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ABSTRACT

Beginning in the 1930s, American corporations increasingly turned to radio for their public relations campaigns. Major firms, including Ford, Du Pont, and General Motors, sponsored network radio programs that carried messages designed to improve their image. Other large corporations funded national radio news commentators, while smaller businesses sponsored weekly or even daily local radio programs. For twenty years, radio was an important component of corporate public relations, allowing businesses to speak more directly to the public than print advertisements had. By the mid-fifties, institutional broadcasting, combined with other public relations activities, had succeeded in helping business improve its status in American society.

During the Great Depression, business faced new challenges to its prestige and power in American society. Several corporations and business organizations, like the National Association of Manufacturers, responded by dramatically expanding their public relations programs to compete with the New Deal and organized labor for public favor. Convinced that industry's problems were primarily the result of public misunderstanding, these companies and organizations engaged in an array of public relations activities in an effort to restore America's confidence in corporate leadership and the free enterprise system. Radio offered a new, exciting medium for selling business and capitalism. As Richard Tedlow observed "with its momentous implications for influencing society," radio was a "weapon of great potential." (FN1) Embracing this potential to reach vast new audiences, Ford and Du Pont, among others, sponsored nationally broadcast network radio programs that carried messages designed both to improve the corporate image and to promote business values. Other corporations began sponsoring radio commentators, and, as interest in public relations at the community level grew in the postwar era, an array of smaller firms inaugurated weekly or even daily local programs.

For twenty years, radio was an important weapon in a public relations arsenal that also included newspaper and magazine advertising, films, billboards, photographs, and fair exhibits. (FN2) Businesses found, however, that radio differed fundamentally from the more traditional activities. It was a powerful medium of communication that, as Warren Susman noted, "helped create or reinforce uniform national values and beliefs in a way that no previous medium had ever before been able to do." (FN3) Radio allowed businesses to speak directly to Americans. But, unlike the print media, which enjoyed the protections of the first amendment, broadcasting was regulated by the government. Subject to political and regulatory pressure, networks, as well as many other broadcasters, never allowed the business community totally free access to the airwaves. This article explores how businesses used radio to shape their external political and social environment from the thirties to the mid-fifties when many of the larger firms shifted from radio to television.

EARLY PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EARLY RADIO HISTORY

Business leaders have long been aware of the importance of the image their company projected to the external environment. During the early part of the twentieth

century, in the face of growing hostility toward business and demands for greater state regulation, firms turned to public relations to improve their reputation. They began hiring press agents and engaged in a host of public relations initiatives, ranging from welfare capitalism and institutional advertising, to factory tours and elaborate exhibits at world fairs and exhibitions. These campaigns often had multiple goals. Many targeted employees as well as the public, seeking not only to shape political opinion but also to promote morale within the company itself. General Motors' 1920s institutional advertising campaign, for instance, aspired to create public goodwill by portraying GM as an agency of public service and simultaneously to stimulate corporate loyalty among the often hostile divisions of the firm. By the end of World War I, companies, including AT&T, Swift, Bethlehem Steel, and Du Pont, and such organizations as the National Association of manufacturers (NAM), had established public relations programs. Their efforts helped deflect Progressive Era political attacks against corporations and later enhanced public esteem for business enterprise in the prosperous 1920s. By the end of that decade, the executives of many large national firms believed that they had achieved for business the status of a respected "national institution." (FN4) The economic collapse of the thirties, however, shook the nation's faith in corporate America. Public relations advocates advised businesses that they must "sell the American way of life to the American people." (FN5) Longtime public relations enthusiasts and new converts like Du Pont and U.S. Steel became committed to more aggressively carrying their message to the American public. As Roland Marchand observed, "never before had big business reached out so ardently to the common man and invited him into its confidence." (FN6)

Reaching out to the common man increasingly involved the use of a new medium, radio. The first stations, a mix of profit and non-profit broadcasters, began operations in the early twenties. By the end of the decade, two major networks—National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting Company—had begun operations, and radio rapidly became commercialized. The number of homes with radios grew from 20 percent in 1926 to 30 percent in 1928 and then more than doubled between 1930 and 1940. The 1940 census revealed that radio reached almost 83 percent of American families. (FN7)

