

# Mobilizing the Home Front

Propaganda Posters & Films  
during the Second World War



# Comic Books and WWII

- Cheap, easily read/digested by people young and old, comic books were an exceedingly popular form of entertainment in the 1930s.
- As the U.S. moved towards WWII, comics became increasingly focused on the Axis threat. Some even pointed to the danger as early as 1939 (well before the rest of the nation knew there was a threat!)



# Enter Captain America!

- Designed by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, who were both 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Jews. They felt strongly that the US needed to get involved in WWII and wanted to defy the powerful mood of isolationism in America. The character of Capt. America, Simon said, “was our way of lashing out at the Nazi menace.”
- Kirby and Simon originally designed the character as a protest vehicle to stir a stubbornly isolationist America to action.
  - “To me, the times were screaming war,” Jack Kirby recalled later during a radio interview. “To me the enemy was Hitler. The enemy was growing and growing, and I didn’t know where it was going to end, but every day something new would happen, and it was really scary. This was the kind of event that I felt was ruling our times and I felt it inside of me and it had to come out in some way.”

# Captain America & Isolationism



- Isolationists wanted to keep America out of the war, and they were doing a darn good job of it.
  - Roosevelt spent his 1940 campaign promising, “your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars.”
- Capt. America #1 voiced the belief that many were quickly coming to, that joining WWII was inevitable.
  - Simon and other interventionists said that avoiding the war would only help to strengthen the opposition and make the battle that much harder when it eventually came.

# An Opportunity: Hitler the Super-villain

- Simon recalls, “With Captain America, the villain came first. Jack and I read the newspapers, and knew what was going on over in Europe. And there he was – Adolf Hitler, with his ridiculous moustache, high-pitched ranting and goose-stepping followers. He was the perfect bad guy, much better than anything we could have made up, so what we needed was to create his ultimate counterpart.”



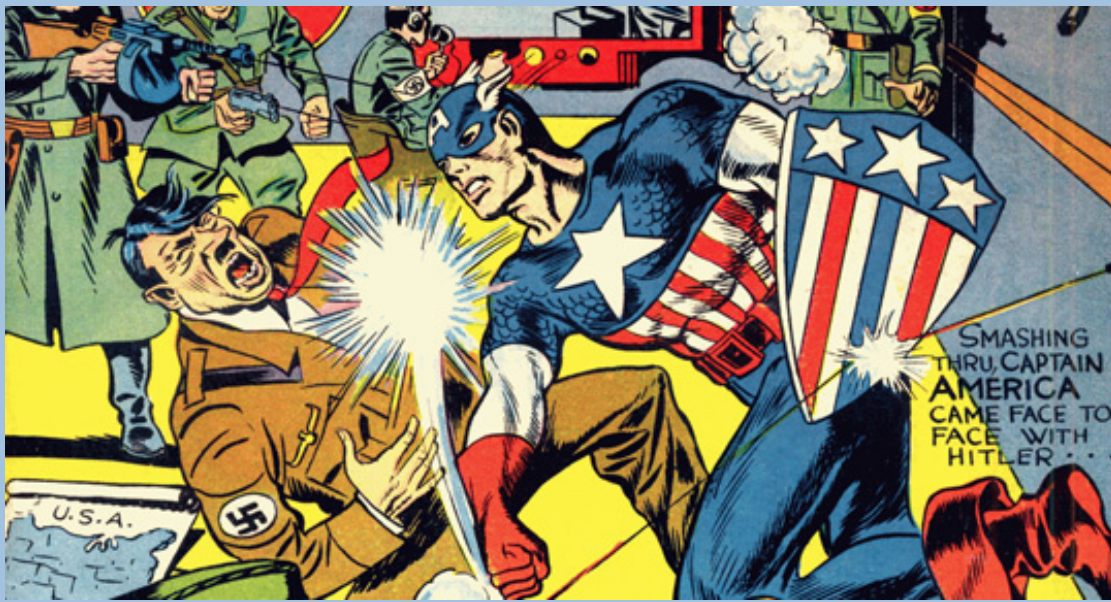
The time was right for an idealistic freedom fighter who possessed, in Kirby's words, "the character to win and to triumph over evil. It is a simple formula, but very effective and powerful."



- *Captain America #1* debuted March 1941, months before Pearl Harbor.
  - At the time, much of the country was still isolationist and many in the media were afraid of featuring Nazis as explicit villains for fear of offending those who wanted America to stay out of the war.
  - Captain America was the first comic book character to be so clear in advocating that America become a global dynamo.



# Captain America #1



- Book #1 made a clear argument for intervention:
  - The entire plot of the first issue was a rallying cry for the American public to support the war effort.
  - The plot of book #1 centered on a Nazi plot of subversion within America. Story focused on the belief that the Axis powers sought to destroy America.
  - The argument: faced with “the danger of foreign attack,” Americans also needed to defend against “the threat of invasion from within...the dreaded fifth column.” Americans must “heed the call to arm for defense.”



- The final page of the comic book gave young readers a way to support the cause by joining “Captain America’s Sentinel of Liberty” and helping Cap “in his war against the spies and enemies in our midst who threaten our very independence.”

