture and thus its trials could be seen as the source of malaise for the entire civilisation.’<sup>275</sup> Mumford expressed this belief often. In one of his most popular books of the 1930s, *The Culture of Cities*, he wrote: ‘Today we begin to see that the improvement of cities is no matter for small one-sided reforms: the task of city design involves the vaster task of rebuilding our civilization.’<sup>276</sup> Kohn reiterated this philosophy stating: ‘How critical is the need to provide a decent standard of living quarter for all people, critical for us if we want to build up a true and hence a permanent democracy in our country.’<sup>277</sup> Underpinning their motivations then was a deep desire to shape both the landscape and the people who would inhabit it. *The City* had been intended as an educational film that would stimulate demand for

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<sup>272</sup> *The City*, 1939, 22:18 – 22:33.

<sup>273</sup> *The City*, 1939, 22:55.

<sup>274</sup> *The City*, 1939, 30:15 – 30:36.

<sup>275</sup> Gillette, “Film as Artifact,” 81.

<sup>276</sup> Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, 9.

<sup>277</sup> Kohn, Abstract of Paper, 1.

new housing development. The design of these developments however would entail the kind of social and economic distribution that broadly speaking would be more beneficial to the various kinds of white collar and light industry workers. At the same time this would potentially disperse the concentrations of urban heavy industry, and the political formations that thrived from the concentration of labour in the industry adjacent cities, particularly in the Great Lakes region and Atlantic Northeast. Though *The City* repeats the conceit of proper planning as a panacea for industrial blight, the issue of that blight is placed squarely on the vague issue of unplanned growth, while nothing explicitly critical is stated of the ecological and social by-products of heavy industry nor the necessity of those industries to the livelihoods of working families.

As a promotional piece for the planning industry, rather than the social documentaries whose style it emulates, *The City* focusses on the merits of its product, the Green City. As Robert Snyder has pointed out, Lorentz's films tended to spend more time elaborating the social and structural problems than they do the solution. In the case of his films for the Resettlement Administration, *The River* (1938) and *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), the narrative spends almost the entire running time elaborating the problems that have developed since the settlement of the afflicted areas and the subsequent decades of mismanagement that had led to disaster, before pointing out the steps taken to alleviate the problem through government intervention and investment. According to Snyder, Lorentz believed that he could 'make the audience see the need by showing the problem as powerfully as possible.'<sup>278</sup> In *The City*, almost half of the running time focusses on the fifth section of the film, drawing out the elements of the green city concept that the planners believed would rescue society from the pace, pressure, and misery of contemporary urban living. Instead of the social commentary associated with Lorentz's New Deal films, in which the film details at length with the social, ecological, or

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<sup>278</sup> Snyder, *Pare Lorentz and the Documentary Film*, 191.

industrial problem, the messaging of *The City* is more aligned with salesmanship, and the product as solution for problem. Much like the automobile or the washing machine, the planned city would improve the quality of life by reducing labour and providing convenience, with faster, and better machines designed to create a slower pace of life. In addition, the film fails to address the fact that the tragic portrayal of the children in the industrial towns, the central selling point of the green city movement, was due to industry itself. If the green city was, as the planners claimed, designed to alleviate their suffering, they would need to remove the heavy industries altogether as those families whose livelihoods were reliant on heavy industry would still need to live within the residential shadow of the factory. The film implies that the green city was never meant for these types of children to grow up in but was instead for the children of white collar and light industry workers in what *The City* describes as ‘sunlit factories and laboratories.’<sup>279</sup> In this sense *The City* can be read as an advertisement for a future of class and industry-based segregation, a form of better living through zoning.

In the film’s resolution, the town of yesteryear, the quiet New England town is thematically twinned with green city of the future. The creators of *The City* were attempting to suture the divide between the nostalgia for a past agrarian golden age and a technological utopia led by architects and designers whose rational approach to everything from domestic appliances to city infrastructure would deliver a new and better world. Thoughtful planning, Mumford’s narration claimed, would bring us closer to nature as if closing a loop of progress from the utilitarian community of the New England village to the functional harmony of the green city.

*The City* echoed many of the fair planners’ dreams for a new and distinctly American society organised around harmony with technological progress, illustrative of a hope that technology would be cure-all for the cultural problems of the day. Ideas like the green city

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<sup>279</sup> *The City*, 1939, 22:53.

alongside its contemporaries at the fair, the Democracy and the cities of the Futurama ride, illustrate a desire to create an environment defined by rationality and personal freedom that was, as Cusker points out, still ‘intimately connected with the industrial landscape.’<sup>280</sup> Under the auspices of housing provision, this techno-utopian vision was committed to film, and through the fair, taught to the nation.

### **1.5.5 The Debate on Housing**

Preoccupation with housing provision extended beyond Civic Films’ centrepiece production. Briefly rewinding the clock to the planning stage of the fair reveals that from the earliest days of fair planning the push back against federal involvement in urban and city development was at the forefront of the Fair Corporation’s public strategy. A radio broadcast on New York’s local *World of Radio (WOR) Forum Hour* in December of 1935 sheds some interesting light on the motivations of the fair corporation in the field of housing provision. For a special symposium titled *The World’s Fair, What it Means to Progress, Business and Labour*, Grover Whalen and Louis K. Comstock, both incorporators of the fair, joined U.S. Senator for New York Robert F. Wagner to answer questions on the potential benefits of the fair to what they deemed the average citizen, a figure represented in the debate by a Mr. D. McAvoy.<sup>281</sup> The debate almost immediately turned to the question of housing development and whether federal housing programs were ‘detrimental’ to private enterprise.<sup>282</sup>

Wagner’s response was to downplay the impact of government housing programs on private enterprise, claiming that in his ten-year proposal of ten billion dollars’ worth of expenditures, the vast majority would be allocated to private enterprise and only a small

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<sup>280</sup> Cusker, “The World of Tomorrow,” 291.

<sup>281</sup> Comstock was the president of the Merchant’s Association of New York. His engineering company was closely tied to large scale electrical infrastructure projects in New York and Chicago including the lighting for the Empire State Building.

<sup>282</sup> Wagner et al., “A Round Table,” 5.

portion, specifically in those areas where it would not be profitable for private enterprise to invest (low rent and low-income social housing). Here the government would be committed to subsidise with federal money. Not only was this large portion of his proposal dedicated to private enterprise, but he contended, the small part of federal funding on low-income housing would also pass through the networks of private enterprise, further enriching and bolstering both it and the ancillary heavy good industries.<sup>283</sup> Justifying the need for such lopsided investment strategies, Wagner appealed to the dire need for a reduction of slum housing in the New York area, a necessary project based on the assumption that, ‘the first step toward the elimination of crime and disease is the elimination of the conditions that breed them.’<sup>284</sup> Crime, squalor, and as a corollary, juvenile delinquency, which was claimed to be four times higher than the national average, rested at the core of the moral argument for new housing. However, the principal motivation for legislation, protecting the rights of private enterprise from government competition, appeared to supersede the moral imperative of housing necessity. Wagner, who would go on to be the sponsoring legislator of United States Housing Act of 1937, (an act written in large part by Catherine Bauer, at the time working on early drafts of the synopsis for *The City* with Robert Kohn) was described as a ‘guiding spirit in home legislation, and as rather a jealous guardian of the rights of private enterprise.’<sup>285</sup> Certainly he lived up this reputation in this debate.

The Wagner-Steagall Act which he would go on to draft also restricted development of new federally subsidised housing to current levels of stock, meaning that newly constructed federal housing would only be replacing existing housing deemed unfit and targeted for slum clearance. Any new housing provision would be reserved for private developers, and as such, subject the plans to the powerful local regimes of political and economic interest. Private

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 11.

enterprise would therefore become a greater force in shaping the character and people of new urban developments.<sup>286</sup> An unfortunate irony given that the act was intended to alleviate substandard housing conditions. Instead, fostered by a community of progressive senators, city planners, and architects, it would result in legislation designed first and foremost to prevent government competition with the private market. This resulted in creating housing aimed at tenants with such a low maximum income requirement that it led to inevitable concretions of poverty in government housing projects. Not only this, but the devolution of the ownership, decision making, and operational duties to local authorities ensured that the low-income building projects could either be blocked entirely by local committees or confined to certain zoned districts, a practice which through the removal of federal oversight enabled the racial segregation of new building developments. By 1957 Catherine Bauer herself would regard its design as severely flawed, referring to it in an article in *Architectural Forum* as the ‘dreary deadlock of public housing’ that had fostered racial and social segregation and become mired in ‘selfish reactionary obstruction.’<sup>287</sup>

Why then was the discussion with Whalen on the *World of Radio* show, ostensibly to promote the fair, so fixated on assuring the audience that government plans in housing would not interfere with private enterprise? Mr. McAvoy, the figure in the broadcast debate that was supposed to represent the average citizen and homeowner was in fact secretary of the Home Mortgage Advisory Board, allied with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a government corporation that provided financial loans to banks, railroads, and mortgage providers throughout the depression. In his role as representative of the ‘average homeowner’ in the scripted debate, McAvoy gave praise to the ideas set forth by Wagner and Whalen, namely that enormous housing provision would be needed to accommodate visitors to the fair, however as

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<sup>286</sup> Although this would be less through provision of the clean, open, green spaces of well-planned neighbourhoods, and more through the creation of new social stratifications of exurban communities, zoned and confined to restricted areas based on economic inequalities.

<sup>287</sup> Bauer, in Penner, “The (Still) Dreary Deadlock,” 1.

he made clear, hotels should not be built to accommodate this purpose, but instead a ‘cooperative keynote’ should be developed for a federal housing program ‘side by side with private enterprise.’<sup>288</sup> Side by side in this case would place private enterprise first among equals. This radio show demonstrates a shrewd utilisation of a different kind of useful media, broadcast radio, to encourage the umbrella financing of the NYWFC to advocate for specific industries and legislation that would be favourable to the fair executives.

Incidents like this reveal the intimate ties between the fair executives, local government, and industry that sought in practical terms, a way to build their own version of the World of Tomorrow. One in which private enterprise would have greater political and economic power to expand its borders and influence. In keeping with this trend, in a speech at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1937, Kohn acknowledged that government would need to be involved in any future design for improved housing to some degree but wished control over decision making to be delegated at the local level, and responsive to local needs of population, climate, and necessity. At the federal level he made it clear that government efforts have been deficient stating: ‘We realize, with considerable shame, that our governmental constructive interest in housing is years and years behind England, Sweden and Germany.’<sup>289</sup> He also acknowledged that a *laissez-faire* approach had led to disastrous land speculation and substandard, unregulated developments. Some form of cooperation between local government and private enterprise would be needed in order to avoid a return to the ‘leftovers of wretched hovels, blighted districts and bankrupt cities.’<sup>290</sup> Comparing the need to develop public housing as a civilisational challenge, and a necessity for the preservation of supposedly fragile democracy, Kohn aligned himself and the fair planners with the progressive educators who in the previous decades had achieved notable advances for public education.<sup>291</sup> Free public

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<sup>288</sup> Wagner et al., “A Round Table,” 11.

<sup>289</sup> Kohn, “Government Intervention in Housing,” 1.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*, 2-3.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, 15.



education was, in his estimation, bequeathed to the nation in order that future citizens be aware and capable of voting in an intelligible way, otherwise he insisted, universal suffrage would be more of threat to democracy than a blessing. So too he viewed the importance of new housing to the extent that he proclaimed the realisation of the very idea of democracy would be impossible without it, and the citizenry would be incapable of making any meaningful contribution to society.<sup>292</sup> The solution to poor public housing, portrayed as he believed it to be, as the greatest failure of democracy, was not to remove government input altogether, or rely solely and undesirably on charity but to turn to, as he put it, ‘a democracy never yet worked out anywhere.’<sup>293</sup> In his speech he described his ideal projection of what a government and business partnership would look like. In his conception, government would act as a planning agency, marshalling the resources and coordinating the efforts necessary for private business to flourish. The crucial element that he stressed however, was that ‘our housing must be locally promoted, built and managed.’<sup>294</sup> This he claimed would not be an unwanted intervention of government beyond what he described as the ‘objectionable role of policeman and tax collector’ but a symbiotic relationship.<sup>295</sup> Most importantly however, he stressed that the role of the citizen in this relationship was to support government by decentralising federal power so that it could be exercised at the local level. In doing so, he remarked, this decentralising of government interest in housing would be a preventative measure, arresting a ‘dangerous expansion of democratic governmental powers.’<sup>296</sup> The dynamic that had shaped the fair, the tension between private enterprise and federal power, mediated by the aspirations of progressive planners, is fully revealed through the Kohn’s views on localised delegation of housing and limitation of government as a preventative of social crisis. The fair then was not

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>294</sup> Kohn, “Summary of Points,” 2.

<sup>295</sup> Kohn, “Government Intervention in Housing,” 17.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, 17.

only an exercise in promoting new commodities, or a celebration of industry alone, but a demand for the restructuring of social relations between the citizen, the government, and industry. This was the politics at the heart of the project that would become *The City*, the incentive for the producers of an educational film, made in the style of New Deal documentaries, given centre stage at the Science and Education pavilion at the single largest mass cultural event of the decade. If the fair was the classroom, the necessary expansion of free enterprise, and limitation of government intervention to preserve democracy would be one of its key lessons.

### **1.5.6 Coming Soon to a Classroom Near You**

Briefly to recap, at the 1939 New York World's Fair, an exhibition space dedicated to science and education used motion pictures to educate the public. The most prominent film during the two seasons of its screenings, which was subsequently integrated into national educational audio-visual libraries, was a film designed by architects and town planners, using money from the coffers of a former industrialist's charitable trust to promote the future of residential living. It was premised on a utopian promise of rationally planned, efficient living, but with the implicit message that this form of living could only be fulfilled by the reduction of government involvement in social housing and removal of limitations on private enterprise. The fair planners promoted themselves as a civic-minded collective, setting themselves in opposition to the industrial corporations that dominated the NYWF. They were, however, just as determined to sell the public on an imagined future of better American living that would be determined by a withering of the federal government's influence in social affairs and community development.

Showmen, industrialists, city planners, architects, university professors, advertisers, progressive teachers, citizens advice groups, and confidants of the U.S president; the sphere of

influence in the educational presentation was vast. Their designs were merged and hybridised with the spectacles of the fair and were witnessed not just by over forty million attendees at the fair in Flushing Meadows, but by scores of school children who would continue to be shown the messaging of the fair for years to come in classrooms across the country. Corporations had been using the classroom to promote pro-business ideology throughout the 1930s but by the end of the decade something had changed. The days of the subtle sponsor were over. Industry, with renewed confidence, was now asserting itself with vigour. Science was theirs to command, economics theirs to dictate and their drive towards shaping the classroom in service to the needs of industry would accelerate exponentially. Through the adoption of motion pictures and the appropriation of science they had begun to change the nature of education itself, its purpose was now a matter of civilizational rescue and industry had positioned itself, not the government as its saviour.

Not everyone was convinced by this claim. Even Walter Lippmann, who remained an outspoken public critic of FDR and his New Deal, was sceptical of the industrial exhibitors' self confidence in their future projections, claiming that they were promising something that only the government could deliver. Upon seeing the Futurama exhibition, he wrote that 'General Motors has spent a small fortune to convince the American public that if it wishes to enjoy the full benefit of private enterprise it will have to rebuild its cities and its highways by public enterprise.'<sup>297</sup> Even if the NYWFC had asked for and received federal support for the fair, its backers were determined to promote it as a triumph of the business community. Motion pictures had made the dominance of corporate power legible to the public on an enormous scale, reinforcing industry's narrative of the fusion of political and economic freedoms. In a

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<sup>297</sup> Lippmann, "The Press," 51; For more on Lippmann's New Deal opinions see Philip Bright, *The Speaking of Walter Lippmann as a Critic of the New Deal 1932-1941*. (1968)

dual capacity these forms of useful media would simultaneously target the public through theatrical and non-theatrical circuits, the most important of which were the schools. An essential part of their development and distribution strategy had been to incorporate them into educational film libraries. The films condensed the experience and the ideology of the fair into reusable forms, extending their message both geographically and temporally. As such education had become an established organelle of industrial public relations, in service to its ambition by redefining consumerism as a social practice of democracy.

Likely in response to the now unignorable escalation of conflict in Europe, in the run up to its second season the fair executives made major changes to try and boost fair attendance. The enormous financial successes of the Century of Progress were not to be repeated in New York. Whalen's anticipated billions of dollars failed to materialise and faced with a rapidly declining return on their investment the fair corporation were keen to recoup as much money as possible. Demonstrating just how shallow the supposedly embedded techno-utopian idealism of this fair was, the fair planners abandoned their long-standing theme. When the fair had opened Whalen had announced: 'The theme which inspires the Fair projects the spirit of this event into the future. It is a theme of building the World of Tomorrow - a world which can only be built by the interdependent co-operation of men and of nations.'<sup>298</sup> By the second season 'building the World of Tomorrow,' had been changed to the strikingly militant: 'American democracy must go forward.'<sup>299</sup> The optimism of the World of Tomorrow crumbled in the face of economic and political realities.

If, as Robert Fishman has suggested, 'every civilisation gets the monuments it deserves,' what then would be the legacy of the World of Tomorrow?<sup>300</sup> The most iconic elements of the fair, the Trylon and Perisphere were, by most accounts, scrapped for their metal

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<sup>298</sup> Whalen in Seldes, *Your World of Tomorrow*, 4.

<sup>299</sup> Burdick "Teaching the New York World's Fair," 1.

<sup>300</sup> Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 3.

to be used in the war effort shortly after the fair closed its gates to the public. The optimism of a progressive future designed by the some of the most gifted architects reconstituted as the necessary raw material for America's emergent war machine.<sup>301</sup> Of the post-war suburbs that would flourish in the shadow of the garden city movement's unrealised potential, Mumford would lament:

The suburb served as an asylum for the preservation of illusion. Here domesticity could flourish, forgetful of the exploitation on which so much of it was based. Here individuality could prosper oblivious of the pervasive regimentation beyond. This was not merely a child-centred environment; it was based on a childish view of the world.<sup>302</sup>

For all the utopian aspiration, forces beyond the control of the fair planner's beset the U.S. as a once imagined future of rational order gave way to the chaotic realities of global mechanised warfare. The fair presented new technologies and products, but it was its showcasing of new ideas for living, forecasting new social formations and their enabling technologies and infrastructures: the highway, prefabricated housing, time-saving consumer goods, and the television, for which its legacy is best remembered. However, as this chapter has argued, the greatest prediction of the fair was the demonstration of how education would become standardised, mediatised, and utilised by networks of corporate, industrial, and educational elites in the years to come. Downey has suggested that: 'Information and communication technologies ... by their very nature exist to transcend history and geography, storing ideas across time, and moving ideas across space in an organised and productive manner.'<sup>303</sup> The reusability and extended 'shelf life' of motion pictures, especially those produced with multiple audiences and secondary circuits of distribution in mind uniquely suited them for the task of storing, repeating, and enculturating information at scale. After the fairgrounds had been shuttered, the legacy of the World of Tomorrow, and its implicit social and economic ideologies

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<sup>301</sup> Yost, "World's Fair as Overture to World War," 1; Gosnell, "A Fair to Remember."

<sup>302</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 494.

<sup>303</sup> Downey, "Making Media Work," 147.

would persist in classrooms around the country. The fair had helped make education a platform, for the debut of products, a billboard for industry to assert its self-importance, and a conduit for political and economic interests to outline their own visions of the future of the country.

The next chapter will explore a further evolution of the use of educational film. The war necessitated the rapid training of vast numbers of young men for the operation of weapons, and for civilians at home be kept up-to-date with the latest developments. With time in short supply and funding in abundance, film was adopted as an essential component of the United States military. Nearly every division of the military developed its own film service, and many private producers lent their production capacities to the war effort to produce both informational films for the home front and training films for the troops. The same aesthetics, rhetorical style, and production values that had been refined for sales training at the local Chevy dealership would now be used to teach men how to become efficient killers. Films were produced by a variety of government agencies to assist in the war effort, and educational film underwent a hybridisation with propaganda to be used both domestically and abroad to extend the cultural influence of the United States and securitise its hemispheric interests.

## **Chapter 2: Educational Films at War**

### **2.1.1 Good Films for Good Neighbours**

Perhaps the most effective medium of education, instruction, and morale building is the motion picture. In order that our program may be expanded and particularly that the present program may remain in operation, it is absolutely necessary that certain spare parts and replaceable items be made available. Without the spare parts called for, the motion picture program, which has as its objective the furthering of the war effort of the Latin Americans, would be stopped. The Latin American nations are now considering sending troops into the active theatres of operation; and it is imperative that the troops see war instructional films. It is also important that the populace view educational and instructive films on such matters as civilian defense, health and sanitation, and the morale “builder” showing the fast growing power of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The previous chapter demonstrated that motion pictures were used at the New York World’s Fair to service the aspirations of liberal progressive educators and industrial manufacturers who used them to imagine the trajectory of American scientific and educational advancement. At the same time, they were shown to embody the pro-business ideals of the elite institutions and wealthy sponsors that underwrote the fair’s construction. On a global stage, the spectacle of American economic ascendancy was communicated to fair goers and foreign visitors primarily through the medium of educational and sponsored non-theatrical motion pictures.

This chapter focuses on developments in the application, distribution, and institutional preference for educational films as their utility for the transmission of cultural values and national image building became fully mobilised by the United States government. During the build-up to America’s entry into the Second World War, a cohort of President Roosevelt’s New Deal appointees would turn to motion pictures to service the objectives of several interlinked departments, steadily laying the intelligence and propaganda architecture that would be necessary to further the security interests of the United States.<sup>2</sup> This chapter draws its

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<sup>1</sup> Rowe, Memo to Thomas McGregor, 1.

<sup>2</sup> The use of motion pictures for wartime propaganda was hardly novel. The American Mutoscope & Biograph Company, and Edison Manufacturing Company for example, produced a series of propaganda films during the Spanish American War between 1898 and 1901, featuring US navy ships and Theodore Roosevelt’s troop of Rough Riders. It produced a cinematic rendering of the conflict that Charles Musser has described as ‘visual newspapers’ that ‘evoked powerful patriotic sentiments in their audiences, revealing the new medium’s ideological

arguments from an analysis of the administrative records of these departments and the films they produced to achieve their operational mandates. As this chapter will demonstrate, educational films were utilised as a key component in the power projection and civil defence programs of the United States, becoming fully integrated into its offensive territorial securitisation and essential to its intelligence and propaganda strategies.<sup>3</sup> They also became critical as a method of narrativizing the war to domestic and foreign audiences, and in developing international relations, which is to say, securitising American capital interests abroad.

Educational motion pictures were used by a panoply of government agencies including the State Department (DoS), the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), and the Office of War Information (OWI). In the first section of this chapter, I draw attention to the use of educational films in Latin America where, following the formation of the OCIAA, they were used as part of a vast multimedia propaganda campaign to assist U.S. foreign policy objectives in securing territory and raw materials from South America. Films were used to promote an idea of unity through cultural exchange in order to draw the Latin Republics closer to the American cause. They promoted the idea of a continent spanning community of Pan-America solidarity, one that would, however, principally serve the hemispheric security interests of the United States. This section highlights the ligatures between state and corporate

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and propagandistic force.’ (Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 225) Grieverson has linked their use as a ‘display of state power’ to the ‘fusion of economic, state, and geopolitical logics powering the intensification of capitalist imperialism. (Grieverson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 51). Similarly, Amy Kaplan identifies these films in tandem with the sensationalist ‘yellow journalism’ of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, the American press barons whose sometimes fabricated reportage attempted to tilt public opinion in favour of war with Spain. (Kaplan, “The Birth of an Empire,” 1068)

<sup>3</sup> The term propaganda was often used at the time by those in the public relations industry as a neutral term in comparison to the negative association of psychological manipulation that the experience of war had associated with the term. A semantic drift had, for the most part, already occurred by this point in time and the common usage of the term (which is employed liberally in the communication of the OCIAA, OWI, and State Department) was closer to a contemporary understanding and less as a synonym for something like advertising or public relations.



entities that worked in tandem to position the classroom at home and aboard as a staging ground to extend the cultural influence of the United States.

From here the chapter examines the use of educational film on the domestic front. At home, the OCIAA extended their Latin American campaign by producing and circulating films through U.S. schools and laid plans for the future consolidation of the educational film industry. At the same time the Office of War Information began an initiative to create a central directory of sponsored and educational films. As this section will examine, many of these films, with their intrinsic ideological messaging were recycled for use in the creation of a national civil defence and propaganda network.

The last section will look at the joint efforts of the OWI and OCIAA to produce films depicting life in America for use in liberated Europe. These organisations believed in the efficacy of motion pictures for transmitting the cultural values of the United States abroad and as the war was drawing to a close, a new impetus to promote American liberal values in the post-war world directed their filmic output. However, as the later portion of this chapter will explore, the degree to which these efforts may have been counterproductive to the globalising aims of U.S. influence remained to be seen.

It is clear from the investment of multiple government organisations that the numerous departments that were producing films during the Second World War believed in their efficacy, as did vocal congressional opponents of using propaganda films who were wary of a return to the days of the Creel Commission under President Wilson's administration.<sup>4</sup> The sheer volume

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<sup>4</sup> The Committee on Public Information, also known as the Creel Committee after its Chairman George Creel, had been established by Woodrow Wilson to influence the American public into support for America's entry into the First World War. Regarded as the 'first modern mass propaganda machine,' the CPI waged a relentless media campaign to encourage support for an end to American isolationism. As Chris Hedges points out, its stated goal 'was not as Creel confessed to simply impart pro-war messages, but to discredit those who attempted to challenge the nation's involvement in the conflict,' with Creel 'setting out to demolish decentralized and diverse systems of information.' (Hedges, *The Death of the Liberal Class*, 69) In later life Creel would become a hard-line anti-communist and provided financial support to Senator Joseph McCarthy and confidential advice to Richard Nixon in the 1940s during the second Red Scare. (Annunziata, "The Progressive as Conservative," 229) It is notable that the same figure who had false accusations of unpatriotic behaviours published in the national newspapers during

of films produced by the US government or commissioned by them during the war is difficult to quantify and certainly too broad a swathe of media to explore in their entirety in the limited space of this of this chapter. As an example, one familiar company, the Jam Handy Organisation is estimated to have produced somewhere in the region of two thousand training films alone for the U.S. Navy.<sup>5</sup> According to Arthur Mayer, by 1944 more than forty-nine different government agencies were involved in producing motion pictures with no overall coordination, and with considerable overlap in subject matter, leading for example to seven different departments creating instructional films on swimming.<sup>6</sup> One thing this volume demonstrates is that wartime expediency, and the need for efficient, mass-produced instruction capable of being legible to many who may have been functional illiterates, made motion pictures the preferred medium for rapid and universal training. Whether it be instructional, propagandistic, or entertainment (and as this chapter explores, these categories were often overlapping), motion pictures were deployed in multiple contexts across the Western hemisphere to service the security objectives of cultural missions and intelligence agencies.

What follows is an exploration of the means by which educational films were instrumentalised in American geopolitics. As a consequence, this chapter argues that under the auspices of wartime necessity, cross agency adoption of educational film encouraged a legitimisation of the affective power of propaganda to achieve the ideological goals demanded by existing national defence policies. Revealed through the planning and production contexts of these films, the exploitable attractiveness the ‘American way of life’ as a saleable product was used to extend its cultural sphere of influence and facilitate the globalising trajectory of American power.

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in the lead up to the First World would go on to be instrumental in McCarthy’s libellous, paranoid, and sometimes fatal anti-communist and homophobic witch hunts in later decades.

<sup>5</sup> Oakes, *Building Films for Business*, 100.

<sup>6</sup> Mayer, “Fact into Film,” 211.

### 2.1.2 The State Department and the Division of Cultural Relations

Dr. Zook describes the motion picture as “potentially ... the most revolutionary instrument introduced in education in our day. Out of it there can arise a new and tremendously effective curriculum,” and perhaps he might have added, in it may be found just as effective a means to promote mutual understanding among peoples.<sup>7</sup>

Cinema became integral to the foreign political and military ambitions of the United States in the lead up to its entry in the European and Pacific theatres of war. At home it was used to quash isolationist sentiment, bolster relations with neighbouring countries, and rapidly train its troops in the technical necessities of a vast array of new military equipment. At the same time, a growing body of non-theatrical film became indispensable to the networks of civil defence organisations who turned to educational film to both instruct and reassure the domestic civilian population in wartime. As this chapter will explore, the ethical questions that had long centred on debates about the affective potential of cinema were swept aside as the military and the government used motion pictures to shape the thoughts and behaviours of its civilians, troops, allies, and enemies.<sup>8</sup> Wartime necessity would, in many cases, override criticism of the widespread use of films to achieve propaganda objectives.

As the conflict in Europe began to intensify, and as that conflict began to spill over into the wider world through trade and mass-media, several departments of the United States Government began to monitor and eventually influence the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures throughout Latin America. This was done as part of efforts to counteract the growth of Axis influence in the region. These initiatives adhered to its long-standing regional policy of resisting the influence of European powers in the New World, the so-called Monroe Doctrine. This policy of hemispheric securitisation opposed the European powers from attempting to establish a colonial influence over the Americas, and as stated,

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<sup>7</sup> Zook, in DoS, Memo to Division of Cultural Relations, 1.

<sup>8</sup> See Grieverson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, chapter ten for debates about the affective potential of cinema.

considered ‘any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.’<sup>9</sup> As part of these efforts, the Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long appointed a Special Committee on Motion Pictures in 1940 to review the State Department’s policies and practices on sending American made educational films abroad. In part this was in response to a ‘keen’ demand from foreign states and cultural institutions seeking American government-made educational films for use in grade schools and high schools.<sup>10</sup> As this section will reveal, these activities were also in keeping with the Monroe Doctrine’s policy of securing U.S. influence in the region.

Despite concerns that available films were unsuitable for display aboard, Long had suggested that the State Department’s Division of Cultural Relation needed to ‘look outside of government for films to diversify its “library,” to ask for the loan of industrial and institutional films.’<sup>11</sup> One of the central criticisms in Long’s report was that the department lacked any specific culture films on the ‘American scene.’<sup>12</sup> The Bureau of Mines, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Department of Agriculture were recognised as being among the largest producers of government films, but the nature of their output was viewed as either highly technical and related to the processes and equipment, or as being ‘propagandistic’ with a tendency to ‘plead the causes of the producing agencies.’<sup>13</sup> Long’s committees arrived at the decision that in lieu of a government produced body of cultural films, they should assess what was already available. Their recommendation was to look to the work of colleges, museums, corporations, and various institutes that were ‘of a character such as might profitably be circulated abroad.’<sup>14</sup> Named specifically in this list of producers intended as a stand-in for government-produced culture films were Du Pont De Nemours, American Telephone and

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<sup>9</sup> Monroe, “The Monroe Doctrine,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> Wright, Letter to Mr. Thomson, 1-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Special Committee on Motion Pictures, “Informative Educational Motion Pictures,” 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Special Committee on Motion Pictures, “Report of the Special Committee,” 1-2.

Telegraph Company, General Motors, the American Iron and Steel Institute, the National Association of Manufacturers, and ERPI Classroom films, alongside a list of unspecified educational institutes. The impetus for this decision, Long claimed, came from: ‘Recognizing in informative educational motion pictures an effective means to widen that mutual acquaintance among peoples upon which commercial and political relationships largely rest.’<sup>15</sup> The same educational films that at home were used to advertise and propagate the hegemonic power of big industry became useful in developing economic and political cooperation aboard. They would sell America and American industry to their hemispheric neighbours, as well as their European allies and their colonial holdings. In effect, Long’s proposals would enable unprecedented global distribution for the sponsored films of America’s largest industrial manufacturers presented under the umbrella of cultural outreach, mutual international development, and education. Using its embassies and consulates as distribution hubs to supply colleges, schools, and special interest groups, the Department of State would serve as a free distribution network for industrial propaganda, with funding for the purchase and distribution of the films, maintenance of equipment, and training of necessary personnel provided by the taxpayer. One of the first issues the DoS would need to resolve was that their cultural mission had a distinct lack of cultural films to distribute. In their own assessment they concluded that:

None of the pictures made in this government are primarily cultural; that is, none were planned to present the “American scene” for its own sake, without ulterior intention to teach, to preach, to advertise or to propagandize. This is because none of the producing agencies are concerned to present upon the screen the life, customs and ideals of this country for their own sake.<sup>16</sup>

Despite an abundance of films nothing suitable for the work of subtly extending American cultural prestige and influence was available. As such, the DoS recommended that they should take it upon themselves to present the ‘American scene’ abroad, working through their Division

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Special Committee on Motion Pictures, “Informative Educational Motion Pictures,” 6.

of Cultural Relations. Initially this would mean using available motion pictures, which they were fully aware meant using films ‘for a purpose for which they were not intended’ until such time as it would be possible to secure funding to produce their own.<sup>17</sup> Long’s committee members reviewed a selection of films, each giving notes on the film’s suitability. When reviewing *The City* (1939) for example, it was suggested that the film be shortened before being translated into Spanish and Portuguese, and that the majority of scenes of slum dwelling Americans be edited out to prevent sending a bad impression of Americans living conditions.<sup>18</sup> The committee developed a cautious and measured approach, acting through indirect channels to distribute openly propagandistic films, often learning as they went what would work and what would backfire, a process which illustrated the problem of leaving the cultural dissemination of American life to the sponsored producers and commercial interests of Hollywood.

One notable example of this issue emerged from Long’s office. In March of 1940 the State Department convened a conference to align policy on motion picture distribution in foreign countries. Long called the conference to look into developing strategies around two key issues. The first was to consult with other government agencies and offices, especially those already involved with or in proximity to the production of motion pictures to see if it would be practical to produce and distribute cultural films abroad through official government channels. This would assess how cooperative industry and private producers of educational and cultural films might be to working with government. These films would be used specifically to portray the cultural scene and institutions of the United States in a favourable light in order to help foster better relations. His second, and much further reaching ambition was to delicately ascertain ‘how far the Department might appropriately go and what procedure would be

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Special Committee on Motion Pictures, Reviews of Screened Films, 3.

suitable to induce the American motion picture industry to adopt a practical but not burdensome system of voluntary self-censorship.’<sup>19</sup> These actions were designed to avoid giving what Long described as a ‘distorted’ view of America or its institutions abroad. Long’s concern about the potential for motion pictures generating an unfavourable impression of the U.S. related specifically to a screening of Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) to an audience in Paris for members of the Foreign Office. According to Long, a few days after the screening, when Senator Pittman made a speech to Congress concerning U.S. policy of neutrality, the French government linked the senator’s actions back to the screening of the film. Long consulted with Will Hays at the MPPDA on the issue and set up two action committees to investigate the department’s use of motion pictures, one to study the department’s progress in the field of motion picture development, and the other ‘to consider what could be done to discourage the showing abroad of films of the type of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.’<sup>20</sup>

Capra’s ode to the moral decency and capability of the common American to effectively speak truth to power would continue to prove a thorn in the side of America’s overseas ambitions. During the post-war occupation of Japan for example, the Civil Information and Education Division of the Supreme Allied Command moved to have the film suppressed on the grounds that it negatively portrayed the liberal democratic system of government that the allies were trying to install and cause the Japanese people to ‘doubt seriously the advantages of adopting it as their own government.’<sup>21</sup> Particular objection was made that the film represented American style democracy as: ‘A system of corrupt political machinery, financial graft, dictatorial control of all the newspapers of a state to distort news, and the manipulation of governmental offices extending through governor to a U.S. Senator who is supposedly (the

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<sup>19</sup> Special Committee on Motion Pictures, Conference Called by Long, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Long, Motion Picture Questions, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Press Pictorial Broadcast Division, “Recommended Suppression,” 1.

probable) next president.’<sup>22</sup> Hollywood’s take on civic responsibility problematised exporting media without due consideration for the contexts of its reception.