The growth of the size of this audience increased concerns about the control of radio by private interests. During the late twenties and early thirties, civic organizations, educational, religious, farm and labor groups fought for control of broadcasting. They argued that radio should serve the public interest and that "commercial broadcasting was inimical to the communications needs of a democratic society." (FN8) According to these reformers, radio was too powerful a medium to be controlled by companies driven solely by the profit motive. The struggle for entirely non-commercial broadcasting ended, unsuccessfully, with the passage of the Communications Act of 1934, which established the Federal Communications Commission. While commercial broadcasters retained control of radio, the industry was regulated by the government operating under a mandate to serve "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity." The FCC issued stations short term licenses and could deny renewal if there were evidence of violation of federal regulations. Stations were required to present a balanced, well rounded schedule of programming, representing a variety of political viewpoints. (FN9)

Through the late thirties and early forties, relations between broadcasters and the government remained unsettled. Very few license renewals were ever rejected, but the "threat of government mischief haunted the industry." (FN10) The networks were not under the immediate jurisdiction of the FCC, but they did own local stations that were. In some ways the networks were even more politically vulnerable than local stations. Broadcast reformers' charges that the networks had gained monopoly control of the

industry raised the specter of potential anti-trust litigation and other kinds of regulation. Industry fears were not unwarranted. In 1938, in response to Congressional pressure, the FCC began an investigation into chain broadcasting, and in 1941 launched an inquiry into newspaper ownership of broadcast stations. Given this pressure, broadcasters sought “to foster a spirit of accommodation with the administration.”(FN11) The networks hoped to create goodwill by offering the government free public service airtime. Moreover, to reduce the pressure for further federal regulation, the networks discouraged criticism of government policy and shied away from programs they deemed too controversial. Indeed, in 1939, attempting to silence growing criticism of the industry, the National Association of Broadcasters (the broadcasters’ trade association) adopted a new voluntary code of ethics that barred stations from selling time for the discussion of controversial issues with the exception of political broadcasts. It was within this regulatory context that business discovered that radio could be used to sell their ideas.(FN12)

INSTITUTIONAL RADIO PROGRAMS

Despite some initial resistance, radio in the twenties quickly became associated with the advertising of products. In the thirties, attempting to fill airtime, networks began encouraging companies to use radio as a public relations tool. Broadcasters offered radio as the “1st line of defense” against “radicals stirring up criticism of big business.”(FN13) Exploiting fears about the future of the free enterprise system, NBC urged industry to “campaign for public favor as never before.” It advised, “Get your story across through the greatest force the world has ever known for influencing lives and thoughts—Radio.”(FN14) According to the networks, radio had special advantages over the printed word for the purpose of public relations. David Sarnoff, head of RCA, argued that radio was “personalized and intimate, man-to-man, friend-to-friend, as no message through any other channel except personal communication can be.”(FN15) Opinion polls conducted during the late thirties reinforced the networks’ sales pitch. A Fortune magazine survey found that radio had higher credibility among Americans than the press. Moreover, radio commentators, like H. V. Kaltenborn, Boake Carter, Lowell Thomas, and Elmer Davis were more respected than newspaper editors and columnists. Paul Lazarsfeld’s study of the media preferences of over five thousand Americans concluded that radio provided a “feeling of personal touch with the world” and that listeners felt that radio personalities spoke directly to them.(FN16)

Convinced that radio could serve as a vehicle for generating goodwill, a number of major firms began sponsoring nationally broadcast programs, which carried institutional rather than commercial messages. General Motors, Ford, Chase National Bank, Armco, Du Pont, Texaco, and Firestone underwrote highly prestigious classical music programs and serious dramas. Employers believed that this type of programming provided the dignified atmosphere necessary to accompany institutional messages. Wheeling Steel’s show, aimed at both the company’s workers and the general public, however, had a different format, featuring the amateur talent of the company’s ten thousand employees and their families.(FN17)

During World War II, business expanded its institutional programming at the national level. With no products to sell, American companies began to sponsor prestigious arts organizations: U.S. Rubber underwrote the New York Philharmonic; Allis Chalmers, the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Texaco, the New York Metropolitan Opera; and U.S. Steel, the Theater Guild on the Air. Some of this programming, like Texaco’s support of the opera, continued well into the postwar era. Shows like Du Pont’s Cavalcade of America and US Steel’s Theater Guild eventually appeared on television.(FN18)