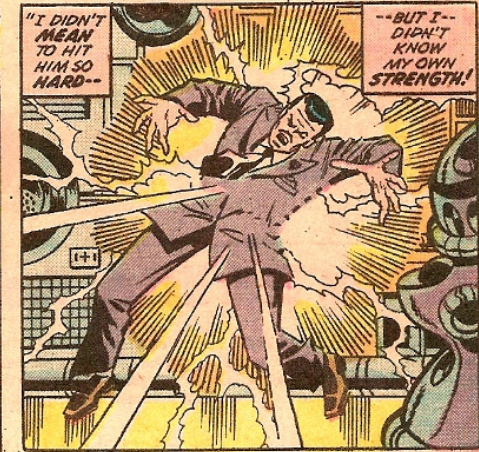
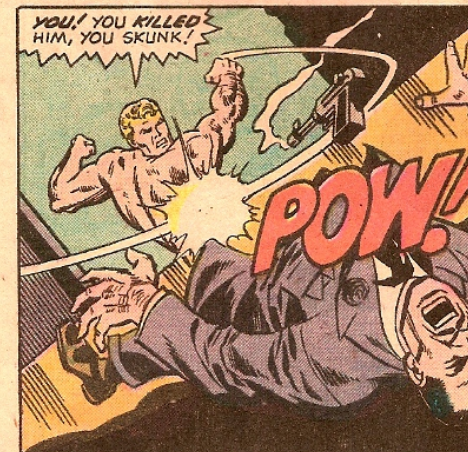
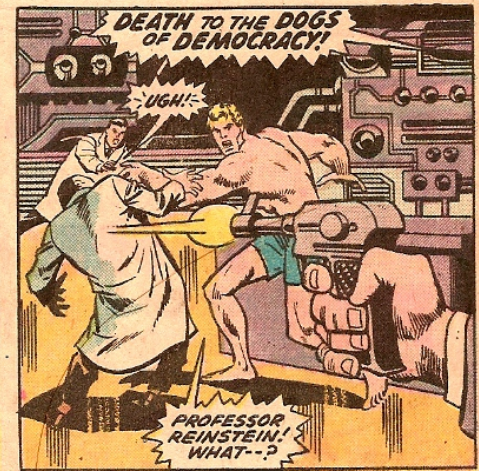




# Comics & the War

- Once the U.S. entered the war (Dec. 1941), comics were one vehicle of support for the war effort:
  - Comics urged a united national front & promoted patriotic slogans.
  - Comics often depicted the enemy in vicious, racist stereotypes that played into people's emotions and fears.
- Not uncommon for a single monthly issue to sell in excess of 500,000 copies. Comics were also quite popular with the millions of young men entered in military service.
- Most popular books were Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel and the Walt Disney cartoon characters – often sold over 1 million copies per issue.

# Captain America's Origin Story





- Captain America's appeal: he was not born with great power, but rather had it bestowed upon him as a gift.
  - Steve Rogers started out as a scrawny man who was rejected by the Army and then redeemed by a dose of a "strange seething liquid" that turned him into a muscular young hero.
- It could happen to anyone, even the ordinary reader. And part of the attraction was that Steve Rogers never became excessively gifted; he wasn't invulnerable - he was just tougher and braver and smarter than anyone else.

# I WAS WEAK AND RUN-DOWN

I had circles under my eyes. My tail drooped. I had a foul case of Appeasement . . . . .

... THEN  
I LEARNED ABOUT

## “GUTS”

that amazing remedy  
For all Mankind's Woes

### NOW

I AM TAKING IT DAILY  
and today

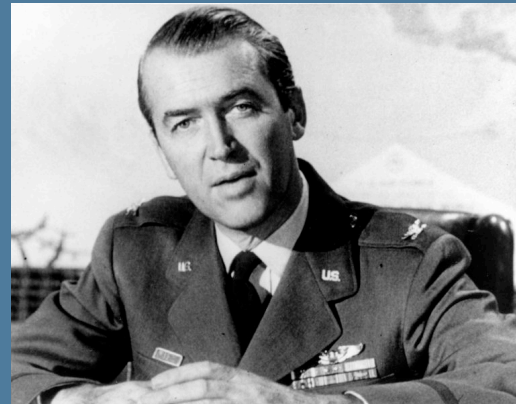
I FEEL STRONG  
ENOUGH TO

## PUNCH MISTER HITLER RIGHT IN THE SNOOT!

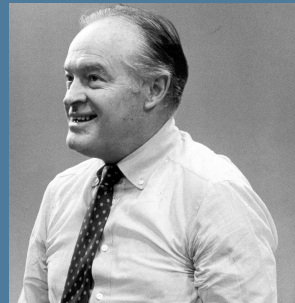


© 1941 Dr. Seuss

- During WWII, the American government enlisted a Hollywood producers and actors, as well as famous artists and cartoonists to support the war effort through a series of film shorts and cartoons.
  - Many actors, like Clark Gable and James Stewart, chose to enlist in the Armed Forces.



- Others toured with the newly formed USO, which was responsible for entertaining troops on the front. Bob Hope and others helped provide entertainment and boost morale on the front lines.