The incident in Paris highlighted a problem facing the State Department, and other departments who were using cinema as a tool for the work of international relations. Relying on extra governmental sources, particularly the socially liberal bastion of American entertainment in Hollywood could prove counterproductive to the government’s security objectives. The lack of bespoke culture films documenting the American scene left a vacancy that could only be filled with existing productions: feature films, whose primary consideration was box office receipts, and sponsored non-theatrical films whose primary considerations were extolling the virtues of industry and their commodities. The committees’ findings and policy suggestions would be foundational for the U.S. government’s political and eventually military utilisation of motion pictures abroad. They outlined the mission of the DoS as a combination of several interagency intelligence activities:

New projects constituting an extension of policy under consideration which are intended to attain the department's long-range objectives in the field of cultural relation whilst, in the present emergency achieving also the coordinator’s short-range purpose to strengthen national and hemispherical defense through a wider use of motion pictures abroad.<sup>23</sup>

The DoS were subsequently able to achieve a much greater degree of success with theatrical, educational, and non-theatrical motion pictures, enabling them to ‘move forward, more rapidly than might otherwise have been possible,’ through the creation of a new agency with specific cultural and propagandistic objectives.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Shaw, “Motion Pictures,” 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 1.



### 2.1.3 The Rockefeller Connection

To facilitate its cultural and hemispheric defence objectives, The Office of the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics (OCCCRBAR) was established by the Council of National Defence (CND) on 16 August 1940. Its explicit mandate was to counter the growing successful influence of the Axis powers, particularly Nazi Germany, in Latin America. Realising that ‘the creation of disunity in the Western Hemisphere would greatly increase its chances for success in case of war,’ the Nazis had begun several propaganda campaigns designed to ‘arouse antagonism against the United States’ among the considerable population of German descendants in Latin America.<sup>25</sup> Counteracting this disunity, protecting America’s economic interests, and preventing the opening of a Nazi aligned front on America’s Southern border became their priority.

To achieve these goals, Roosevelt appointed Nelson A. Rockefeller, an ‘ambitious political operator and bureaucratic empire builder,’ as Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) to head the new department, establishing what was to be renamed as the Office of the Coordination of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) by Executive Order 8840 on 30 July 1941.<sup>26</sup> Rockefeller’s close links with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Rockefeller Foundation, who had been making forays into the educational film market since the mid 1930s, ideally placed him in a position to capitalise on the prestige and experience of established cultural institutions.<sup>27</sup> The Rockefeller Foundation, as Victoria Cain points out, endorsed the nineteenth century liberal philosophies and ‘pragmatic embrace of capitalist realities’ held by

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<sup>25</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 29; The OCIAA was also known as the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA). Rockefeller himself was often referred to in many documents as the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA). Following the end of the war, Rockefeller’s departure, and the absorption of many of its functions into the State Department in 1945, the OCIAA was officially referred to as the OIAA. For the remainder of this chapter, I refer to it as OCIAA, though some historical references use the shorter acronym.

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed examination of the history of the Museum of Modern Art see Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*, (2005).

its father and son founders, and was guided by a conviction that education, at least a certain type of education, was essential to a functioning democracy.<sup>28</sup>

The OCIAA, using its unique political, financial, and institutional connections, wielded enormous power through which it leveraged a lopsided cultural exchange with the OAR. Its activities clearly demonstrate a strategic deployment of entertainment and education as cultural signifiers of dominance, ones which were not just undertaken in order to create favourable impressions of the United States in the OAR, but, more broadly to extend the cultural influence, industrial strength, and ideological territory of its political and economic leaders. In its own assessment of the department's mission, the OICAA stated that:

Mr. Rockefeller based his objectives in the field of cultural relations on the importance to national defense of the consolidation of peoples of the Western Hemisphere in a free bicontinental community. These involved the clearing away of misapprehensions on the part of those who overemphasized elements in cultural differences rather than the possibility of promoting mutual understanding and sympathy.<sup>29</sup>

The OCIAA publicly emphasised cultural exchange, international understanding, and a repeated discourse of neighbourly cooperation consistent with existing Good Neighbour policies. Their programs spanned radio, film, print and the visual arts, as well as educational exchanges.<sup>30</sup> Cramer and Prutsch, whose methodical exploration of the organisation's surviving records are an excellent resource for researchers, group the OCIAA's various programs and activities into seven broad categories: 'Economic warfare, economic cooperation, transportation, health and sanitation, food supply, information and propaganda, and cultural and educational activities.'<sup>31</sup> All of these functions were directed through

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<sup>28</sup> Cain, "An Indirect Influence on Industry," 231.

<sup>29</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 166.

<sup>30</sup> The Office's many divisions, shifting operational mandates, and collaboration with other agencies covered an enormous range of activity. Its radio or newspaper divisions for example could equally be the focus of entire research projects which this thesis does not have the scope to cover. The focus here will relate specifically to the overlapping educational and non-theatrical motion picture projects.

<sup>31</sup> Cramer & Prutsch, "Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office," 791.

Rockefeller's team of assistant coordinators, a revolving door of close associates and industry figures.

The OCIAA's records note that 'the larger part of the associates Mr. Rockefeller drew about him to carry out his program were men with whom he had had close personal or business contact. Some were Dartmouth College graduates, such as Carl B. Spaeth, First Assistant Coordinator, John S. Dickey, John M. Clark, William Brister, and Sylvester Weaver.'<sup>32</sup> Outside of his close circle of associates Rockefeller made shrewd appointments of experienced members of the film industry, publishing houses, and business world for his team. Kenneth McGowan for example, who had been a producer at Twentieth Century Fox was made executive in charge of film production and distribution. Henry Luce, Chairman of Time inc., and William Benton, the President of the University of Chicago worked in various roles in the Cultural Relations Division.<sup>33</sup> John Hay Whitney, initially appointed head of the Motion Picture Division, was at the time of his appointment the Vice President of MoMA, and president of its film library.<sup>34</sup> Rockefeller himself had resigned as Director of MoMA and its various enterprises to commit himself to work with the department, however he remained President throughout his tenure with the OCIAA. This considerable influence and power concretised around the person of Nelson Rockefeller, sitting as he did close to the centre of networks that connected oil wealth, military intelligence, the New Deal government, finance, elite cultural institutions, the State Department, the entertainment industries, and some of the nation's leading universities.

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<sup>32</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 148.

<sup>33</sup> Another indication of Rockefeller's preference for close associates to work in key positions is evident in the appointment of Wallace K. Harrison to become Director of the Cultural Relation Program. The famed architect who had worked alongside the Rockefeller family for years designed the UN building in New York as well as the Rockefeller Centre, the Trylon and Perisphere at the NYWF, and by special commission of Nelson himself, the Rockefeller apartments opposite the Museum of Modern Art.

<sup>34</sup> Prior to this, the wealthy film producer had worked in Hollywood as a financier using his prestigious family's considerable wealth to raise capital for *Gone With the Wind* (1936).

The OCIAA and State Department furthered the mission of inter-American relations alongside, and often in collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation, Guggenheim Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, and the Commonwealth Fund through student exchange programs.<sup>35</sup> Its educational programs acted as precursors to the student exchanges under President Harry Truman's Point Four Program, which in the 1950s would bring Latin American students to the US through grants from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations to study economics, particularly at the Rockefeller founded University of Chicago.<sup>36</sup> The cultural aspects of the OCIAA's mission emphasised cooperation and exchange to create greater understanding between nations. Medical student and business apprenticeship exchanges between universities were arranged, but by its own admission these medical and business educational exchanges were far exceeded by military training, in line with the OCIAA's security mission, which claimed that 'the largest exchange programs ever undertaken were of a military character.'<sup>37</sup> The narrative of America's pragmatic defensive war efforts can at times obscure a parallel history of burgeoning imperialism. Although many of the activities of the OCIAA were directed towards the specific threat of Axis influence, the resulting architecture of information networks, and economic controls is evidence of a wider trend towards securing a global position of dominance for the United States.

Examining how cultural exchange through the arts had been 'conceived as a service to strengthen the U.S. political position,' Andrea Matallana has argued that public exhibitions of Latin American art in the United States during World War II, facilitated by MoMA, serviced America's Good Neighbour policy as much they did the elevation of Latin American artists.<sup>38</sup> Matallana argues that the OCIAA, through its many cultural projects operated on the premise

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<sup>35</sup> CIAA Motion Picture Division, "Motion Pictures," 3.

<sup>36</sup> For an understanding of the consequences of such actions see Sebastian Edwards *The Chile Project: The Story of the Chicago Boys and the Downfall of Neoliberalism*. (2023); Naomi Klein *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. (2007)

<sup>37</sup> CIAA Motion Picture Division, "Motion Pictures," 7.

<sup>38</sup> Matallana, "Inventing Latin America," 30.

that no significant defensive operations through military or economic channels would be successful without a concerted cultural program. She asserts that these cultural missions, orchestrated by powerful and wealthy American institutes aided in establishing the machinery of ‘informal imperialism.’<sup>39</sup> Gregory Barton and Brett Bennett propose a definition of informal empire as a ‘willing and successful attempt by commercial and political elites to control a foreign region, resource, or people [including] the enforcement of extra-territorial privileges and the threat of economic and political sanctions, often coupled with the attempt to keep other would-be imperial powers at bay.’<sup>40</sup> The OCIAA regarded its program of educational film distribution as an essential component of Rockefeller’s ‘broad responsibility for acquainting the people of the other American Republics with educational and other cultural values of the peoples of the United States.’<sup>41</sup> However, in its non-theatrical program the OICAA was using educational film in a capacity to securitise and control its hemispheric neighbours. Its actions closely match Barton and Bennett’s definition of informal imperialism as the next section explores.

#### **2.1.4 Clearing a Path: The Proclaimed List**

Foreign trade can be and, in a world devoted to peace, is a force making for mutual prosperity, international cohesion and understanding. Like many another instrument of peace, it can also become a menacing weapon of war.<sup>42</sup>

In July of 1941 President Roosevelt issued a decree authorising a ‘proclaimed list’ of blocked nationals and exports, a global list of persons and businesses that were to be subjected to economic sanctions based on their alleged financial alignment with Axis governments. This executive order among other things gave ‘sweeping and highly questionable delegation of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>40</sup> Barton & Bennett, “Forestry as Foreign Policy,” 67.

<sup>41</sup> Non-Theatrical Division, “Project Analysis,” 2.

<sup>42</sup> Russell, “Some Economic Weapons in Total Warfare,” 1.

power' to the Secretary of the Treasury to be able to declare any person of the United States or other targeted countries as a foreign 'national' of the Axis powers and duly sanction, fine, or imprison them if found in violation of the new economic regulations.<sup>43</sup> This list eventually extended to fifteen thousand people and businesses in the OAR.<sup>44</sup> The United States would not declare itself for war for another five months, however it had, through emergency powers, made moves to clear a path of economic securitisation, especially in the OAR. As Warren Grimes has pointed out, legally they were not at war, but the United States effectively had a 'Monroe Doctrine on trade,' one which they could implement at any time, and which he noted was 'coated with the national colors.'<sup>45</sup> The economic sanctions would immeasurably benefit U.S. industries, who, under the umbrella of the later military occupation of Axis territory, and the restrictions placed on certain individuals and businesses, would gain access to the markets previously held by Axis aligned companies.<sup>46</sup> In May of 1944, almost a year before VE Day, Francis Russell, Chief of the Division of World Trade Intelligence gave an address to the gathered American Drug Manufacturers Association at Hot Springs Virginia. In a speech titled 'Some Economic Weapons in Total Warfare,' Russell discussed the broad economic opportunity that had arisen from the sanctions imposed on the Axis powers by FDR's 1941 Proclaimed List. He referred to the list as 'one of the principle weapons that was used by this government in the defence of the Western hemisphere.'<sup>47</sup> Russell made clear that the transition

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<sup>43</sup> Grimes, "Administrative Action," 351.

<sup>44</sup> It also included five neutral European countries (Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, and Liechtenstein), their colonial possessions in Africa and the Far East, and four Near Eastern countries, Morocco, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 410; This sort of economic strategy was nothing novel to US foreign policy, nor was the awareness of the consequences that they could have for Latin America. Former Secretary of State Robert Lansing understood as much when voicing his opinion to President Wilson in 1914 that: 'In its advocacy of the Monroe Doctrine the United States considers its own interests. The integrity of other American nations is an interest not an end.' (Lansing in Gabriel Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History*, 47)

<sup>46</sup> Noticeably absent from this list were any members of General Motors or Ford who, according to several reports, continued to profit from their overseas auto manufacturing in Germany despite government prohibitions. As *Washington Post* reporter Michael Dobbs has revealed: 'Documents show that the parent companies followed a conscious strategy of continuing to do business with the Nazi regime, rather than divest themselves of their German assets. Less than three weeks after the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, GM Chairman Alfred P. Sloan defended this strategy as sound business practice, given the fact that the company's German operations were "highly profitable."' (Dobbs, "Ford and GM Scrutinized," 1)

<sup>47</sup> Russell, "Some Economic Weapons," 1.

from wartime to peacetime controls would not be swift and a prolonged period of readjustment would be necessary before the effect of the Proclaimed List would be eased. Doing so allowed for a retention of business and government influence in the region.

It its scope, the list particularly targeted mass media operations to ensure that no pro-Axis propaganda could circulate in the OAR:

It has been the policy of the Proclaimed List authorities to strike wherever they found the Axis at work: chemicals, banks, at manufacturers and dealers in drugs, electrical goods, hardware firms. ... The list includes Axis-subsidized newspapers, radio stations, and motion picture houses. This government has scrupulously avoided infringing won freedom of expression in other countries but when newspapers and other media of expression cease to be free media of expression and become merely instruments of propaganda subsidized by the Axis Governments, listing action is taken in order to deprive them of newsprint and other equipment.<sup>48</sup>

The degree to which the protection of the freedom of expression was safeguarded however is questionable, with one channel of propaganda often being directly replaced with another. Likewise, the due process with which certain businesses and individuals were sanctioned was subject to little oversight. Warren Grimes, Chairman of the District Bar Association's Committee on International Law, and a vocal critic of the Proclaimed List, noted that those on the list had 'no advance notice, no indication of the charges, and no chance to explain or defend. ... The entire machinery in set-up and operation had the odor of a star-chamber.'<sup>49</sup> As a result, this provided a bureaucratic cover for personal and political motivation to effectively blacklist certain business and individuals in the OAR with as many as eight thousand 'improperly branded' in just a two-year period listed on an equal status as 'enemy alien.'<sup>50</sup> Once added to the list, names could not be removed without the unanimous consent of the Treasury, the Department of State, the Foreign Economic Administration, the Department of Justice, the Department of Commerce, and the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Nelson Rockefeller.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Grimes, "Administrative Action," 411.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 410-414.

Russell noted that the effects of the proclaimed list were in keeping with the security objectives of the OCIAA, with the added bonus that American businesses were able to plug the economic gaps created by the imposed sanctions:

Thus local firms that have been satisfactorily reorganized, subjected to intervention or other surveillance, or which have given satisfactory undertakings to this government or to the local government have been restored to participation in the local economy. In this way it has been possible to give full recognition both to our war objectives of combatting the Axis war machine in all of its manifestations and also to local economic needs. Where the results of listing have denied to a country the services of an essential firm this government has been active in taking steps to assure a meeting of local economic needs in so far as possible from United States or other available friendly sources. This system of consultation and reciprocal collaboration has been an outstanding example of inter-American cooperation.<sup>51</sup>

Inter-American cooperation in this case aided the security needs of the government by clearing a path both in industry and in the mass media for the OCIAA's operations. Newspapers, motion picture theatres, radio stations, and publishers were turned over to allied businesses. Heavy industry and war manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and transport greatly benefitted not just friendly Latin American companies but North American businesses as well, as Russell noted:

This success has been due to a cooperative effort which has received the participation not only of the various interested departments of this government and of American business but of the British Government and our other Allies, the governments of virtually all of the other American republics and of pro-democratic businessmen.<sup>52</sup>

Preventing the Axis powers from establishing a beachhead in Latin America necessarily involved America establishing one of its own. Through economic sanctions, partnering with friendly business and taking control of multiple press organisations, the OICAA were better positioned to carry out their propaganda campaigns.

### **2.2.1 The Motion Picture Division**

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<sup>51</sup> Russell, "Some Economic Weapons," 8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 9.



The OCIAA's mass media strategies were, at least in their stated intent, used to improve cultural relations between the Americas as part of efforts by the Roosevelt administration to secure the hemisphere from Axis influence. Motion pictures would play a significant role in these efforts and were considered one of the most effective way to 'introduce our Southern neighbors to us in the right way.'<sup>53</sup> In its short existence the OCIAA managed to fund the production of over seven hundred 16mm non-theatrical films, seventy-seven of which were intended for U.S. audience only.<sup>54</sup> Films designed to educate populations on the cultural, industrial, and economic landscape of the United States also taught the means by which these territories were made secure. As the war escalated, a noticeable shift in the rhetoric of the office deemphasised the mission as stated by FDR's executive order 8840 of 'furthering the spirit of cooperation between the Americas in the interest of hemisphere defense.'<sup>55</sup> In its place, an increased discourse of 'economic warfare and psychological warfare' came to define the operation of the Communications Division (Later the Information Division), encompassing motion pictures, press, and radio.<sup>56</sup> Countering the formidably well-developed Axis propaganda machine necessitated a thorough understanding of its workings. To this end, the Division of Propaganda Analysis headed by Leonard Doob, was created to provide the Office with detailed breakdowns of Nazi propaganda technique, such that they might develop their own, more efficient methods.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "News and Notes," 441.

<sup>54</sup> Bender, "Film as an Instrument of the Good Neighbor Policy," 91.

<sup>55</sup> Roosevelt, "Executive order 8840," 1.

<sup>56</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 154.

<sup>57</sup> Leonard Doob was a professor of psychology at Yale and also worked in the Office of War Information during this time analysing German news propaganda. Nathaniel Brennan has detailed the archiving and analysis work of Axis propaganda taken on by MoMA at the request of Rockefeller. (Brennan, "The Cinema Intelligence Apparatus," 137-56) Wasson has identified similar efforts at MoMA's Film Library whereby grants were issued for the study of Weimar and Nazi cinema, from which Siegfried Kracauer's landmark study *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947), resulted. (Wasson, *Museum Movies*, 263) For more detail on these efforts see chapter five of *Museum Movies*.

The Motion Picture Division (MPD) of the OCIAA was established during the first days of the OCCCRBAR in August of 1940. Its mandate was to produce a 'program of 16mm non-theatrical films for distribution in the OAR and U.S.'<sup>58</sup> With the expansion of the operational scope of the OCIAA, the MPD's activities rapidly diversified to encompass theatrical, newsreel, and non-theatrical production and distribution in order to achieve the OCIAA's foreign and domestic security objectives. The MPD was split between Washington D.C. and New York, with the D.C. office handling the policy, planning and inter-agency management. The New York branch was divided between three main divisions. The Production and Adaptation Division handled the selection, editing, and language translations of government and privately produced films, and oversaw their distribution through the Other American Republics. The Newsreel Section concerned itself in an editorial capacity, ensuring that content on inter-American activities and the U.S. war effort made its way into weekly newsreels of the major newsreel producers both North and South of the boarder. The Distribution Section oversaw the handling and distribution of 16mm film through the OAR, and was responsible for equipment, training, and direction of the coordinating committees across the network of embassies and consulates. This involved the creation of corporations to facilitate their media activities, as well as close partnerships with private production companies, cultural institutions, and university film libraries. Foremost of these corporations was the creation of the Motion Picture Society of the Americas (MPSA), a non-profit corporation through which the OCIAA could represent itself in the film industry and promote its programs.<sup>59</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, acted as a focal point for many of the MPD's functions, serving as an office for many of its staff. At the suggestion of Kenneth Macgowan, it was proposed that that MoMA's film library be used as clearing house for the OCIAA's film resources, leading eventually to its

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<sup>58</sup> Rogan, Letter to Arch Mercey, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 242.

adoption as a distribution hub for between two and three hundred domestic films.<sup>60</sup> As of July of 1941, MoMA were also beginning to handle the distribution of educational and documentary films to the Latin republics directly.<sup>61</sup>

Cooperation between the Office of the Coordinator and the State Department allowed much more rapid escalation of existing programs involving informational and educational films. Within the first six months of operation, Rockefeller's then named OCCCRBAR managed to transfer one hundred and seventy-eight reels of film to diplomatic mission and consular offices for the purpose of loaning them to educational, civic, and social organisations.<sup>62</sup> Of these, thirty-eight were secured through cooperation with industrial sponsors and scientific organisations, a mixture of medical and dental films intended for the universities, whilst the remainder 'served the purpose of acquainting the peoples of other countries with phases of American industry.'<sup>63</sup> The initial operation selected from existing educational and documentary films which were then edited and soundtracked in Spanish and Portuguese. The project then provided equipment and training with 16mm sound projectors for thirty consulates and embassies throughout the OAR.

The department outlined its brief as a mission to secure alliances through cultural exchange and a broadening of U.S. understanding of South and Central America. However, Richard Rogan the Assistant Director of the MPD, framed the idea of unity in openly self-aggrandising terms, acting as a combination of shepherd, censor, and policeman:

As a result of the motion picture program of this office, the film industry in this country is showing increasing awareness of its obligation to the ideal of inter-American unity: (a) by producing more pictures based on South and Central American themes and showing the increasing ability of the United States to maintain the doctrine of freedom for the Americas and (b) refraining from producing pictures irritating to the sensibilities of the peoples of these countries.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Macgowan, Letter to Spaeth, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Rockefeller, Memo to Mr. Harrison.1.

<sup>62</sup> Shaw, "Motion Pictures," 2.

<sup>63</sup> Shaw, "Motion Pictures," 2.

<sup>64</sup> Rogan, Letter to Arch Mercey, 2.

Maintaining good relationships required a conscious effort to prevent offence. Part of this arrangement was encouraging in the strongest terms the ‘voluntary’ self-censorship of all motion pictures relating to Latin America.<sup>65</sup> Negative portrayals of Latin Americans were censored, as were themes that might offend the religiously inclined. A meeting of over one hundred Archbishops from North and South America had raised concerns that morality standards in American films being shown in the South were negatively impacting hemispheric relations:

Repeatedly the Catholic leaders and Bishops of our Southern neighbors have protested against the exhibition of motion pictures which have been produced here without complying with moral standards. The propaganda of the vices of artificial birth control and divorce which has its origin in our country must be condemned as destructive of religion.<sup>66</sup>

Maintaining a respectful balance would be necessary to ensure the cultural exchange was not undermined by cultural differences. To this end a tighter control over theatrical film and newsreels became one of the OICAA’s most effective strategies, and film censorship, not for the first time, became embroiled in foreign diplomacy.<sup>67</sup>

### **2.2.2 Newsreels and Theatrical Propaganda**

The enthusiasm of Rogell and Manson [at Republic Pictures] was boundless as to what cooperation the Coordinator's office could give them. We then listened to their story line and believe me they are really going to do a terrific job, hitting every propaganda theme we wanted them to, stocking their production with the best available Brazilian personalities in the country, and really doing a bang-up technicolor job.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Prendergast, “Immoral Films,” 2.

<sup>67</sup> As Grieverson has stated regarding the Committee on Public Information during the First World War, the ‘policing of speech and media dovetailed with the propaganda of the CPI.’ (Grieverson, “War, Media, and the Security of State and Capital.” 273.

<sup>68</sup> Rivkin, “Republic Studios,” 1.

Newsreels focussing on the war constituted the bulk of the office's distribution efforts in the earlier days of their project. A brief examination of their development is valuable in understanding how the OCIAA developed close relationships with the entertainment industry that aided in the expansion of their non-theatrical campaigns. According to the OCIAA's report 'United States newsreel companies were already exporting weekly newsreels covering world events to their Latin American outlets, and the main necessity was to make it financially possible for them to secure the type of subjects which would tend to further the CIAA program.'<sup>69</sup> The proclaimed list had played a significant role ensuring newsreel content favourable to the United States was more easily accessible, however the Motion Picture Department felt it necessary to tighten controls on existing newsreel production. This involved entering into direct contractual agreements with the newsreel companies and establishing a special newsreel department in the MPD to direct content and distribution. This agreement involved the newsreel companies including in their films special content that had been created by the MPD for 'reasons of strategic significance.'<sup>70</sup> The extent of the control that the MPD had was such that they could request for newsreel cameramen to film specific scenarios or events that were important to the OCIAA's program and have the newsreel companies substitute that footage for the Latin American editions. Meanwhile the editions screened in the United States would remain in their original forms.<sup>71</sup>

Through the cooperation of other government agencies (particularly the Office of War Information, the Army, the Navy, and the Office of Strategic Services), the Motion Picture Division began to produce material of inter-American interest in the United States. Here it had the benefit, at a nominal cost, of the extensive facilities provided by the domestic

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<sup>69</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 76.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 76. Regarding censorship of the press, Grieverson has stressed the arguments of Walter Lippmann that for public opinion to be effectively moulded through mass media, opinions must be organised for the press, not by the press. (Lippman in Grieverson, "War, Media, and the Security of State and Capital," 273.

newsreel companies whenever special assignments were desired.<sup>72</sup> In a letter to the president of MGM Nicholas Schenck, Alstock boasted that newsreels and particularly MGM's *News of the Day* were playing a significant role in solidifying the Western hemisphere, noting that the American Ambassador to Chile had told the State Department that 'American newsreel are the most effective propaganda now being sent to Chile.'<sup>73</sup> So effective were they in Alstock's appraisal that he had planned, in addition to the educational film programme, to distribute MGM's Spanish and Portuguese dubbed newsreels through the networks of embassies and legations several weeks after they had enjoyed a theatrical run. Writing to Schenck, Alstock insisted that 'in this manner we would show our strength and what we are doing in the war effort to the most interested audiences.'<sup>74</sup> So successful were they in saturating the market that Rogan claimed that 'Virtually all the motion picture theatres in the other American Republics have access to five United States newsreels each week,' with the majority of these covering the American war effort.<sup>75</sup>

As with the circulation of newsreels, the expansion of feature motion picture circulation through Latin America was expedited with the close assistance of the major Hollywood studios. One of the most important steps in their theatrical strategies was securing the endorsement and cooperation of the major studios and their overseas managers. In tandem with the newsreels and feature films, the Motion Picture Department assuredly moved to expand the propaganda operations.

Francis Alstock met with a committee appointed by the foreign managers of RKO, United Artists, Warner Brothers, and Twentieth Century Fox in New York to impress upon them 'the necessity ... for getting American-made propaganda pictures distributed in South America

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<sup>72</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 76.

<sup>73</sup> Alstock, Letter to Nicholas Schenk, 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Rogan, Letter to Arch Mercey, 2.

more rapidly and in more theatres.<sup>76</sup> In exchange for supplying equipment, film stock, and facilitating shipping, the major studios made an ‘enthusiastic [and] unanimous promise to cooperate,’ giving preference and wide coverage to selected ‘American made propaganda films.’<sup>77</sup> At the same time, a selection of 16mm versions of the studio’s feature films were approved by the OCIAA and bound for the diplomatic missions. The list of films included *Sergeant York* (1941), *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940), and *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), a selection of decidedly patriotic films that, it was hoped would emphasise the sincerity and righteousness of the American cause.<sup>78</sup> The concentration of films concerning the life of Abraham Lincoln is of particular note. They indicate a preference for an American figure whose presidency was defined by overcoming fierce opposition to fight for a righteous cause against a backdrop of cataclysmic war. No doubt they would have been intended to impress upon the OAR a degree of moral certitude in American politics.

By collaborating with the major studios, and benefitting from the closure, seizure, and censure of any picture house deemed to be operating against the interest for the United States, the OCIAA were able to blanket the OAR with pro-American motion picture content encompassing feature films, newsreels, and theatrical shorts. By 1942 they were able to claim that: ‘We have every reason to expect that from now on propaganda pictures will not only go faster to Latin America but will also be shown on more theatre screens than any time in the past. Thus, our story will be told to millions of people daily throughout the other Americas.’<sup>79</sup> The OCIAA were thus able to establish an extensive propaganda network that was shielded from view by the publicly facing benevolence of respected cultural institutions and renown of

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<sup>76</sup> Alstock, Letter to Arthur Jones, 1.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Rogan, Letter to John Begg, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Alstock, Letter to Arthur Jones, 1.

pre-eminent entertainment industries. Between 1941 and 1945 the OCIAA were able to increase its weekly viewing figures of 35mm films from 16.5 million to 20.6 million.<sup>80</sup>

Although the MPSA had managed to produce as many as a hundred theatrical shorts in collaboration with States Department through its 'ideological production program' the MPD did not consider that its theatrical projects were fulfilling the OCIAA's hemispheric defence objectives, and a refocus of their strategy was needed.<sup>81</sup> The OCIAA would maintain close personal connections with Hollywood throughout the war, as one letter from Rockefeller to David O. Selznick revealed. The OCIAA had been invited to participate in the 1943 Academy Awards in the documentary category, but Rockefeller declined, believing his office's focus on military documentaries would make their participation inadvisable. However, he mentioned to Selznick that he hoped to work more closely with the Academy in the following year, seeking Selznick's advice on an upcoming documentary program and a greater participation in Academy Awards for Latin American projects.<sup>82</sup>

So far, we have seen how the OCIAA's propaganda networks were established. From here a focus on the non-theatrical program will highlight how classroom films became the key focus of the Motion Picture Division. In the following section, a history of the close relationships between the OCIAA and American businesses reveals the dissemination of two key elements of their mission, the projection of military power and the desirability of American lifestyle.

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<sup>80</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 68.

<sup>81</sup> Bender, "Film as an Instrument of the Good Neighbor Policy," 82.

<sup>82</sup> Rockefeller, Letter to David O. Selznick, 1.



### 2.2.3 The Non-theatrical Division

In March of 1941 the MPD created a new film unit that it was hoped would better serve the ideological and propaganda objectives of the OCIAA. Non-theatrical and educational films could be produced at a greater pace and be distributed to a great number of people without the need to charge admission. They could also be more openly propagandistic, a reflection of greater control over the production and development of the scripts that the OCIAA had, compared to the MPSA whose influence in Hollywood, although significant, was limited to lobbying the studios to increase the use of Latin American actors, musical scores, scenic locations, and the production of screenplays based on Latin American historical figures.<sup>83</sup> The scope and content of these feature films remained within the purview of the studios who although cooperative, still needed their films to be profitable. Developing films for the non-theatrical market allowed for targeted campaigns and close scrutiny of the themes and scenarios in the scripts that were eventually developed directly to service the program. It would also allow for a much wider distribution pattern, including the schools and universities in their campaigns. In its early days however, much like the DoS, the OCIAA was reliant on existing non-theatrical film supply for which they turned to their close associates at MoMA:

The Office of the Coordinator recognizes the importance of non-theatrical films as a means of communicating cultural values, and to this end has appropriated \$250,000 for a closely integrated program of non-theatrical film supply. ... Part of the program, the portion dealing with the selection and supplying of films will be operated by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>84</sup>

MoMA was tasked with selecting films from available government agencies, educational institutions, and industrial sponsors, whereas overall control of the project would rest with the

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<sup>83</sup> This was the case with OCIAA co-productions with RKO pictures, which resulted in an unrealised Orson Welles and Greg Toland production *It's All True*. The OCIAA also gave enthusiastic backing of potential historical biopics of Latin American heroes, offering their services when scripts being developed by MGM and Warner Brothers surfaced hinting at lavish costumes dramas of the lives of Jose de San Martin and Simon Bolivar, who was repeatedly referred to in telegrams as 'South America's own George Washington.' (Rockefeller, Telegram to Nathan Golden, 1)

<sup>84</sup> Prendergast, Letter to Charles Thomson, 1-2.

Office of the Coordinator. This granted Rockefeller enormous personal control over political and cultural relations with the OAR. In nominating staff at MoMA in the executive function of film selection, the OCIAA empowered the institution's personnel, and their cultural and ideological prerogatives to guide the cultural exchange between the U.S. and OAR. If, as Prendergast suggested, that non-theatrical films were key to the communication of America's cultural values, it was through MoMA's definition of culture and their editorial input that the United States would be understood abroad.<sup>85</sup> At this stage in the program the traffic of films was almost exclusively one way, with a 'reciprocal phase of the operation' relegated to a later date.<sup>86</sup> As became evident in later phases, the cultural exchange of films that was being arranged was heavily skewed towards the OCIAA's selections, and premised on establishing a network of theatrical and non-theatrical cinema across the OAR, with Latin American cinema entering the United States largely as an afterthought.

#### **2.2.4 Strategic Alliances With Business**

With project approval, funding, and a clear ideological objective, the question of progress now rested on the technicalities of distribution. In addition to disseminating their expanding catalogue of films through diplomatic missions and consulates in the urban centres, the OCIAA sought the assistance from private American companies already well established in the OAR. In Early 1942, William Reynolds of the Sterling Products Company, a large American pharmaceutical manufacturer, visited the offices of Carl B. Spaeth, Assistant Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and Director of the American Hemisphere Office of the Board of

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<sup>85</sup> For more on MoMA's curation of film and its relation to national image building see chapter four of *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (2005). Here Wasson links the exhibition practices of Museum trustees with shaping a narrative of film history as 'not only quintessentially modern but also quintessentially American.' (Wasson, *Museum Movies*, 124)

<sup>86</sup> Prendergast, Letter to Charles Thomson, 3.

Economic Warfare, offering the services of Sterling in Latin America.<sup>87</sup> At first the OCIAA made it clear that they could not work with Sterling officially but there might be some assistance they could offer through their embassies by utilising Sterling's fleet of mobile projection units.<sup>88</sup> Sterling claimed they would be ready to begin the program in July or August of 1942, allowing the free exhibition of films subject to the approval of the OCIAA.<sup>89</sup> The OCIAA would provide the Sterling Products Co. with motion pictures and in return, Sterling would use its dispersed network of businesses in the OAR and its mobile projection units to distribute the OCIAA's films through outer lying towns and the interior. Doing so allowed the films to reach audiences beyond the scope of most national cinema networks. Although there was nominal resistance from some of the embassies, (notably Uruguay, who wanted decision making and film selection to be the charge of the Ambassador) the State Department and OCIAA were happy to partner with Sterling Products given one condition that: 'there will be no advertising of any connection between the Government and the Sterling Products Company in this project, and that the films will not bear any credit line marking them as coming from a United States Government agency.'<sup>90</sup> The State Department believed that accreditation of the films to the U.S. Government would be counterproductive to its goals in key regions and wished to mask their connection to their production, effectively using Sterling as a front for distributing its propaganda films.

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<sup>87</sup> Sterling had profited enormously from the Office of Alien Property Custodian (OAPC) laws enacted by the US Government as the 1917 Trading with The Enemy Act during the First World War which confiscated German business holdings. Among the confiscated property were shares of the Bayer Company (Germany's largest pharmaceutical company at the time) held by German citizens as well as property in the U.S. where Bayer had been developing their business. Following the Armistice of 1918, the U.S. Government auctioned off the property and shares of Bayer, which Sterling readily acquired, alongside its New Jersey factory and patents on a number of its pharmaceuticals including the then relatively unknown drug aspirin. This allowed them to rapidly expand their operations, supply routes and infrastructure which included the promotional mobile sound trucks throughout North and South America. (Oswald, *Guide to Sterling*, 5)

<sup>88</sup> Rogan, Letter to Walter Blumenthal, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Miller, Memo to John Whitney, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Duggan, Letter to John McClintock, 2.