These network programs generally carried a mixture of “institutional advertising,” aimed at creating a positive corporate image, and “advocacy advertising,” aimed at

shaping public policy. Assuming that public hostility toward industry was based on a lack of knowledge, companies used their programs to present information about the firm, including its labor policies, safety record, and support for charities. Presented in an “informative and confidential fashion,” General Motors’ spokesmen mixed discussions of the technical problems of automobile construction and driving safety with occasional remarks on wage levels and the benefits of the American economic system. Wheeling Steel’s folksy Musical Steel-makers began each program with Old Timer, the master of ceremonies, telling “authentic stories on the daily drama of making steel.” In an industry beset with labor troubles, advertising manager J. L. Grimes’ primary goal was to convince people “from coast to coast that here is a large corporation that is human.”(FN19)

Du Pont had special reasons for sponsoring Cavalcade of America, which began in 1935. It had been tagged with a “merchant of death image” when the Senate investigated munitions profits during World War I. In addition, the Du Ponts worried about the influence of the “many strange and bewildering doctrines” proposed by those seeking answers to the Depression. Through its historical drama series, the company sought to refurbish its image while taking subtle shots at the New Deal. The Du Pont family believed that the New Deal was destroying the freedoms associated with the American economic system. The radio program reminded the public of the “origins of our unique freedom through dramatic stories of the men and women who won it, and of those who fought to hold it.” Designed to be inspirational, it focussed on the lives of such prominent Americans as Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Boone, Robert E. Lee, Tom Paine, and Roger Williams. The show’s commercials emphasized the contribution of the company’s products to American society. Each episode concluded with the slogan, “Better Things for Better Living through Chemistry.”(FN20)

The company carefully crafted and vigorously promoted the program. Originally broadcast over CBS, in 1940 Du Pont shifted the show to NBC to gain a larger audience. Generously financed, Cavalcade attracted such talented writers as Arthur Miller and well-known actors. To ensure historical accuracy, Du Pont’s advertising agency, Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn enlisted Yale historian Frank Monaghan to review the scripts. Monaghan also worked with BBD&O and NBC to promote the program among educators and other opinion leaders. The advertising agency distributed tens of thousands of promotional pamphlets to teachers throughout the nation, while the network hosted dinners for state superintendents of education. During twenty-two years on the air, the program won sixty-three broadcasting awards, including numerous honors from various educational associations.(FN21)

Like the Du Ponts, Henry Ford was appalled at the economic reforms of the New Deal. Ford battled with the Roosevelt administration over the National Recovery Administration’s efforts to regulate the auto industry and later ignored the provisions of the National Labor Relations Act. His company’s violent reaction to workers’ efforts to organize prevented the unionization of the Ford plants until 1941.(FN22) The Ford Sunday Evening Hour began broadcasting in October 1934 over the CBS radio network. At a cost of more than a million dollars a year, it gave Henry Ford a public platform from which to defend his firm and to share his economic philosophy with the American public. The program offered classical music with five to ten-minute intermission talks by William J. Cameron, Ford’s director of public relations. Although never a top-ranked show in its time slot, it was the most popular of the concert programs, with an audience of over ten million. Tens of thousands of Americans regularly wrote the company asking for copies of Cameron’s speeches, and forty-five million were distributed over the years. To listener Nora Huey, the talks were the “warp and woof of American life.” She believed that they served as “a steadying influence amidst all the clamor of shortsighted demagoguery.”(FN23)

Cameron's talks were never strident. He assured his audience that the Ford Company had "no political ax to grind" and "no theories to propagate." Striving to be the voice of "sweet reasonableness," he charmed his listeners with regular tributes to America, its institutions, its history and holidays. The virtues of Mothers' Day, for instance, were rarely overlooked. Cameron's primary goal was to create a favorable impression of the company and its founder. His talks were filled with stories about Henry Ford's ingenuity, his compassion and his good business sense. Cameron described how much Ford cared for his employees, pointing to the hiring of disabled and older workers, and emphasizing Ford's commitment to boosting wages and thus improving workers' lives through increased productivity.(FN24) Dismissing "alluring schemes" for "sharing the wealth," Cameron ardently defended enterprise and the existing distribution of wealth. He argued that business, not government, was the key to recovery and criticized the NRA, the New Deal's relief programs, unemployment insurance, and surplus taxes.(FN25) On December 30, 1934, as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration's checks helped millions of Americans escape starvation, Cameron warned listeners that "the more heavily we lean on government for support, the more heavily government must lean on us." Government assistance was "unnecessarily costly and demeaning." Ford's spokesman never explicitly attacked the autoworkers' union or its leaders, but he condemned strikes and asserted that employers were the true labor leaders. According to Cameron, history showed that "every improvement of industrial conditions, every advance in industrial justice" originated with management. He charged that "no labor leader has ever originated or suggested a single improvement in industrial conditions. Nor has any statesman."(FN26)