- Walt Disney, Warner Bros. & Dr. Seuss were just a few of the famous artists to support the war effort.
- During the war, the U.S. Army hired Disney & Warner Bros. studios and had the staff create training and instructional films for the military and home-front morale-boosting short films.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

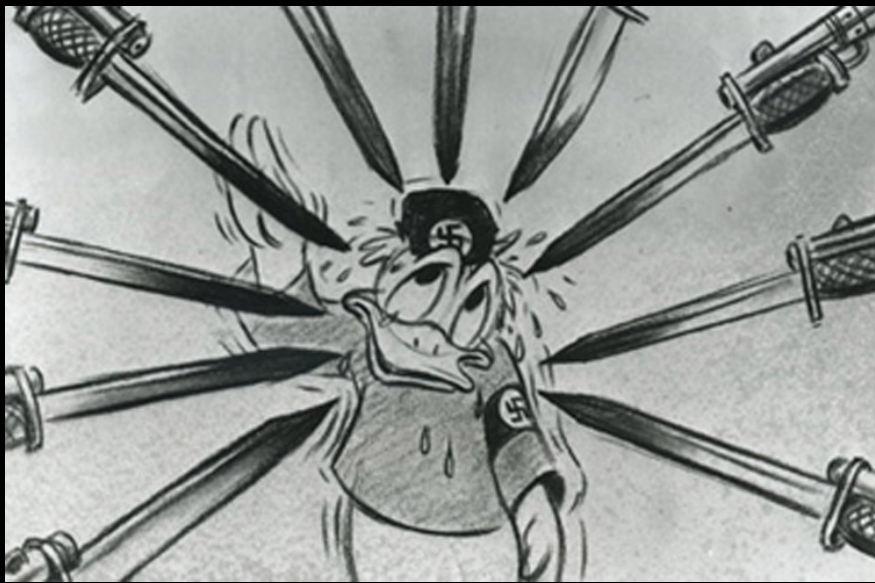
MICKEY MOUSE

GOES TO WAR

[www.PublicDomainFootage.com](http://www.PublicDomainFootage.com)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★





A MAX FLEISCHER CARTOON  
**Popeye**  
THE SAILOR  
AS ENLIGHTENED BY  
KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.

YOU'RE A SAP,  
MR. JAP  
Produced by Max Fleischer  
DISTRIBUTED BY UNITED ARTISTS



**WHY WE FIGHT**  
A SERIES OF SEVEN  
INFORMATION FILMS

THERE'S A THRILL IN THE AIR!  
Walt Disney's  
**ICTORY  
THROUGH  
AIR  
POWER**  
Produced in Technicolor  
Released Through UNITED ARTISTS  
From the book by ALEXANDER P. DE SEVERSKY



- The Office of War Information (OWI) was created in June 1942 to educate the public about the war, to organize govt. information, and to coordinate all press, radio & motion pictures about the war.
- In effect, the OWI was responsible for selling the war.



Don't Let Them Carve THOSE Faces on Our Mountains!

BUY  
UNITED STATES  
SAVINGS BONDS  
AND STAMPS!



# Paying for the War

- Wars cost a lot of money. In an effort to finance the war effort, the govt. raised taxes and encouraged Americans to buy war bonds.

ONE BUCK OUT OF EVERY 10!













ME? I'D GIVE MY LIFE FOR MY COUNTRY!



"Yeah... but 10% of his income for War Bonds... that's a different matter."



Dr. Seuss

Copyright 1943 Holt Publishers



YOU, TOO,  
CAN SINK U-BOATS

\* BUY \*

United States War Savings Bonds & Stamps

No 11  
10¢

MAGNO LIGHTNING

FOUR

UNKNOWN SOLDIER CAPT. COURAGEOUS

# FAVORITES

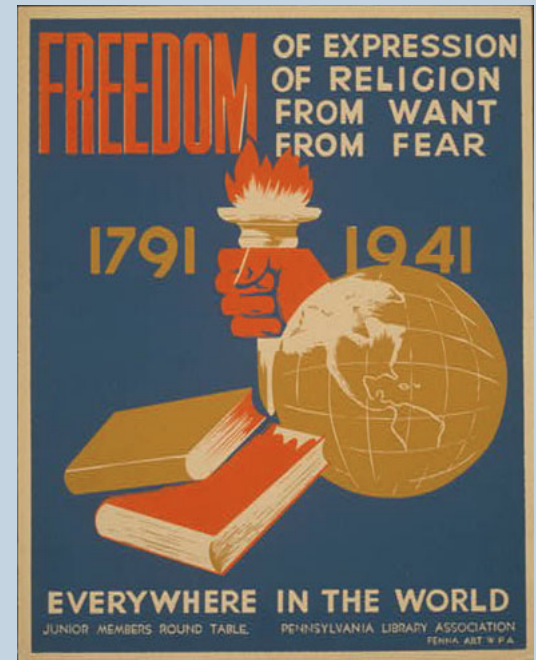
AUG.

ALL NEW COMICS

RIGHT IN DER FUHRER'S FACE

SMASHING ADVENTURES OF  
MAGNO & DAVEY, CAPTAIN  
COURAGEOUS, LIGHTNING,  
AND THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

# The “Four Freedoms”



- On January 6, 1941, FDR addressed Congress, delivering the historic "Four Freedoms" speech. He explained his dream of a world where other nations enjoyed some of the same freedoms that Americans had.
- The speech inspired Norman Rockwell to make a series of paintings about the Four Freedoms. These paintings later served as the centerpiece of a massive U.S. war bond drive and were put into service to help explain the war's aims to the American people.