In its initial stage, a collaborative network was established between the OCIAA, MGM and Sterling. The OCIAA approved ten initial programs consisting of 16mm reels of *Airacobra* (1941), *Bomber* (1941), and *California Fashions* (c.1941) to be divided between Mexico, Argentina, and Uruguay. *Airacobra* and *California Fashions* had been selected by Sterling with *Bomber* selected by the OCIAA. These were to be grouped with a number of MGM shorts and distributed through their target regions using Sterling's fleet of mobile projection units. Sterling and the OCIAA were careful not to select any shorts produced by MGM without their permission. After consulting with Arthur Loew at MGM, they had come to an agreement that would allow MGM's shorts on to the programme provided they were not circulated until months after MGM's theatrical releases. Loew was encouraged further by the fact that exhibition via Sterling's mobile units, although free of charge, would be concentrated in the country's interiors, in locations without picture theatres, and as such would not compete with box office revenues.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, in an effort to sweeten the deal with MGM, it was agreed that when Metro's shorts were handed over to Sterling for distribution, Sterling would submit the route of the mobile projection units to MGM for approval, giving MGM the opportunity to alter the route to avoid any towns in which they had not already been shown theatrically. MGM therefore had a considerable input into the shape of the distribution program. This consideration would allow for a more robust program of shorts whilst ensuring MGM would not lose out on any additional revenue. A remarkable example of the ways in which the mutual interests of state and corporate entities became intertwined in the pursuit of national security goals and the expansion of economic and political influence through motion pictures. For the OCIAA, keeping MGM happy, it was believed, would open the door for similar collaboration with the other major studios and boost the volume of non-theatrical films available.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Crown, Letter to John Whitney, 1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

This practice became commonplace for the OCIAA. The preference for using outside agencies and private companies permitted a distancing of the coordinator's office from the produced pictures. Laurence Duggan, Advisor on Political Relations, recommended that whenever working with such a partner it would be 'advisable to use only the name of that agency,' rather than include a reference to the OCIAA.<sup>93</sup> After consulting with Alstock, Deputy Coordinator of Government Films Arch Mercey recommended that the OCIAA should title their films with 'United States Film Exchange: Distributor of Inter American and Defence Films,' in an effort to avoid perception that the films were being produced by a government agency.<sup>94</sup>

Balancing a program of non-theatrical shorts with approved propaganda material remained a delicate issue for the Motion Picture Department. Judging the effectiveness of certain films would not be without its difficulties either. In line with their mandate to broadcast American military power in the OAR, the film *The Battle of Midway* (1942) was selected among other shorts for circulation. This first-hand filmed account of the battle in the Pacific, produced by the Photographic Division of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and directed by its then head, Lieutenant Commander John Ford, was considered appropriate for the work of demonstrating US combat effectiveness and patriotic zeal. Ford approached Francis Alstock regarding the film's possible distribution through the OAR after having already received approval from the State Department and OSS for its Spanish and Portuguese dialogue versions. However, before the film was finally cleared for distribution a telegram was sent out to the coordination committees in all of the republics urgently demanding that they 'do not show Midway Film to any other than American citizens.'<sup>95</sup> This followed an incident at a preview in the embassy in Mexico City after which the embassy decided not to screen it publicly. Mixed

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<sup>93</sup> Duggan, Letter to John McClintock, 1.

<sup>94</sup> Mercey, Letter to John Whitney, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Rockefeller, Letter to Lovette, 1.

reactions to the film as a ‘propaganda vehicle,’ led the OCIAA to halt its distribution until Rockefeller could arrange test screening in New York to an audience of Brazilian newspapermen in order to gauge their reactions.<sup>96</sup> Despite generally positive assurance from the screening, and the encouragement of the military attaché in Venezuela, Rockefeller decided to proceed with caution and have the film pulled from further theatrical and non-theatrical distribution. This incident demonstrates how keenly aware of the dangers of deploying counter-productive propaganda Rockefeller and the OCIAA were, and the fine line apparent in negotiating the cultural exchange of motion pictures. For their propaganda to be effective it was necessary for it to not be read as propagandistic. A subtler approach utilising informational, educational, and training film, alongside cultural exchange programmes might have greater impact than the bombast of wartime jingoism. Other than two screenings in Cuba and a further three theatres in Caracas, *The Battle of Midway* (1942) was effectively withdrawn from general distribution in the OAR.<sup>97</sup>

The ability to enact censorship at such a distance demonstrates the considerable power wielded by the OCIAA to influence specific localised media content inside of foreign sovereign countries. They were also able to block the distribution of a labour film, *Argentine Industry* (c.1942), produced by the Argentine Ministry of Agriculture, from wider circulation after a review screening. This followed an assessment that ‘its primary intent seems to be to undermine the support of the United Nations war against Fascism,’ and that the film ‘must have been sent by the Argentine government for the express purpose of propagandizing against the war.’<sup>98</sup> Such criticism of Argentinian cinema was commonplace as the U.S. viewed Argentinian neutrality with great suspicion. Beginning in 1941 they had established embargos on the sale of film stock to Argentina’s major studios.<sup>99</sup> This was done partly in retaliation for the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 1-2.

<sup>98</sup> Laves, Memo to John Whitney, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Falicov, “Hollywood’s Rogue Neighbor,” 245.

censoring of American films. In response, the OCIAA, Board of Economic Warfare, and State Department diverted the supply of raw film stock that the Argentine film industry had been reliant upon since the import ban on German filmstock had taken effect. Tamara Falicov has argued that these actions put a stranglehold on the Argentinian film industry, the most developed in the region at the time, whilst lavishing support on allied Mexico allowed its golden age of cinema to flourish through the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>100</sup> Mexico was a key ally for the United States during this period and received special attention from the OCIAA. Their close proximity and open cooperation made them a strategic partner in the region, and a counter to Argentina's ambiguous alignment. Working through the MPSA, the OCIAA funded a non-profit film production company, Precinradio, to work with American studios to develop and promote the Mexican film industry. As Pennee Bender has revealed: 'The Precinradio project not only eliminated a Latin American competitor for the U.S. film companies but also gave the U.S. film industry considerable influence over the Mexican industry that would last beyond the war.'<sup>101</sup> Censorship and propaganda, hand-in-hand with economic warfare reshaped the cinematic landscape of the OAR, tilting the favourable exchange of motion pictures between amicable good neighbours to an enforced asymmetry of media and cultural flow regulated by an ascendant U.S. regional empire.

As with the close cooperation with Hollywood studios in the distribution of newsreel and theatrical propaganda films, the OCIAA partnered with well-established providers of educational films as part of its non-theatrical program. ERPI Classroom Films had previously worked closely with the State Department to distribute its educational films abroad. Through the Division of Cultural Relations, two of ERPI's educational titles *New England Fisherman* (1938), and *The Wheat Farmer* (1938) had been distributed through the French public school

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 256-259.

<sup>101</sup> Bender, "Film as an Instrument," 122.

system to enthusiastic reception. Subsequently, the State Department had sent seven ERPI reels to represent the United States at the First South American Exposition of Educational Cinematography in Buenos Aires in 1939 where ERPI's films would come to define the American style of educational motion picture.<sup>102</sup>

At the request of ERPI's Vice-President H. C. Grubbs, Rockefeller authorised a budget for ERPI to soundtrack a selection of twelve of their films in Spanish and four in Portuguese in order that they might be more effectively distributed in the OAR. In Grubbs words they would be used 'to continue ERPI's full cooperation in the Government's policy of intellectual cooperation with the other American republics.'<sup>103</sup> The agreement specified that distribution of the films would be guided through schools and cultural institutions with the OCIAA funding and giving final approval to any new language recordings. The films would then be sent to MoMA where they would await instruction and eventual distribution under contract by the museum.<sup>104</sup> As with Sterling's mobile distribution for the Motion Picture Department, ERPI signed a legal agreement guaranteeing that they would not publicly represent either the OCIAA or the US government by advertising that they were 'sponsoring or being in any way connected with any distribution that [ERPI] may make.'<sup>105</sup> Once again the OCIAA wished to maintain a distance between the frontline of the cultural project and the declared interests of the United States government. Too obvious a pathway from State Department to cinema or classroom could potentially harm relations and appear too openly propagandistic.

In 1941 this led to ERPI signing a contract with the US government to produce films directly for the OCIAA. Though America was not yet at war, the funds were allocated through

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<sup>102</sup> Grubbs, Letter to Rockefeller, 1. The Motion Picture Division also worked closely with Walt Disney. They considered the Disney style of animation to be 'one of the most effective in the field,' based on the popularity of Disney in South America. (Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 79) For an extensive list of Disney's animated films and analysis of their place in film history during the war see Tracey Louise Mollet *Cartoons in Hard Times: The Animated Shorts of Disney and Warner Brothers in Depression and War 1932-1945* (2017), and Richard Allen Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up: The Walt Disney Studios During World War II* (1976).

<sup>103</sup> Grubbs, Letter to Rockefeller, 1.

<sup>104</sup> Director of Projects Management Division, "ERPI Classroom Films," 1.

<sup>105</sup> Shumaker, Letter to Lawrence Levy, 1.



the Office for Emergency Management, a short-lived department whose role involved the coordination and clearance of information and resources for national defence, efforts similar to its functional predecessor the Wilson era Council of National Defence. Through the Military Appropriation Act, and the Navy Department Appropriation Act of 1941, ERPI had been effectively drafted into America's military preparations, although for now its projects would remain within the scope of the OCIAAs objectives of furthering the war effort of the OAR.<sup>106</sup> Within the space of a few years ERPI had transitioned from a supplier of educational films to an integral part of the State Department's cultural and intelligence apparatus.

Of the twelve ERPI films initially selected for distribution in the OAR, four were given special consideration for their target audience of highschoolers. Other films from the catalogue were considered too immature or for too generalised an audience to be worth the expense of soundtracking in Spanish and Portuguese. Instead, an emphasis was placed on films of a scientific and medical theme. Both the age range and the subject matter indicate a strategic way of thinking about the educational value of these films. Appealing to potential university entrants, and future exchange students was key to wider cultural exchange programs and extending the influence and prestige of the American educational system:

We should concentrate on the high school ages and among the films which were most well made. Half of the group of 12 were not particularly good jobs of production, but the four pictures called *The Heart and Circulation*, *Sound Waves and Their Sources*, *Body Defense Against Disease* and *Molecular Theory of Matter* are very much superior to the rest. They are addressed to the oldest group -- the group most likely to have some affect [sic] on future national policy.<sup>107</sup>

These developments are indicative of the convergence of state and corporate interests in the extension of American influence across the globe. Educational films were evidently a key component of this process and their use value for the U.S. government suggests a way of

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<sup>106</sup> Spaeth, "Contract for ERPI," 1.

<sup>107</sup> Macgowan, Letter to Edward Robbins, 1.

thinking about the classroom as a strategic location for influencing populations culturally and militarily.

In early 1942, Sumner Welles, then Under Secretary of State wrote to Rockefeller to discuss expanding the 16mm distribution network: 'It is believed that the problem of distributing motion pictures and radio transcriptions should be considered in connection with the general over-all problem of disseminating in the other American republics information concerning the United States and our war effort.'<sup>108</sup> Replying to Welles, Rockefeller agreed to commit to 'increased distribution of motion picture films, radio material, and press material.'<sup>109</sup> An expansion of the program, that shifted the contours of what had been developed as a cultural mission into a fully-fledged propaganda network with better facilities, training, and motion pictures.

### **2.2.5 Selling America: Military Might and Just Causes**

By 1942 the volume of educational films available for selection had dramatically increased. The list was comprised of a variety of scenic, morale, and war production films. The OCIAA now divided their film selection into four broad thematic categories, 'power to win', 'ideological', 'culture and agriculture', and 'health.'<sup>110</sup> These it was hoped would sell America to the OAR and more closely align the Latin peoples with the American cause. Included in the programme was a scenic film of American colleges, two episodes of General Electric's *Excursions in Science*, and twelve ERPI shorts.<sup>111</sup> One of the films, *This Amazing America* (1940), had been produced by Greyhound Buses as an advertisement disguised as a travelogue. Premised on two gameshow contestants winning a scenic tour of America, the short film follows their adventures on a cross country coach trip. The film depicts a journey through

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<sup>108</sup> Welles, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, 1.

<sup>109</sup> Rockefeller, Letter to Sumner Welles, 1.

<sup>110</sup> Motion Picture Division, "List of Films," 1-10.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 1-10.

America's most recognisable tourist destinations mixing stock footage and descriptions of the American scenery including the US Capitol building, the Grand Canyon, the Alamo, and a statue of folk hero Paul Bunyan, with frequent references to Greyhound's spacious luggage compartments, comfortable seating, and ease of travel. With the noted absence of a government film on the American scene, the sponsored scenario from the Greyhound Bus Company would have to do the work of educating the OAR on the sights and sounds of North America. The film highlighted one of main problems facing the OCIAA. In the absence of a coherent programme of cultural films, sponsored corporate films were doing the work of defining the American scene.

Within the list of ideological films, three titles were included to appeal to the vast majority Catholic Latin Americans and convince them that Nazism and Catholicism were incompatible. *The Nazis and Polish Catholics* (c.1942), *The Nazis and Catholic Youth* (c.1942), and *Cardinal Innitzor of Vienna* (c.1942) variously depict the persecution, corruption, and betrayal of European Catholics by the Nazis.<sup>112</sup> As with these appeals to religion, several films addressed concerns about U.S. intentions in the Americas. Listed back-to-back in the catalogue, *Hitler's Plan for the Americas* (c.1942) and *America is Not Imperialistic* (c.1942) were intended to make a clear distinction between Hitler's military plans for the conquest of the OAR and America's Good Neighbour policy, so that the Latin American audiences would not confuse U.S. regional influence for aggressive expansion. Other films such as *Rationing in America* (c.1942) detailed the sacrifice and determination of the American people in the name of the war effort. The film depicted how 'America gladly tightens its belt devoting all production to war.'<sup>113</sup> Films such as this could help generate good will by depicting an uncharacteristic image of American life of sacrifice and frugality to contrast with the

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 3.

preconception of American abundance and good living that had been developed for decades through advertising and theatrical cinema. Acquainting themselves with their Southern neighbours necessarily meant fabricating a narrative that was believed to be more palatable.

Some of the films were intended to depict life in America exemplifying the democratic and egalitarian aspirations of its progressive educators. The production of the short educational film *They All Go To Evander* (c.1942) by Willard Pictures is an example of this in practice.<sup>114</sup> The film was intended to demonstrate the best aspects of education in the United States which the project described as ‘a factor in an understanding of our war aims and effort.’<sup>115</sup> The film served as a type of cultural export that would strengthen American prestige as well as promote a model of cultural practices with regard to race relations that broadcasted an internalised notion of exceptionalism. The film had been planned to depict ‘democratic aspects and the excellence of curriculum’ of American public schools.<sup>116</sup> Based at the racially integrated Evander Childs School in the Bronx, the film was a professional remake of a student produced documentary about life as a student at Evander. Although approved by the policy committee, the subject none-the-less brought into question the ambiguity concerning the acceptability of a sanctioned deployment of propaganda, with the distinction between propaganda film and culture film becoming increasingly blurred even to those committee members authorising the projects. Lawrence Duggan, the department’s Advisor on Political Relations warned of the complication that such a film might have: ‘While they perceive no objection to the project they believe that a picture embodying this type of material must necessarily become a propaganda film rather than a picture bearing on “the excellence of curriculum of public school education in the United States.”’<sup>117</sup> Duggan suggested that if the project were to be intended as a culture film that the subject matter should focus on a smaller, mid-western school more visually typical

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<sup>114</sup> Willard Pictures were a small New York based production company with links to MoMA.

<sup>115</sup> Watts, Letter to Laurance Duggan, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Duggan, Letter to John McClintock, 1.

of the American public school system than a large, diverse inner-city school in the Bronx. This would bring the project in line with other productions that planned to show the typical scene of an American universities. The incident highlights the department's consideration of race as it pertained to foreign relations. Depictions of multiculturalism were considered to fall under the domain of propaganda, a conscious manipulation of the truth necessary to align more diverse nations with America's war effort. However, when exporting what it deemed to be culture, a normative depiction of a homogenous society, to be read specifically as white, was considered best practice. Racialised narratives then, were useful only in so far as they were believed to engender a sense of external empathy and solidarity as a necessary tool of state craft by an otherwise internally segregated nation.

If amity failed to convince, perhaps fear would keep the republics, and the hemisphere, properly aligned. One of the ways this was achieved was not through direct intimidation but by subtly reminding the OAR of America's military and technical capabilities. The scope for what was considered a war picture was quite broad, as stated in their production notes: 'Naturally, the division between war and non-war subjects for Latin American distribution is an arbitrary one. Maybe the war note should be modified - or emphasized even more strongly.'<sup>118</sup> By 1942 the proportion of war films in production was markedly increased. In October for example, twenty-three new films were to be added to the distribution, all but three earmarked to be war films. This was in addition to over seventy films already circulating, two thirds of which were concerning the war. Films such *Flying the P39 (Airacobra)* (c.1941) a pilot training film for the Bell System's P39 Airacobra, and the Office of Emergency Management's *Bomber* (1941), promoting the production capacity and attack capabilities of the new B26 Marauder were selected for this role, as was the Navy co-production with MGM *Eyes of the Navy* (1940), a two-reel basic naval aviator training film. MGM also produced

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<sup>118</sup> Macgowan, Letter to B.C. Brown, 2.

shorts including *Army Champions* (1941) which detailed the speed, efficiency, and teamwork of army recruits. Together with a roster of naval co-productions, these films made up a considerable portion of the films being planned for distribution in the OAR explicitly to project American military power and technological superiority. In a letter to Alstock, a plan was detailed to focus on the rapid production of a number 16mm films that would ‘best fulfil our propaganda aims.’<sup>119</sup> The plan was to saturate the Latin American non-theatrical market with films that would display the technical and productive capabilities of the U.S war industries:

These people are interested chiefly, so far as policy goes, in who is likely to win the war. Therefore, our pictures should show them as effectively as possible that the U.S. has what it takes. If this premise is correct then it seems to me that at least two-thirds of our pictures going to Latin America should show our military might. The remainder could be devoted to cultural or civic subjects.<sup>120</sup>

Clearly the cultural mission of the OCIAA was intimately connected with the nation’s war effort. A prominent display of military power would be beneficial in maintaining international relations. With a proven propaganda network already in place, and the legacy of the proclaimed list to diminish any insurgent propaganda, the U.S. were well positioned to influence politics and public perception throughout the region as the war escalated.

In addition to these war films, the OCIAAs Science and Education Division in collaboration with the United States Office of Education began requesting the MPD ‘to prepare a series of war training films, designed to train workers in the other American Republics in technical industrial operations.’<sup>121</sup> Anticipating an escalation in hostilities and the possibility that the OAR would need rapid technical mobilisation training, the Science and Education Division sought out vocational training films that could be used for instruction in technical schools and factory conversion. Specific requests for films on shipbuilding, engine lathes, precision measurement, and bench work illustrate the direction that vocational instruction was

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<sup>119</sup> McCarthy, Letter Concerning the 16mm Program, 1.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Hughes, “Use of Vocational Film,” 1.

rapidly advancing. Tied to this request for training films was a plea for information on the location of specific heavy industries in the OAR, the volume and type of heavy machinery they used, as well as the location of any known specialists from the United States who could have the expertise to explain the films to the workers.<sup>122</sup> The production of the instructional films, as was often the case, was tied to industrial resource management and intelligence gathering in the OAR. The exchange of teachers and specialists was supplemental to facilitating broader military and industrial concerns. Though this was a wartime initiative, one of the considerations of this form of cinematic force projection is the degree to which this strategy ever diminished in the peace that followed the war's conclusion.

So far, this chapter has examined the use of propaganda in South America under the umbrella of cultural outreach to meet the U.S. government's demands for hemispheric security. As has been discussed, the extension of U.S. influence was achieved through close cooperation with business and the entertainment industry who facilitated a portrayal of American military strength, justness of cause, and cultural prestige. What follows is an exploration of parallel developments North of the border, where educational film was used to achieve many of the same outcomes as they had in the OAR. Now the Motion Picture Department worked out how best to relate the OAR to U.S. citizens. A consideration here is that domestic audiences would need just as much persuasion if Pan-American security would be achieved. To this end, networks that had begun to be developed from public and private institutions were rapidly converted to wartime needs. Schools, libraries, museums, educational periodicals, and local governments aided the OICAA, and later the OWI, in disseminating defence related educational films, and education was aligned to service national wartime policies.

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 1.

### 2.3.1 Establishing the Domestic Network

Incorporating the American schools into the OAR distribution circuit and the wider aims of U.S. wartime domestic defence orientation became a crucial strategy for the OCIAA. Replying to requests for information and visual aids on Latin America from teachers in the U.S., Richard Rogan, the Assistant Director of the OCIAA's Motion Picture Division wrote to one teacher that: 'I am sure that a great deal can be done to promote the good-neighbour policy by starting the work of promoting interest in the other Americas early in the educational life of the students.'<sup>123</sup> Through the schools and particularly via the medium of motion pictures, American foreign policy was being taught and reinforced. Official support for these programs appeared in *Educational Screen* who eagerly promoted the Good Neighbour Policy in articles aimed at teaching students about Latin America. These articles framed the understanding of closer relationships and cultural exchange between the Americas in the language of wartime necessity. As one article described: 'Dallas County Schools, as their part of the nation's defense program, began a unit that had for its primary purpose a closer understanding of all of the countries of the Western hemisphere.'<sup>124</sup> In the schools, Latin America would be understood through the lens of national defence. When it first began circulation *Educational Screen* established itself as an impartial, non-partisan publication dedicated to the advancement of American education that would provide everything needed to understand and promote 'the truth of visual education.'<sup>125</sup> In the words of its first open editorial is declared that:

The Educational Screen is not the official organ of anything or anybody. It is published to give American educators, and every American who believes education important ... a magazine distinctly intellectual and critical, rather than commercial and propagandist; a magazine written and produced exclusively by those whose scholarly training, experience and reputation qualify them to discuss educational matters.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Rogan, Letter to Mrs. DeHaters, 1.

<sup>124</sup> Lee, "Democracy at Work," 231.

<sup>125</sup> "To our Readers Personally," 5.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid p.8



This admirable commitment to impartiality, however, did not prevent them from partnering with the State Department and its mission to extend the cultural and military influence of the United States in the Other American Republics. In a letter to Irene Wright at the Division of Cultural Relations, Nelson L. Greene, the long-standing Editor in Chief of *Educational Screen*, enthusiastically welcomed a request to publish articles on their educational mission.<sup>127</sup> *Educational Screen* were also running regular columns to inform the public on the school's role in national defence with morale boosting articles such as 'Educating for Patriotism.'<sup>128</sup> Regarding the OAR with caution, and with one eye across the Atlantic at the situation in Europe, articles like this reminded readers of the need to foster good relations with their regional neighbours through language and geography lessons. Articles such as these were couched in a militant tone: 'National defence demands that we promote such an understanding of the scenic wealth ... [and] ... the commercial possibilities of Pan-America.'<sup>129</sup> How the OAR would be understood by domestic school audiences would depend largely on the prerogatives of its defence minded educators. This frequently meant relating foreign nations less in terms of their culture and more in terms of their natural resources.

In tandem with the projects disseminating American non-theatrical films throughout the OAR, the Motion Picture Department, pressed by the cloying immanence of America's entry into the war, began the task of circulating films concerning Latin America through the U.S. school systems. Macgowan's proposal involved displaying 'suitable pictures of the Other Republics in the United States, in order to incline public opinion here to support those governmental policies toward our neighbours which circumstances are making imperative.'<sup>130</sup> In effect this would mean using the schools as a distribution service for OCIAA propaganda.

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<sup>127</sup> Greene, Letter to Irene Wright, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Post, "Educating for Patriotism," 102.

<sup>129</sup> De Bernardis, "Audio-Visual Aids," 56.

<sup>130</sup> Macgowan, Collier, and Wright, "Informative Educational Films," 2.

The foreign policy and war preparation goals of the United States required an equally rigorous information campaign on the domestic front as had been established in the Latin America. However, the supposedly two-way traffic of non-theatrical films between the US and OAR had been considerably less equitable than initially intended. Effective distribution of their films through the United States would depend largely on the availability of 16mm sound projectors. Although admitting that the true number was unknown, the OCIAA consulted with their commercial contacts who put the figure at roughly eighteen thousand school projectors, the largest of any significant audience group, comprising what they believed to be eighty percent of all 16mm sound projectors in the country.<sup>131</sup> Much like the sponsored non-theatrical film market of the 1930s, the OCIAA divided their non-theatrical audiences into four broad categories; men's groups, women's groups, service groups, and schools, totalling an audience of nearly twenty-one million, of which, seven million comprised the students in schools and colleges. Anticipating the full cooperation of the educational network and social groups, their initial report projected a remarkable confidence in their anticipated network of screens: 'By means of planned release through the medium of the schools ... and distribution plans already set up with the larger organisations ... we should reach almost the entire membership listed.'<sup>132</sup> However, confidence in using the school networks was not shared by everyone. In a letter to Rockefeller, Arch Mercey, the Deputy Coordinator of Government Films declared that no suitable network of film distribution existed in the United States, and if the Coordinator's distribution plan was to work, they would need an immediate injection of funding and equipment.<sup>133</sup> Mercey also voiced his apprehension that openly aligning themselves with the universities could come with public relations considerations despite the fact that he believed it would be a 'very useful kind of enterprise provided the Coordinator's office does not become

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<sup>131</sup> Maroney, Letter to Charles McCarthy, 3-4.

<sup>132</sup> Maroney, Letter to Charles McCarthy, 3-4.

<sup>133</sup> Mercey, Letter to Rockefeller, 1.

directly involved.’<sup>134</sup> As had become a running theme, distancing Rockefeller’s office from the public was considered best practice.

While still working as an FDR appointee at the Office of Government Reports Lowell Mellett was inundated with requests from state universities offering the services of their audio-visual departments for the war effort.<sup>135</sup> One such request from the University of South Carolina protested that the government were passing up the great opportunity to utilize the extensive state university film library networks for the distribution of films for ‘civil defence training and morale building.’<sup>136</sup> In their request, Charles James of the Audio Visual Aids Bureau and H. H. Ward, the director to the university’s extension department, pointed out that three quarters of state universities had by that point developed their own film library networks, servicing schools, clubs, and their local communities. Their letter protested the recent partnership with the YMCA, who had been selected by the OCIAA to act as film distribution hubs despite having only four film libraries nationally. Ward and James insisted that the state universities were better suited to act in the capacity of a domestic civil defence and wartime propaganda network as their resources allowed them to put films before large audiences rapidly. They estimated this capacity to represent at least three quarters of the country, a feat they claimed was proof that the job ‘should rightfully fall into their hands’ and not the ‘private concern’ of the YMCA.<sup>137</sup>

The YMCA had been selected without consultation of the much larger available networks available to the OCIAA, a fact that indicates a conflict of interest between the publicly funded state university system, and privately operated organisations, such as MoMA and the YMCA, that had personal, familial, and financial ties to Rockefeller. Mercey made it clear to James and Ward that despite declining this specific request due to operational conflict with

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<sup>134</sup> Laves, Letter to Frances Jamieson, 1.

<sup>135</sup> Mellett would go on to head the OWI’s Bureau of Motion Pictures.

<sup>136</sup> Ward & James, Letter to Lowell Mellett, 1.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 2.

OCIAA, that soon enough ‘every film library which can distribute films effectively during the war must and will be enlisted in this program.’<sup>138</sup> By July of 1942, the OCIAA had established cooperation with and deposited films in forty-seven university extension departments, as well as its four major YMCA clubs in New York, Dallas, Chicago, and San Francisco.<sup>139</sup> Within the United States the films were made available for free by request to any educational or civic group on the condition that full reports on the reception of the film, and the constitution of the audience were recorded on the specially designed report cards that were sent out with the reels.<sup>140</sup> What was rapidly emerging was a hybrid network of government agencies, public universities, and private institutions, cooperating in developing an ecosystem of educational film production, distribution, and exhibition that was intended to strengthen public opinion of the United States, and further its war effort both in Latin America and at home. These networks functioned now as propaganda distribution nodes, well-funded and supplied with a rapid turnover of newsreels, documentaries, and civil defence films that as this chapter will go on to explore, encompassed a remarkably diverse cross section of non-theatrical films. The mixture of cultural and civil defence pictures is evident of multipronged strategy that would use any available option, and often several concurrent strategies to achieve its goal of properly aligning the OAR with the foreign policy interests of the United States.

### **2.3.2 Americans All**

In comparison to the films being sent to Other American Republics, *Americans All* (1941) was the first in a series of informational educational films produced primarily for distribution in North America.<sup>141</sup> The film was produced and narrated by the Polish film director Julien Bryan who had been documenting Nazi atrocities in Warsaw during the late 1930s. In 1940 after

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<sup>138</sup> Mercey, Letter to Charles James, 1.

<sup>139</sup> Maroney, Letter to Charles McCarthy, 1.

<sup>140</sup> OCIAA, “Americans All,” 1.

<sup>141</sup> Spanish and Portuguese language versions were later developed for distribution in the OAR.

fleeing to America, Bryan filmed most of what would become *Americans All* independently before being hired by the OCIAA to begin work on a series of educational films on Latin America with an OICAA approved edit of *Americans All* as its centrepiece.<sup>142</sup> The film focused primarily on the aspirant youth of Latin America, drawing parallels between the cultural, educational, military, and social lives of Latin Americans and their Northern neighbours. *Educational Screen* declared it to be the best film on Latin America available for education.<sup>143</sup> A description from the one of the film's hand bills enthusiastically emphasised the anti-European sentiment and Monroe Doctrine rationale that permeate the themes of the film:

AMERICANS ALL describes, honestly and dramatically, the young people who live and work and play between the Straits of Magellan and the Rio Grande River. Made by Julien Bryan, it is a swift inclusive document which is intended to give the people of the United States a better understanding of their little-known fellow Americans to the South - their all-important allies who, in the words of the film, 'don't want the European new order' any more than we do. But they know that if freedom is to survive here, we must all - the young and the strong stand together. We are no longer two continents, but one Hemisphere twenty-one liberty-loving Republics ... AMERICANS ALL!<sup>144</sup>

*Americans All* was presented as the star attraction of a series that included twelve other shorts portraying the cultural scene in Latin America in a mixture of travelogue, nature documentary, and anthropological films. In a departure from their overseas distribution, the films' title cards prominently displayed its producer as the OCIAA. The twelve films included a mixture of life in the metropolitan cities focussing on the picturesque historic city centres. Others such as *Orchids* (c. 1942) and *Wooden Faces of Totonipican* (1942) showed the natural world and craft cultures of indigenous peoples. One film, *Patagonian Playground* (c.1942) highlighted a popular tourist and leisure destination, visualising 'scenic beauty and summertime fun of Argentina's Nahuel Huapi Park.'<sup>145</sup> Like *Patagonian Playground*, *Our Neighbours Down the Road* (1942), a comparatively lengthy four-reel film emphasised the modern infrastructure and

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<sup>142</sup> Funded by the OCIAA, Bryan would eventually make twenty-one films on Latin American subjects.

<sup>143</sup> Larson, "New Films of the Month," 152.

<sup>144</sup> OCIAA, "American's All," 2.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

leisure activities in the OAR, drawing similarities to the pastimes of North Americans. The film features a road trip on the Pan-American highway from Caracas to the Magellan Straits, visiting cities and sites along the way. The film's narration reiterates the quality of the infrastructure of the highway as well as drawing parallels between the modern cities and their northern or European counterparts. Of Buenos Aires, the narrator describes a 'general air of spacious elegance that reminds one of Paris.'<sup>146</sup> The film also comments on the poverty apparent in the lives of the indigenous peoples of Latin America with typical condescension, noting the 'admirably simple and sufficient economic life of the Indians.'<sup>147</sup> As a physical and symbolic ligature that connected North and South America, the Pan-American Highway embodied the freedom and mobility of the automobile age. As a signifier of modernity, its focus in the film represented a relatable American construct, yet the film, in detailing its incompleteness in parts of its South American course only served to emphasise a developmental lag in Latin American infrastructure in comparison to the United States. As was the case in many of the films, the superiority of the modern industrialised United States was contrasted with a folkish curiosity in the underdeveloped Latin world.

These themes would be repeated in a successive series of films produced for North American distribution, not always to the liking of partners in the OAR. In efforts to produce a catalogue of films that was more representative of the modernising trajectory of regions in the OAR, Assistant Coordinator Victor Borella had asked that a number of 'primitive films' be removed from the next catalogue.<sup>148</sup> Borella's request reiterated concerns that had been trickling up from the film centres in the OAR that the films' representation of the Latin peoples was overly simplistic and premised on depictions of poverty that 'perform a disservice' to the peoples of the OAR.<sup>149</sup> The OCIAA seemed to care little about the promotion of the OAR as

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<sup>146</sup> *Our Neighbors Down the Road*, 1942, 32:10.

<sup>147</sup> *Our Neighbors Down the Road*, 1942 09.34.

<sup>148</sup> Borella, Letter to Russell Pierce, 1.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

developed nations, instead preferring to understand them via an anthropological lens that emphasised natural wonder and ethnographic voyeurism. Borella wished to retire eight films from the OCIAAs catalogue, the majority of which featured subjects focussing on terrain, wildlife, and the comparatively un-industrialised agricultural practices, or that over emphasised the colour and exoticism of South America which had become increasingly used as a selling point for the films.<sup>150</sup> Replying to Borella, Russell Pierce ignored the requests for certain pictures to be culled from the forthcoming catalogue complaining that: ‘We are all anxious and eager to portray the modern side of Latin America, but unusual dances, types, scenery, and general backgrounds are always more intriguing than factories, buildings, and other evidence of material progress. People in this country see big buildings all the time.’<sup>151</sup> In the United States, it appeared that the OICAA were more invested in portraying the OAR as underdeveloped, or certainly not the economic or cultural peers of the U.S. Such a view might undermine internalised notions of American exceptionalism and the USA’s emergence as global hegemon. The content of the films and the regard for its people that the OCIAA displayed in relating the OAR to the United States highlights the asymmetry of the supposed cultural exchange. In a pattern that would be repeated, films about the OAR made for American audiences would be produced in the USA as a preference to enlisting Latin American film makers. The films were overwhelmingly produced by American filmmakers including Ralph E. Gray, and Desmond Holdridge, or by the National Geographic Society. Only one film in the *American’s All* catalogue had been produced in the OAR, *Brazil Gets the News* (1942), a ten-minute black and white documentary produced by the Brazilian Information Bureau detailing the daily activities of the editorial and technical departments of a modern newspaper company in Sao Paulo.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> (Macgowan, Letter to Carl Spaeth, 1)

<sup>151</sup> Pierce, Letter to Victor Borella, 1. Pierce was an Associate Director of the Motion Picture Department.

<sup>152</sup> Maroney, Letter to Charles McCarthy, 2.

Curiously, The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was particularly keen on the OCIAA's Latin American films. Kenneth P. Miller of the OSS had written to the MPD requesting six of their English language films on permanent loan, as he believed that 'these films would be helpful in the work of this office,' claiming they were to be used for 'official army training purposes.'<sup>153</sup> However, jurisdictional conflict once again hampered interagency cooperation and the film loans were denied. The OSS were sternly reminded that they were specifically prohibited from operating in the Western hemisphere and that the War Department was responsible for all official army training.<sup>154</sup> What sort of training the OSS intended to do with the films remains a mystery.

