

Oklahoma Books

Propaganda for War: the Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-17, by H. C. Peterson. University of Oklahoma Press, 1939. \$3.00.

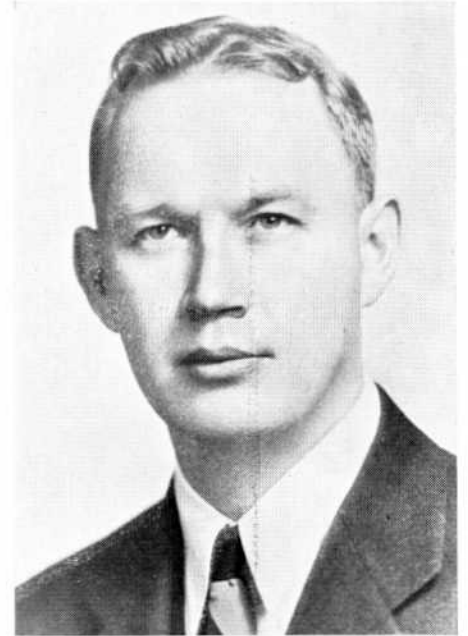
IN 1934, the Senate Munitions Inquiry prompted a public demand for neutrality legislation which would guarantee our keeping out of what appeared to be imminent war. The Nye Committee Report reviewed not only the role of the munition makers in the period before our entrance into the World War but also reviewed the question of how we came to enter the war. The question, thus reopened, received the attention of a veritable flood of scholarly books tracing in detail the events and factors which led to our declaration of war.

In his *Propaganda for War* Professor H. C. Peterson, assistant professor of history in the University of Oklahoma, has carried this study to a new field. He has made a careful and revealing study of the efforts of the British Government and British citizens to win the sympathies of the American public, of American business and of our government.

As the author points out, "the struggle between weary old England and boisterous new Germany readily adapted itself to the stereotype of virtue versus iniquity." Thus, as the American public was bombarded by propaganda from both the Allies and the Central Powers it was the former that had the edge from the start. The author clearly shows that "laborious handling, or dullness" on the part of the German propagandists and the adroitness of the British, coupled with the natural (and cultivated) sympathy of Americans for Britain, were strong points in making British propaganda almost unbelievably effective.

Providing American producers with an almost unlimited market and at the same time, through its blockade destroying the German market, England had an excellent economic base for a propaganda setup. Through the floating of loans in the United States and the sale of bonds to Americans, British economic propaganda was made even more effective.

With the social elite strongly pro-British, with business interests tied with British economics, with the professors and the clergymen Anglophile, with some American diplomatic representatives more British than American, with such leaders of American thought as Roosevelt and some of Wilson's advisers sympathetic, the British propagandist worked in a most propitious climate. But, even so, the propaganda machine would not have been so successful if it had not been so thoroughly organized and so well financed.



Dr. H. C. Peterson

The author has described in detail the workings of the propaganda mill. He has pointed out most clearly the techniques used to secure the desired results. He has called attention to the fact that the best British propagandists were the native Americans, who unwittingly or wittingly advanced the Allied cause. He has carefully studied the British capacity to understand American psychology—an understanding which added to the success of the campaign.

For the first time, this volume reveals the facts concerning the British campaign of propaganda as the story is unfolded in the "American Press Resume" prepared by the British Foreign Office for the use of the British cabinet. This publication, together with the "Daily Review of the Foreign Press," reveals not only American reaction to the Allied cause but also sets forth in detail the efforts made on the part of the British to further their purpose of securing not only a friend in the United States but, if possible, an ally as well. In the use of these documents, not generally available to the scholar and nowhere published, the author has made his great contribution to a realistic study of the behind-the-scenes events which led to our participation in the war.

Mr. Peterson has written a scholarly and carefully-documented book. He has been penetrating in his analysis. He has spared no effort to make his volume precise and accurate. And in doing this, he has rendered a signal service not only to scholars but also to the layman, who is today so troubled over American foreign policy.