# SAVE FREEDOM OF SPEECH



BUY WAR BONDS

# SAVE FREEDOM OF WORSHIP



BUY WAR BONDS

**OURS...to fight for**



**FREEDOM FROM WANT**

**OURS...to fight for**



**FREEDOM FROM FEAR**

# Emphasis on Racial Unity

- Segregation and racism were common in the military and American life.
- Govt. was aware of the negative effects racial prejudice had on black Americans.
- Govt. worried that racial division would negatively impact the war effort – WHY?
- To this end, the govt. promoted posters, pamphlets and films highlighting participation & achievement of African-Americans in military & civilian life



**Pvt. Joe Louis says...**



**"We're going to do our part  
... and we'll win because  
we're on God's side"**

**"above and beyond the call of duty"**



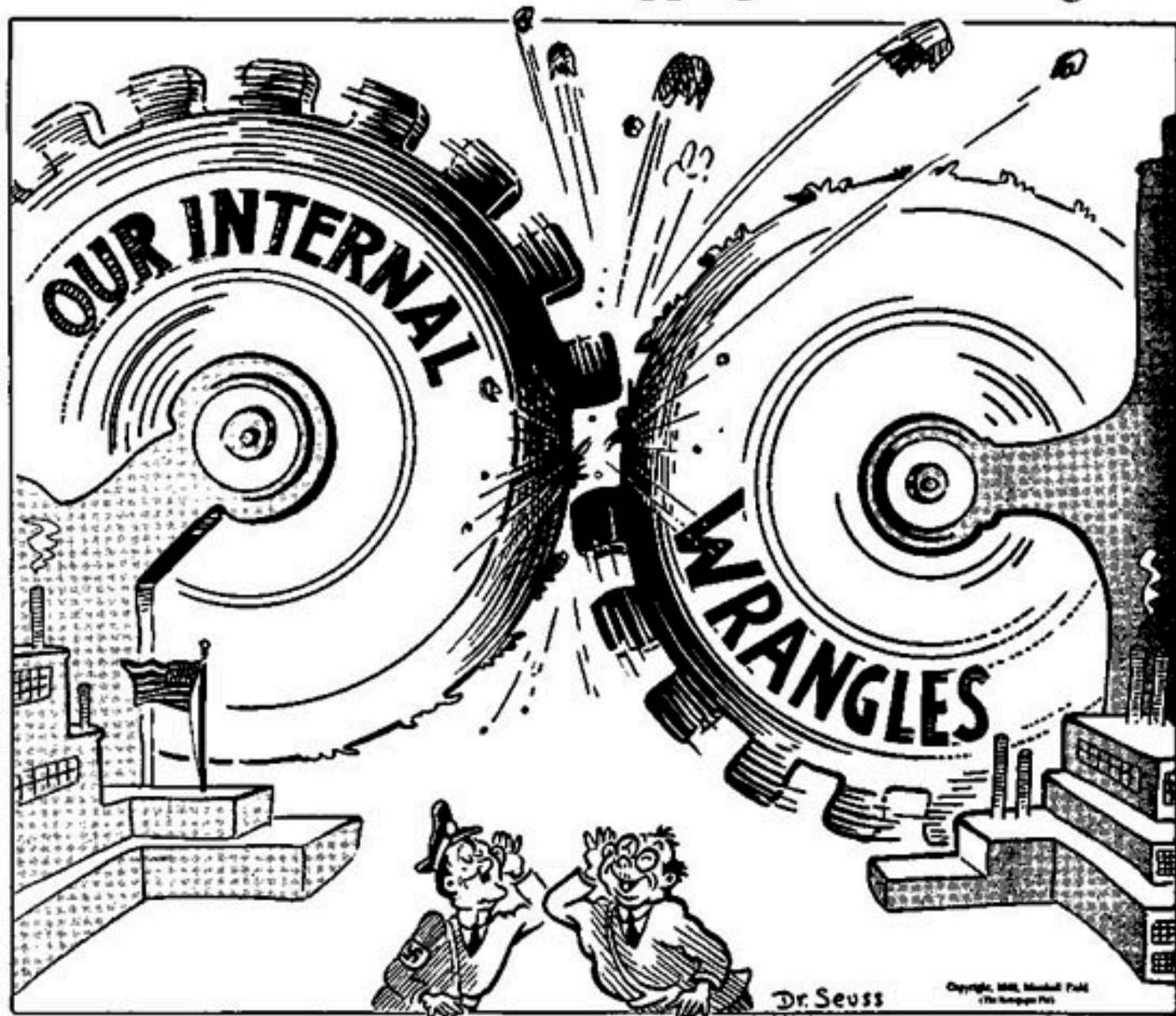
**DORIE MILLER**  
*Received the Navy Cross  
at Pearl Harbor, May 27, 1942*

# Double-V Campaign

- Despite racial discrimination at home and in the military, the majority of African-Americans participated in the war hoping it would end racial discrimination in American society.
  - They hoped that by fighting and demonstrating their patriotism in the war, that when the war was over, that Americans would no longer discriminate after the war (the “Double – V” campaign.)



**'I Hear the Americans Are Stripping Their Gears Again!'**



Dr. Seuss

Copyright, 1944, Marshall Field  
(The Sunlight Press)