To generate publicity for the film and encourage its wide adoption in domestic educational film libraries, Rockefeller's department arranged for a gala preview screening on 8 January, 1941 in the motion picture auditorium of National Archives Washington D.C. The event invited what would be the target audience of the north American distribution program, educational organisations including the National Education Association, a large roster of leading women's groups including the national defence committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 4H and other agricultural clubs, religious societies, and societies affiliated with the development of Latin American relations including the Pan-American Union.<sup>155</sup> One particularly impressed attendee, Edwin Embree, from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, praised the film for 'so convincingly [showing] the common history and ideals that should bind us all together.'<sup>156</sup> Embree promised to send copies of the film immediately to the film libraries that serviced the over five thousand schools built and maintained by the charity

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<sup>153</sup> Miller, "Inquiry," 1. The films were *Argentine Soil*, *Hill Towns of Guatemala*, *Brazil*, *Mexico Builds a Democracy*, *Venezuela*, and *This is Ecuador*.

<sup>154</sup> Galloway, "OSS Attempt to Get Latin American Films," 2.

<sup>155</sup> Brooks, Letter to Mary Winslow, 1.

<sup>156</sup> Embree, Letter to Mary Winslow, 1.



in the USA's Southern states.<sup>157</sup> The film's themes of racial plurality combined with a singular American identity among the OAR no doubt would have been appealing to educators at the Rosenwald schools whose mostly one room schoolhouses were established to combat the racial apartheid of the Jim Crow South. It is unclear how a film depicting Pan-American racial unity would have been received by an audience of young Americans marginalised by state enforced segregation laws.

### 2.3.3 The Future of the Educational Film Market

In May of 1943 *Variety* reported that 'subsidizing of films by government [had] proved inexpensive and highly effective.'<sup>158</sup> So successful were they that Rockefeller had cut the previous year's appropriation of three million dollars by half for production in 1943. Speaking to *Variety* on the effectiveness of the proclaimed list on South American media outlets, Rockefeller stated that 'this project eliminated all but twelve houses showing propaganda,' with these few all located in Argentina.<sup>159</sup> By 1943 Rockefeller had begun drawing the production closer to his familiar circle of institutional acquaintances and entered into contracts to have MoMA directly produce and soundtrack in Spanish and Portuguese a new series of educational films. One consideration when scrutinising Rockefeller's choice of MoMA to produce the OICAA's pictures is the sizeable amount of money that he was funnelling towards an institution that he directly benefitted from. According to correspondence between Rockefeller and John Abbott, the museum's Executive Vice President, estimates for the new films could cost in the region of ten to fifteen thousand dollars per reel, and an expansion of one project's initial

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<sup>157</sup> The Rosenwald fund took great interest in educational film as did its benefactor whose company, Sears-Roebuck would go on to acquire ERPI Classroom Films.

<sup>158</sup> "Pix Called Good-Willier," 2.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

appropriation was increased to one hundred thousand dollars to produce only six or eight films.<sup>160</sup>

Similarly, Rockefeller's endorsement of ERPI went beyond the merely practical. In a letter to Rockefeller, Robert Hutchins, the President of the University of Chicago discussed their mutual interests in the future of educational film. In November of 1943, William Benton, the Vice-president of the University of Chicago acquired Encyclopaedia Britannica from its then owner Sears-Roebuck. Following this, he signed a deal to take over ERPI Classroom films from Western Electric, as well as purchasing the back catalogue of Eastman Teaching Films from Kodak to merge them into a new educational film company that would become Encyclopaedia Britannica Films.<sup>161</sup> Hutchins hoped to further the conglomeration and corner the educational film market by linking the new acquisition with MoMA's close association to the Motion Picture Division. Writing to Rockefeller, Hutchins proposed: 'I certainly hope that ways can be developed to tie up the interests of the University and Britannica in the development of educational pictures, with the interests of the Modern Museum in Hemisphere Films.'<sup>162</sup> The appropriately named Hemisphere Films Inc., was a private, non-profit corporation chartered in New York with close links to MoMA.<sup>163</sup> It was planned to continue the MPD's educational film production and distribution as an independent corporation with a 'greater emphasis on post-war affairs,' that were considered 'vital to the continued success of the Good Neighbour policy.'<sup>164</sup> As Hutchins noted:

ERPI's interest up to now has been strictly in classroom or "instructional" films, though the possible area for so-called educational films is much wider than this. Perhaps that area should be broadened through the use of the name Encyclopaedia Britannica on films, and through the use of ERPI's distributing organization.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Abbott, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, 1.

<sup>161</sup> Smith, *Mental Hygiene*, 100. Benton had purchased Encyclopaedia Britannica with his own finances under the agreement that the university would eventually purchase it back from him.

<sup>162</sup> Hutchins, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 243.

<sup>164</sup> Kennedy, "Hemisphere Films," 3.

<sup>165</sup> Hutchins, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, 1.

According to Hutchins, Benton was already drawing up post-war planning for the educational film market, possibly anticipating the expanding market in educational needs that was approaching. Under these plans the apparatus and networks that the OCIAA had established through Rockefeller would essentially fall into the hands of the new company and the University of Chicago (which had been founded by Nelson's grandfather). For his assistance, Nelson would be well compensated: 'Bill tells me that when you are no longer a government official, he is going to try to persuade you to go on the Board of Directors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and ERPI Classroom Films.'<sup>166</sup> Rockefeller had already anticipated a retraction of government spending at the closure of the war and had taken steps to ensure that certain core operations of the OCIAA were continued whilst limiting funding to others. His solution rested with handing over operational management of the Office's activities to select private interests, more or less continuing his practice of giving preferential tender for government operations to Rockefeller associates.<sup>167</sup> Two private corporations were set up to handle what had been the purview of the State Department, The Council for Inter-American Cooperation inc. and the Institute for International Education. Both would continue the work of promoting 'mutual cooperation and cultural exchange,' acting now primarily as liaisons between the private institutions in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Together they fulfilled many of the roles previously occupied by the OCIAA, with Rockefeller even serving as 'chairman, trustee, and board member' until 1953.<sup>168</sup>

The life span of the OCIAA, only briefly bookended the United States' war effort, suggests that its entire operational scope was less in the continuity of the Good Neighbour

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>167</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 274. Meanwhile, Rockefeller had migrated to the State Department where he became Assistant Secretary of State before drawing the ire of President Truman and exiting government for a time.

<sup>168</sup> Council for Inter-American Cooperation, "Historical Note," 43.

policy and more a direct effort by a war agency to align and securitise the OAR. In securing hemispheric cooperation and cultural exchange, the Office of the Coordinator also ensured the economic and cultural supremacy of the United States while inhibiting any potential enemy influence in the region whether that be the immediate concern of the Axis powers, or any future threat that may arise. Such campaigns were neither unique nor temporary, often reconstituted in different forms by successor agencies. After its dissolution, much of the operational capacity of the OCIAA for example was absorbed into the State Department.<sup>169</sup> As the Cold War escalated in later years, a continuity of the OCIAA's intelligence and propaganda activities was shepherded by more militant and clandestine agencies. Often this was done in the name of American business interests, marking a more radical departure from the Good Neighbour era of foreign relations as propaganda work was increasingly accompanied by military intervention.

The next section will examine the wartime operations of another government department, the Office of War Information. It charts their domestic operations as they used classroom films to develop a cohesive, education focussed propaganda network at home. Their strategies were characterised by censorship, an over-reliance on industrial sponsors and growing militarisation of school curriculums. If the New York World's Fair had merged education and science with a militant defence of the free market, the OWI's non-theatrical program escalated the sense of militancy, fully enshrining the economic rationality of sponsored films within a patriotic curriculum. The defence of the free market then, was extended to imply a territorial defence of the nation.

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<sup>169</sup> Rowland, *History of the OCIAA*, 274.

### 2.4.1 The OWI: Censorship and the Domestic Front

The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds is to let it go in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized.<sup>170</sup>

The Office of War Information had been created by President Roosevelt in June of 1942 to simplify the often overlapping and sometimes confusing mass of war related information by centralising all official public information into one department. Scholarship on the OWI has focussed almost exclusively on the department's relationship with Hollywood studios and entertainment focussed theatrical productions, with some attention given to theatrical shorts such as *March of Time's Why We Fight*. However, little has been explored in the way of its work through non-theatrical circuits, particularly education. What follows is an exploration of the OWI's education focussed domestic motion picture project, a brief comparison to their theatrical division which reveals some of the underlying logics of the office's approach to motion pictures in general.

Aside from its role as a central resource for the American public, the OWI's Motion Picture Bureau (MPB) worked closely with Hollywood to regulate its cinematic output, justifying their widening censorship under the moral canopy of wartime emergency. Through their activities in regulating Hollywood, the OWI became de facto national censor, curtailing Hollywood's entertainment output and channelling the ideological demands of a wartime government through its media, a process that saw mixed results. As Birgit Streich points out: 'As long as propaganda could be mixed with entertainment and made money, producers were willing to support the war effort.'<sup>171</sup> However, Koppes and Black suggest that although the government may have shifted to a more authoritarian position in terms of its regulatory capacity and insistence on migrating the film capital to a war-footing, Hollywood's adherence to these

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<sup>170</sup> Davis, in Koppes & Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 64.

<sup>171</sup> Streich, "Propaganda Business," 59.

new expectations was somewhat non-committal. They point out that while the OWI ‘demanded affirmation of New Deal liberalism for America and the world,’ Hollywood’s response was either to simply shoehorn the war into ‘conventional mystery and action plots or [appropriate] it as a backdrop for frothy musicals and flippant comedies.’<sup>172</sup> Gradually however, the studios would become more compliant with the agency’s demands, deepening its influence over the entertainment industry to the point that by late 1943 every studio with the exception of Paramount had their scripts read, reviewed, and re-submitted for corrections that better reflected the OWI’s mission to represent America in a positive light. In a little over a year the OWI were able to leverage the correction of two hundred and seventy-seven out of three hundred and ninety incidents of ‘objectional material,’ demonstrating a level of influence and control over the domestic media consumption habits of the American public never before witnessed.<sup>173</sup>

Lewis Jacobs suggests that this shift occurred when Lowell Mellett, the Chief of the OWI’s Motion Picture Bureau became dissatisfied with Hollywood’s apparent lack of cooperation. Criticising their lack of seriousness in delivering a coherent message on America’s mission in the war, he decided to give Hollywood ‘the same indoctrination it administered to soldiers.’<sup>174</sup> This involved arranging for the army to screen a series of approved films that represented what the military wanted the public to know about the war to groups of writers, directors, and the Hollywood press. Films shown at the screenings included episodes from Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* (1942-1945) series. Capra’s orientation films were believed to give a level-headed approach to propaganda that would be more palatable and play on the sympathies of the Hollywood elite, something that Jacobs argues was successful in generating a shift towards ‘weightier themes and to the demands of the democratic ethos.’<sup>175</sup> However,

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<sup>172</sup> Koppes & Black, “What to Show the World,” 105.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>174</sup> Jacobs, “World War II and the American Film,” 14.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 14.

this considerable concentration of power would not go without some resistance. In 1943 fifteen members of the OWI resigned in protest at alleged abuses of power being perpetrated by some of the OWI's senior staff.<sup>176</sup> The fifteen men and women made a joint statement on their decision to resign in the *New York Times* citing the conduct of the head of domestic operations and newspaper magnate, Gardner Cowles Jr., as well as William B Lewis, former Vice President of CBS, as the primary reason for their protest:

There is only one issue—the deep and fundamental one of the honest presentation of war information. We are leaving because of our conviction that it is impossible for us, under those who now control our output, to tell the full truth. No one denies that promotional techniques have a proper and powerful function in telling the story of the war. But as we see it, the activities of OWI on the home front are now dominated by high-pressure promoters who prefer slick salesmanship to honest information. These promoters would treat as stupid and reluctant customers the men and women of the United States.<sup>177</sup>

Despite these and similar protests, the influence of the OWI became near complete, and in the consensus patriotism that emerged as the war developed, resistance to the overarching power to censor media and public information met only sporadic and ultimately ineffective resistance. A precedent had been established in which the public were, for the most part, accepting of centralised control of entertainment and information, provided a narrative of national cohesiveness in the face of a sustained external threat could be used as justification. For the government to mount an effective military campaign abroad that depended on the consent of the public and the productive capacity of industry, the nation would need a shared narrative of unity, patriotism, and self-evident righteousness of cause.

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<sup>176</sup> Though they made explicit their support of their boss Elmer Davis, the Director of the Motion Picture Department.

<sup>177</sup> Wood, "Writers Who Quit OWI," 1.

## 2.4.2 The OWI and Non-theatrical Film

It is the job of the schools and colleges of America to provide the opportunity for every youth to equip himself for a place in winning the war. The schools and colleges of America must become preinduction training centers [sic] for our armed forces, leaving the armed forces free to train men in the combat application of the training that you give.<sup>178</sup>

Aside from its role in domestic propaganda pictures, the OWI also marshalled non-theatrical films for the war effort. Paul C. Reed, the head of the OWI's Educational Division at the Bureau of Motion Pictures used the department's resources to consolidate a government approved catalogue of films that might be applicable for wartime skills training and civil defence. Reaching out to the major non-theatrical producers he requested lists of films along with technical details including runtime, format, availability, and a synopsis for 'all non-theatrical films related in any way to war training and information.'<sup>179</sup> In response to a huge volume of requests for information films from government departments and public sources, including schools and regional civil defence groups, the OWI became a central information distribution directory for the private educational film market. Reed, a member of *Educational Screen's* editorial advisory board, and Director at the Department of Radio and Visual Education of the Board of Education for Rochester, N. Y., often assisted in directing the propaganda efforts of the OCIAA's motion picture dissemination project in Latin America and worked closely with the Museum of Modern Art to utilise their film library for his domestic civil defence needs.

In June of 1942 following executive order 9182, the OWI were tasked to 'coordinate the war informational activities of all Federal departments and agencies for the purpose of assuring an accurate and consistent flow of war information to the public and the world at large.'<sup>180</sup> Although many of the films produced by the OICAA were specific to the cultural and

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<sup>178</sup> Somervell, "You Can Help Shorten the War." 1.

<sup>179</sup> Reed, Letter to ERPI Films 1.

<sup>180</sup> Reagan, Letter to Stanton Griffiths, 1.



wartime objectives of that department, their reconstitution as civil defence films through the OWI bears some consideration.

In response to Reed's loose mandate for war-related informational films, the educational film producers furnished the OWI with their entire back catalogues of sponsored and educational motion pictures to be reconstituted for war-time education, regardless of their films' relevance to civil-defence or wartime training. General Motors produced an entire catalogue for 1943-1944 offering films for civil defence and mobilisation. The catalogue was comprised of an eclectic mix of past Direct Mass Selling Series films produced by the Jam Handy Organisation (JHO), economic literacy films including the NAM produced *Frontiers of the Future* (1937) which they had made a part of their library, and GM's newsreels series *Victory Parade*.<sup>181</sup> Many of the older sponsored films were given new descriptors to make them appear relevant to the task at hand with tenuous connections made between their content and the context of the war. Two different versions of their New York World's Fair film, *To New Horizons* (1940) were listed, one of them a ten-minute cut down titled *Futurama* (1940). Both were listed under entertainment without much detail as to how they might be used for war training. The list also included many films of a new type of sponsored film, what might be called the morale booster, or war productivity film. Typically, these films, sometime in the form of newsreel or instructional film featured war industries, often production line factories showing the wartime conversion of manufacturing. These films marked an aesthetic return to the assembly-line films of the 1930s such as GM's much celebrated *Master Hands* (1936). In their new incarnation, the films detailed the construction of aircraft, artillery, tanks, and the launching of ships, all narrated with the booming jingoism of wartime propaganda vaunting the efficiency, productivity, moral righteousness, and inevitability of victory promised by

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<sup>181</sup> General Motors "Film Catalogue," 1-52.

capitalist modes of production. If capitalist realism has been the defining mode of depression era industrial film, its offspring, the war productivity film was now an evident successor.

*Victory is Our Business* (1942) was one such film listed in GM's catalogue. It detailed GM's diesel truck engines and liquid-cooled Allison aircraft engines, describing how in 'ten minutes packed with war production ... the audience is told of the thousand and one things now being made to help sink the Axis.'<sup>182</sup> General Motors were not alone, catalogues from Shell Oil, Westinghouse, and MoMA, among others, were added to the civil defence motion picture list. Despite operating its own domestic educational film distribution network MoMA also contributed a catalogue of its films for the OWI's civil defence collection. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Americans All* (1941) was listed among the entries in the travel and anthropology section alongside some of cinema's most iconic filmic texts including Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (1926) and *Nanook of the North* (1922).<sup>183</sup> MoMA's decision to enshrine *American's All* as a cultural landmark of factual film in its catalogue along with the works of Pare Lorentz, John Grierson, Robert Flaherty, Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann is an example of how a general accounting, and preservation of film history is so often shaped by the archival decisions made by such powerful institutions.<sup>184</sup>

In place of films of educational, technical, or cultural films, sponsored commercial films such as Imperial Airways' *Wings Over Empire* (1939), Ford's *Rhapsody in Steel* (1935), and the NYWFC's *Lets go to the Fair* (1939) were often substituted for domestic distribution. Some films such as *Winning Ways* (1943) from General Motor's catalogue were little more than simple product endorsements given a wartime gloss. However, within their thinly veiled advertising one can parse the ideological trajectory of sponsored film content. This particular

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>183</sup> MoMA Film Library, *Film as Fact*, 1-32.

<sup>184</sup>As Wasson has pointed out regarding the archival selection of MoMA, 'The tremendous popularity of certain films was often invoked as a virtue unto itself rather than a vice. Clearly, film's formal history and the attempt to foster a critical public were intimately related to efforts to also generate consideration of film's sociohistorical significance.' (Wasson, *Museum Movies*, 158)

film from GM's Frigidaire division is described as 'a story of a woman and a weapon taken from real life. The woman is an American housewife, and the weapon is America's food.'<sup>185</sup> It details the responsibility and 'vital role' in winning the war played by the American housewife through proper understanding and usage of the storage capacity of a refrigerator in a typical framing of domestic segregation embodied through consumable appliances. The film in many ways anticipated the post-war campaigns that framed the patriotic duty of American women as a commitment to domesticity and the abandonment of industrial labour.<sup>186</sup> Many of these campaigns were intimately tied to evangelising the post-war commodity boom and fixing the housewife's identity as the economic engine of suburban consumerism. Assisted by eager advertisers and social scientists, post-war domesticity was developed into a 'national obsession.'<sup>187</sup>

Similar catalogues were supplied by DuPont and General Electric, keen to do their patriotic duty as well as profit from the free national advertising and coverage that the OWI provided by centralising a national film catalogue. General Electric's catalogue included filmed shorts of segments reimaged from their *House of Magic* show from the 1939 New York Worlds' Fair. The voice operated train, magnetic levitation, and cathode ray tube demonstrations were now reimaged in a short series of five films named after their popular radio science series *Excursions in Science*. These films emphasised a more scientific and serious approach to the same material subjects that only a few years earlier were used as pure entertainment. One of the series, a single reel titled *Magic Versus Science* portrayed a scientist who was also a slight of hand magician demonstrating magic tricks as well as experiments.

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<sup>185</sup> General Motors, Film Catalogue, 39.

<sup>186</sup> See chapter three of *A Consumers' Republic* by Lizbeth Cohen; Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History*, (1993).

<sup>187</sup> Harvey, *The Fifties*, 70.

This showmanship and spectacle lifted directly from the NYWF live show was apparently considered applicable to wartime training by GE.<sup>188</sup>

Much as the industrial sponsored films of the 1930s had leveraged their use in the classroom by insisting that their contents, although not specific to any particular subject, might be used as educational aides none-the-less, so too were the catalogues of promotional and advertising films sent to the OWI. These were accepted under the thinnest of pretences that they might have some practical application in war training or civil defence. In the long term, the practice of using sponsored films in place of subject specific educational films became normalised, as did the practice of using films to acculturate students to new national policy. No prior educational initiatives had so pervasively entered into the schools as had the films listed by the OWI under calls for civil defence and war preparation.

### **2.4.3 The OWI and Militarism in the Schools**

Though framed by the context of the war, the escalation of militancy evident in educational films directed at school children was none-the-less alarming. One of the largest educational film producers in the United States, and close associate of the OCIAA, ERPI Classroom Films readily offered their services, reframing their educational catalogue to service the OWI's war-time demands. In a special wartime educational film pamphlet, ERPI declared: 'Youth now in high schools and colleges must prepare for wartime duties. Many of the young men in the last year or two of high school may be in the armed forces before another year has elapsed. They should begin now their preparation for the crucial tasks ahead.'<sup>189</sup> With this endorsement from

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<sup>188</sup> General Electric would continue to use elements of the House of Magic into the late 1950s. The same levitating magnetic plates, voice activated train set, and demonstration of various patented materials were used as shorts to fill in the breaks between acts of *General Electric Theatre* - GE's popular sponsored television programme. On the show GE spokesman and future president Ronald Reagan would cut away to a segment called General Electric Progress Reports, presented by Don Herbert in which Herbert would provide a breakdown of the latest contributions by GE to industrial progress, comfortable living, and national defence. In this case progress meant rehashing twenty-year-old carnival tricks for a television audience. (*House of Magic Segment*, YouTube, 1955, 00:20 – 03:15)

<sup>189</sup> Studebaker in ERPI, "You Can Help Shorten the War, 1.

U.S Commissioner on Education John Ward Studebaker on their brochures, ERPI promoted their educational film library as an adjunct service of basic military training. Under the banner slogan ‘you can help shorten the war by using instructional films for wartime training,’ ERPI reconstituted their school film programs for use in a school-to-combat educational fast track.<sup>190</sup> The stated purpose of their thirty-film catalogue, as ERPI advertised it, was that ‘high schools face the problem of speeding up short term instruction in scientific principles in order to reduce the period of army training after induction. Films can shorten this instructional period and thus, in the end, shorten the war.’<sup>191</sup> In essence, basic training was being drawn back from the point of enlistment in the armed forces and into the nation’s classrooms. The objective of the final years of high school education would be to re-focus on war preparation and pre-enlistment training to shape the body and mind for efficient use in war. The majority of the thirty films listed by ERPI as essential for wartime preparation of students skewed heavily towards health and science. Interestingly, the films listed under health were labelled as ‘individual efficiency,’ and the scientific principles labelled as ‘instruments and machines,’ an indication of the continuation of the kinds of techno utopian thinking that imagined human progress as convergence with machine precision.<sup>192</sup> Here, health and efficiency were reconstituted as martial necessity. Keeping one’s body healthy was now a matter of patriotic duty, good posture, and healthy diet now a matter of national defence.

In whichever arena, peacetime production, or wartime instruction, the motion picture was the tool of choice for conditioning the subject to desired levels of behavioural and cognitive necessity. To answer the complex demands of the country’s offensive and defensive capabilities, the rapid mobilisation and mechanisation required technical proficiency above all else, and this in turn required the kind of efficient industrial output native to the auto industry.

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 1.

Already well versed in the necessities of industrial, technical, and educational film, companies like the Jam Handy Organisation (JHO) whose industry expertise and formidable production capacity ideally placed them to accommodate the demands of rapid wartime production, eagerly adapted their libraries of instructional films for the war. The JHO's back catalogue, quickly retrofitted with new descriptors to better sell its credibility as a war training and civil defence manual was prominently titled 'The teacher's part in the fight for freedom.'<sup>193</sup> The JHO already had long standing ties with the military, creating instructional films for the Navy including anti-aircraft gunnery trainers. These motion picture-based simulators allowed recruits to practice their aim by shooting down targets appearing on a dual projection screen with pre-recorded footage of enemy aircraft.<sup>194</sup> Handy sold the idea of his training films to the armed force on the basis that his company's experience in the automotive business in Detroit, promising to make 'available to the army the visual training techniques which we have been applying so successfully during the mechanization of industry.'<sup>195</sup> Training for mechanised warfare was a matter of minor adjustment.

To meet the technical demands of rapid mobilisation, the War Department, in cooperation with the Office of Education under J.W. Studebaker produced a programme of technical instruction in the fundamentals of mechanical knowledge. Lessons on shop work, electricity, and automotive mechanics were produced for high school students based on the U.S. Army's technical and field manuals. The Jam Handy Organisation were quick to convert these instruction manuals into a series of slide reels and motion pictures that could be used in line with their company ethos of the 'motion picture as educator' in classrooms across the country. Their catalogue illustrates just how fully accepted the idea of the mobilisation of the school had become:

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<sup>193</sup> Jam Hand Organisation, "Slidefilms and Motion Pictures," 3.

<sup>194</sup> "To Learn By Doing" JHO; Oakes "Building Films for Business," 100.

<sup>195</sup> Handy, Letter to Brigadier General William Byrden, 1.

It has long been the duty and the privilege of the teacher to prepare young people for the kind of life they must live. They are doing it now, as always. A clear statement of this objective has been made by The Educational Policies Commission in the pamphlet “What the Schools Should Teach in Wartime.” The statement reads, in part, “In the secondary schools, every young person must be regarded as a reservist in preparation for the armed forces or wartime production.”<sup>196</sup>

Motion pictures, it was claimed, could rapidly reduce the preparation time for the armed forces, and as such their rapid deployment to school was encouraged.<sup>197</sup> In addition to the high school technical training films, and military equipment simulators, the JHO also produced theatrically targeted morale boosting films such as *Steel for Victory* (c.1943), a typical wartime production intended to be shown before features. Although not produced officially by the Office of Civilian Defence or funded by the government directly or indirectly, the film claimed that it could be tied into local scrapping drives. The centrefold of its glossy fourteen-page promotional booklet declared ““Steel for Victory” builds public morale and box office grosses ... every wide-awake, war conscious exhibitor will want this picture.”<sup>198</sup> This and similar films glamorised heavy industry, telling the story of how the war will be won by America’s superior steel production ‘crushing the enemy under an avalanche of steel.’<sup>199</sup> The exhibitors’ awareness of the hunger for war-related content, combined with the shrewd salesmanship and slick production value that the JHO were famous for made for a powerful combination. Playing on the heightened patriotic feeling in the nation, *Steel for Victory* simultaneously promoted the combined steel industry as the saviour of America whilst turning a profit for the JHO. The promotional brochure declared, ‘This is something your public should know, and it is your duty as an American to show them.’<sup>200</sup> Clearly the war offered opportunities for large industry, and its ancillary producers to promote and enrich themselves. That such a volume of these sorts of

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<sup>196</sup> JHO, “Slidefilms and Motion Pictures,” 3.

<sup>197</sup> In the same catalogue, the JHO also included their back catalogue of Direct Mass Selling Series films for General Motors, sponsored advertisements for Chevrolet cars disguised as science lessons.

<sup>198</sup> Jam Handy Organisation, “Steel for Victory,” 7-10.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 12.

self-promotional, sponsored-film as morale-booster motion pictures were being collected, advertised, and subsequently made available for distribution by the OWI illustrates the continuing reliance and preference of the United States government for private business to produce national propaganda. Unlike their self-produced and distributed theatrical newsreel series, *The United News*, when it came to non-theatrical films the OWI, despite its considerable New Deal staffing, ceded some of its leverage as a propaganda agency to industry and instead exercised its power as a regulator or censor, as was the case with their Bureau of Motion Picture in Hollywood. With industry's sponsored films circulated by the OWI, and newsreels being produced and distributed in abundance by the major studios and media outlets, the non-theatrical and secondary circuits proved a rich source of revenue and influence for industry, whilst achieving the propaganda objectives of the wartime government.

### **2.5.1 The Joint Film Series: Projecting America Abroad**

As has been observed in this chapter, the lack of an educational, government-produced culture film depicting the American scene had left a gap in their cultural relations program which Hollywood pictures and sponsored films had been used to fill. Chauncey Rowe spoke of the problem as a 'crying need ... for motion pictures depicting the United States scene and the "average citizen" way of life.'<sup>201</sup> Reiterating a problem that the State Department had been concerned with from before the start of the war. The DoS, in one typical example, relied on releasing a Spanish language soundtrack of Cecil B. DeMille's pseudo-documentary *Land of Liberty* (1939). A film which DeMille called 'the first historical picture in which facts have been unhampered by dramatic license.'<sup>202</sup> The film had been shown on repeat for two years at the Federal Government Building at both the San Francisco and New York World's fairs. This

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<sup>201</sup> Rowe, Letter to Dudley Bonsal, 1.

<sup>202</sup> de Mille, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," 13.



one-hundred- and thirty-seven-minute retelling of the history of the United States had been assembled from over one hundred and twenty-five different short subjects, newsreels, and Hollywood feature films into a chimera of documentary and drama on which all the major studios had miraculously collaborated. As such, it was a typically Hollywood reimagining of American history, despite DeMille's opinions to the contrary.<sup>203</sup> However, this did not prevent the State Department from repackaging it for distribution as a culture film in 1940 for use in the OAR.

Sara Beth Levavy has pointed out that as a result of its 'hybrid nature, its interventionist politics, and its association with the executive branch of the federal government,' the film became the target of a congressional inquiry in 1941 which accused Hollywood of acting as a propaganda machine for a government, seeking entry into the European conflict.<sup>204</sup> Whilst a fierce and often antisemitic domestic battle between Senator Gerald Nye and the MPPDA raged concerning the film's alleged intent to 'rouse the war fever in America,' it had long since attracted the attention of the DoS and OCIAA for potential use abroad.<sup>205</sup> *Land of Liberty* was screened by the DoS and OCIAA at the National Archives in October of 1940 to decide its 'suitability for display abroad,' nearly a year before the congressional trials into its propagandistic nature were conducted in the U.S and subsequently mooted for distribution in South America.<sup>206</sup> After America's entry into the war, objection to the active deployment of propaganda to further the war effort for the most part evaporated. The latent nationalist sentiment in *Land of Liberty* would shortly be eclipsed by the sanctioned, industrial scale production of propaganda during the following war years. Nye's openly antisemitic accusations levelled a charge that the Hollywood studios, acting as subversives, were dragging America into a foreign war by distributing propaganda. In truth, the United States Government was

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>204</sup> Levavy, "Land of Liberty," 453.

<sup>205</sup> Nye, in Levavy, "Land of Liberty," 453.

<sup>206</sup> Thomson, Letter to the Department of Cultural Relations 1.

already seeking ways to use the film and others to migrate the public of the United States and its regional neighbours to a war footing. An indication that they were in preparation for a conflict which despite the country's declaration of neutrality, many at the highest level regarded as inevitable. Still the issue remained, unlike many of its Allies, and most notably the Axis powers, the U.S. Government had not produced its own educational films on the 'American scene' and had until 1943 been entirely dependent on private and commercial film producers to plug the gaps with their own productions.

By this time, Defining the jurisdictional boundaries between the OCIAA's Latin American mission and the State Department's Division of Cultural Relations became something of a contentious issue for Rockefeller. Overlaps in operational territory and interdepartmental authority began to cause friction between the two offices. Rockefeller wished to run his office with as little oversight from the DoS as possible in a manner that befitted his style of close personal relations and localised decision making. An outraged memo circulated through the department concerning the vetting of films by the DoS, for instance, announced that 'it would seem gratuitous to submit our films to the State Department for general approval.'<sup>207</sup> Likewise, the DoS running parallel motion picture projects often ignored Rockefeller's jurisdictional mandate in Latin America to service its own needs. To clarify the matter the OCIAA insisted that: 'It should be clearly understood ... that responsibility for production of non-theatrical films for Latin American distribution is to rest solely in our hands.'<sup>208</sup> Though much of their respective histories had involved the clear demarcation of territorial and operational boundaries, the OWI and OCIAA would eventually see enough common purpose in their motion picture programs that a joint project was eventually announced.<sup>209</sup> Together they would need to work around the growing image problem of the

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<sup>207</sup> Motion Picture Section, "Extent of the Authority," 3.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>209</sup> The subsequent interdepartmental working group would operate under the acronym CIAA-OWI.

United States that was developing with their allies, something the two agencies that had been specialising in propaganda and censorship should have had no difficulty in achieving.

The project had emerged from the Brazilian coordinating committees outlining demand for a picture of the American scene that depicted the way of life of the 'average citizen'.<sup>210</sup> Since the initial outline of the OCIAA project, its goals and budget, and the 'recent success of Allied arms' had changed the departments mission.<sup>211</sup> According to Rowe 'There has been a growing feeling in the other Americas that the present interest of the United States in them will not survive the war.'<sup>212</sup> With changing circumstances and a shift in mood from their friends in the OAR, the objective of the project was changed from delivering a picture on the American scene to one that attempted to relate a cultural and economic equivalence between the working peoples of North and South America:

These pictures will be designed to help allay the suspicion that every Yankee is a dollar chaser; that our only interest in the other Americas rises from the fear of aggression stemming from the South or the derivation of commercial benefits. We would show the actual parallel between our millions of working people and theirs.<sup>213</sup>

At the same time the production of a series of educational documentaries on the American scene had been suggested to Rockefeller by Ambassador to the U.K. John Gilbert Winant and noted journalist Herbert Agar. Realising the potential to kill two birds with one stone, Francis Alstock proposed that the series of films already under consideration for the OAR could be 'construed as to be equally effective in the British Empire.'<sup>214</sup> The project involved close collaboration with the British Ministry of Information who had sent a representative, Mara Clayton to 'view as many motion pictures and film strips as possible in the United States with an eye to their possible use in the public relations program in Great Britain.'<sup>215</sup> Clayton had

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<sup>210</sup> Rowe, Letter to Dudley Bonsal, 1.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>214</sup> Alstock, Letter to Joseph Breen, 1.

<sup>215</sup> Holland, Letter to Rockefeller, 1.

written to Rockefeller to request taking a series of films back to Britain for an ‘experimental showing’ with the hope to develop a transatlantic program of Allied educational propaganda.<sup>216</sup> Clayton had intended to use film strips as a preference to motion pictures, however this was quickly dismissed due to the need for consistency with the OCIAA’s existing programs. As such, it was suggested that production should be flexible enough that it would be consistent with the films so far sent to the OAR but remain applicable for potential use through the OWI’s overseas commands and free British territories. The chance timing of Clayton in the department brought forth an opportunity to broaden the horizon of the project. Partly this was because British attitudes towards Americans despite, or perhaps arising from intimate war time alliances were not as amiable or as reciprocal as imagined, and partly because the Latin Americans suspected that the United States’ cultural mission had been based purely on wartime necessity. The series of film needed to do more than simply document the patterns of life in America, they necessarily needed to assuage fears, and humanise Americans to the rest of the world. Propagandistic educational film would have to massage public perception on a global scale.

The problem was twofold, first they would need to overcome the subtle but important distinctions between the attitudes of the British and the OAR towards the United States, and then find a way to use the same media to target the specific needs of the respective regions. The consensus as far as the CIAA-OWI were concerned was that although the British and Latin Americans both viewed the U.S.A as a ‘great and powerful nation ... [and] ... a potential partner,’ the British also viewed the U.S. as a ‘potential competitor,’ whereas the Latin Americans viewed them as a ‘potential exploiter.’<sup>217</sup> Force projection would not achieve the required outcome, and egregious displays of prosperity could deepen resentment. The CIAA-OWI recognised a generalised ‘current of fear or distrust,’ that they assessed to be based on

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>217</sup> CIAA-OWI British Division, “Joint Film Project,” 1.

popular conceptions of America stemming largely from mass-media consumption.<sup>218</sup> According to surveys that had been conducted to gauge attitudes towards the U.S., the impression imparted was that Americans were ‘braggards,’ and ‘want to run the world.’<sup>219</sup> Theatrical films and to a lesser extent newspapers and radio gave the impression that Americans were ‘materialistic,’ ‘isolationist,’ ‘frivolous and greedy,’ ‘gamblers and wasters,’ ‘irreligious,’ with ‘no historical consciousness,’ and ‘no cultural achievements.’<sup>220</sup> The CIAA-OWI put their faith in the idea that attitudes towards America could be rectified if an agreeable and somewhat humble impression of the quality rather than quantity of American life and its institutions could be put before British and Latin American audiences. If motion pictures had generated these negative associations as they believed, then motion pictures could be used to undo them.