While Ford and Du Pont may have contended that they were simply seeking to create goodwill for their firms, other business programming was overtly political. From 1934 to 1936, the Crusaders, an organization of conservative business leaders committed to opposing "all forces destructive to sound government," went on the air with a weekly program broadcast over seventy-nine CBS stations. With financial backing from executives of General Foods, Du Pont, General Motors, Nabisco, Heinz, Sun Oil, Weirton Steel, and Standard Oil of Indiana, The Radio Voice of the Crusaders defended American industry and fought the New Deal and its regulatory agencies.(FN27) The entertainment industry journal *Variety* described the Crusaders program as "sugary propaganda" that asked listeners to "rebel against a dictatorship in the U.S." The Crusaders national commander, Fred G. Clark, dismissed the problem of unemployment, arguing that it was simply "a state of mind." To solve the nation's problems, he called for his audience to participate in a spiritual revival and to fight for constitutional liberty, individualism, patriotism, and limited government.(FN28)

The National Association of Manufacturers' radio series, *The American Family Robinson*, fought the New Deal in a somewhat more subtle fashion. The NAM generally used this program, whose first segment aired in the fall of 1934, to teach economic lessons and to argue that Roosevelt's social policies were utopian and disruptive. It involved the audience with contests, such as one that asked listeners to respond to the question "What Will Speed Recovery?" Within six months *American Family Robinson* was being broadcast by 207 stations. By the late thirties almost 300 small non-network stations carried the program. The NAM paid production costs, and either local employers bought airtime or stations provided it for free.(FN29) The most expensive item in its public relations budget, the program was an important element of the NAM's campaign to restore America's faith in business—as opposed to government—leadership. According to the NAM's public relations director, James P. Selvage, the program was "industry's effective answer to the Utopian promises of

theorists and demagogues at present reaching such vast audiences via the radio.”(FN30)

American Family Robinson, a fifteen minute program, focused on the trials and tribulations of the Robinson family in the small manufacturing city of Centerville. Like the rest of America, Centerville felt the impact of the Depression: its citizens suffered from unemployment; labor unrest was rampant; workers blamed their employers for wrecking the economy; and ideologues peddled economic panaceas, promising government-guaranteed security. In the first series of episodes, Luke Robinson, the “philosophical and kindly” editor of the Centerville Herald, defended his friend Dave Markham, owner of the local furniture factory, which was on the verge of closing due to exaggerated charges of running an unsafe plant and exploiting his workers. On the domestic front, Luke’s daughter Betty found her romance with reporter Bob Collins jeopardized by his support for the “Friends of the Downtrodden.” This radical group of agitators was creating dissension among Markham’s workers in an effort to organize Centerville’s industry on “a communal basis.” Through several episodes, the audience was left in suspense over the future of capitalism in Centerville and over the future of Betty’s relationship. Luke Robinson defended Markham by demonstrating that the plant had been running for three years at a loss and that conditions had deteriorated when a government agency, presumably the NRA, had forced him to increase pay and shorten hours. He also reminded the workers of Markham’s many contributions to the welfare of the community. By the end of the first series of episodes, the ringleader of the Friends, a Mr. Margolies, fled after he was unmasked as a professional “trouble making agitator” from Buffalo who was wanted by the police. Harmony restored, Centerville’s workers and Bob Collins regained confidence in the community’s business leaders. Moreover, they learned that “the welfare of the town—and the nation too—is tied up with the success of private enterprise.” Just as things return to normal, however, another “mysterious stranger” arrived in town to threaten the industrial security of Centerville.(FN31)