**WE'RE LOSING**

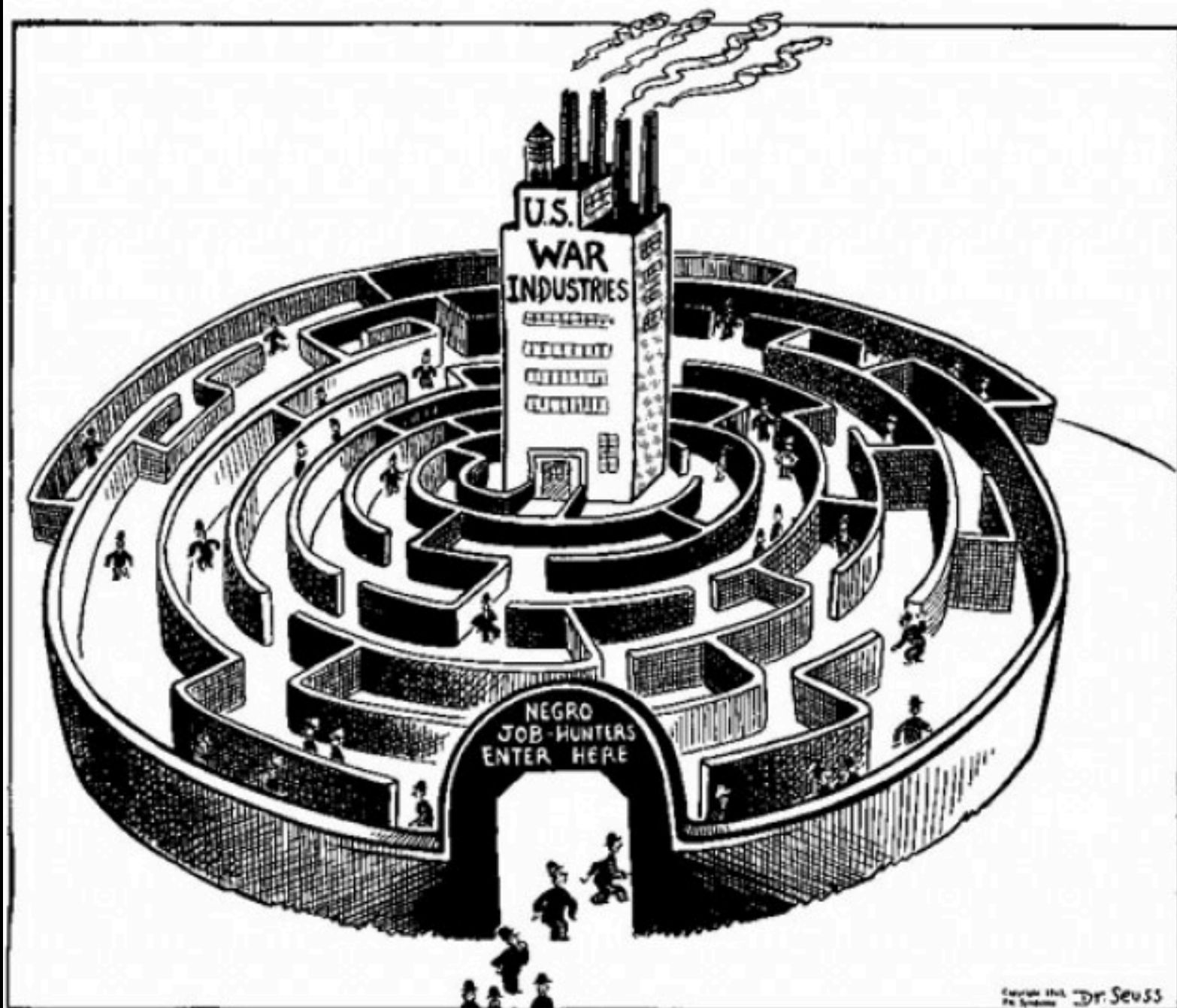
**DISUNITY**

**LIBERALS**

**CONSERVATIVES**

**OUR  
COMPETITIVE EDGE**

# The Old Run-Around



## The Guy Who Makes a Mock of Democracy



"I pledge allegiance  
To the Flag of the United States  
And to the Republic for which it  
stands.

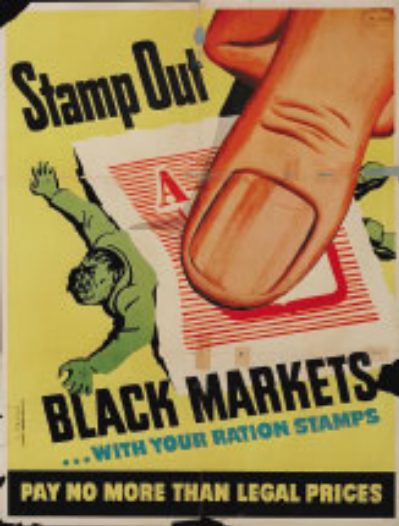
One Nation indivisible,  
With Liberty and Justice for  
all . . .

(Except the boys and girls  
I keep down in the cellar)."

# The Need for Efficiency in Work



# Rationing & Shortages



- *The Office of Price Administration (OPA) was established in 1942 to stop wartime inflation (an increase in prices of goods.) It's job included:*
  - *Setting a maximum price on most goods: eventually 90% of food prices were frozen...the OPA kept prices relatively stable during the war years.*
  - *Rationing (giving people a fixed amount of certain goods) scarce consumer goods such as tires, silk, nylon, automobiles, sugar, gasoline, fuel, oil, butter, coffee, meats and processed foods.*
    - *By the end of 1942, gasoline rationing was limited to 4 gal./wk for those issued A stickers. B stickers (supplementary allowance for war workers), C stickers (vital occupations such as doctors), T stickers (trucks, which were given unlimited amounts)*
      - *By 1945, 32,500 motorists had been arrested for using stolen or counterfeit stickers.*



"An eager school boy gets his first experience in using War Ration Book Two. With many parents engaged in war work, children are being taught the facts of point rationing for helping out in family marketing."  
*(Photo by Alfred Palmer, Feb. 1943 from Patch-NA)*



140604 AK

# WAR RATION BOOK No. 3

Void if altered

**NOT  
VALID  
WITHOUT  
U.P.A.  
STAMP  
U.S.A.**

Identification of person to whom issued: PRINT IN FULL

*Clara A. Schoenher*  
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Street number or rural route *311 Smith*

City or post office *Fair Wayne* State *Ind.*

AGE	SEX	WEIGHT Lbs.	HEIGHT Ft. In.	OCCUPATION
<i>49</i>	<i>F</i>			

SIGNATURE  
(Person to whom book is issued. If such person is unable to sign because of age or incapacity, another may sign in his behalf.)