In September of 1943 the production of a series of films for distribution in the British Commonwealth and Latin America was approved by the joint committee of the CIAA-OWI, with Alstock suggesting to Rockefeller that MoMA might be best to handle the production.<sup>221</sup> The film series would be coordinated between Mary Losey at the OWI, John Reinhardt at the New York offices of the OCIAA and Jonathan Begg at the State Department. With the film’s being produced through the usual Rockefeller channel at MoMA. The series was planned to capitalise on the healthy non-theatrical market in England which they estimated at an average of four million viewers annually, primarily in schools, armed services groups, and industry canteens.<sup>222</sup> The Latin American market was expected to be less productive due to the comparative scarcity of screening equipment, particularly in the schools. Instead, there the focus would be on theatrical audiences and mobile projection units such as those offered by Sterling Products. The two agencies made efforts to further consolidate their motion picture

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>221</sup> Alstock, Letter to W.K. Harrison, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Williams, Letter to the CIAA-OWI, 1.

activities. These films would primarily be distributed to the OAR, but many were also put to similar use with their allies in Europe. When deciding the thematic content of the films, the CIAA-OWI would fall back on familiar subjects, and assumptions about foreign interest in American life:

Mr. Williams suggested that we look at these institutions, the family car, mass production, etc.- as social gadgets. The English and Latin Americans want to know how we happened to invent them, what makes them run. We can take what to us is commonplace and make it exciting, and humanize it - i.e. mass production of shoes. We are selling not so much America but something which is typically American. Gadgets produced in an atmosphere of freedom, but we don't have to mention freedom. Then we could take the pictures to Spain and Franco would have no logical reason why we could not show them but they would be more valuable for propaganda than any anti-Fascist propaganda show could be to the common man.<sup>223</sup>

The desirability of American lifestyle, the consumerist 'American Way' that NAM had spent the 1930s propagating through print, radio, and motion picture campaigns was now being weaponised by the CIAA-OWI. Commodities and consumerism, which the departments understood to be considered typically American could be used, so they believed, to undermine fascism. A tentative subject list which the committee decided would adequately portray this typically American scene attempted to encapsulate the American experience within nine broad categories: One nation, one people of many, libraries, mass production, public schools, government, rural life, family car, and the corner drug store. Initially a series of twelve shorter films were proposed but a set of nine films with a longer runtime of twenty to twenty-five minutes each was eventually agreed upon as being more practical. The initial offering, it was believed, would 'barely scratch the surface' and open up an 'almost illimitable market' of future productions.<sup>224</sup> Their approach to production involved seeking out the expertise of established production studios rather than attempt to create their own film production unit. Partly this was a cost reduction measure and effort to save time by eliminating the need to train their own

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>224</sup> CIAA-OWI British Division, "Joint Film Project," 3.

personnel by using the talent pools of the major studios. To this end Disney, MGM, RKO, and Time Inc. were mooted as potential partners for the series. Unlike previous collaboration with educational film producers, the studio talent was suggested in the belief that they would be more capable of using the full potential of the cinematic form. Much like the experience of the OCIAA in Latin America, it was believed that for the propaganda to be effective it needed to be of the highest quality:

The film medium, especially its visual possibilities, must be exploited for all it is worth. Its power to “bring alive” and to reveal rather than to lecture and preach is what we are after. Its power to comprehend space and comprehend things past with things present, to select and compress will be particularly important to this series. The rhythm, sweep, texture, detail, and variety of the country, the faces, gestures, feelings of the people must be constantly in the mind and eye of the director.<sup>225</sup>

Details like this demonstrate a profound recognition of the aesthetic qualities and emotional stimulation effects of cinema on audiences. A factual diatribe was simply insufficient, cinema was to be used to its fullest potential not to dictate to the audience but to make them feel.

Overcoming the production issues and internal conflicts allowed for the production to proceed, with the expansive project now having elements that incorporated the State Department, MoMA, Disney, the OWI, the British Ministry of Information and the OCIAA. However, continuing restrictions from the Budgeting Bureau would hamper production, as would cuts to the budget of the OWI’s Domestic Motion Picture Bureau starting in the summer of 1943.<sup>226</sup> The OCIAA and the Overseas Branch of the OWI would continue to collaborate on motion picture projects but, wishing not to avoid duplication with work that was already under way by Robert Riskin’s Overseas Branch of the Motion Picture Bureau, plans for the joint film series fizzled. Elements from the joint CIAA-OWI project were however incorporated into projects that Philip Dunne and Robert Riskin had been developing separately. Riskin’s

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>226</sup> Roholl, *An Invasion of a Different Kind*, 20.

*American Scene* series would finally realise the demands of the State Department for government made films on the American scene and was distributed in tandem with the *Why We Fight* series in liberated Europe.<sup>227</sup> The series of films produced between 1943 and 1945 aimed to depict sympathetic and relatable visions of American life that emphasised the diversity of its peoples and dispel illusions about some of its cultural practices.<sup>228</sup> In place of bustling cities, skyscrapers, and luxury commodities, the honesty and simplicity of the American people was emphasised. In its planning stages *The Town* (1945) was described as depicting ‘the neighborly cooperation and friendliness that characterise much of our small-town life. We also hope to insist, throughout all the film, upon the fundamental determination of our people to direct their own collective destiny.’<sup>229</sup> *The Town* captured in its one reel the ideological and propaganda objectives planned for the OCIAA-OWI joint project.<sup>230</sup> The series depicted the value system of the United States as expressed through the lives of its people. Its subjects depicting ‘one nation of many,’ free public schools, small government, and the richness of family life portrayed in subtle, but none-the-less romanticised terms, presented a microcosm of liberal order that America wished to propagate in the post-war world. *The Town* repeatedly emphasised the universality of the American way of life, making a direct appeal to the foreign audiences for whom it was intended. The narrator introduces a selection of the townspeople of Greek, Irish, Dutch, and German ancestry, showing their peaceful coexistence, having been reconstituted as American, noting that ‘The United States was created by men who came from the four corners of the earth.’<sup>231</sup> This decision to relate the cultural plurality of America as a

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<sup>227</sup> Ian Scott labels the series *Projections of America* in his study of Riskin’s work for the OWI. (Scott, ‘From Toscanini to Tennessee,’ 347-366) Much of the early production documents refer to the series as *Projections of America*, however the films themselves carry the title card of the *American Scene*. Marja Roholl elaborates on their use in the liberation and post-war reconstruction of the Netherlands.

<sup>228</sup> Titles in the series produced between 1943 and 1945 included: *Cowboy*; *The Autobiography of a Jeep*; *Swedes in America*; *Pipeline*; *The Town*; *Oswego*; *A Journey*; *City Harvest*; *Toscanini—Hymn of the Nations*, and *Valley of the Tennessee*.

<sup>229</sup> Cunningham, Letter to Philip Dunne, 3.

<sup>230</sup> *The Town* was produced in 1943, but not released until 1945.

<sup>231</sup> *The Town*, 1945, 02:05.



nation of immigrants, an idealistic view of American life, most likely would have been intended to make the American people appear more relatable to overseas audiences. It is also perhaps why the Austrian born Joseph von Sternberg was chosen to direct it, providing an outsider's view of America for a foreign audience.<sup>232</sup> The humility of life depicted contrasts with early proposals depicting American 'gadgets and mass production.'<sup>233</sup> The finished product more closely reflected Riskin's draft proposals for the series to depict 'the happiness of ... family in simple, characteristically American pleasures, and indicate that many class barriers traditionally surrounding the man that works with his hands do not exist in Small Town, U.S.A.'<sup>234</sup> In wishing to encapsulate the distinctiveness of American life and projecting even its most modest practices as an idealised model for democratic society, the *American Scene* series sold the idea of America in distinctly aspirational terms. Through cinematic propaganda, America would offer to the war-ravaged world an example of how a peaceful, cooperative society should function. As Roholl has suggested, settling the post-war peace on American terms was as important as winning the war in the first place.<sup>235</sup> The *American Scene* series embodied a distinctly liberal view of propaganda, that American prestige could be communicated not through force projection, and the sleek modernism favoured by the sponsored films of the pre-war era, but by valorising its institutions and celebrating the commonality of its people in seeking to live the good life. Though the need to reiterate the idealism and simplicity of the American way of life betrays a suspicion that its intended audience may have feared or resented it.

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<sup>232</sup> This theme was introduced in the first film of the series, *Swedes in America* (1943), featuring Ingrid Bergman, and was repeated throughout.

<sup>233</sup> Williams, Letter to the CIAA-OWI, 3.

<sup>234</sup> Cunningham, Letter to Philip Dunne, 4.

<sup>235</sup> Roholl, "An Invasion of a Different Kind," 2.

### 2.5.2 Continuity and Counterproductivity

America's attempts to extend its influence abroad had potentially contradictory effects. Enforcing a narrative of cultural benevolence and military power also fostered resentment and suspicion. Measuring the effectiveness and audience reaction to their films was a key component in the process of the films made by the various agencies. Feedback from screenings informed the progress or obstacles to their propaganda programs, but understanding the effectiveness of the long-range objectives of the programs was harder to gauge. One indication of a potential failure of the series of films to change attitudes can be found in research conducted by Edward and Doris Bernays in 1958, where it appears that attitudes held by the British towards their wartime compatriots had changed little.<sup>236</sup>

The survey which attempted to gauge the popular opinion of the British public revealed some interesting conclusions. According to the study, the negative attitudes towards America by the general public drew heavily from a combination of media exposure and lack of positive reinforcement in the national curriculum. Responses to the survey indicated that 'particular stereotypes for Americans varied with the education and background of each critic.'<sup>237</sup> However, at every level, cliches and misunderstanding were commonplace. Americans were perceived as having bad manners, being prone to divorce and marital indiscretions, as well as mass hysteria. Typical complaints identified Hollywood films as influencing English girls by promoting sexual immorality, and an imitation of 'Hollywood sexiness,' as well as a delinquent youth 'characterized by blue jeans, bubble gum, ill manners, and general brashness.'<sup>238</sup> Alongside these, complaints were directed at the imposition of American culture through fashion, music, attitudes, and language. There was an awareness amongst those Britons

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<sup>236</sup> The survey had been conducted to assess the status of Anglo-American friendship in the wake of the Suez crisis, and as such was an attempt to develop strategies that would help reaffirm British and American Cold War cooperation.

<sup>237</sup> Bernays & Bernays, "A Study of British Hostility," 7.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

surveyed who had spent extended periods in America that the primary driver of these attitudes was an understanding of America derived from media consumption, even if they were aware that filmic depictions of the United States were not accurate. Respondents placed the blame squarely on Hollywood studio producers for depicting lurid, or decadent lifestyles of Americans that led to misrepresentation and inflation of negative perceptions in the public understanding of the American scene:

American films are popular in Britain, the trouble is they are too popular, the viewer heartily disapproves their content even while they entertain him. Our films exploit extremes in American society and give the impression that all America is, as one of our correspondents expressed it, either a world of “luxurious penthouses, mink coats, motor yachts, expensive automobiles” where everyone has a “swimming pool in his back garden;” or a world of “dope addicts with monkeys on their backs; of gangsters, rackets and corruption.”<sup>239</sup>

This was compounded by an unsurprising lack of public education on American history in British schools and popular press whose coverage tended to skew towards scandal and intrigue stories when it covered America at all. Certainly, it was the opinion, if not the unspoken truth that ‘school children glean their only knowledge of the U.S. from films, usually fairly horrific ones, too.’<sup>240</sup> Cinema then, was considered an informal educator and influencer by the man most recognised for his contributions to the fields of propaganda and public relations. If motion pictures could act as educator, their use entailed a seemingly open potential for influencing public opinion, a particular obsession of Bernays.<sup>241</sup> Britain remained a strategic European partner and repairing confidence in the Anglo-American alliance after a tumultuous year that saw a fracturing of NATO from the fallout of the Suez Crisis, and an enormous scientific, cultural, and propagandistic victory for the Soviets following the launch of the Sputnik satellite, was essential to maintain a controlling influence in the region. Europe was as much in need of

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>241</sup> See Bernays *Crystalizing Public Opinion*, (1923).

securitising as Latin American had been during the war. Another opportunity for the United States to use film and education to securitise its own territorial and ideological interests.

What the Bernays' survey reveals is a continuing practice of attempting to remedy negative and detrimental media coverage of the United States with further and more pervasive information and media campaigns that coupled a desire for self-censorship in Hollywood with targeted educational propaganda. Even with the dissolution of the OCIAA and OWI in 1945 the continuing mission of U.S. information agencies, most notably the United States Information Agency (USIA), would perpetuate the media strategies of wartime America for decades to come. The Bernays' study made several recommendations that demonstrate a way of thinking about American foreign policy in terms of consciously manipulating the cultures and politics of other nations to better serve the globalising influence of the United States. Believing that print and radio in Britain were dominated by self-serving media barons, whose primary concern was selling copy by catering their American focussed content towards scandal and the sensational, they recommended:

The need in Great Britain, therefore, is to convert those in control of the media and the top-level leadership in general to a recognition that British and Americans have common goals and that our mutual interests demand our working together. There must be pro-American leadership on the part of those who dominate British culture in order to create a new climate of opinion in Great Britain. Only through such constructive leadership can information favorable to the United States be broadly projected and accepted.<sup>242</sup>

Edward Bernays' longstanding method of utilising influential public figures and thought leaders was recommended alongside a refinement of the USIA's dissemination of news and opinion to work around what was considered to be the roadblock of British news publishers. Student exchanges, the recruitment of educational organisations, travel agency promotion, preferential trade with allied industries, and civic institutions were all suggested to help enforce

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<sup>242</sup> Bernays & Bernays, "A Study of British Hostility," 29.

the message of Anglo-American cooperation and mitigate anti-American sentiment. A mirror image of the OCIAA's Latin American security strategy was now being proposed to securitise and culturally align strategic European allies. This took the form of recommending that the British government reevaluate their textbooks and other educational publications in order to 'correct distortions or untruths about the United States that are detrimental to the Grand Alliance.'<sup>243</sup> As this study dramatically illustrates, U.S. educational interest in their European partners was deeply rooted in the security prerogatives of an expansive global security project, one that strongly suggested that a friendly sovereign nation re-write their textbooks to look favourably on American history in order to shape overseas public perception. Public education, though often associated with liberal progressive traditions, was evidently essential to the territorial and ideological strength of the USA who understood that maintaining its power involved shaping educational decision making both at home and abroad.

Koppes and Black agree that the New Deal liberals who constituted the bulk of the OWI's senior staff 'undermined the liberation for which they said they fought.'<sup>244</sup> Specifically, they argue this resulted from their censorship crusade in the American entertainment industry, actions which indicate a transformation in the liberal mentality during the war, enabled through a media strategy that focussed on centralising and conforming public opinion whilst reinforcing obedience to the authority of the state. For the New Deal liberals, already used to an uncommon amount of centralised executive authority, the War Powers Act of 1941 was more of a continuation or escalation of policy established during the Great Depression rather than a radical departure from it. What emerged was a system of governance through censorship, uncritical patriotism, and an unquestioning obedience to central authority quite unlike the ideals of liberalism as Adam Smith might have imagined them. What might be called consensus

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>244</sup> Koppes & Black, "What to Show the World," 105.

politics of the period, I would argue is closer to what Giorgio Agamben has described as a ‘permanent state of exception’ that he argues arose during the First World War and whose continuity was sustained in large part by the immediacy of the Cold War.<sup>245</sup>

### **2.5.3 Looking Ahead to Peace**

Even with the war entering its concluding phases in Europe, there was to be no let-up in the OWI’s ‘long term cultural program’ using ‘16mm informative educational films,’ with production to continue to be developed ‘until the end of the war in the Pacific.’<sup>246</sup> However, even an organisation as powerful as the OWI was subject to the mutability of post-war bureaucracy. According to Kenneth Osgood, President Truman came under increasing pressure to dismantle the vast propaganda network amassed by the OWI in large part due to pressure from congressional conservatives who targeted the department on the basis of its large staffing of New Deal democrats.<sup>247</sup> Without FDR to protect them, many of the former president’s long-term appointees saw their positions dissolved by Truman, who, feeling pressure from the right, but not wanting to lose the leverage the propaganda apparatus conferred in foreign relations, decommissioned the OWI and transferred many of its operations to the State Department. What this demonstrates is that despite their best intentions, the development of long-term media strategies was often subject to the internal power politics of the U.S. government. The longevity of useful propaganda programs, implemented under wartime expediency, was only made possible by the shrewd refocussing of resources to ensure they could be continued under the wings of more integral and stable peacetime departments. Thus, the U.S. Cold War propaganda machine was drawn from the fringes of largely independent wartime information departments and integrated as a core function of state foreign policy. The conscious manipulation of the

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<sup>245</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, 12.

<sup>246</sup> Arnason, “Relations With OWI,” 1.

<sup>247</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 32.

thoughts and behaviours of American citizens and foreign nationals through entertainment and educational media was now an official stratagem of international relations.

The State Department's long-term planning for the future of education in the United States were laid bare in a policy document sent to Don Francisco and Francis Alstock at the OCIAA in July of 1944. Titled *Educational Movies: A Coming Revolution*, the document forecast an immanent necessity for educational films, proposed approaches for adapting the department to its needs, and most importantly, outlined strategies for cornering the new market. Citing Disney's educational films as benchmarks of the technical standard already possible, H.K. Fleming proposed that the next decade would be 'revolutionised by ... visual instruction by movies.'<sup>248</sup> Fleming's plan urged a cautious haste. As much as he insisted that 'competition will be strong and the first entry in the field will be in an advantageous position,' he was well aware that several challenges lay ahead, particularly when it came to the teaching unions.<sup>249</sup>

It is essential to approach the problem cautiously and scientifically for several reasons, one is that if teachers - and they are a powerful body - fear their profession may be jeopardised by the widespread introduction of movies, they will resist them strongly, and they are in & position to make adverse reports at any time ... The first technical difficulty to be overcome will be the nature of the liaison between the producing unit and authoritative educational circles ... It would be wise to secure participation or a capital investment by some well-known text-book concern ... It would also be wise to secure the participation, possibly as an advisor, of someone like Joe Brandt, President of the University of Chicago Press ... Still another participant, advisory or otherwise, should be the most enlightened State Superintendent of Schools who can be located ... The advantage to be gained here would be by inducing some one State to accept a system of visual education to the fullest possible extent. If the State is say, Iowa, there would be a publicity concentration on the "Iowa development" or the "Iowa experiment." ... In short, there should be set up a corporation having links on the one hand with a producing unit and on the other with educators. This job will entail imaginative research and salesmanship of a high order.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Fleming, "Movies and Education," 2.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 1-3.

Auguring the future of motion picture-based education is, as this thesis has already explored, not exactly a novel concept, with predictions of textbook obsolescence, teacher redundancy, and pedagogic patents dating back to the earliest days of cinema. What distinguishes the plan, however, is how informed it is by the strategic thinking of centralised wartime bureaucracy, whilst seeking ultimately to privatise and monetise a public concern. Still more revealing is the embedded necessity of a propaganda campaign, enlisting academics, publishers, and educators as well as a fabricated showpiece of their ‘experiment’ which can be sold to the American public. Techniques and technologies of mass persuasion, birthed from the securitisation and intelligence prerogative of wartime necessity, and honed on the frontiers of a fledgling empire would return to home as standardised practice to do much the same work as they had done abroad, selling America and its cultural and militaristic supremacy, only this time to young Americans.

The emergent conflict with the Soviet Union renewed the United States’ vigour for propaganda as the superpowers mutually adopted far reaching media strategies to advance their territorial boundaries and ideological precepts. As Kenneth Osgood puts it: ‘Mass communications, mass societies, and the democratization of politics further accentuated the ideational aspects of the Cold War competition.’<sup>251</sup> Securitising and influencing the world via a persuasive filmic medium and reinforcing through education a stable knowledge base of prescribed dogma proved a cost-effective means to advance American hegemony whilst minimising direct military conflict with the USSR. The frontline of this mediatised conflict would return home to envelope the peacetime prosperity of the 1950s in a number of surprising ways, chief among them being the use of educational film. The war permitted an almost universal acceptance of propaganda in the American mass media from news to entertainment, technical instruction, and education. The emergency powers had blurred the lines between the

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<sup>251</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 33.



school and military by fully incorporating and legitimising in-school military training and enlistment preparation. Would these programs and the thinking that motivated their implementation cease in the post-war world? The short answer is no, as the next chapter will explore, in assimilating education via motion pictures into its foreign policy objectives of hemispheric securitisation and expansive free market economic supremacy, the United States irreparably entwined educational cinema and national politics.

The primary consideration of this chapter has been that educational cinema constituted a platform on which Rockefeller's OCIAA, the DoS, and OWI leveraged the cultural influence of the United States as collateral against securing the popular and military support of the OAR for the Second World War specifically, and ongoing Pan-American hemispheric securitisation in general. The combined domestic and foreign distribution shows that the U.S. government were aware on some level that domestic civilian populations required just as much narrative propaganda as did the overseas allies. This consideration is useful in drawing back an understanding of the United States' Cold War foreign policy by witnessing the establishment and of its pre-war propaganda apparatus and their rapid expansion after America's entry into the war. The hybrid use of educational films such as *Americans All* as a culture film, and civil defence film for example demonstrates the plasticity of motion picture usage. Likewise, a popular entertainment film like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, could, in front of one audience be enjoyed as pure amusement and yet have disastrous consequences when used in foreign relations. This plasticity recalls Fisher's definition of capitalist realism. The implication of multiple functional renderings of the same fixed media emphasises the importance of the classroom as the fixer of ideological context. The same film played in a theatre may be contextualised as entertainment but in a pedagogic context, with the impetus to regard what is viewed from an ideological perspective, namely that a better understanding of one's neighbour

forms part of a praxis of national defence, the true ideological function of capitalist realism is revealed.

The interdepartmental coordination of the OWI, OCIAA, alongside the projects already underway by the State Department, and the fledgling Office of Strategic Services indicate a unified and convergent, if not officially sanctioned, media strategy. Extending U.S. influence and prestige abroad was actioned by using educational cinema as a distribution network to propagate military and ideological supremacy in the guise of liberal cultural outreach. The same strategies that foregrounded education and motion pictures as key sites for industrial ideological ingress were again used to conform friendly overseas nations to the foreign policy objectives of the United States government.

The dissolution of these agencies coupled with the emergence of distinctly Cold War orientated domestic and overseas intelligence agencies marked the beginning of the end of the New Deal liberals' grip on power. They would cede these responsibilities to successive and evermore hawkish political operators. Meanwhile at home, as the next chapter will explore, ideologically inflected educational films would become the staple of American classrooms, as industry led post-war campaigns reiterated the political philosophies of the National Association of Manufacturers in which promotion of the economy, was fully conflated with a defence of democracy. The next chapter will examine a selection of these films, the networks that enabled their production in the context of a renewed effort by NAM and other organisations to expand and legitimise a probusiness, small government, and increasingly reactionary enclave in public education. Films would be produced that would demonise unions, rail against taxation, and preach of an existential need for free enterprise, while establishing a school to factory pipeline that would extend the prerogatives of public education to service the needs of industry. Through sponsored motion pictures, education would be used to facilitate a turn towards an idea of democracy yoked to the demands of free enterprise.

## **Chapter 3: How Our Business System Operates**

### **3.1.1 The National Association of Manufacturers**

The statement “let's go to the movies” which is repeated millions of times daily as America seeks its favorite form of recreation and relaxation is being utilized to the utmost by the organization. As we all know the “movie” audience increases daily and it is through the medium of the screen that we have one of the most potent forces of public relations. Questions such as “What is free enterprise?”- “What does It mean to me?”- and “What opportunities does the worker have in industry today?”- are vividly typified and explained by NAM productions.<sup>1</sup>

The formation of the National Association of Manufacturers coincided with the birth of cinema. From its inception in 1895, birthed from the turmoil of the Panic of 1893, a coalition of likeminded manufacturing concerns banded together to form a national body that could act in the interests of the mutual security and economic advancement of its members. Organised around two core principles, it dedicated itself ‘to make the American system of individual competitive enterprise work better for all,’ and ‘preserve and strengthen individual freedom as the only basis for economic, political, and social well-being in a free America.’<sup>2</sup> Using the medium alongside which it matured, NAM would reach unprecedented audiences with its ideological messaging. If NAM were as they proclaimed, ‘the voice of industry,’ cinema was the medium thorough which this voice would be heard by millions.<sup>3</sup>

The previous chapter explored how educational motion pictures were utilised by intelligence branches of the U.S government, creating propaganda for foreign and domestic securitisation. Through motion picture distribution campaigns, the United States extended its regional influence in Latin America and Europe whilst fixing a narrative of patriotic solidarity at home where educational film producers and Hollywood became fully absorbed into the wartime propaganda apparatus. Educational films, in large part because of their value to the war effort, had become widely accepted as an essential part of any modern curriculum. Novelty

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<sup>1</sup> Hosking, Letter to Edward Garity, 3.

<sup>2</sup> NAM, “Champion of the Competitive Enterprise System,” 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 2.

had given way to convention and a fully-fledged educational film industry erupted to meet expected post-war demand, spurred on by a surplus of stock, equipment, and a substantial talent pool of technicians who had honed their skills during the war.

Post-war surplus was met with post-war demand as the population effects of the baby-boom began to be felt and the student population United States ballooned. So too did the need for infrastructure and staffing, with forty five percent of all American schools being built between 1950 and 1969 to accommodate demand.<sup>4</sup> Even though there were ‘more projectors in schools than ever before,’ the same financial pressures that had plagued schools and stalled the educational film industry in the 1930’s still existed.<sup>5</sup> Despite tight budgets and less procurement of equipment than what had been expected, the number of film libraries in the United States exploded in the decade after 1949, from under nine hundred to over three and a half thousand.<sup>6</sup> With the growth in demand and the financial pressure on film libraries to make cost effective decisions in purchasing and rental of films, the opportunity arose once again for independently funded organisations to capitalise on the market by making films available for free.<sup>7</sup>

The following chapter will examine how the American classroom became one of the most significant platforms for the dissemination of free enterprise ideology. Cries for the schools to be purged of communist influence, as happened in the Baltimore school system, were typical of a mounting anxiety that despite the post-war peace and prosperity, America was being undermined by radical subversives.<sup>8</sup> Alongside calls to develop patriotic curriculums that focussed on developing ‘better understanding of democratic heritage,’ stark ultimatums were pronounced on the assumption that the schools had become a hot bed of communist

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<sup>4</sup> National Centre for Educational Statistics, “How Old Are America’s Public Schools?” 1.

<sup>5</sup> Reglein, “The Plight of the Educational Film,” 309.

<sup>6</sup> Orgeron, et al., *Learning With the Lights Off*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Oaks, “List of Motion Pictures,” 3.

<sup>8</sup> “Baltimore Schools Act to Purge Reds,” 12.

infiltration.<sup>9</sup> One newspaper declared: ‘We must deny to Communists and to those who support the principles of Communism the opportunity to use the public school system for disloyal indoctrination.’<sup>10</sup> Loyalty oaths, witch-hunts, and summary dismissals, contested only by an increasingly maligned network of teaching unions framed an educational environment in the late 1940s and early 1950s that was fraught with suspicion and accusations of indoctrination and sedition. School administrators were often caught in between the need, as Edmund Reutter has explored, to ‘cope with the problem of alleged subversive activities of public-school personnel, and at the same time to insure [sic] for teacher’s civil rights and prerogatives of academic freedom.’<sup>11</sup> By 1950, thirty-one states had enacted laws granting legal grounds for dismissal rooted in enforced loyalty oaths that demanded patriotic affirmations from its teaching staff.<sup>12</sup>

Public educators faced numerous fierce assaults spearheaded by vocal right-wing groups. Organisations including Allen Zoll’s National Council for American Education, openly endorsed antisemitic political organisations in their crusade to root out subversives and ‘Red-ucators’ in the public school system.<sup>13</sup> Zoll, who the Anti-Defamation League described as a ‘fascist propagandist,’ widely disseminated literature campaigns that included such works as *Progressive Education Increases Juvenile Delinquency*, and *They Want Your Child* alongside the pamphlet that most clearly iterated their plans for education *Private Schools: The Solution to America's Educational Problem*. His organisation claimed that by 1951 they had managed to pressure nine states to investigate ‘subversives’ in their schools and sought to introduce ‘teacher loyalty oath legislation’ nationwide.<sup>14</sup> The issue was becoming so severe that even President Truman was forced to intercede to prevent what he saw as the material and social

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<sup>9</sup> “Jansen Stresses the American Way,” 17.

<sup>10</sup> “Baltimore Schools,” 12.

<sup>11</sup> Reutter, “The Administration of Restraints,” 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Melby, “American Education Under Fire,” 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

progress of the 1950s being ‘swept away by a wave of hysteria.’<sup>15</sup> The President vociferously opposed the kinds of reactionary legislation that was attempting to be pushed through congress for being ‘so broad and vague in its terms as to endanger the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly protected by the First Amendment.’<sup>16</sup> NAM’s leadership were not so restrained in their public cries for action. Amidst the pervasive atmosphere of suspicion and whispers of communists undermining the institutions, the creeping militancy, which had characterised industry’s approach to the promotion of its free enterprise economic philosophy, would erupt, tilting into the paranoid zeitgeist to assert its logics as the embodiment of democratic liberty. Spearheaded by that most persuasive of technologies, the motion picture, NAM would escalate its crusade for free enterprise by focussing on the school as one of the primary targets for its propaganda campaigns. Truman’s portrait may have hung in the principal’s office but NAM’s films played in the classrooms.

As this chapter will explore, NAM’s adaptability and increasingly hard-line position on teaching economic literacy combined with limitations on federal power dragged the political discourse on public education ever further to the right. The ultimate goal of which was to use educational films to make their economic theories legible to children. Not only did the political philosophy of industrial capital inform the content of its filmic output but, through enormous financial and organisational leverage, NAM were able reshape significant parts of the educational landscape to service its own ideological needs. In doing so they influenced national educational policy primarily for the benefit of the technical and manpower requirements of its members. This chapter engages with a growing body of scholarship on the National Association of Manufacturers, situating its arguments within a continuation of efforts to promote free

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<sup>15</sup> Truman, “Special Message to the Congress,” 1. Douglas Miller and Marion Nowack argue that Truman was himself to blame for much of the hysteria of the Second Red Scare after signing Executive Order 9835 in an ultimately futile attempt to seek out the infiltration of dissident and disloyal civilian employees in the government. (Miller & Nowack, *The Fifties*, 26.)

<sup>16</sup> Truman, “Special Message to the Congress,” 1.

enterprise through education. First it examines the ideological base of the National Association of Manufacturers and how it informed their concerted educational campaigns in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>17</sup> It will then focus on three films produced by NAM for a post-war school audience which best articulate their core philosophies and typified their responses to social change in America. Scrutinising the messaging and the methodology by which these ideas saturated curriculums across the country, this chapter argues that these films, reactionary against both government and unions, constitute the culmination of twenty years of industrial propaganda. As this chapter will reveal, there was a demonstrable radicalisation of ideas fusing the business-first logics free-enterprise capitalism with individual notions of democratic freedom which were propagated as a form of ‘militant liberty.’<sup>18</sup> The consequence of which, this chapter argues, was the reshaping of the post-war educational landscape to resemble a manifesto for free enterprise, and as such, significantly contributed to the ideological groundwork for what would become neoliberalism.

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<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Glickman’s *Free Enterprise*, provides a wider context to the historical development of the concept of free enterprise as it has entered into political discourse and changed over time, reflecting shifts in American political history from the opposition to the New Deal to its consequential legacy in the conservative political formations of the 1970’s and 1980’s. Jennifer Delton’s *The Industrialists* provides an in-depth look at the Association itself, charting its growth and decline, noting the complexity and internal contradictions of an organisation that challenges assumptions regarding it as an economic monolith. Charlie Whitham’s *Corporate Conservatives Go to War: How the National Association of Manufacturers Planned to Restore American Free Enterprise, 1939–1948* provides detailed insight into NAM’s wartime efforts to reassert the dominance of its members and develop its post-war planning (A history that immediately precedes much of the focus of this chapter.). In addition, chapter seven of Elizabeth Fones-Wolf’s *Selling Free Enterprise* provides one of the best accounts of NAM’s interest in education in tandem with wider post-war programs initiated by industry to counter a growing void between the business community and educational institutions. Chapter twelve of Lee Grieveson’s *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations* also provides essential insight on NAM’s multimedia strategies in the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>18</sup> Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 308. These concepts would be formalised in the 1950s and later actioned in projects of psychological and political warfare in Latin America, and any other regions deemed susceptible to the influence of communism. See: *Militant Liberty: A Program of Evaluation and Assessment of Freedom* (1955).

### 3.1.2 ‘The Rising Stock of Dr Hayek’<sup>19</sup>

In 1945, the social scientist Lawrence K. Frank noted that Friedrich Hayek’s latest book *The Road to Serfdom* was beginning to become popular among certain circles of businessmen and industrialists. He set out to try and understand what it was that made Hayek’s theories so popular. NAM, for example, actively encouraged its members to read *The Road to Serfdom* almost as soon as it was released in 1944, aligning as it did with their economic philosophy of total economic liberty and the devolution of the federal government’s capacity to enact economic and labour legislation at a national level.<sup>20</sup> Hayek’s insistence that civilisation was only made possible by humanity’s submission to the ‘impersonal forces of the market,’ struck a chord with the business community who’s reverence for the idea of free enterprise had grown increasingly militant during the war.<sup>21</sup> Hayek’s insistence that ‘economic freedom is ... an indispensable condition of all other freedom, and free enterprise both a necessary condition and a consequence of personal freedom,’ was an affirmation of the economic orthodoxy and ‘alarmist rhetoric’ that NAM and other opponents of the New Deal had increasingly adopted since the early 1930s.<sup>22</sup> Its adoption of Hayek’s political and economic philosophy mirrored an increasingly hard-line stance among its constituent members who crusaded to suppress union power and reverse, as much as possible, the economic reforms and expanded role of government that had characterised Roosevelt’s presidency. After 1947, and with the beginnings of the Cold War, the Association was pushed ever further to the political right with the ascendancy of figures including Robert Welch to the board of directors.<sup>23</sup> With new leadership,

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<sup>19</sup> Frank, “The Rising Stock of Dr Hayek,” 46.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 151.

<sup>22</sup> (Hayek, “The Spiritual and Moral Significance of Free Enterprise,” 27; Glickman, *Free Enterprise*, 82. See Glickman chapter three for more on anti-New Deal actions outside of NAM.

<sup>23</sup> Welch would go on to found the John Birch Society, an extreme far-right, anti-communist lobbying group who similarly advocated a philosophy of ‘less government and more individual responsibility’ alongside their virulent anti-communist beliefs. Such was their paranoia in pursuing a national witch hunt for communists that they publicly accused President Eisenhower, and director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, of being communist subversives. (McFadden, “Robert Welch Jr. Dead,” 6.) Welch would also throw vocal support behind the later nomination of



NAM 'became dominated by family-controlled manufacturing concerns with an ultra-conservative bent.'<sup>24</sup> Frank offered a scathing rebuke of Hayek's worldview, describing Hayek, and his followers, as 'bewildered and sometimes panicky individuals who are unable to muster the courage and the imagination to face the problems of an evolving technological social order.'<sup>25</sup> Frank warned that Hayek's pessimistic beliefs were being taken seriously in the world of politics and business by powerful individuals who had the capacity to act on their beliefs, warning against Hayek's 'curious doctrine which some of our editorial writers, businessmen, economists, and professional groups are asking us to accept as the only guide for facing the problems of tomorrow.'<sup>26</sup> What Frank described as curious, the business community and their representatives, especially at NAM, accepted for gospel, and sought to evangelize at every level of society the idea of the 'successful use of competition as the principle of social organisation.'<sup>27</sup> When it came to government, their long-standing refrain, whether it regard housing, highways, education, or electricity, remained doggedly consistent: 'the preservation of the American system of free, private, competitive enterprise depends upon the limitation of governmental activities in proprietary undertakings.'<sup>28</sup> In pursuit of this goal to limit government, NAM framed any perceived attack on the idea of the free market, or regulatory legislation at the federal level, as a dangerous encroachment on civil liberty. This increasingly militant stance on free enterprise, developed out of perceived threats to its client industries, formed the basis of its post-war public relations campaigns.