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Perhaps it is because of his stereotypes, but this reviewer finds that three criticisms of the book are in order: First: The author has taken the Nye Committee Report too much at its face value. He has not been as penetrating in his appraisal of that report as he has of other sources. At times he appears to have wanted to believe some of the theories and questionable facts there included. Second: No doubt recoiling from British propaganda in an effort to keep his balance, the author has swung too far in his criticism of Woodrow Wilson. He would have one believe that Wilson was decidedly partisan from the outbreak of the war and he almost leads one to conclude that the president maliciously plotted with our enemies to secure our entrance. His chapter on the Wilson administration is the weak point in the book. Third: This reviewer cannot agree with Dr. Peterson's appraisal of the uprightness, the objectivity, the impartiality of William Randolph Hearst. The author appears almost naive in his acceptance of Mr. Hearst's boasts of neutrality and impartiality.

The bases of these criticisms in no way destroy the value of the book. It is a first rate contribution to American history and diplomacy. To all who would be on guard, the book must be commended.—ROYDEN DANGERFIELD.

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Boomer-Sooner: A Life Story, by H. G. (Teen) Cook. Co-operative Books, Norman, Oklahoma, 1939. Fifty cents.

This first publication of Co-operative Books, a pamphlet publishing enterprise organized by Winifred Johnston of Norman, is a lively and lusty account of pioneer days in Oklahoma, written by a man who in one way or another participated in every Oklahoma run and opening.

It was chosen as the first number of the new pamphlet series because of its timely value on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Oklahoma Territory, and because of its lasting interest as the autobiography of an Oklahoma pioneer.

Boomer-Sooner entirely fulfills the editor's objective of selecting works that possess the personality and flavor of individual style, as well as social significance

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and timeliness. Mr. Cook tells his story with a profusion of lively incidents and colorful detail. The book is of particular interest to O. U. alumni since Mr. Cook lived for many years in Norman and sent his five sons and daughters to the University.

One of the first orders for this book came from George B. Parker, '08, editor-in-chief of Scripps-Howard newspapers now living in Washington, D. C., who lived in the Cook home in Norman while attending the University.

General response to the pamphlet series idea seems to indicate that the plan is sound. Three titles are scheduled for publication this year. Advance orders already are coming in for the Paul Anderson memorial, *Where Is There Another?*

The pamphlet series is printed by the *Norman Transcript* Press.

Distinction for Whitehand

American Nocturne, a short story by Robert Whitehand, '33, young instructor in drama in the University, has been named one of the fifty best American short stories by Edward J. O'Brien, literary critic whose annual short fiction anthologies are popular with the reading public.

The story, which has been reprinted many times since its first appearance in *American Prefaces*, University of Iowa literary quarterly, will be included in O'Brien's forthcoming volume, *The Best American Short Stories*.

The critic's volume, *Best Short Stories of 1936*, was dedicated to Whitehand as the most promising young writer of that year.

Sooner writers

Stewart Harral, '36ma, assistant professor of journalism and director of the University news service, has written an article on "The University and Its Press Regulations" which has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Higher Education*. . . . An article by Dr. Charles M. Perry, head of the University philosophy department, on the theory of the late Alfred H. Lloyd, American philosopher, has been published in *Philosophia*, "a magazine of all languages" printed in Jugoslavia.

An article by Roland Hinds, '36ma, member of the faculty of Duncan Junior College, appeared in the current issue of *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, published by the Oklahoma Historical Society. The article tells about the Christianizing and education of the Creek Indians. . . . An article by Dr. Homer L. Dodge, dean of the Graduate School, on "The Training of College and University Teachers" was published in a recent issue of *School and Society*, weekly educational publication.

Two articles by Grace E. Ray, '20, '23 ma, assistant professor of journalism, have been accepted for publication by national magazines.

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BOOK EXCHANGE

Books of Interest to Oklahomans

1.

Propaganda for War

This new book from the University of Oklahoma Press, by H. C. Peterson of the history faculty, describes in accurate detail the campaign against American neutrality in 1914-17. Orders for this book are coming in from all over the country since reviewers have spoken so highly of it. Burton Rascoe says, "contains information of highest importance to all Americans . . . shows the subtle, ingenious, nefarious ways by which we were brought into the World War, and should put us on our guard against being dragged into another."-----\$3.00

2.

Boomer-Sooner

This is the life story of H. G. (Teen) Cook, and is the first number in Series I of Cooperative Books, Norman. An Oklahoma pioneer tells his own story in his own lively style. 50c

3.

Toward a Dimensional Realism

A significant book by Dr. Charles M. Perry, head of the University Philosophy Department, published by the University Press. Of special interest to students of philosophy, theology and biology, as well as all who are concerned with present social conflicts. A graphic statement of the relation of ideologies to one another.-----\$2.50

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