**WARNING**  
This book is the property of the United States Government. It is unlawful to sell it to any other person, or to use it or permit anyone else to use it, except to obtain rationed goods in accordance with regulations of the Office of Price Administration. Any person who finds a lost War Ration Book must

**LOCAL BOARD ACTION**  
Issued by \_\_\_\_\_ (Local board number) \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)  
Street address \_\_\_\_\_



**4**

148518 BP

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION



# WAR RATION BOOK FOUR

Issued to *Otto G. Schoenher*  
(Print first, middle, and last names)

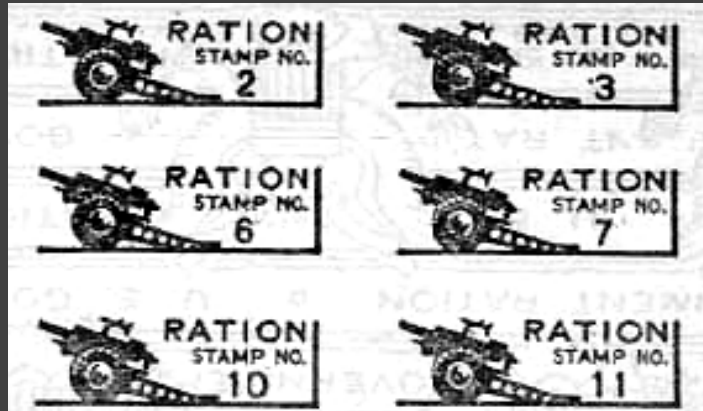
Complete address *3118 Smith St.  
Fair Wayne, Ind.*

**READ BEFORE SIGNING**

In accepting this book, I recognize that it remains the property of the United States Government. I will use it only in the manner and for the purposes authorized by the Office of Price Administration.

Void if Altered

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)





# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



## War Ration Book One

### WARNING

- 1** Punishments ranging as high as *Ten Years' Imprisonment or \$10,000 Fine, or Both*, may be imposed under United States Statutes for violations thereof arising out of infractions of Rationing Orders and Regulations.
- 2** This book must not be transferred. It must be held and used only by or on behalf of the person to whom it has been issued, and anyone presenting it thereby represents to the Office of Price Administration, an agency of the United States Government, that it is being so held and so used. For any misuse of this book it may be taken from the holder by the Office of Price Administration.
- 3** In the event either of the departure from the United States of the person to whom this book is issued, or his or her death, the book must be surrendered in accordance with the Regulations.
- 4** Any person finding a lost book must deliver it promptly to the nearest Ration Board.

No. 379446 -70





# Girdle Shortage



# Giving the Axis a Lift

'Step on it, kid; ya got  
gas and rubber to burn!'