One such campaign, calling for every patriotic American to become a 'sentinel of free enterprise,' established a national network of spies, enlisting the help of the public to monitor

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Barry Goldwater and, through the John Birch Society furnish him with financial support. (Mallon, "A View from the Fringe," 1)

<sup>24</sup> Soffer, "The Militarization of American Conservatism," 781.

<sup>25</sup> Frank, "The Rising Stock," 53. Frank's criticism drew heavily from his professional field of childhood developmental psychology, and framed Hayek in infantilising terms.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> NAM, "Hydro Electric Power Development," 1.

local press and media.<sup>29</sup> Sentinels were tasked with reporting anything that might be construed as an attack on industry or free enterprise to their local coordinator, or write letters of complaint to newspapers, or theatre owners should they publish or screen material critical of free enterprise. Their handbook gave instructions to listen for anything they might hear on the radio, in group meetings, at the cinema, at church, from things their children say about school, and from what their wives say when they return from their women's group meetings.<sup>30</sup> The pledge implored them: 'Don't fail to report immediately to NAM mobilization headquarters attacks of national character upon industry. The NAM will endeavor to answer them. NO UNJUST ATTACK UPON INDUSTRY, LOCAL OR NATIONAL, MUST GO UNANSWERED.'<sup>31</sup> Although the campaign mirrored the broad national paranoia regarding communist subversion, the pamphlet made no direct mention of communism itself, only by inference using the terms 'radical' and 'economic planners.'<sup>32</sup> Instead it superimposed a free-market defence over a contemporary issue in an attempt to mingle the idea of national defence and the wider Cold War conflict with their own legislative, anti-federal agenda. Clearly NAM's priority was more about monitoring national press for negative coverage and being a sentinel had less to do with defending America from communists. The enlistment of volunteers was also used as a way to spread NAM's free enterprise propaganda, as the guidebook noted, it was the duty of the sentinels to duplicate the work of NAM's public relations department: 'As a "sentinel" ask your local theatre manager to show constructive films and suggest to him the use of "Your Town" and other N.A.M. productions which are available to him free of charge.'<sup>33</sup> Regardless of the sincerity of the campaign, what is striking is that NAM were willing to tap into contemporary anxieties in pursuit of their own agendas. With the Cold War framing the public consciousness,

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<sup>29</sup> NAM, "Sentinels of Free Enterprise," 1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 1- 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 10. Capitalisation in original.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 10.

NAM were able to superimpose patriotism, and a defence of the American way of life onto their campaigns. In this sense the abstracted bogeyman of communism could be deployed and attached to any perceived threat to NAM's clients or their free enterprise campaigns as a justification for an aggressive response. When it came to education, and transplanting their core beliefs into the curriculum, NAM prosecuted their campaigns with an equally ruthless zeal.

### **3.1.3 Economic Literacy and Educational Orthodoxy.**

Many large corporations established education departments in pursuit of an understanding of the best ways to extend their public relations campaigns into public education and develop a greater influence in the curriculums of schools and universities. In recognising the opportune circumstances for imparting free enterprise ideology at schools, as well as a broader advocacy of vocational training, NAM dedicated enormous sums of money and personnel to study and implement educational programs that would teach 'economic literacy,' a disarming pseudonym used by liberal free market advocates to describe strict adherence to the ideals of free enterprise capitalism.<sup>34</sup> It was at this time that business leaders such as those at General Motors believed that the growth of their productive capacity and expansion of the economy was act of public good, the method by which they would 'discharge [their] responsibilities to the community in the form of an advancing standard of living.'<sup>35</sup> However if the public did not understand the business view of this role and the social value of expanding capital markets then industry would have little popular support, potentially losing ground to unions and politicians who sought to limit the power of industry. This tension informed much of the turmoil between industry, the New Deal government, and the expanding unions during the Great Depression which had largely been side-lined, though left unresolved by the war.

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<sup>34</sup> NAM described their teaching of economic literacy in the 1940s as a 'knowledge of the functions and principles of our economy ... conversely, a national necessity if our way of life is to be preserved.' (Fern, "A Brief Statement," 4.)

<sup>35</sup> Sloan, Letter to Larsen, 1.

During the Second World War, Alfred P. Sloan, the Chairman of General Motors and ferocious defender of free enterprise, forecasted a crisis that unless the fundamental necessity of the free enterprise system was entrenched in the public mind, then he believed, America would drift ‘more and more in the direction of a socialized or semi-socialized economic state.’<sup>36</sup> What was vitally needed, he argued, was the ‘reconstruction of a foundation of confidence in the future opportunities of accomplishment based on the American system of free enterprise. Otherwise, we may win the war but nevertheless lose the peace.’<sup>37</sup> The necessity of free enterprise needed to be made legible to a generation of children who would grow up in the commodity driven post-war world that business was constructing. The problem as Sloan identified it was a disconnect between the labour force needs of industry and the learned realities of disillusioned work force: ‘We had reached the point, even before the present emergency, where the very people who must be depended upon to expand employment, began to recognize that the effort is not worthwhile.’<sup>38</sup> The role of businessmen like himself, Sloan argued, was to do everything in their power to prepare youth to become part of the industrial workforce. The aim of which was to assist them in identifying their place in society via their relation to the opportunity of employment that free enterprise allegedly offered, and in so doing ‘help youth make the most constructive decision possible.’<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, industry’s primary concerns in education was to streamline pathways into employment and reinforce the idea of the importance of free enterprise in the lives of students. Regular conferences were convened where representatives from industry met with public school administrators to align policy on economic education. One such typical conference outlined its objective as ‘the acceptance and understanding on the part of school children, beginning at the pre-adolescent level, of the benefits to them of the American system of free enterprise, individual freedom and the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Sloan in Larsen, Letter to Sloan, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Sloan, Letter to Larsen, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 1.

democratic way of life in terms of their daily experiences and mode of living.’<sup>40</sup> Skills training was apparently not on the agenda, instead an education that essentialised free enterprise as integral to the maintenance of democracy took precedence. Thus, the values of business rather than the necessary skills to build one were taught to children. NAM’s long-range concern was ensuring a favourable business climate in which to operate. This of course was dependent on future elections and capturing not just a sympathetic candidate, but the electorate too. Demonstrating an awareness that both political parties would set their election campaigns around winning the most votes regardless of economic alignment, NAM’s strategy, however cynical, involved creating a generally sympathetic impression of industry in the public consciousness. In their appraisal of the democratic system of government NAM stuck to a simple principle: ‘Politicians will measure the value of any program in votes. If public opinion is hostile to business, there will be difficulties for industry whichever party wins.’<sup>41</sup> Mitigating anti-business attitudes through education focussed public relations campaigns was therefore key to the association’s livelihood. Through NAM’s educational programs these core educational principles would be disseminated nationally, entrenching free enterprise beliefs about the purpose of education, the necessary limitation of government, and nature of personal liberty.

### **3.2.1 NAM’s History in Education**

NAM’s forays into education began as early as their second annual convention in 1897. Following the assessment that technical schools in England and Germany were more advanced than those in the U.S., a resolution was passed by those in attendance to commit to ‘urging the starting of Commercial and Industrial Arts Schools’ in the United States aimed at making

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<sup>40</sup> Basic American Economics Coordinating Committee, “Summary of Meeting of the Committee,” 1. This organising committee consisted of representatives from Procter & Gamble, Westinghouse, General Motors, Union Carbide, Goodrich tyres, General Mills and the Austin and Des Moines public school systems.

<sup>41</sup> Bohon, “Script for 1955 Development Presentation,” 15.

American industry more competitive with its European counterparts.<sup>42</sup> From early campaigns to improve the quality and access to vocational education, the development of continuation schools, and introducing shop experience into classroom teaching, NAM soon began to focus on the mainstay of their efforts in the educational sphere: opposition to federal government.<sup>43</sup> In what became a recurring motif of their campaigns, in order to avoid negative public perception from the support of controversial decisions, NAM would reframe their opposition to federal regulation of taxes, wages, safety and environmental standards, and education as a struggle between states' rights and an oppressive federal bureaucracy. NAM pushed for a series of policy changes at the national level through lobbying and congressional opposition that were designed to limit government in any arena that the Association perceived to be its domain. In the case of their opposition to child labour laws in the mid 1920s their opposition to the prohibition of children between the age of ten and fifteen working in coal mines, factories and textile mills was spun as 'opposition ... to granting Congress supreme power to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under eighteen years of age.'<sup>44</sup> In 1924 the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Child Labour Amendment that would empower Congress to regulate or prohibit the labour of children under the age of eighteen. However, the Amendment, that would have become the twentieth amendment to the constitution, was only ratified by four states.<sup>45</sup> NAM contributed to its defeat with a sustained campaign to oppose it at the state level, using their influence to 'rally the Southern states' in opposition to the Amendment.<sup>46</sup> NAM reframed the debate as a question of government overreach, limiting the 'revolutionary grant of power' that they argued Congress was allocating itself and positioned themselves as

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<sup>42</sup> NAM Education Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 1.

<sup>43</sup> These policy decisions emerging from annual conferences were enacted between 1910 and 1924, and at the time advocated for increases in federal aid to education programs across the country, in stark contrast to their post 1924 opposition to federal aid for education.

<sup>44</sup> Oreskes, "Attacks on Child Labor," 1; Abbott, "The Child Labor Amendment," 229; NAM Education Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Delton, *The Industrialists*, 95.

<sup>46</sup> Rosenberg, *Child Labor in America: A History*, 184.

defenders of America's hallowed constitution.<sup>47</sup> NAM's general counsel James Emery, who 'appeared frequently at government hearings,' publicly argued that NAM's position on the proposed changes to child labour law was that they were 'both socialistic and communistic ... Subversive of the principles of American life as well as an unjustifiable invasion of states' rights.'<sup>48</sup> At the state level NAM were able to leverage greater political power. NAM and their partners were intimately connected to local politics and often worked in tandem with local government officials towards convergent political goals.<sup>49</sup> At the local level, school boards, super intendants, local politicians, and business leaders were much easier to access and influence, and as was regularly the case, local political power often overlapped with business interests and NAM membership.<sup>50</sup> As Edward Maher, editor of NAM's magazine and staffer at the Public Relations Department would state in a speech years later:

Our job is to make clear the free enterprise view and the reasoning behind it. We are ready at all times to furnish data, statistics, and analyses which may help a member of Congress or a government official in the performance of his duties. This is sometimes called "lobbying", but it is merely the exercise of the right of petition provided in the Constitution.<sup>51</sup>

Following its resolution to block the child labour law, NAM established the Committee on Junior Education and Employment in 1926. The scope of the committee's activities covered a broad evaluation of current educational trends, the extent and causes of accidents to minors in industry, and an analysis of the education of young persons in the United States, including the

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<sup>47</sup> NAM Education Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Rosenberg, *Child Labor*, 184; "Denies Child Labor," 16.

<sup>49</sup> Moore, "The Voice of Industry," 140-149 and 335-338; See also Jennifer Delton, *The Industrialists* Chapter six on lobbying.

<sup>50</sup> One notable example of this from NAM's archives illustrates the close acquaintances and collaboration between NAM's Public Relation Department and local politicians. A letter of congratulations was sent to NAM following the successful election campaign of Republican Governor John Reed in Maine in which the Governor's success was attributed to a blanketing of local political groups, community clubs, and television stations with a NAM produced film on voting rights, *The Velvet Curtain* (1962). In the letter, Hugh Saunders the Executive Vice President of Sanders Brothers Inc, a member of NAM, and former State Senator declared joyously that 'John Reed was elected by the "Velvet Curtain."' (Saunders in Stanley, Letter to Robert Humphrey, 1.) In effect the film was considered to have delivered a political victory for the local Republican Party interests, the State's largest manufacturing concerns, and NAM itself. News of the acclaim was proudly circulated via an inter-office memo between the firms in Maine and NAM offices in Boston in celebration with the proviso that they were 'welcome to use it however, with discretion, inside "the family."' (Stanley, Letter to Robert Humphrey, 1).

<sup>51</sup> Maher, "The Origin, Philosophy, and Program of NAM," 4.

extent of junior employment.<sup>52</sup> As with much of their supposedly progressive initiatives, much of this campaigning sat under a broader drive to increase the power of the states over federal legislation. This political strategy would boost the influence of its closely knit political affiliates and allow them to effectively repeal government legislation that they found unfavourable, particularly the national level reforms aimed at progressive education, workers' rights, wages disputes, and above all else, taxation.

The vocational education which NAM's early campaigns focussed on were seen as much as a practical induction to the necessity of the industrial economy as they were a counter to the progressive liberal education favoured by teachers and unions who, according to Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, viewed vocationalism as a reflection of 'employers desire to produce docile workers.'<sup>53</sup> In this way, as Joel Spring has argued 'the public schools became the central mechanism of social control feeding trained and conditioned workers into its whirring gears.'<sup>54</sup> From the 1930s NAM's subsequent campaigns began to focus less on the promotion of vocational training and more on promoting their own core beliefs about how the economy should operate.

Starting in 1931, NAM began making inroads with universities and students directly, resulting in an established College Bureau by 1937 and a Speaker's Bureau the following year that organised talks on college campuses and in high school assemblies, targeting the nation's 2.4 million university and college students.<sup>55</sup> The coterie of speakers consisted of 'top-flight American industrialists - board chairmen, presidents and vice-presidents of leading national concerns ... [dispatched] ... to tell industry's story before assemblies of college and university students.'<sup>56</sup> An interesting method involved encouraging these industry leaders to canvas

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<sup>52</sup> NAM Education Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, 190.

<sup>54</sup> Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State*, 167.

<sup>55</sup> NAM Educational Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 4.

<sup>56</sup> NAM Education Department, "NAM Educational Objectives." 7.



campuses outside of their local regions, travelling far and wide to address college audiences based on NAM's belief that 'men often have greater appeal when they do not come from the immediate areas in which they are speaking.'<sup>57</sup> NAM's plan was to position figures of considerable influence in the industry as public relations spokesmen, selling the importance of industry and free enterprise face to face: 'This is of supreme importance from the standpoint of commanding the respect and attention of college and university audiences ... as well as insuring good newspaper and radio coverage in the localities they will visit.'<sup>58</sup> The purpose of the speeches, as outlined in NAM's guide, was to instil in students a deep faith in the economy, and to impart a message that the American system of free enterprise provided 'unlimited opportunities' that could only be made to work for everyone by developing free from government restriction.<sup>59</sup> To assist with the dissemination of the message, speakers were encouraged to pay special attention to short bullet point statements and statistics of the type that would be easy to make good newspaper copy or radio broadcast, and to make available mimeographed copies of the speeches for students to take with them and thus ensure 'that maximum publicity can be secured.'<sup>60</sup> Wherever possible these speeches were to be delivered to entire student bodies rather than special interest groups and followed up with actions to keep the student and administrative body of the institutions engaged with industry. It was suggested these could include holding regular meetings with faculty members to keep them up to date with industry developments, and suggest graduate paths for students, establishing contact with editors at student, staff, and general campus newspapers and keeping them well supplied with material and articles on the achievements of industry and the necessity of free enterprise. Together these activities were planned to fashion a 'continuous, year-round campaign in the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 7.

colleges ... in order to build up the most favorable continuing atmosphere possible therein for the American individual enterprise system.’<sup>61</sup>

Close scrutiny was paid to issues of industry-education relations from junior high and high schools to junior colleges, and vocational schools. NAM’s records indicate that they poured considerable resources into studying the issue. They commissioned several studies on the nature and scope of the relationship and problems between education and industry in the twentieth century and consulted with university departments to better understand and develop strategies to appeal to schools.<sup>62</sup> One of the methods they developed to bridge the industry-education gap was to push for ‘recruitment of more top-flight business men on boards of education.’<sup>63</sup> If they couldn’t appeal to educators directly, then it would be more efficient to replace them with their own. In this way educational programs, literature, and films were more likely to make their way into local curriculums and NAM would have permanent liaisons in local public-school districts, ideally situated to influence the classroom experience of the then 6.8 million boys and girls in U.S. secondary education.<sup>64</sup>

NAM established its Educational Advisory Council to foster intimate links at every level and in every sector of the educational system. However, when it came to government involvement in public education, their position remained firm. Despite having advocated for federal aid for vocational education in 1917, funding that would help industry be more competitive with overseas manufacturers, when it came to public education at large they strongly opposed federal subsidies. The following statement which was sent to NAM’s board of directors for approval outlined their stance: ‘The Federal government should not participate in financing the public school system in any of its aspects, either through grants-in-aid or the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 9-10.

<sup>62</sup> Brasted, “Problems Between Industry and Education,” 1.

<sup>63</sup> NAM Education Department, “NAM Educational Objectives,” 10.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 10. A similar approach was laid out to accommodate the 17.85 million children in elementary education.

use of Federal credit.’<sup>65</sup> Big government was useful when NAM were the beneficiaries of the subsidies, but when providing funds to improve the conditions, infrastructure, and salaries of the nation’s educational institutions, such funding was considered ‘further encroachment of the central government on the functional operations of the states and their localities.’<sup>66</sup>

It wasn’t until 1949 that all of the activities of NAM in relation to education were consolidated into a single dedicated educational department tasked with expanding their current activities in the broad field of education. The objectives of the department varied in scope, but revolved around two core principles, firstly to ‘assist schools in making available to the youth of the nation a basic knowledge and appreciation of the advantages as well as the responsibilities of living in a free democratic society.’<sup>67</sup> Secondly, to achieve this ideological objective they would work through their various affiliated industries to ‘make available to teachers at all educational levels informative material concerning the role of industry in the growth and development of our country.’<sup>68</sup> These educational efforts were separated into two divisions, the Education Department, under the direction of F. Kenneth Brasted and answerable directly to the NAM’s managing director, was primarily responsible for action on policy at a national level. Its sister department, the Education and Industry Program (EIP) functioned from within the Public Relations Division and was responsible for more localised ‘community level’ operations.<sup>69</sup> Though the two divisions would collaborate on projects where their responsibilities coincided, there were several important differences in their respective missions. The Education Department focussed on research and consultation. They collated information on current educational trends and practices of significance whilst maintaining contacts with industry bodies such as the Department of Education, the National Educational Association,

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<sup>65</sup> NAM Educational Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Lutz, “Bring Government Back Home,” 19.

<sup>67</sup> NAM Education Department, “NAM Educational Objectives,” 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 4-5.

and American Council on Education (although noticeably absent were the teaching unions) through conference attendance and organising national speaking tours. The EIP, acting on the knowledge and contacts derived from the Education Department organised policy at the local level, implemented education programs, distributed literature, oversaw motion picture distribution, and arranged youth organisation programs.<sup>70</sup>

As an adjacent objective, the Education Department sought to foster better cooperation between educators and industry in the field of vocational guidance, through which they hoped to increase the level of ‘employment efficiency, and employability.’<sup>71</sup> From NAM’s perspective the function of the school was to provide an environment in which potential future employees could be trained, at the public expense, to maximise productiveness and efficiency upon entering the workforce. Notably they sought to distinguish vocational education from a mainstream liberal education by refocussing on a patriotic, civic, and ideological renderings of the meaning of education and purpose of industry. These ideas, which had been decided upon at the previous year’s annual convention in 1948, would define their educational policy in post-war America, they included:

The important task placed in the hands of teachers - making patriotic American citizens ... [and] ... The necessity for teaching American history in all public schools with emphasis upon economic American history ... [with emphasis] ... placed on the importance of having the history of American manufacturing presented in its true light, supplemented with visits to manufacturing plants by high school and college students.<sup>72</sup>

Within a few years NAM’s position on education had shifted from one of improving access to certain industry orientated subjects and advocating for vocational training, to reorientating national educational policy to reflect a locally directed, ideologically motivated, patriotic history fused with a form of liberal economics.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 1.

The formation of a NAM's Education Department coincided with a pronounced militant turn at the beginning of the 1950s, when the newly established division introduced objectives into its programme that focussed on two key areas: citizenship education, and cooperation with 'war-related educational and governmental training programs' designed for war production jobs.<sup>73</sup> As had happened in the past, when certain ideological and manpower priorities aligned with government demands, NAM were happy to collaborate with the federal government. The significant increase in United States military spending from the beginning of the 1950s presented a great opportunity for NAM's members. Expansion of the war industries however, also required a necessary growth in qualified labour force. As had been the case with vocational training in the past, NAM cooperated with government in developing educational curriculum that would ease the transition from the high school to the factory. As the high school had been figured as a pre-induction facility for military service during the war (as the previous chapter explored), NAM were similarly configuring the high school as preinduction for industrial labour and defence industries:

The Education Department's activities in connection with training for defense or war mobilization will be primarily concerned with educational institutions and agencies--national, state and local ... in all matters pertaining to training programs essential to defense or war mobilization.<sup>74</sup>

In tandem with training for these kinds of industrial labour, citizenship education was regarded as an essential component in American education. As their Education Department noted:

With 46,000,000 young people who became of voting age within the last 20 years, and with the prospect of some 50,000,000 becoming of voting age in the next 20 years, our efforts to cooperate with all groups engaged in promoting citizenship education becomes vitally important.<sup>75</sup>

This policy reflected NAM's beliefs on the purpose of education; that it should reinforce a sense of patriotism through citizenship education harmonised with their broader propagandistic

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<sup>73</sup> NAM Education Department, "NAM Education Department 1951 Program," 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

drive to create a syncretic form of American nationalism that stressed the inseparability of individual freedoms from those of market freedoms. This integrated national network of advisors, educational practitioners, researchers, and specialists, operating through the administrative wings of the public relations division of the largest industrial lobbying group in American history represented one of the single most dominant (and well-funded) forces in national education. The ‘spare no expense’ approach to capturing the public, and particularly the student’s imagination was a remarkable undertaking. Gilbert Geis, a noted criminologist, and scholar of white-collar crime observed in 1950 that ‘today, it is estimated that a million dollars are spent daily by the Association to make the American people believe that what is good for business is good for them.’<sup>76</sup> By 1950 NAM’s catalogue of teaching aids was mailed out to twenty-five thousand public schools. In one month alone it had mailed over three million pieces of free NAM literature, and its industry education magazine *Trends* was being sent to seventy-thousand educators across the country.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.2.2 HOBSO in the Schools

NAM’s post-war educational mission was defined in their own words as a ‘determined expansion of its original purpose in establishing an Education Department – to get school and college administrators, teachers, and students to consider and understand the fundamentals of a free enterprise economy.’<sup>78</sup> How Our Business System Operates (HOBSO) was an educational program designed to introduce into school curriculums their free enterprise beliefs ‘as a motivating device ... [for] ... developing certain basic economic ideas.’<sup>79</sup> As with much of their disarming language, the description of ‘basic economic ideas’ masked an ulterior motive. Elizabeth Fones-Wolf has described HOBSO as the ‘most systematic effort to shape

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<sup>76</sup> Geis, “NAM in the Schools,” 1.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>78</sup> NAM Educational Advisory Committee, “History,” 4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 13.

ideology in the realm of education.’<sup>80</sup> HOBSO began life in 1949 as an employee training program developed by the DuPont Company and adapted by NAM in 1950 for use throughout industry as a primer on economic education before being launched in schools.

Two versions of HOBSO, an employee communication programme for education in the workplace, and a visual aid for economics in the classroom were distributed widely. NAM subsequently adapted it for use in the high school, where it was launched as a fully-fledged educational program in 1954 and within a year it was being taught in over three and a half thousand classrooms.<sup>81</sup> HOBSO was introduced to communities strategically. First, a NAM representative would offer a free demonstration of HOBSO to school administrators and teachers. Following this, workshops co-sponsored by local education authorities would be organised to train teachers how to effectively deliver the HOBSO presentation, after which they would receive an official NAM certificate. These twelve-hour training courses effectively used funds allocated for public education to train teachers to become part-time NAM employees and deliver its economic literacy in place of an established curriculum.<sup>82</sup> Schools with one or more HOBSO certified teacher could then choose to purchase the HOBSO kit for a modest fee.

In the schools, HOBSO was intended to be used in place of, or as part of, courses on U.S. history, economics, community civics, and ‘problems of democracy.’<sup>83</sup> The classroom HOBSO program consisted of a four-part flannel board presentation discussing concepts and problems in the economy designed to outline how best it could work, and how superior it was to other economic systems. Part one described the basic factors of the American economic system as viewed by NAM, highlighting its beliefs on the role of the consumer, government, and competition whilst outlining the ‘contributions of American capitalism to everyday

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<sup>80</sup> Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, 204.

<sup>81</sup> Bohon, “Script,” 10.

<sup>82</sup> NAM Education Department, “HOBSO,” 1.

<sup>83</sup> NAM Education Department, “Teacher’s Handbook,” 13.

living.’<sup>84</sup> Part two emphasised the accomplishments of the American business system over the past one hundred years, drawing connections between improvements in living standards, working hours, and new inventions to positive improvement in people’s lives. Part three consisted of graphic illustrations that described the mechanisms of the economy in step-by-step fashion, while part four reinforced the idea that the ‘constitutional rights and privileges of Americans’ are ‘inherent to our system of government,’ drawing comparisons with communism, socialism, and fascism.<sup>85</sup> With each panel, a series of leading questions was asked of the class to consider which would then be accompanied with a rhetorical statement. For example when considering the style of government in the U.S., the teacher would ask from a flashcard: ‘How would this system of ours be altered under Socialism where the Government owns and operates the basic industries?’<sup>86</sup> This was then followed up with the statement: ‘The founders of this country were used to strict government regulations and control of trade and industry, but they didn't like it ... so they rebelled, won a war, and built an entirely new system to their own liking.’<sup>87</sup> This then led on to a discussion of the Bill of Rights, linking free enterprise to foundational moments of American revolutionary and legislative history, and enshrining it as part of the democratic system of government. All of which was designed to draw the audience with a progressive series of leading questions and half-truths presented in such a way as to make them seem like common sense values and natural laws, to establish HOBSON’S core conclusions: ‘In our consideration of certain other systems, it became inescapably evident that political freedoms are inseparable from economic freedoms, and that when we interfere arbitrarily with one, we endanger the other.’<sup>88</sup> As was common when explaining the necessity of free enterprise capitalism, the threat of communism and fascism as

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid,12.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>86</sup> HOBSON, Chart IV, 55.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>88</sup> NAM Education Department, “Teacher’s Handbook,” 97.



the only imaginable alternative to a wholly deregulated market system was invoked as a casual scare tactic. Any suggestion of regulation and federal assistance in any sector was likened to aggressive socialism and a rapid descent into the kinds of Orwellian tyranny that Friedrich Hayek had argued were the inevitable conclusion of government interference in the economy in his writings a decade earlier.<sup>89</sup>

In summary it is evident that our system has not only produced the highest standard of living in the world, but it has provided us with more individual freedoms than are enjoyed by any other nation in the world. We are free to act as we wish, providing our actions do not interfere with liberties and freedoms of others. And it is important to remember that our freedoms are indivisible; each freedom inter-locking with another.<sup>90</sup>

In this formulation of NAM's core philosophy, sometimes referred to as the 'indivisibility thesis' after the usage of term by NAM board member John Howard Pew, NAM presented the belief that social, political, and religious freedoms, freedom of choice, and freedom of expression were indivisibly linked to economic freedom. As has been pointed out by Oreskes, Conway, and Tyson, this dogmatic principle was accompanied by a militant defence, made virtuous by its interweaving of nationalist sentiment forcefully asserting that 'any compromise to business freedom threatened the fabric of American social and political freedom and with it the American way of life.'<sup>91</sup> Thus NAM enshrined in their defence of a specific configuration of the economy, a defence of the fabric of the nation itself and all the symbolic and patriotic investment that it entailed. HOBESO was held so highly in the regard of the Education Department that after its initial deployment there were calls for sustained use in classroom well into the 1960s.<sup>92</sup>

The program was also designed to answer as many of the potential questions that might arise from a classroom setting about free enterprise capitalism (which in the HOBESO program is only ever referred to as 'our business system') and explain in simple terms why it was

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<sup>89</sup> See Hayek. *The Road to Serfdom* 1944.

<sup>90</sup> NAM Education Department, "Teacher's Handbook," 99.

<sup>91</sup> Oreskes, "How American Businessmen Made Us Believe," 102.

<sup>92</sup> Steinbrugge, "HOBESO and Economic Education," 1.

necessary. Examples from their pamphlets illustrate the kind of anticipated business-critical questions that HOBSO was designed to refute or defuse such as: ‘can’t business cut dividends and pay higher wages?’... [and] ... ‘why shouldn’t we have a shorter work week?’<sup>93</sup> Other questions such as ‘what freedoms are lost under socialism ... [and] ... ‘are profits really necessary,’ clearly indicate the ideological prerogatives that HOBSO foregrounded.<sup>94</sup> Speaking on its success and widespread implementation, Robert E. Wilson, the Chairman of the Board of Standard Oil stated: ‘Activities like these will help our high school and college students understand the how’s and whys of our economic system. We believe that such better understanding is the prime essential to a favourable climate for free enterprise in the future.’<sup>95</sup> In pursuit of this ‘favourable climate’ NAM would turn to motion pictures to help saturate the public with its free enterprise essentialism.

### 3.3.1 NAM’s Motion Picture Department

Realizing that the motion picture is recognized as one of the most effective molders of mass opinion, the organization has, starting in 1936, to date produced eight films for public consumption and two films for promotional purposes. By actual count more than 82 million persons in the United States have seen our movies.<sup>96</sup>

NAM’s Public Relations Division dedicated itself to the task of selling ‘the story of competitive enterprise on a national level and to show the U.S. public the reasons behind industry’s stands on current issues.’<sup>97</sup> Out of this division, the Visual Education Department was established in 1946 under the direction of L. Robert Oaks, becoming responsible for the production, distribution, and promotion of NAM’s back catalogue and future productions. Almost immediately after they had begun to use motion pictures for their publicity campaigns, NAM

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<sup>93</sup> NAM Education Department, “HOBSO,” 1.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Wilson, in Bohon, “Script,” 10.

<sup>96</sup> Hosking, Letter to Edward Garrity, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Film News. “We Use Films in Our Program,” 2.

started to use its sponsored films to develop economic education in schools. Motion pictures subsequently became essential to their dual strategy of opposing federal financial support whilst flooding school districts with its own commissioned economic literacy campaigns.

Great care was taken by NAM in selecting the correct filmmaking methods for their motion pictures. In collaboration with the Motion Picture Department, the Education Department conducted surveys with teachers to determine the kinds of usage and expectation that teachers had for the films they would show in certain classes. To maximise the impact of forthcoming film productions in 1950 and 1951, NAM quickly put together surveys aimed at refining the films for use in the classroom before they had even been given subjects or budget. The surveys, a by-product of the close relationships that NAM had fostered with educators through their Educational Council, revealed some interesting conclusions.

Teachers were consulted about their preferences and criticisms for motion picture techniques concerning narrative dramas, animation, and documentary. When breaking down the replies, the survey indicated a preference for motion pictures that divided along disciplinary lines. Teachers in the social sciences indicated a preference for narrative, claiming that ‘biographical fiction has an important place in teaching history and other social sciences ... [whereas] ... teachers of the natural sciences tend to prefer the objective, un-emotional approach of animation and narrative-editorial.’<sup>98</sup> The science and shop-class teachers also stressed the importance of still images and colour in their teaching techniques. Noticeably, the teachers as a group exhibited a bias against animated films, particularly ones made in the style of entertainment cartoons where a slapstick or ‘clumsy character’ is ridiculed for doing things incorrectly.<sup>99</sup> The survey, which pointed to its own methodological flaws in its limited sample group and question range, none-the-less arrived at a series of important conclusions that would

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<sup>98</sup> “Teacher Preference for Motion Picture Technique,” 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

inform the style and content of future productions. Firstly, that teachers used motion pictures more than any other type of visual aid in high school, although there was still a preference for slide films at the elementary level. Secondly, teachers and pupils were also more likely to give positive feedback on the films if they tended to be ‘quality productions,’ ‘well paced,’ and ‘free of advertising.’<sup>100</sup> In its general conclusions the survey found that: ‘The preference of teachers for any technique is determined by the function of the particular motion picture in the specific learning situation ... [following this] ... The fictional story kind of presentation might serve effectively if the lesson were aimed at the development of attitudes.’<sup>101</sup> A toolkit of sorts was needed, specific themes and styles needed to be targeted at certain subjects. These kinds of surveys determined the production process in NAM’s educational films. Once the subject and primary audience had be decided, they would plan the content, style, and narrative around them to achieve maximum effect.

Keenly aware that they needed to produce films of the highest possible standard, NAM sought partnerships with leading Hollywood film and television studios for their wartime and post-war productions. Prior to 1941 NAM had worked with Audio Productions Incorporated, a leading sponsored film producer, but beginning in 1941 with *Defence for America* (1941), they had switched to Paramount, with later films produced by Academy Award winning producer Jack Chertok’s Apex Film Corporation. Unlike many industrial producers who favoured smaller, regional producers, NAM’s dual strategy of theatrical and non-theatrical release required higher quality production value that would be suitable for general audiences in the theatres as well as the classroom. In their promotional material they claimed: ‘Since 1936 the NAM has been using Hollywood-made motion pictures to inform the public on subjects of wide general interest. In that period approximately 175 million persons have witnessed NAM

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 4.

films at some 575,000 separate showings.<sup>102</sup> Production value was of great importance for imparting the seriousness of the ideological messaging in their films, and to this end they favoured a production process that stressed quality and timelessness in order that their films would have a longer circulation.

NAM created meticulous, easy-to-use guides for setting up and maintaining the distribution of its films. One of their manuals detailed NAM's great faith in the power of motion pictures to achieve its ambitions, reiterating industry's faith in the persuasive power of popular mass media: 'Wisely used, the motion picture can be an effective means for explaining the difficult and sometimes abstract problems in the field of economics and in changing unfavorable attitudes toward business management.'<sup>103</sup> NAM's advocacy for motion pictures was summarised in one of its educational booklets, *The Big Market for 16mm*, which described educational films as the most effective weapon in their formidable public relation arsenal. The guide set out rules for best practice in screening NAM films, explaining methods to target certain audiences, how to access film material, and how to fit the films into a program. In one example this involved a method of priming the audience for a screening of their patriotic, anti-government film *Joe Turner, American* (1950), a film advertised as 'a clear call to the businessman to take the helm and oust the inadequate politician.'<sup>104</sup> In the suggested program that would use the film as the centrepiece for a patriotic occasion, it was encouraged that the audience begin by singing 'God Bless America,' and make a 'patriotic recitation,' then have the film introduced by a speaker, explaining its relevance to the occasion. Following a screening the group was encouraged to sing the national anthem.<sup>105</sup> This kind of group conditioning was intended to frame the message of the film in an explicitly patriotic context, guiding the audience to the intended ideological conclusions that NAM wished to impart,

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<sup>102</sup> Bennett, "Press Release," 2.

<sup>103</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department, "The Big Market for 16mm," 2.