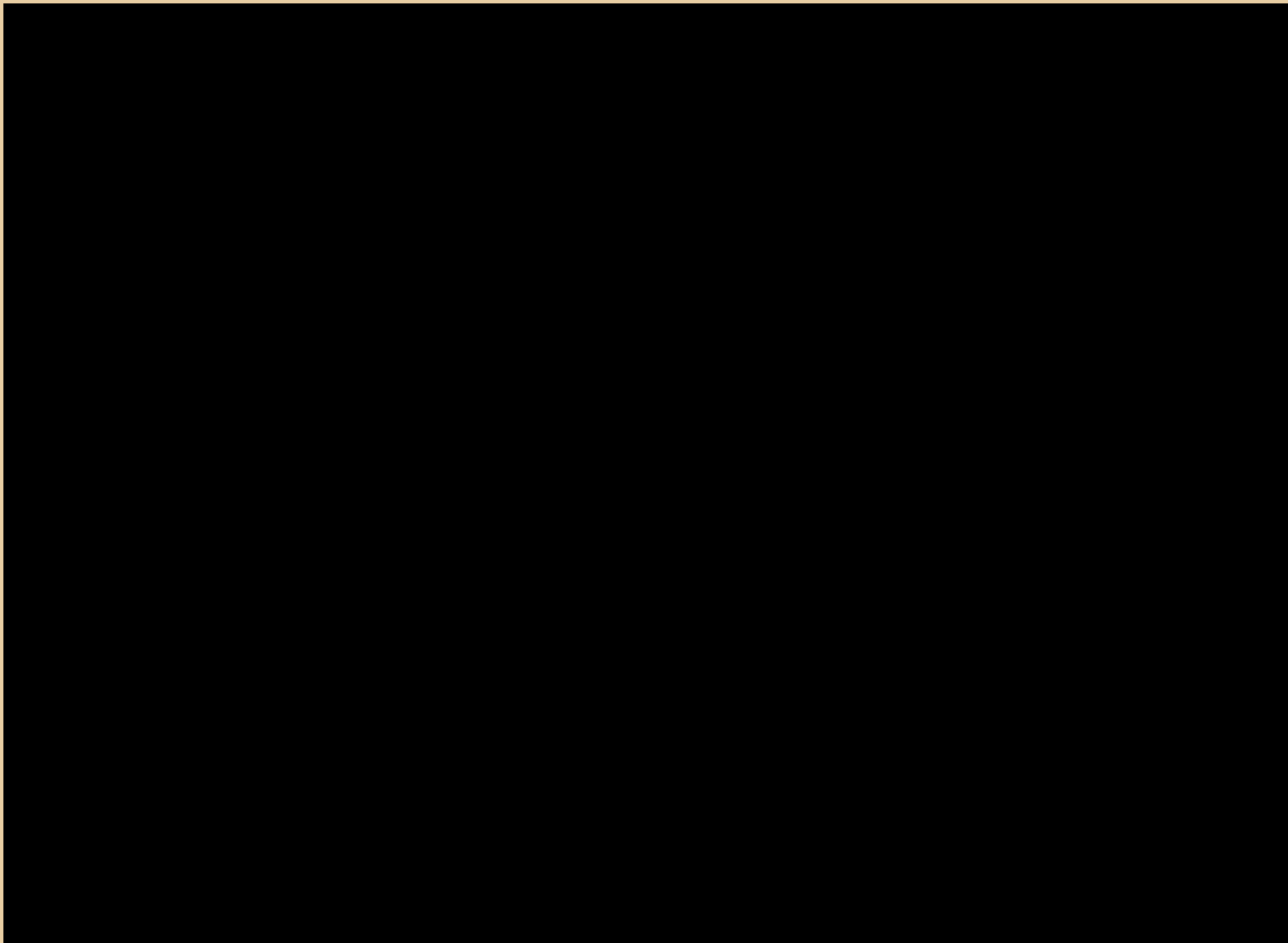


Dr. Seuss Copyright, 1942, Marshall Field (The Newspaper Co.)



# Conservation

- Govt. publicity reminded people that shortages occurred because they were going to the troops, and that civilians should do their part to conserve.



When you ride **ALONE**  
you ride with Hitler!



Join a  
**Car-Sharing Club**  
**TODAY!**

**WASTE HELPS THE ENEMY**

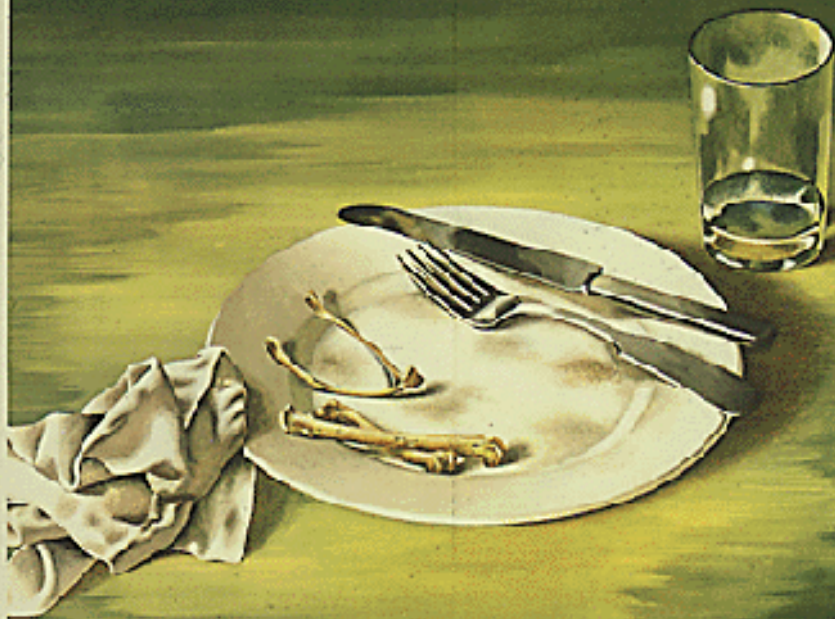


**CONSERVE  
MATERIAL**



HELP WIN THE WAR  
*Squeeze in one more*

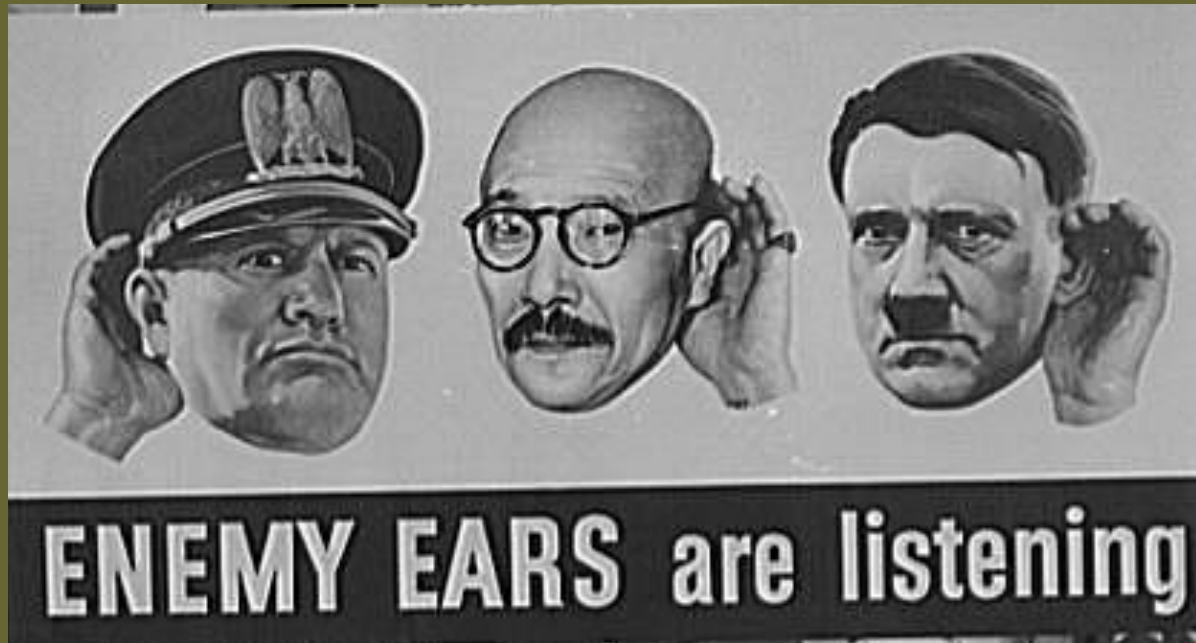
**FOOD IS A WEAPON**



**DON'T WASTE IT!**  
**BUY WISELY - COOK CAREFULLY - EAT IT ALL**

**FOLLOW THE NATIONAL WARTIME NUTRITION PROGRAM**

# Concerns about national security



- **“Words are ammunition. Each word an American utters either helps or hurts the war effort. He must stop rumors... He must not speak recklessly. He must remember that the enemy is listening.”**  
*--Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry (OWI)*



Spies, Spies, Spies!

# WANTED!



# FOR MURDER

***Her careless talk costs lives***



"Please don't gamble  with your LIFE!"

**BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY *or write!***

© 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

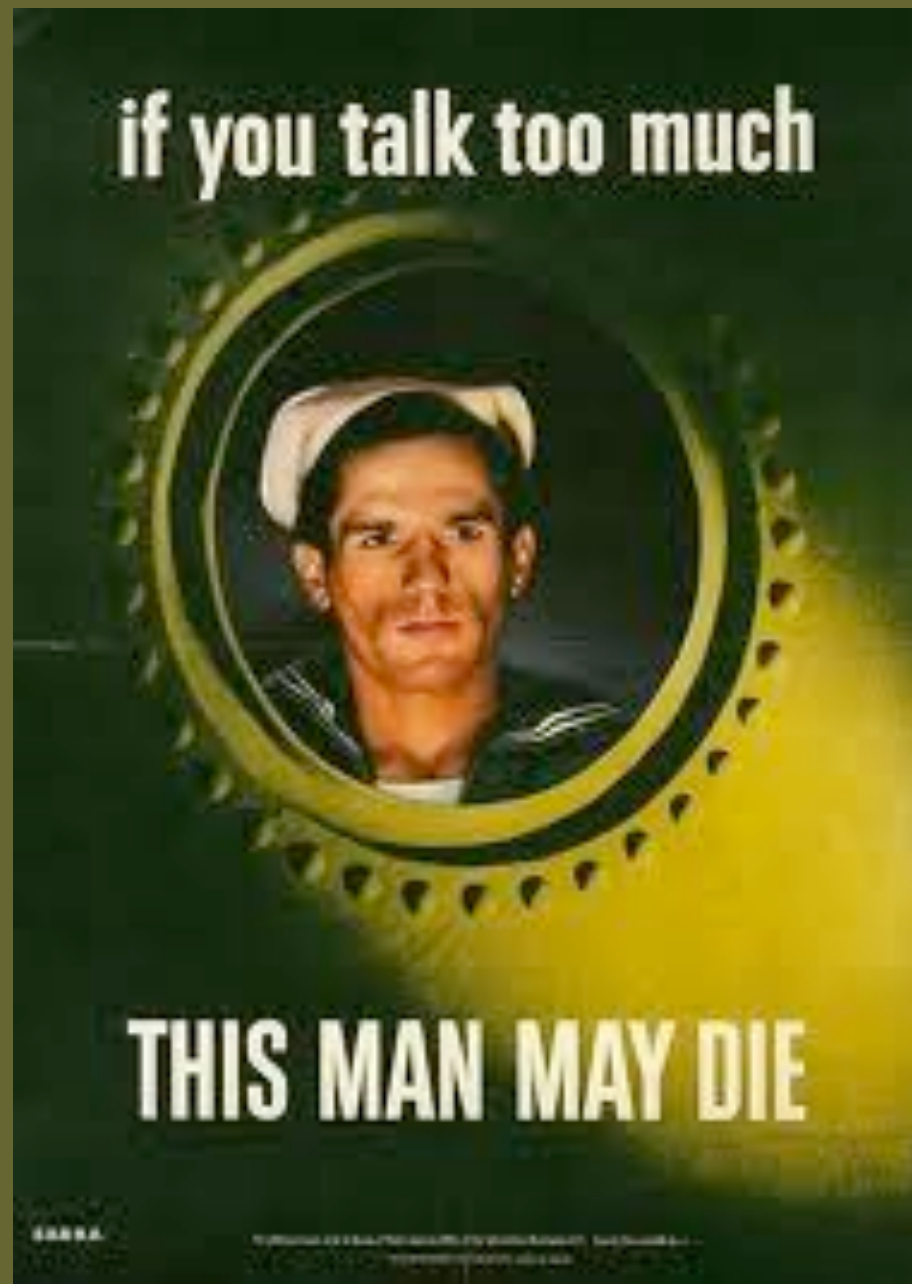


*You never know who's on the wires!*

**BE CAREFUL  
WHAT YOU SAY**



*...because somebody talked!*



if you talk too much

THIS MAN MAY DIE

LANNA

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT US AT WWW.LANNA.COM

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# Playing on Americans' Fears & Stereotypes







Don't Let That Shadow Touch Them

*Buy* **WAR BONDS**



**WE'RE FIGHTING  
TO PREVENT THIS**



**HE'S  
WATCHING  
YOU**



**SOMEONE**



**TALKED!**