<sup>104</sup> Film News, "We Use Films," 4.

<sup>105</sup> "The Big Market for 16mm," 12.

namely that big government was inherently corrupt, and that the business community would be better suited to the role of directing the country.

Detailed instructions for setting up and maintaining a film library, contacts for equipment, distributors, and business film periodicals were also included in the packs sent out to teachers and administrators. NAM's guide also provided a glossary of terms for the amateur, and basic templates for a library stock and loan system, everything a school or civic group might need to establish their own audio-visual department and furnish it with NAM's catalogue. NAM believed that cinema was imbued with a capacity to fundamentally reshape thought. Much of this belief was grounded in the universal acceptance of the use of motion pictures in wartime training. The role played in America's victory by the use of film for training, induction, and propaganda was seen as proof of its effectiveness. Films had helped to win the war, but could they be used to the same success in the world of business? Certainly, NAM believed they could, with victory came a justification, an endorsement even, of the use of motion pictures to effect success, condition the thoughts of viewers, and embody a machine efficiency for programming the human mind:

Motion pictures can cut down teaching or training the armed services found during war time. Motion pictures standardized the training procedure, brought the most effective training practices to all. Motion picture lessons were remembered longer, did not need to be repeated so often.<sup>106</sup>

NAM considered the most potent attribute of film as the ability to 'disarm prejudice,' undoing and reshaping negative public perception in a near miraculous way: 'You can also take your motion picture guests into a world of imagination where fictitious characters teach economic lessons objectively, disassociated from their prejudices of every-day living.'<sup>107</sup> The public needed to be mentally disassociated from their lived experience so that NAM's messages could effectively reshape their attitudes. Peacetime optimism and promises that 'after total war ...

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 2.

[would come] ... total living' may not have been enough to banish the memory of the Great Depression, and with it a lack of faith that a 'post war world would be brought to Americans by corporate largesse.'<sup>108</sup> The need for such sustained campaigns to instil and bolster faith in the public, are evidence that that message was not entirely universal. However, NAM believed the motion picture could assuage doubts, and with the right conditioning, replace them with carefully scripted propaganda: 'One of the greatest advantages of the screen over actually showing people a place or thing is that in the darkened room their attention is not wandering, but is concentrated on the subject under discussion. The camera has led the way - the audience follows.'<sup>109</sup> Clearly NAM believed cinema was a vehicle for the efficient transmission of persuasive and unashamedly coercive material. With a remarkable candidness they also encouraged its use to transmit falsehoods stating that 'Films can ... introduce humor to "kid" people into cooperation when the serious approach fails.'<sup>110</sup> Thematically, NAM's films tended towards reactionary warnings against government overreach, or celebratory endorsements of their free enterprise philosophy. Grouped in these categories the narratives of the films can be divided loosely into either cautionary tales, focussed on the dangers of taxation and government intrusion on business, or explanatory guides telling the story of how free enterprise was uniquely American, inseparable from democracy, and promised prosperity to all. The next section will explore how these two approaches defined their post-war film program by focussing on three films from their catalogue and examining the logics that shaped their production.

### 3.3.2 The Triangle of Plenty

A higher material standard of living can come only from industry - industry in the broad sense, including the production, distribution, and servicing of goods. The social and

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<sup>108</sup> Revere Copper in McGovern, *Sold American*, 352.

<sup>109</sup> "The Big Market for 16mm," 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

political worlds can contribute nothing to the material standard of living. Food, clothing, and shelter come only from industry.<sup>111</sup>

Frederick Crawford's presidency of NAM from 1943 to 1946 was critical to its post-war emergence as a right-wing political force. His tenure witnessed victories over labour with the successful support and promotion of the Taft-Hartley Act and a scaling up of its campaigns to capture the post-war public imagination. While at NAM he used his position to promote his economic philosophy, a dogmatic and overly simplistic understanding of market economics premised on a central fallacy, specifically that 'this market is inexhaustible ... any saturation point is inconceivable.'<sup>112</sup> Crawford distilled his understanding of the economy, one based on a model of infinite growth fuelled by infinite demand, into a simple allegory he described as *The American Triangle of Plenty* which he debuted in a speech at NAM's 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in 1940. In the speech Crawford insisted that: 'To preserve free enterprise, the American people must understand it and its accomplishments ... The industrialist has an obligation to tell the story to his own workmen, and he must tell it in a simple and graphic manner.'<sup>113</sup> The triangle of plenty would explain to workers their place in the three-way demand of industry, as consumer, labour force, and potentially as investor. The triangle pictorially represented the three demanding pressures of industry, in the lower left was capital, the investors who seek greater returns on their investments, in the lower right was labour who seek higher wage and shorter hours. At the top of the triangle is the market, which in Crawford's models represented the market of consumers, always demanding cheaper and better products. In his model, the perfect harmony of the three corners of the economy acted as a wealth redistribution system that benefitted labour, capital, and consumer equally, increasing wages, capital return, and lowering prices indefinitely. The fourth element standing in the middle of the triangle, the lynch pin that allowed for free enterprise to enrich the lives and pockets of

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<sup>111</sup> Crawford, "The Triangle of Industry," 1.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 1.



the three corners, was management. The demands of all three corners needed to be met by the skilful operation of the businessman. Management's role was made explicit, they were the custodians of the economy, the engine that kept the capital flowing, encouraging innovation and constant improvement through competition.

The critical message that this narrative tried to establish was, as Crawford described it, that: 'There are no classes in the American system. All of us are market. All of us are capital. All of us are labor.'<sup>114</sup> The model insisted that everyone in America was a consumer in a collective market demanding more goods, that everyone worked, and therefore everyone was labour, and made the same demand for greater wages. Perhaps most surprisingly the triangle also insisted that everyone, the same one hundred and thirty million people that sat equally in the other two corners were similarly capital: 'Every person with a life insurance policy, or savings account, or who owns anything at all, is capital.'<sup>115</sup> A rather rosy view of labour-management relations given that the staunchly anti-union Crawford, who often clashed with his own labour force and their unions, once described the president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), Walter P. Reuther, as 'ruthless ... unprincipled ... [and] ... a socialist at heart.'<sup>116</sup> In essence the triangle of plenty was an attempt to obfuscate the wealth inequality, lack of capital agency of working people, and power asymmetry between labour and capital in order to erase the notion of class. This erasure, and with it the potential of solidarity, identity, and the collective strength of directed class consciousness, was an essential mechanic of labour suppression. The Triangle was an illusion intended to mask and nullify any connection to the broad based industrial economic redistribution, and decentring of power that unions had struggled to attain against the barrage of violent, and often lethal industrial opposition.<sup>117</sup> Industrial wealth on the other hand enjoyed perhaps the most distinguished and entrenched

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 122.

<sup>117</sup> See labour violence during the Great Depression in the Introduction.

class solidarity in America. NAM if anything were proof of that, bringing together as it did the disparate and competing interests of industrial capital into a single cohesive entity that acted relentlessly in its own collective self-interest.

In Crawford's formulation there were only two obstacles to the operation of the triangle and the subsequent production of wealth. Both of these he identified as being imposed by government. Firstly regulation, including price control, capital flow, and 'all regulation which affects labor wages, such as freezing or creating artificially high wages.'<sup>118</sup> Secondly, taxation, which he argued 'consumes the wealth produced before it can be distributed.'<sup>119</sup> Government would need to be removed from the economy entirely for the triangle to function properly. De-regulation, erasure of taxation, and severance of all federal subsidy was the only path to truly free enterprise, then and only then could the free market in a truly free country act to redistribute wealth evenly. In this formulation NAM embraced many the tenets of a political philosophy that would later come to be known as neoliberalism.

Reader's Digest printed the *American Triangle of Plenty* in 1943 as an illustrated twelve-page pamphlet which NAM subsequently mailed nearly a million copies to teachers. In NAM's estimation this nationwide distribution made it a 'best seller.'<sup>120</sup> However, Crawford's economic model would not rest solely in printed form, and it was quickly earmarked for adaptation by their motion picture department. What began as an attempt to promote free enterprise to the common worker would, under the guidance of NAM's educational department, be developed into an economic propaganda film aimed specifically at children. Because of its simplicity, the triangle of plenty was believed to be an effective way to successfully communicate to children, allowing them to relate to the struggles of management as a beleaguered force that seeks only to satisfy the conflicting demands of labour, consumers, and

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<sup>118</sup> Crawford, "The Triangle of Industry," 9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>120</sup> NAM, "Bibliography," 11.

capital. Through educational film, American children growing up in the immediate post-war period would be taught about business, labour, and the economy through the ideological prism of Crawford's triangle of plenty.

### 3.3.3 Three to be Served

Unlike some of their productions that had been made with the intention of being screened to a diverse range of viewers, *Three to be Served* (1944) was made 'explicitly for high school audiences.'<sup>121</sup> Though it would also have a theatrical release and be used extensively for civic groups, the film, even at the planning stages, was designed to teach the economic philosophy of NAM directly to school children. As such, its narrative would focus on a group of teenagers learning about the values of business. Compared to NAM's other films produced since 1936 it is perhaps the purest distillation of NAM's economic philosophy, being 'primarily intended to visualize and dramatize Mr. Crawford's "American Triangle of Plenty."<sup>122</sup> Produced by Paramount's industrial film division for NAM's National Industrial Information Committee (NIIC), *Three to be Served* would present in an 'entertaining form the basic fundamentals of the American economic system.'<sup>123</sup> The film stands out from NAM's educational productions for a couple of important reasons. Firstly, it formed the backbone of NAM's post-war planning. Despite its early planning stages beginning in 1943, the film was intended to capture the post-war industrial reconversion that had been anticipated even before the war's end and reassert NAM's core free enterprise beliefs. Secondly, its launch and distribution would be on a scale not previously attempted, with the school audience firmly in sight as the primary audience. NAM worked out a distribution plan for the film which was still being labelled as 'The Triangle of Plenty in post-war planning,' aiming for it to be released on the first of February 1944 to

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<sup>121</sup> Parkes, Letter to Jack Thacher, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Paramount Pictures Inc, "Motion Picture Outline," 2.

<sup>123</sup> Steedle, Letter to YMCA's, 1.

coincide with the start of the second school term.<sup>124</sup> Initial forecasts predicted that it might achieve five hundred thousand screenings per year each in schools and women's groups with two hundred and fifty thousand viewings through social agencies, in addition to an anticipated two million viewings during a short theatrical run.<sup>125</sup>

The film tells the story of Bill Miller (Bobby Scott), a teenager who devises a business plan to generate money for a sporting summer camp. Stylistically the film plays on comedic elements and family drama to drag the narrative to its didactic vignettes. NAM's promotional material claimed the film to be 'an important contribution to post-war thinking ... praised by businessmen and screen stars alike as high in entertainment value.'<sup>126</sup> Clearly NAM valued the stylistic comparison to conventional dramatic entertainment, an approach to embedding ideological messages that Elmer Davis endorsed through the Office of War Information's productions as the 'easiest way to inject propaganda.'<sup>127</sup> For example, in an attempt to lampoon Marxist criticism, Bill mockingly describes his hard luck at having crashed his car as the result of him being 'a member of the downtrodden masses exploited by the capitalistic system for its own personal gain.'<sup>128</sup> An amusing scene evidently intended to demonstrate NAM's belief in such economic conditions as self-pitying and childish, while reinforcing the notion that individual responsibility, and self-reliance were all a person needed to compete successfully in the American marketplace.

Bill strikes upon the idea of making insect repellent sprayers to make money for the summer camp after a kindly neighbour shows an interest in purchasing a prototype Bill had been working on. Bill tries to gather some advanced orders to get investment money for new tools and to pay for labour costs, having been told that 'when you have anything worthwhile

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<sup>124</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department "Prospectus," 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>126</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department. "Three to be Served," 1.

<sup>127</sup> Davis, in Koppes & Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 88.

<sup>128</sup> *Three to be Served*, 1944, 08:50.

and orders to prove it, you can always get financial backing.’<sup>129</sup> But when it comes time to pay his friends who have been working to build the insect sprays, they complain about their earnings, apparently ungrateful for their meagre wages, Bill’s first labour dispute. Bill then explains that he can’t pay them anymore because he has a responsibility to the investors and needs money for overheads. When the store owner complains that he can’t sell the sprays for more than a dollar because they are only worth a dollar in the current market and he has to make a margin, Bill’s troubles begin to mount, the market has spoken. Bill is told he will need to improve the quality and lower the price for them to sell competitively.

The problem, as the narrator describes it, was that Bill didn’t understand the ‘fundamentals’ of business. Fortunately Bill is given an inspirational talk and the necessities of business are drawn for him by the kindly neighbour, outlining the tenets of the triangle of plenty and describing it as the ‘theory on which all business operates.’<sup>130</sup> Bill is shown that in the triangle, management sits in the middle with the capital investor pulling on one leg, the labour force pulling other, and ‘the consumer with a rope around your neck, he wants better bargains.’<sup>131</sup> All three must be served, and the solution proposed is to return to the capital investors, to ask for more money, to make more improvements in order to sell more units, thus lowering the price for the consumer.

With more sales at lower prices, the teen workforce of Bill’s friends finally earns enough for the sports camp and decide to close up shop, disbanding the workforce much to the chagrin of Bill’s younger brother who complains that ‘good gosh, I thought this was a steady job,’ much to everyone’s amusement.<sup>132</sup> Fortunately, the investors agree to forego their capital return until the next summer despite everyone in town having already bought an insect sprayer. With a happy resolution and NAM’s triangle of plenty system graphically, if beguilingly

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<sup>129</sup> *Three to be Served*, 1944, 10:45.

<sup>130</sup> *Three to be Served*, 1944, 17:50.

<sup>131</sup> *Three to be Served*, 1944, 18:50.

<sup>132</sup> *Three to be Served*, 1944, 24:05.

explained as a cure all for business management, the film concludes with Bill rescinding his belief that ‘the system was wrong’ and gleefully hands out the gang’s wages. Bill’s social fortunes take an upswing to match his business success as he wins a game of football, goes to the high school dance with his sweetheart, receives an invitation to the meeting of the local planning committee to give a speech, gets his picture in the paper, and has a meeting with the mayor to recognise him as a successful businessman and esteemed member of the community. The film presents these immediate material rewards for Bill’s adherence to NAM’s model of business management, a reflection of his faithful commitment to the virtues of free enterprise and shepherding of capital.

To an audience of children, the simple narrative, and cast of relatable characters may have had a broad appeal, sufficient to communicate the triangle of plenty, however test audience in its other target audiences were vocally unimpressed. For example, an early criticism of the film from test audiences suggested a limited appeal for its use by social services, recognising that a sixteen-year-old boy driving the family car and attending summer camp was not representative of all of school-age children. The main character Bill’s ‘unusual advantages (from a social worker's point of view) ... narrows the field in which we can advantageously promote the film.’<sup>133</sup> NAM realised the need for universality of representation in its target audience, and that pitching the activities of the film as the domain of a removed social class would impair the potency of the ideological messaging. Even if the audience did not have the social means to participate in the economy in the way the film would depict, NAM still needed to engender a sense of investment in the root ideas of the film, namely that its version of economic orthodoxy and the circulation of wealth created by the triangle of plenty benefitted Americans regardless of class distinction. Fortunately for them it was agreed that ‘it should not

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<sup>133</sup> Wayer, “Bill Finds the Angles,” 1.

affect the groups on which we are counting for the greatest circulation.’<sup>134</sup> Similarly, when shown to women’s groups and agricultural workers, audiences were less than convinced. One member of the women’s group asked: ‘There’s one question raised by the film which is not answered, the one by Bill’s little brother Joe: “I thought this was a steady job.” What’s your answer to Little Joe? Why not a guaranteed wage?’<sup>135</sup> Another seemingly unimpressed worker asked, ‘Would you say that competition basically is enterprise? Does it need policing?’<sup>136</sup> NAM offered no answers, but noted the questions carefully as they represented a test run for proposed discussion guides. The discussion guides that would accompany the film for special interest groups could subsequently be better calibrated to avoid unfortunate or awkward questions.

These test audiences were conducted in preparation for NAM’s intense post-theatrical saturation of the alternative film circuits so that they could refine their discussion guides for each specific group. To this end NAM produced three different sets of flyers and discussion guides to cater to each group. For the church groups, the flyer which depicted a bound book in the style of a bible on the cover described *Three to be Served* a ‘modern parable with a message.’<sup>137</sup> For the agriculture groups the green coloured variant depicted ploughed fields, barns and grain silos with a slogan describing the film as ‘a film story about planting tomorrow’s prosperity.’<sup>138</sup> The third, emphasising the entertainment and educational values depicted a reel of film, describing it as the ‘featurette of the year,’ and as ‘an outstanding educational film suitable for classroom use.’<sup>139</sup> Clearly NAM understood that the film needed to appeal to multiple audiences, and as such they developed a distribution plan to blanket the non-theatrical market with discussion guides and targeted appeals to maximise the film’s message in each market.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>135</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department, “Report of the Conference of Fieldworkers,” 1.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>137</sup> Paramount Pictures, “Three to be Served,” 1.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 1.

Their post-theatrical distribution plan was similarly targeted for maximum efficiency. Split into two broad phases, intensive, and general, the film would first be distributed to two hundred and seventy-five towns to be shown before ‘leadership groups’ with a follow up ‘general mail promotion to solicit further showings to groups in each major area - when the intensive campaign has been completed.’<sup>140</sup> First the film would be distributed to between two and five theatres in the targeted towns with a mail campaign encouraging leaders of civic and educational groups to attend, that way the ““thought-moulders,” under any circumstances can see the film, whether or not they book it for their groups.’<sup>141</sup> This would be followed up with the second phase in which a mail order campaign would be sent out across the country to all of the towns and cities not initially in the intensive phase, to encourage the free rental or purchase of the film and projection equipment. This was all exclusive of schools which NAM were confident they could reach ‘without too intensive an effort,’ due to their close links with school systems, and the much greater availability of sound projectors.<sup>142</sup> Once again the Bernays inspired strategy of promotion through community thought leaders and influential figures formed the bedrock of non-theatrical promotion.

For its primary audience, the nation’s school children, a teacher’s guide was produced and distributed along with the reels. Unlike sponsored educational films of preceding decades, where the onus of extracting educationally relevant material from an otherwise unspecific advertisement was placed on the teacher, NAM were specific in directing the educational content and context of the film’s usage. NAM’s practice of instructing the instructor ensured the specifics of the ideological message were properly interpreted, eliminating any error in the transmission of its message. The guide, written for NAM by M.R. Brunstetter, (a PhD researcher in education from the Teacher’s College at Columbia University) provided

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<sup>140</sup> “Plan of Distribution” 2.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 2.



instructions on how the film could be used in multiple learning environments within the school. These included assembly programs, noon-hour programs, extra-curricular club activities, and as a taught unit in the classroom ‘to assist the teacher in planning a unit of this kind ... [with] ... suggestions for objectives, introductory activities, and follow-up projects.’<sup>143</sup> For use in an assembly setting the guide recommended incorporating the film into a Q&A with local business leaders in the school auditorium. For the noon-hour setting it was suggested to substitute individual reading and study time with a screening, effectively side-lining regular curricular activities. For after school clubs it could be used as a springboard to discuss the ‘study of economic, civic, or post-war problems,’ centring NAM’s beliefs in the most pertinent contemporary discussions.<sup>144</sup> The guide’s main instruction however concerned using the film as part of a unit in the classroom, using NAM propaganda *as* education where ‘the greatest value will be derived ... if it is used as an introduction to an extensive experience planned as part of a social studies course.’<sup>145</sup> In this way NAM were framing the context of lessons with their view of economics and American society.

The teacher’s guide set out a list of ten potential objectives for a unit that focussed on the film, with suggestions including: ‘To analyze the free enterprise system in contrast with other types of economic development’ and ‘to study current governmental regulation of business with respect to wage and price ceilings, health, taxation, and trust or cartel agreements.’<sup>146</sup> Embedded in the lesson discussions were NAM’s distinctly anti-regulation, small government ideologies alongside its view of free enterprise as the righteous and singular capital formation of the American economy. The common theme in promoting its version of economics was to repeatedly emphasise that free enterprise was an organic, near perfect, formulation of the market. The fundamentals of business that NAM promoted through the

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<sup>143</sup> Brunstetter, “Teacher’s Guide,” 1-6.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 11.

triangle of plenty were simply a methodology to reveal what they promoted as something akin to a natural law, with any alteration or intervention in its naturalness an almost sacrilegious act. Crawford, who had formulated the triangle of plenty, expressed such a belief when outlining the idea in 1940 stating that: ‘This industrial system - free enterprise - is not a system at all. It is simple everyday human nature expressing itself in a land of freedom. ... Sweep free enterprise all away, let people alone, give them freedom, and the same thing will come back.’<sup>147</sup> Free enterprise was, in NAM’s eyes, inevitable. Yet its inevitability needed decades long constant reinforcement, rigorous psychological entrenchment, and a concerted militant defence to any and all criticism that extended its list of enemies to the government itself.

In addition to its domestic deployment, and following a request from the State Department, six prints of *Three To Be Served* had been donated to the DoS for use in ‘test screenings’ in Mexico, Indonesia, Thailand, France, Italy and Egypt.<sup>148</sup> In Cairo the film was shown to boys between the ages of ten and twelve ‘to show what young people in America are doing and how business in America operates.’<sup>149</sup> The screening had been arranged to test the intelligibility of the film’s message to children with little or no formal education. Something that despite a language barrier and cultural differences, the boys appeared to comprehend with only minor misunderstandings.<sup>150</sup> Partly this effectiveness was believed to be the relatable story, ‘the universal interest in the subject matter - making money,’ with transmission of the message largely ascribed to dramatic narrative being more engaging and easier to follow than the ‘semi-lecture character of the narration of the average short.’<sup>151</sup> NAM’s use of the opportunity to conduct fieldwork here demonstrated part of their rigorous testing process in film production as well as the State Department’s continued project of using U.S. produced,

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<sup>147</sup> Crawford, “The Triangle of Industry,” 7.

<sup>148</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department, “Motion Picture Activities,” 2.

<sup>149</sup> Martindale, “Embassy Telegram,” 4.

<sup>150</sup> The film was presented in English without subtitles, an attendant at the screening would pause the film and describe the dialogue to the children.

<sup>151</sup> Martindale, “Embassy Telegram,” 4.

ideologically infused media to communicate American culture and capital hegemony to the world. The legibility of *Three to be Served* to an audience as far removed from its intended target as the children in Cairo is a remarkable indication of the meticulous care and effort that NAM put into their productions, and a credit to the coherence and orchestration of their long-term ideological projects. Considering that NAM were anticipating that its active circulation would be roughly five years, it was believed the film would result in a substantial ideological dividend given the audience it might reach in that time. Its humorous dismissal of worker's demands, and simplistic narrative of labour/management relations almost seemed to anticipate what would become the largest wave of labour strikes in U.S. history from 1945 to 1946 and the subsequent mollification of labour bargaining power that resulted from the reactionary legislation of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947.<sup>152</sup>

NAM's projected shelf life for the film proved remarkably accurate. By 1951, NAM were asking for copies to be recalled based on dwindling returns, however as one customer from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce in Michigan pleaded, the film, six years after release was still being requested regularly from its library and had been used in eighteen screenings to over a thousand people in one month alone.<sup>153</sup> Lucian Oaks the director of NAM's audio-visual campaigns noted embarrassingly in 1952 that its withdrawal from active circulation without a suitable replacement had given the impression that NAM had 'relinquished [their] leadership to the labor unions in the field of labor-management relations as far as motion pictures are concerned.'<sup>154</sup> Perhaps because of the success of the suppressive effects of the Taft-Hartley Act, NAM had not produced a follow up film until *The Price of*

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<sup>152</sup> The Act which some claimed was 'written by NAM' reversed or severely impaired many of the gains that the Labour Relations Act of 1935 had guaranteed including the rights of workers to unionise, bargain collectively, and call for strikes. (Lee in Delton, *The Industrialists*, 156) John Lewis, the President of the United Mine Workers of America described it as: 'The first ugly, savage thrust of Fascism in America. It came into being through an alliance between industrialists and the Republican majority in Congress, aided and abetted by those Democratic legislators who still believe in the institution of human slavery.' (Lewis, Speech by John L. Lewis, 1)

<sup>153</sup> Gentleman, Letter to Robert Oaks, 1.

<sup>154</sup> Oaks, Letter to John Thacher, 1.

*Freedom* (1949), certainly a more ideologically charged film, and more reflective of the new era defined by the ‘paranoid style’ of right-wing politics in America that characterised the Second Red Scare.<sup>155</sup>

### 3.3.4 The Price of Freedom

By 1950 the circulation of NAM films in schools, colleges, and industry had ‘advanced rapidly,’ with a total reported audience for its films in an eight month period of 2,747,727, an increase of almost one million compared to the same period in 1949.<sup>156</sup> Though they had retired some their oldest films from circulation, NAM were already looking to the future and had arranged for one of their more recent productions *The Price of Freedom* (1949) to be broadcast on television. Much like *Three to be Served* (1944), *The Price of Freedom*, written and directed by William Thiele, reflected NAM’s post-war ideological policy. A dramatic and emotional appeal to justify a system of government and model of society that reflected NAM’s free enterprise values. If *Three to be Served* had aimed to rationalise a simplistic economic model, *The Price of Freedom* preached the necessity of defending that model as a patriotic duty. In essence, conflating the constitutional freedoms of American democracy with a defence of the economy by playing on contemporary fears of communism. *The Price of Freedom* achieved this by fantasising an existential threat to democracy, using the idea of freedom as a floating signifier or symbolic substitute for free enterprise. In this way any threat or criticism of the absolute freedom of free enterprise at large, be it union resistance or government regulation, could be conflated with a socially reinforced paranoia about communist infiltration. A handbill described the film accordingly: ‘The 23-minute film is designed to demonstrate that “The Price of Freedom” is a matter of individual responsibility, and that personal freedom can be lost

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<sup>155</sup> Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, 3-41.

<sup>156</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department, “Motion Picture Activities,” 1.

through apathy, disunity, and mis-understanding.’<sup>157</sup> Another asserted: “‘The Price Of Freedom’ reminds us that the struggle between freedom and our would-be masters never ceases and that each individual bears a responsibility in that struggle.’<sup>158</sup> The film, as with much of its publicity material, framed the narrative with a quote from the Irish politician and defender of civic rights John Philpott Curran: ‘the condition which god hath given man liberty is eternal vigilance.’<sup>159</sup> This played on the idea that ‘the people’ needed to be roused from internal division and apathy to resist a slide into totalitarianism that would be brought forth by increasing government control. The film valorised a hawkish vigilance and unshakeable commitment to personal responsibility and individual freedom, familiar themes that echoed Hayek’s central arguments in the *Road to Serfdom*.

The film follows the story of Fred Vollmer (Arthur Franz), a recent graduate who begins working as a reporter at his grandfather’s newspaper the Franklin Leader. Spurred on by a curmudgeonly elder reporter who disapproves of his writing, Fred decides to write an article of merit, having internalised the criticism that ‘a newspaper has an obligation to make people think,’ and ‘take a stand on things that count.’<sup>160</sup> While visiting Germany on an assignment for the newspaper, Fred meets an ageing relative who describes the Nazi takeover of Germany, framing the recent history as the result of the German people’s complacency being exploited, and the ‘little freedoms that we gave away’ piece by piece until it was too late.<sup>161</sup> Fred’s relative explains that ‘The government took over everything for us, our work our music, our theatre, our press and radio, and eventually our thinking.’<sup>162</sup> On returning to America, Fred starts to pay attention to things he never noticed before, political apathy, and social division. With his mind still stuck on the warning from his relative in Germany, Fred sees parallels from the

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<sup>157</sup> *The Price of Freedom*, 2.

<sup>158</sup> Oaks, “NAM Motion Picture Bulletins,” 5.

<sup>159</sup> Curran in *The Price of Freedom*, 1.

<sup>160</sup> *The Price of Freedom*, 1949, 04:56; *Ibid*, 06:05.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 11:11.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, 11:28.

warning all around him and decides the evidence of ‘apathy, ignorance and confusion’ must be addressed.<sup>163</sup> Fred’s subsequent column, given the eponymous title is submitted to his father, the editor of the newspaper who doesn’t share his belief that American freedom is under threat. Fred then quits his job when his father refuses to print his rousing call to political action, but after consideration and a dramatic monologue on the responsibility of freedom the article is eventually published.

As was common practice, NAM conducted surveys to gauge the effectiveness of the film’s messaging. For this film they directly surveyed a sample of seventy-five sophomore, junior, and senior high school students from a school in Amsterdam, New York. Students rather than teachers were asked a battery of questions to assess whether they had understood the ideological messaging in the film. The first three questions consisted of simple yes/no responses to establish if the core message of the film had been understood. In response to the first two questions, the children overwhelmingly agreed that the Fred Vollmer was justified in insisting that his father publish his articles, and that his father was wrong in believing that American freedoms were in no real danger.<sup>164</sup>

The children were then asked more directly ‘what points do you think the picture was trying to make?’ The response of the children clearly demonstrated that the film’s message was indeed legible and had left an impression.<sup>165</sup> The children’s responses converged on the themes that America was under attack not just from external forces but subversive attacks on individual freedoms. Some respondents stated that: ‘The idea I got was that America was in danger from some internal enemy,’ ‘That freedom is not as secure as we might think now and it might be slipping away from us,’ ‘Vollmer was to say to look out for communism [sic],’ ‘It was trying to impress on us that our freedom is in danger,’ ‘The picture was trying to point out that

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 16:08.

<sup>164</sup> Peterson, “Results of Test Screening” 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 2.

although we won the war, we are still in danger of losing our freedom because of disunity. Also, that Communism could breed here easily.’<sup>166</sup> One child astutely read the film as conveying the message that ‘Fred was trying to tell his father that our country is in constant danger of losing its freedom because certain individuals either do not participate in government or else they try to create confusion and disorder which is fertile ground for the seeds of tyranny.’<sup>167</sup> The survey responses made clear that the film’s message was easily understood and that the children had related the scenario to the wider historical moment. A final question that asked if the children thought that in making this picture that NAM had in mind the welfare of the country as a whole, or just its clients, returned the favourable response that NAM were acting in the best interest of the country.<sup>168</sup> The film, at least in terms of NAM’s intention for it to effectively impart a specific ideological message, was an outstanding success.<sup>169</sup> In addition to its NAM circulation, General Electric promoted the film as part of its ‘Free Enterprise Film Program,’ describing it as:

A weapon in the fight in which every American citizen has a stake — the fight to preserve our freedoms and our system of free enterprise — the fight against those who would have us surrender our heritage in favor of the dictatorial tyranny of state control and political management of our existence.’<sup>170</sup>

To ensure the messaging in the film was not too subtle, GE contextualised the narrative explicitly as a fight against communism, although communism was not mentioned explicitly in the film. GE insisted that the film’s core messaging was a warning against the dangers of centralised government: ‘Communism, socialism and other forms of state control have engulfed most of the rest of the world. Where that has happened, men have lost their

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 2-4.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>169</sup> The film was also awarded a Freedom’s Foundation Award, a non-profit organisation established in 1949 by industrialist Kenneth Wells, advertising executive Don Belding, and Dwight Eisenhower, at the time the President of Columbia University. The prize was awarded in recognition of contributions to civic and patriotic education.

<sup>170</sup> General Electric, “Is America Next?” 4.

freedom.’<sup>171</sup> However, they explicitly relate this loss of freedom, not to a militaristic external threat, but to the localised evil of federal overreach:

State control can be accomplished without violent revolution. It can come in the back door if citizens are too complacent. Today, 25% of this nation’s income goes for federal, state and local taxes. We already have partially socialized housing, partially socialized electric power, and dozens of government “cradle-to-grave” security schemes. We are currently considering socialized medicine.<sup>172</sup>

Their spin on the threat posed by communism expressed itself as a pervasive attempt to tax workers and provide a basic social safety net. In this figuration, GE attempted to conflate taxation with some form of domestic Domino Theory in which increases in government subsidy for social services was proof of some sort of internal drift towards absolute state control. As was the case with many of their films, the freedom cry of liberty under attack masked a reactionary domestic policy. Though many New Deal initiatives had been contracted in the post-war years, the dramatic restructuring of the relationship between the state and public under the New Deal persisted. This understanding was characterised by a regulatory role of the federal bureaucracy in industry, publicly funded infrastructure projects, and the obligation placed on government to intercede in the social fabric of American life to mitigate the worst blight of economic immiseration on its citizens. NAM stood in opposition to these relations believing them to be an undue encroachment on civil liberty that was, in their view, leading to a precipitous decline in personal freedom. President Truman’s ‘Fair Deal’ proposals outlined in his 1949 State of the Union address threatened NAM’s post-war position. A repeal of Taft-Hartley, union regulation, increases to minimum wages, expansion of social security, and low rent housing among other proposals, stood in direct conflict with the Association’s campaigns to dismantle federal power.<sup>173</sup> Educational campaigns like *The Price of Freedom* constituted the leading edge of NAM’s long strategy to win over the hearts and minds of future generations

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>173</sup> Truman, *State of the Union*, 1.



of voters by instilling in them a fear of federal executive power. This strategy was committed to in large part to dismantle the generally favourable memory of FDR's New Deal and breed antipathy to the regulatory power of federal bureaucracy by conflating it with the existential threat of global communism. In *The Price of Freedom*, the warning from history in the form of the Nazi takeover of Germany is strongly coded to invoke a parallel with contemporary communism, itself a strawman for any centralised operation of government.

NAM readily worked in anti-communist rhetoric into the development of their economic education programme. Though NAM had become undeniably hardened in its advocacy of free enterprise as the only rational counter to the threat of the ideological takeover of America, their understanding of the usefulness of communism as an external threat indicates as much an ideological position as it does an opportunistic reading of geopolitics that could be exploited for their campaigns. In preparing an outline for an economic education programme titled *American Production: Defence Against Communism* in 1954, alongside its HOBSO campaign, NAM revealed the threat of communism to be somewhat of a publicity hook to draw in audiences:

It is believed that the emphasis on Communism will assist in obtaining widespread newspaper publicity on the program content ... This program provides a method of using the current interest in Communism affectively in reaching the public with materials about the operations of our own economic system ... Almost any conceivable specifics which NAM may wish to emphasize can be developed in terms of production and, therefore, in terms of the continuing struggle against world-Communism.<sup>174</sup>

The programme outlined subjects that would play on fears of 'military ... [and] ... political conquest by communism,' insisting that these could be neutralised by capitalist modes of production, with free enterprise foregrounded as a spiritual, moral, and technical barrier between the free individual and certain slavery.<sup>175</sup> A simple theme would be repeated

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<sup>174</sup> Barron, Proposed Economic Education Program, 1.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 2.

throughout, that ‘production ... [was] ... the result of industry, not government,’ and that threats to American production, ‘high taxes from big government ... inflexible labour costs ... guaranteed annual wages ... [and] ... featherbedding practices of labor,’ were to be directly correlated with a weakening of the country’s defence against communism.<sup>176</sup> Organised labour, even in its weakened post-Taft-Hartley iteration was to be demonised and derided, made synonymous with global communism and construed in the public mind as a threat to American democracy. Only its complete erasure would keep the threat of socialism from haunting the steel mills and factory floors of free American industry. In this sense, an abstracted idea of communism became a marketing tool in NAM’s educational public relations campaigns, and unionism portrayed as a mile marker on the road to serfdom.

### 3.4.1 Crisis of Confidence

The federal government is too big ... The steady pressure for more power to regulate and control is a growing menace to individual and civil liberty. The increasing concentration of political power and economic control in the federal government is destroying the economic and governmental environment which is essential to the survival of the American system of free enterprise and to the preservation of the American constitutional system of a union of states. Unless the trend toward ever bigger government is halted, and until it is reversed, the states and private business alike face the prospect of ultimate, complete domination by the federal government. And complete federal domination IS totalitarianism.<sup>177</sup>

As well as advocating for American business, NAM’s approach to film production became increasingly targeted to address specific issues in the general public’s perception of their clients and their sustained campaign to reduce the influence of the federal government. Between 1939 and 1950, NAM films were believed to have been seen by as many as one hundred and seventy-three million people, with school screenings doubling from 1949 to 1950.<sup>178</sup> However, by the

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>177</sup> Lutz, “Bring Government Back Home,” 6.

<sup>178</sup> Film News, “We Use Films in Our Program,” 2.

mid 1950s their influence with the public was beginning to wane and by the late 1950s public perception of big business was, despite NAM's best efforts, beginning to sour, with the idea of free enterprise becoming less appealing to a younger generation. As such NAM took the threat of the 1955 merger of the CIO and AFL, under the stewardship of Walter Reuther, with the utmost seriousness. To many at NAM, Reuther embodied the tyranny of organised labour they had so long feared. In joining the two largest labour organisations in the country, Reuther had pulled off a feat of extraordinary labour coordination of the kind that the right wing of NAM's directors had been arguing was proof of subversive activities and communist infiltration of unions.

Two broad counterarguments emerging from the left of the American political spectrum were reiterated throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s. Firstly that 'if we can afford billions for war, we can also afford to meet the cost of an adequate school system.'<sup>179</sup> The second argument made mostly by unions and progressive educators was that attacks on public education by these right-wing political pressure groups destroyed faith in public education. If it continued, they warned, the 'malicious criticism will drive away capable leaders from the teaching profession and discourage intelligent young people from entering it,' resulting in a 'loss of public confidence in the schools [that would] serve the ends of communism.'<sup>180</sup> The arguments emerged as a response to an increasing pressure from NAM and educational pressure groups including Zoll's Council for American Education to limit federal funding to schools, further weakening the purchasing power and capacity to offer competitive salaries to teachers.

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<sup>179</sup> Reuther, Excerpts of an Address, 3.

<sup>180</sup> AFL-CIO Education Department, "The Current Attacks on Education," 2.

The CIO had been one of the only organisations to meet NAM head on with its own cinematic offering, fighting filmic fire with fire with the release of *The Great Swindle* (1948).<sup>181</sup> Though it was aimed at mature audiences, its direct appeal to voting age workers called for a rejection of NAM's 'barrage of propaganda' and 'excuses' for inflation and price gouging.<sup>182</sup> There was some regional pushback from unions and particularly the CIO in Detroit, who had appealed to the Board of Education to investigate what they argued was an undue influence in the schools. However, against the overwhelming downward pressure of capital that NAM had at their disposal for their educational campaigns there was little effective resistance. NAM believed that the CIO's attack on their educational programs, although impassioned, had little effect on their distribution, such was the volume of material distributed. NAM's Education Advisory Committee were more concerned that seventy-five thousand educational guides were going to waste and sought ways to monitor their usage via surveys designed to measure how much and how often their materials were used.<sup>183</sup> The CIO, keenly aware of the expansive power that NAM were able to exert quoted the Association itself in their own anti-NAM materials, highlighting that NAM's own policies were the best criteria against which to judge their 'numerous propaganda activities.'<sup>184</sup> The pamphlet titles *NAM in the Schools* reminded its readership of the dangers of the free educational material, quoting a key note speech from a NAM convention: 'Every activity of this Association ... must, in the last analysis, be judged by this one standard — does it contribute to the immediate or ultimate profit of the Association members?'<sup>185</sup> NAM's representatives, increasingly on the back foot as the decade progressed, felt it necessary to explain themselves more and more to a young audience, no longer pointing

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<sup>181</sup> Fones-Wolfe, *Selling Free Enterprise*, 21. As Elizabeth Fones-Wolf has pointed out, the AFL-CIO's concentration of its efforts to educate the public in the political mainstream by focussing on the education of adults in effect ceded ideological territory of the classroom to NAM and other industrial lobbyists.

<sup>182</sup> *The Great Swindle*, 1948, 15:35. The excuses in question for inflation were familiar NAM criticisms, namely, federal support for agriculture and strikes.

<sup>183</sup> NAM Educational Department, Minutes of Dinner Meeting, 6.

<sup>184</sup> Geis, "NAM in the Schools," 4.

<sup>185</sup> NAM in Geis, "NAM in the Schools," 4.

out the good work that they did but straining to demonstrate the necessity of NAM as a key institution and its work as an essential component of American life.

One NAM executive reiterated the urgency of the issues claiming that ‘If NAM did not exist, we all would be urgently attempting to establish some similar type of organization as the spokesman for business.’<sup>186</sup> Senior NAM officials including Edward Maher were by the mid-1950s giving addresses to high school senior classes portraying NAM as an underdog, continually assailed by government, and criticised by unions. Maher attempted to explain their ‘origin, philosophy, and program,’ portraying NAM as a symbol of freedom in an increasing cynical and hypocritical world of self-interested institutions that blame them for the world’s problems: ‘NAM is neither reactionary nor is it a spokesman for big business. But it is a symbol. It’s a symbol for economic freedom – for free enterprise, if you will. And as such it is the No. 1 whipping boy for people who don’t understand free enterprise and mistrust it.’<sup>187</sup> This notable rhetorical shift from the bellicose days of the late 1940’s betrayed an internal exhaustion within NAM’s approach to public relations. Playing the victim had replaced the forward march of progress. Yet, in the face of declining favour, and generational drift, near begging for the audience of high school seniors to adopt their creed, Maher stuck to NAM’s core ideology. A repetition of their belief that the American of the future will experience as much as sixty percent better quality life than they were already enjoying in the mid 1950s, provided NAM and the economy were free from their economic shackles:

This goal can be achieved only through the operation of economic freedom. We can’t achieve this real gain in living standards by voting ourselves higher pensions, or more welfare services, or bigger money wages, or by taxing the rich. We can only do so by more production – by economic growth and expansion.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Humphreys in Bohon, “Script,” 23.

<sup>187</sup> Maher, “The Origin, Philosophy, and Program of NAM,” 1.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

Coupled with this declining favour was a lingering suspicion of entrenched New Deal ideas about the role of government in a modern democracy. Both would need to be addressed in the new production to satisfy their clients:

As an example, 70% of the general public, and 77% to 83% of high school students (who will in a few years become a potent political and economic force) believe that certain major industries are so controlled by a few companies as to constitute “monopolies,” with all the negative implications the term has acquired. There is also an increasing trend to rely to an excessive degree on government intervention ... particularly in such specific areas as farm price supports, housing, union-management relations, help to small business and the guaranteeing of personal security.<sup>189</sup>

NAM needed to produce a film that would target these specific issues in unison, both bolstering faith in free enterprise and competition, and discouraging support for government regulation and social security legislation. These fundamental ideas about the purpose of government would be translated into the script to achieve its ideological aims. The film had three objectives:

To create sympathetic understanding of business and the businessman; show his feelings of responsibility to the community and his employees, customers and stockholders; to show that business is not motivated solely by financial considerations, but that it cares for the general welfare ... To show some of the problems which must be met in operating a business, such as finance, the effect of high taxes, competition ... [and] ... To show competition as a virtue which results in constantly improved products, thus benefitting the consumer. (Maher, 1957, p.4)<sup>190</sup>

With waning faith in big business, and a need to communicate the personal meaning of enterprise to a generation of young Americans who NAM believed were either economically illiterate or ideologically impotent, the proposed film was burdened with great ambition.<sup>191</sup> For NAM, this meant it would need to counter what they saw as very real ‘long-range dangers’, namely that a ‘generation of Americans has grown up in the New Deal philosophy.’<sup>192</sup> A philosophy which they and their clients saw as a dangerous ‘stranglehold on business,’ and a ‘vehicle for socialism.’<sup>193</sup> Winning hearts and shaping minds was paramount, but NAM were

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<sup>189</sup> Henry Strauss & Co., “Proposal for Film,” 2.

<sup>190</sup> Maher in Opinion Research Corporation, “Audience Test,” 4.

<sup>191</sup> NAM Member Relations Division, “Opinion Research Study,” 2.

<sup>192</sup> Bohon, “Script,” 22.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 16.

well studied in the arts of persuasion and crucially were armed with deep pockets and a sincere ideological conviction. In addition to the high school and college students whose attitudes about free enterprise needed adjusting, the film would need to reach ‘consumer groups, civic, fraternal, and community organisations, chambers of commerce, educators, ... vocational advisors, and others generally referred to as “thought leaders.”’<sup>194</sup> Despite advances in technology and a generational shift in attitude, the strategy of using influential public figures pioneered by Edward Bernays was still the common logic and a vital component of new campaigns.

Before developing script ideas, the function and form of the film were planned in order to deliver a maximally efficient product. The scenario mattered little and changed several times during production, being reorientated from a focus on promoting marketing as a career path, towards humanising the plight of business owners and relating the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives. To effectively address these issues, it was proposed that the film needed to make:

A powerful impact on the beliefs and feelings of the audience. In this area of attitude development it should concentrate on: the free enterprise system as a prime mover and an essential prop of our society ... the idea that the continued successful operation of this system depends on people with self-reliance, initiative, courage and a progressive outlook ... the idea that these same qualities are as essential today as they ever were to personal success, satisfaction and security ... the importance of the distribution function to both our way of life and our standard of living.<sup>195</sup>

NAM had a nuanced understanding of the emotive potential of cinema and at the planning level realised that the entire purpose of the film was attitudinal change and not mere entertainment. As such it was recommended that because the ‘most important function is to affect the attitudes and feelings of its audience, mere statement of fact, no matter how provocatively or lucidly done, is not enough.’<sup>196</sup> Therefore, it was decided that the film would take the form of a

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<sup>194</sup> Henry Strauss & Co., “Proposal for Film,” 5.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid p.6) (12.60.)

<sup>196</sup> Ibid p.7) (12.60.)

dramatic photo play. The abstracted nature of economics made visually communicating free enterprise difficult without losing audience attention with a myriad of graphs and charts. Compared to the technical demonstration and expert testimony that had been the dominant mode of sponsored film in the 1930s and into the 1940s, focussing on a relatable individual overcoming a recognisable problem such as providing for small business, family, or community, was considered a more efficient approach. Dramatic narratives, it was believed, would be the best method for a film to ‘involve its audience emotionally through the development of characters and situation with which they can identify.’<sup>197</sup> NAM’s newest film marked a transitional moment in their motion picture campaigns. Having ceased exclusive theatrical releases earlier in the decade, they now focussed on adapting their content to the medium of the day, with a recognisable dramatic format, and a proposed runtime of twenty-six minutes to ensure that it would be ‘maximally suitable for television programming.’<sup>198</sup>

### 3.4.2 Crisis in Lindenville

The film that was eventually released as *Crisis in Lindenville* (1958) told the story of a small-town tool manufacturer who, facing a potential buyout from a larger company, has to convince shareholders that selling out the company would mean the loss of jobs and the movement of the business out of town. Seeking financing to buy out the stockholders himself, modernise and retool the plant, and update his product to be more competitive with the larger company, Fred Hickman (Richard Kendrick) must use all his business savvy to save his company and the town at large. The ideological leitmotif that the film sustains points to the root cause for Hickman’s business precarity as the result of taxes that have swallowed too much profit and prevented him from reinvesting in new machinery and product lines. This is overcome through sheer will and

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid p.7) (12.60.)

<sup>198</sup> Ibid p.8) (12.60.)



business sense as he rallies his investors and takes out loans on the promise that he will retain his largest clients by being more productive and competitive. The film's press release sold the film on the premise that 'the audience for "Crisis in Lindenville" is offered the opportunity to sit with management as it faces these problems.'<sup>199</sup> NAM's self-reliance, pro-business, pro-competition rhetoric is shrewdly parsed through a narrative that competition and capital's tendency towards monopoly in and of itself was no bad thing, and that greater competition is ultimately what saves the small tool company from annihilation.

*Crisis in Lindenville* premiered at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Congress of American Industry at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York on December 6, 1957, to an audience of industry executives. The launch was set to coincide with what was marked as the forty-fifth anniversary of NAM's sponsorship of motion pictures which they claimed dated to the production of *The Man He Might Have Been* (1912), one of three dramatic shorts produced for them by Thomas A. Edison Inc. and claimed to be 'probably the first motion pictures of their kind ever sponsored by industry.'<sup>200</sup> The screening marked a celebration of NAM's cinematic and educational orthodoxy, illustrating the continuity of message and clarity of their free enterprise mission that had been maintained for almost half of a century.

The level of care in the production process, and preoccupation with achieving the desired affective goals of the project is evident in the efforts that NAM put into testing their product. At the script development stage NAM hired the Opinion Research Corporation to conduct audience surveys from script readings to gauge public reactions to the proposed film,

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<sup>199</sup> News from NAM, Press Release "Crisis in Lindenville," 1.

<sup>200</sup> Oaks, Letter to Lambert Miller, 1; Three other films were produced to order in the same year by NAM. Two others, *The Workman's Lesson*, and *The Crime of Carelessness* by Edison and a third, *An American in the Making* by Selig Polyscope. By 1957 NAM had lost all by the briefest of records relating to their whereabouts, but after an extensive archival search managed to track down negatives of the three Edison films to a stock sell off that eventually came into possession by MoMA. After careful restoration and brief legal dispute over residual rights, NAM were able to secure a copy of *The Man He Might Have Been* for the screening. What distinguished this film from its counterparts, two industrial safety parables and an Americanisation film, is its education focussed narrative.

with questionnaires, personal interviews, and televoter measurements. Candidates were cross-examined for ideological bias to classify them as having ‘free market ... or socialistic leanings.’<sup>201</sup> Reactions were mixed with a generally neutral response that identified the problem of a businessman’s struggles being ‘difficult for the average man to identify with.’<sup>202</sup> It was recommended that NAM refocus the script from the struggles of the businessman and financial dealings to the social impact on family and community, whilst also playing down the somehow overlooked portrayal of big business as the ‘big bad wolf who threatens gobble up the struggling little company.’<sup>203</sup> The solution they arrived at was to emphasise the human drama, and scapegoat the taxman as the true enemy of small business in place of the monopoly seeking corporation. The overall evaluation affirmed that the script should go ahead with minor tweaks from a team of creatives rather than businessmen to ensure that the drama was more palatable, having been reassured that the ideological messages were being faithfully communicated: ‘Obviously, the judgements were based primarily on entertainment value. The indoctrination messages provoked no resentment as propaganda, but only as they slowed the action or seemed dull.’<sup>204</sup> Upon completion one hundred prints were sent out to NAM’s regional offices based on the number of television stations in each region. From there they would be exclusively broadcast for three months to blanket audiences and ‘reach the largest possible public market via TV. With special emphasis on TV outlets in population centers.’<sup>205</sup> The commercial possibilities that *Business Screen* had recognised in television from its debut at the 1939 New York World’s Fair had finally come into their own.<sup>206</sup> After this period of broadcast the prints would be recalled by NAM, inspected, and then redistributed to schools and community groups free of charge upon request, having hopefully caught the attention of

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<sup>201</sup> Opinion Research Corporation, “Audience Test,” 19.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>205</sup> NAM Motion Picture Department, “Field Placement,” 1.

<sup>206</sup> “Camera Eye.” *Business Screen*, 9.

teachers and civic leaders. By the time of its release in January of 1958, NAM like many industrial and sponsored film producers had migrated their prestige screenings from the theatre to television, recognising in the now ascendent medium a powerful channel through which to directly communicate its ideology to the public. It marked a considerable shift in strategy compared to 1947 when only two showings of NAM films occurred on television.<sup>207</sup> However, despite the convenience of new mass technology, the tried and tested model of dual distribution remained with 16mm non-theatrical prints produced for the schools, colleges, and community groups. Even with the television revolution shifting the focus of public relations and mass entertainment from the theatre to the living room, the 16mm classroom projector remained, for now, the workhorse of industrial pedagogy.

### **3.4.3 The Battle for Education**

NAM had promised its members that it would ‘build public understanding of free, competitive capitalism ... Free the individual, home government, and the business system from abuse of federal power,’ and most of all ‘restore to the states those rights which have been usurped by the federal government.’<sup>208</sup> Advocating for its client’s industries and wares was no longer enough. NAM would now focus on influencing public political discourse, promoting as its ultimate aim the limitation and retraction of the federal government from national politics and education. In 1956 the Board of Directors of NAM adopted the following statement as their official policy on federal aid to public education:

It is the direct and exclusive responsibility of each state and its citizens to retain control and to provide funds and facilities for public education. The citizens of each community should be actively urged by all possible means to see that their state and local governments support education adequately ... we do not favor federal support, either as grants or loans. Existing federal grants for specific purposes should be terminated and the services involved should be assumed by state and local governments as expeditiously as may be practical.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Oaks, Letter to J. E. Drew, 1.

<sup>208</sup> NAM Education Department, “Long Range Program,” 3.

<sup>209</sup> Fern, “History and Activities of NAM,” 22.

Long-term planning and a profound generational commitment to an economic ideology defined the NAM's outlook for the decades to come. In 1954 the dominant theme of their forward-looking campaign was described as 'the 1975 potentials.'<sup>210</sup> A twenty-year plan to increase the output of material goods by double their present standard. Through the doubling of material goods NAM argued that people would enjoy a life 'more abundant, more leisurely and more satisfying than any people have ever enjoyed.'<sup>211</sup> An echo of the same arguments made during the 1930's and by the utopians of the New York World's Fair, that an endlessly upward project of consumerism would deliver higher standard of living.

With McCarthyism itself fading from the public eye in large part due to the efforts of CBS's Edward R. Murrow and ABC's televised Army-McCarthy Hearings, two small screen interventions that effected the rapid decline of the divisive populist, the inflated threat of communist subversion became less useful to achieving NAM's goals. McCarthy, who President Eisenhower believed wanted 'above all else, publicity ... to increase his appeal as an after-dinner speaker and so raise the fees he charges,' would fade from the spotlight. However, much of the psychic damage inflicted on the American public remained in the form of generalised mistrust of subversive educators and a suspicion of the power and allegiance of unions.<sup>212</sup> NAM's film department focussed on developing its television campaigns including *Industry on Parade*, which allowed them to capture domestic audiences with the new medium without having to relinquish the hold on the classroom to which the series was widely distributed.<sup>213</sup> However, they would escalate the fight in the coming decade to the legislative level. Despite their dogged insistence that they had 'evinced an energetic and constructive interest in

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<sup>210</sup> NAM Education Department, "Long Range Program," 2.

<sup>211</sup> Maher, "The Origin, Philosophy, and Program of NAM," 6.

<sup>212</sup> Eisenhower, "Letter to Harry Bullis," 2. For the long-term effects of McCarthyism see Bob Blauner – *Resisting McCarthyism*, 2009.

<sup>213</sup> Oaks, "List of Motion Pictures," 4.

education,' by investing great sums of money in teaching programs since 1897, NAM would repeatedly try to block legislation aimed at improving national school standards.<sup>214</sup> This was particularly true when it came to developing infrastructure and providing adequate pay for teaching staff. These aims were typified by their opposition to the School Support Act of 1959, a bill that would provide federal financial assistance to public schools for 'constructing school facilities and teacher salaries.'<sup>215</sup> NAM vociferously opposed the bill claiming that:

Federal control necessarily follows federal dollars, though in more or less subtle fashion. Federal control would remove the incentive of local school boards to improve the quality of their educational systems. This bill would serve only to shift a problem from state capitals to Washington and to make it easier for those who want to control education to offer mediocre and ineffective solutions to urgent problems.'<sup>216</sup>

The Federal government however claimed that despite significant widespread increase in state and local funding for school construction and teacher training, the national standard was still grossly deficient to the extent that urgent federal intervention was necessary. They argued that the problem posed a risk to the very issues of personal freedom that NAM's campaigns sought to advocate for. The ability to enact economic agency was once again invoked, this time by the Federal government:

Without sufficient financial resources at their disposal to provide necessary educational facilities and to employ competent teaching personnel, the control of our nation's schools is not directed by State and local wards but is dictated by the harsh demands of privation. Without the means to pay for alternatives, school boards have no freedom of choice.<sup>217</sup>

This was not to mention that improved school funding, and a teaching staff elevated out of the working precariat by salaries reflective of their essential public role would be less susceptible to the sorts of economic opportunism that had sustained industrial education campaigns, potentially weakening the school-to-factory pipeline that benefitted NAM's clients.<sup>218</sup> Despite

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<sup>214</sup> NAM, "Statement of NAM for File," 106.

<sup>215</sup> *School Support Act 1959*, 2.

<sup>216</sup> NAM, "Statement of NAM for File," 112.

<sup>217</sup> *School Support Act 1959*, 3.

<sup>218</sup> The hearing described teacher salaries as needing to be 'commensurate with the salaries received by persons with comparable education, experience and responsibilities.' (*School Support Act 1959*, 2.)

its claims, NAM's educational mission was directly tied to its own self-interest and political philosophy of deregulation and small government. Seeking the erasure of government investment in one of their key financial and ideological markets was naturally a reactionary form of self-defence. Free enterprise and ruthless individualism would be harder to sell if children recognised themselves as the beneficiaries of new and better schools, teachers, and equipment provided by the federal government. NAM went as far as claiming that calls for federal aid to education were the result of subversives seeking to assert control over the nation's education, reiterating common claims during the previous decade of leftist teacher's undermining the integrity of the nation: 'individuals in both Congress and the Administration are aiding and abetting the forces within the educational profession that are apparently seeking such control.'<sup>219</sup> Despite appeals by the National Education Association, no laws were enacted by Congress to tackle the problems of increasing enrolment or to improve the general quality of education beyond incentives to influence 'gifted high school graduates to enter college,' as had been the scope of legislation for secondary education outlined in the 1958 National Defence Education Act.<sup>220</sup> Even with the recognition in the post-Sputnik era that something must be done to match perceived Soviet educational superiority, NAM were determined to keep education within the purview of state and local politics where their ability to influence curriculums was more pronounced. They would repeat their opposition when a similar bill was put before a Senate Committee on Education and Labour in 1962 to improve elementary and secondary public education with federal funding, reiterating their creed that:

Neither the provision of education to students and teachers, nor the promotion of the educational content in schools and colleges, nor the subsidy of private educational institutions, nor the financial participation in state-local school system operations, is the business of the federal government ... federal grants for educational purposes should be terminated and federal promotional activity with respect to elementary, secondary, and higher education should be halted.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> NAM, "Statement of NAM for File," 109.

<sup>220</sup> Brickman, "Educational Developments," 227.

<sup>221</sup> NAM, "Statement Before the General Subcommittee on Education," 2.

Nothing short of the full marketisation of education would satisfy the members of NAM, even if it resulted in a radically unequal distribution of educational quality and opportunity:

If the appropriate levels of quality education are to become universally available, education must be plural and diverse. Competition has served the marketplace of products and services quite well. Contrary to views popularly held, it would do the same for education. The federal government should not attempt to assume the major burden of financing the education systems of this country.<sup>222</sup>

The Association insisted when it referred to the necessity of ‘plural and diverse’ education that inequality would stir action from the underperforming schools by inspiring competition; an institutional justification for the necessity of structural inequality that would align education with their radical right-wing economic principles. Opposing government aid to some of the most needy and vulnerable children in the country however was a policy based solely on the dogmatic principle that placing these children’s lives and futures in the raw competition of the free market would naturally offer an (unevidenced) improvement in their lives. NAM’s educational mission was not simply based on preparing children for the wider world of work, it was to condition them to specific habits and beliefs that were beneficial to the preservation of NAM’s ideal capital relations. A prescribed, doctrinal, and myopic reading of history, economics, and society, understood solely through the lens of its own economic necessity.

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<sup>222</sup> NAM, “Statement to the President’s Commission on School Finance,” 12.

## **Conclusion**

By examining sponsored films specifically in their educational contexts, this thesis has contributed new perspectives to the history of the forces that were shaping American education and demonstrated that educational film campaigns were key to the strategies of private organisations and public institutions. What this thesis has shown is that sponsored educational films became prized for a utility far beyond their merit as pedagogic facilitators. These films played a significant role in the plans of powerful groups and institutions who, at transformative moments of twentieth century American history, were reshaping ideas about the nation and its political economy. They were essential tools in national identity crafting, international relations, propaganda and specifically in facilitating the unleashing of a free enterprise economy through a cinematic campaign of capitalist realism that aided in the propagation of the central tenets of neoliberal thought.

This thesis has highlighted the strategic long-term presence of sponsored films in the classroom. It has explored how the visual, stylistic, and rhetorical strategies of advertising were mobilised in educational film. In exploring the contexts that affected their production, it has been demonstrated that the sponsored film industry operated not as isolated producers but through diffuse networks of aligned interests that connected philanthropic institutions, industrial manufacturers, film makers, government agencies, lobbying groups, and those in educational administration. In answering the question of how the classroom become integrated into the distribution networks of sponsored films the answer has been revealed as a series of planned, sustained campaigns. These played on financial shortcomings by providing free material, pressurised school systems with scare tactics, advocated their products in trusted trade literature, and used the influence and social prestige of industry to access or even join the boards of school districts. In answer to this question this thesis has given recognition to the



school as a one of the primary targets for influencing opinion and offered a critical perspective on the way we think about a seemingly innocuous media form. In arguing that sponsored films aided in the emergence of neoliberal thought, it is not assumed that these films are solely responsible for the emergence of neoliberalism but representative of processes through which the political transformation was enacted. If as Kyong-Min Son has argued, that democracy ‘requires people to embody democratic subjectivity,’ the capture of the idea of democracy and its reconstitution as an expression of market freedoms through educational campaigns is critical to understanding the significance of sponsored film in this process.<sup>1</sup>

The first chapter explored how at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, education was framed as a laboratory for the development of a new American subjectivity. The progressives believed education would save democracy. What began with optimism about the opportunity presented by motion pictures to improve the quality of teaching quickly became entangled with the commodification of education and the advancement of motion picture-based education as a technocratic solution to social catastrophe. This chapter demonstrated that the fair was a key facilitator in legitimising the use of sponsored films as a preferred medium for public relations, and for extending those campaigns and their ideological messaging into the classroom. Education and science became proprietary motifs in industry’s battle to resuscitate the economy, and its ambition to limit the influence of federal authority. Ultimately, the fair was not simply a display of the latest products and commodities but tasked with an ‘underlying social objective’ to communicate the ‘vastly increased opportunity and ... developed mechanical means which the twentieth century has brought to the masses for better living and accompanying happiness.’<sup>2</sup> Through the fair, happiness, prosperity, and social betterment were twinned with the advancement of mechanical and industrial production. The fair’s true

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<sup>1</sup> Son, *Eclipse of the Demos*, 36.

<sup>2</sup> New York Board of Education, *Teaching the World’s Fair*, 2.

achievement was to mask the reality, internal contractions, and public failure of the U.S economy to provide stability and better living by assuring the public that mastery of science and the machine promised a future uncoupled from the mistakes of the past. What distinguished the exhibitions was not so much the foregrounding of science as a subject of entertainment or the ‘scientific’ framing of their presentation, but the appropriation of the scientific as inherently educational and reconstituted as a force to promote the supremacy of industry. The utopian aspirations of the progressive wing of the fair planners were shown to be intimately linked to private concerns, and the ideas that underpinned the development of their centrepiece production, *The City* (1939), communicated that a better way of living would be provided by an ordered rational society led by private regional interests, not the federal government.

Chapter two explored the consequences of the government themselves becoming producers of sponsored educational films. Far from selling a product or advocating for an industry, films were used on the front line of a multimedia offensive to securitise American territorial and ideological interests. Moreover, this chapter demonstrated the great faith which the OCIAA, OWI and State Department placed in educational films to perform the functions of international relations, and domestic defence orientation, highlighting a similar approach to securing overseas alliances as it did within its own borders, often operating with the same intention, using the same media. This chapter refocussed its history away from the well-studied emphasis on Hollywood’s entanglement with wartime operations to unearth the overlooked history of the classroom film. What it illustrated most clearly was that educational motion pictures and the school networks through which they flowed had become an essential component in both the short and long-term security and ideological objectives of the U.S. government. Similarly, they indicate an awareness at the departmental level that different kinds of motion picture, whether it be newsreel, civil defence, educational, or cultural, had different applications and certainly different objectives that defined their production and exhibition. The

flexible utility of cinema, realised by competing government departments led to a diverse toolkit of cinematic production and distribution methods that legitimised the practice of propagandising to children. An analysis of their production and distribution process has demonstrated that the methods of the New Deal liberals and industrial manufacturers were convergent even if their philosophies were in contention. Educational films were a preferred medium for influencing the public to whatever end.

The U.S. government, having incorporated established educational film producers like ERPI were more than happy to use them to institute patriotic and militant education to service the needs of what President Eisenhower would later warn of as the ‘grave implications ... of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.’<sup>3</sup> The consolidation of a national educational film distribution service by the OWI also provided the opportunity for industry to capitalise on the patriotic fervour to entrench ideas about large industry being essential if not indivisible from the idea of democracy itself, and to encourage children to think about the contribution of large manufacturers to society in nationalist and patriotic terms.

Chapter three has highlighted the commitment of the National Association of Manufacturers to shape education, reconstructing and shedding new light on their long project to entrench favourable ideas about the free market and reorientate public schools to service industry. Organisations like NAM and their clients used motion pictures to weaken the position of public institutions and the federal government’s role in public life as part of a prolonged fight back against the New Deal, unions, and federal authority in general. NAM’s educational initiatives and cinematic productions have gone virtually un-examined in scholarship. This thesis has demonstrated how essential they were to its members’ wider political ambitions. In the vast archival collection of NAM’s historic records was evidence of the meticulous work

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<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower, *Farewell Address*, 1.

that NAM put into ensuring that their ideological education was legible to its target audience of school children. The impact of which was the saturation of the educational market with propagandistic information that conflated the idea of democracy and the American way of life with a free enterprise economy, and to promote adherence to the sovereignty of an economic formation in place of allegiance to the nation state or the immediate needs of the people. Mass democracy, particularly the vocal demands of a cohesive and politically active working class were obstacles to such ambitions. NAM's film campaigns negated these obstacles and acted to make public education a wing of the public relations industry through which the story of free enterprise could be communicated as a fundamental principle of American life. NAM's anti-federal educational campaigns echo in many ways what Nancy MacLean has argued was a desire among those on the radical right in the late 1950s to resist the government's desegregation laws. MacLean suggests these groups wanted to 'reinstate the kind of political economy in America at the opening of the twentieth century, when the mass disenfranchisement of voters and the legal treatment of labour unions as illegitimate enabled large corporations and wealthy individuals to dominate Congress and most state governments alike.'<sup>4</sup> NAM's self-interest and ideological conviction necessitated not just a fabricated understanding of the American economic system but an active suppression of the educational commitments of the federal government. Their filmic renderings of this ambition connect a history from the corporate fight back against the New Deal during the depression to the ascendancy of America as the sole economic superpower after the Second World War.

What the individual chapters point to is a much broader development in the political culture of the United States. The use of motion pictures in the classroom indicated a way of thinking about the usefulness of education as a way to mould opinion, linking a need to shape narratives about the extra-territorial influence of the United States to the necessity of

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<sup>4</sup> Maclean, *Democracy in Chains*, xxxii.

controlling public discourse on the health and inalienable rights of the economy. The neoliberal turn would expand on these ideas to enforce what Quinn Slobodian has described as ‘militant globalism,’ the creation of ‘institutional frameworks’ that would ensure no threat would inhibit the growth of a world economic order, and ‘emphasised the need to override popular decisions when they controvert what is seen as the superior principle of the order at large.’<sup>5</sup> By comparing the crafted reality of the sponsored films with the historical contexts in which they were created, the gulf between the idealised world of capitalist realism and the underlying contradictions that sponsors like General Motors, NAM and the State Department were trying to erase is most fully revealed. In this way these cinematic iterations of capitalist realism point to an awareness on some level for the *need* to simplify and regulate public understanding of American culture and its institutions. They speak to an understanding of the fragility and complexity of social and economic formations that must be made legible if they are to be sustained and reproduced across time.

The scope of this thesis has been broad, and in trying to shed light on specific institutions and campaigns that best illustrate the shifting currents of the development of sponsored film production, this thesis has not been able to cover their entire history. There are of course many other factors and institutions that contributed to this process which this study did not have time to explore in detail. One of the most significant, which presents an opportunity for future scholarship, is the role played by university audio visual departments as facilitators of the networks through which sponsored films were distributed.

The Audio-Visual Department of Wayne State University in Detroit, established in 1948 under the direction of Arthur Stenius was one such institution encountered in the course of the research for this thesis. Acting as an advisor and mediator between sponsoring industries and school systems, they conducted studies on the school use of sponsored materials, collaborated

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<sup>5</sup> Slobodian, *Globalists*, 15.

on the production of films, and advised on the best methods and practices by which sponsored films and filmstrips could be integrated into the classroom. The university partnered with sponsors to refine techniques so that when targeting their economic education programs in schools, industry could avoid ‘costs without commensurate benefits.’<sup>6</sup> Their records at the Wayne State University library provide an invaluable insight into the close links between industry and higher education and could form the basis of further scholarship on industry’s long-standing interest in shaping public education.

This thesis has focussed primarily on sponsored educational films. However, it has recognised that a diverse range of films were used in the classroom during the same period. Ken Smith has written one of the few accounts of the phenomena of what he refers to as ‘mental hygiene’ classroom films.<sup>7</sup> These films were produced for the most part by independent studios but included some companies familiar from this thesis including Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, the Jam Handy organisation, and Audio Productions. Although Smith’s account provides a rich overview of the oeuvre, there remains a great opportunity to delve into the histories of its producers who created films depicting emotional control, social conformity, car safety, and obedience to authority during the early years of the Cold War. As some of the unused research on education from my own project has revealed, these films connect to deeper currents in American social history, with connections to the American Eugenics Society, the post-war obsession with juvenile delinquency, and the U.S. Army’s morale and entertainment divisions. A research project linking some of the key developments of the genre to educational practice during the Cold War would shed light on the lesser observed sociological transformations underway in post-war America. Pursuing a research project on this subject could add new perspectives to histories about the socialising function of American education through

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<sup>6</sup> Stenius, Letter to General Motors, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Mental Hygiene*, 1999.

cinematic renderings of normative behaviours, and a preoccupation with adjusting the child to the demands of the America's Cold War political economy.

One revelation of this thesis has been just how tied to moments of crisis the changes in education have been. The destabilisation of capital during the Great Depression birthed the capitalist realism of General Motors and other industrial sponsors, just as the threat posed by the New Deal rallied industry in defence of free enterprise. The crisis of The Second World War dispelled criticism of propagandistic education, and the perceived threat of communism was exploited by NAM to weaken its opponents in the unions. Crisis defined the campaigns of these influential groups. This pattern is perhaps indicative of responses to future crises from which may arise new educational paradigms in service to the maintenance of global capital.

My primary objective in writing this thesis has been to draw attention to the multitude of ways in which sponsored classroom films have been used to shape new realities and propagate corporate hegemony in the public sphere. It has contributed to a growing field of film history that situates the study of non-theatrical film production among critical discourses for understanding and interpreting cultural change and has demonstrated why the much-overlooked exhibition space of the classroom has played such a significant role in the history of twentieth century America.

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### **Abbreviations**

<b>NYWF</b>	New York World's Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
<b>HMAR</b>	Hagley Manuscripts and Archives Repository.
<b>WPR</b>	Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.
<b>BHC</b>	Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.
<b>NARA</b>	United States National Archives and Records Administration.
<b>LOC</b>	Library of Congress.

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