Most of the stations that carried American Family Robinson were small, independent operations. During World War II, the NAM gained its first major exposure on network radio. In 1941, Mutual aired its program Your Defense Reporter on Thursday nights and NBC broadcast Defense for America on Saturday nights. Both programs featured the story of American industry’s contribution to the war effort. NAM reporters visited key centers of defense production, describing the manufacturing process and interviewing workers at their factory benches, plant superintendents, government officials, and business leaders. Visiting Weirton Steel Company in June 1941, the NAM found evidence of the “American spirit of free enterprise,” as a “great American symphony of men, machines and management, working in perfect harmony” prepared “our nation for any emergency.” Defense for America regularly reminded listeners that managers and workers were “girding to defend the American way of life, a way of life that rests on a base of three inter-dependent freedoms ... representative democracy, civil and religious liberties and free enterprise.”(FN32) In 1944, ABC began broadcasting Its Your Business. A fifteen-minute panel show, it became a Saturday evening institution, on the air at 6:00 p.m. for more than a decade. It presented the views of corporate leaders on business and political issues through round-table discussions. NAM representatives also regularly participated in popular forum-style programs like America’s Town Meeting and People’s Platform.(FN33)

Broadcasters welcomed business’s institutional programming. But, fearful of government intervention, they refused to allow corporations carte blanche to the airwaves. In the mid-thirties, for instance, NBC Vice-President John F. Royal worried about associating NBC too closely with anti-administration business organizations and

he refused to sell time to the Crusaders.(FN34) NBC also rejected the NAM's program American Family Robinson, characterizing it as "decided propaganda." According to Royal, some members of the NAM believed that NBC was going to "give them unlimited time." But, he argued, although "they are our biggest clients, there is a much bigger question facing [us]. That is the very question of our existence for 'public interest,' convenience and necessity."(FN35) At the same time, CBS adopted a similar policy of refusing to sell time for the discussion of controversial public issues, such as taxation, legislation, or regulation. It repeatedly urged William J. Cameron of the Ford Sunday Evening Hour to moderate his commentary. The talks remained a problem plaguing CBS for it neither wanted to offend Ford Motor Company nor the Roosevelt administration.(FN36)

Network principles on controversial programming placed impediments to the promotional programming of businesses and business organizations but certainly not insurmountable barriers. Network policies could be remarkably inconsistent. CBS, for example, sold time to the Crusaders, and during the 1936 election, NBC sold time to the American Liberty League, another anti-New Deal business organization.(FN37) NBC normally refused to allow discussion of controversial issues, like strikes, on commercial programs, but in early 1937, NBC permitted General Motors to use the intermission of its General Motors Concert Hour to make a subtle attack against the Flint, Michigan, sitdown strikers, who had forced the closing of several of the corporation's plants. The GM announcer never specifically mentioned the strike but instead defended the "age-old principle of the right to work." He contended that "whether one shall work—how one shall work—when one shall work—has from the earliest days of our national existence been the acknowledged right of each one of us to decide for himself, with no man's interference." The appeal was "so cleverly done" that NBC Vice-President John Royal felt confident in taking "a chance on it."(FN38)

When networks did refuse to air business programming deemed overtly propagandistic, organizations like the NAM could always turn to the hundreds of small, independent stations. These stations were often not hampered by editorial policies on controversial programming and they regularly ignored the NAB code of ethics which barred selling time for discussion of controversial topics. Indeed, in late 1940, the NAM reported that stations provided the Association with 7,960 free radio hours for American Family Robinson and for commentary by George E. Sokolsky on government, economics, and business. Hungry for programming and often less fearful of public criticism than the networks, some non-network stations readily accepted all kinds of business offerings. Most had little fear of regulatory repercussions, for despite FCC threats, few station licenses were ever revoked. These stations provided a much smaller audience than the powerful network-affiliated outlets, but by avoiding the networks, business groups were freer to say whatever they pleased on the air.(FN39)

BUSINESS-SPONSORED NEWS COMMENTATORS

In addition to creating their own dramatic or musical programs, the NAM and a number of individual firms also attempted to influence public opinion through the sponsorship of radio commentators. Radio news commentary became increasingly popular during the thirties, expanding even further during World War II. Commentators were hired either by the networks, local stations, or commercial sponsors. Many firms tended to shy away from controversial commentators for fear of offending potential customers. Despite this concern, businesses sponsored some of the most conservative commentators of the era, including Boake Carter, George E. Sokolsky, Fulton Lewis, Jr., Upton Close, and H. V. Kaltenborn.(FN40)

In 1933, newspaper writer Boake Carter signed a contract with Philco to broadcast a daily news commentary over CBS. This was one of the earliest

commercially-sponsored news broadcasts. With an audience of over five million, Carter was one of the most popular commentators of the era. He became a powerful critic of the Roosevelt administration and organized labor. In his broadcasts, Carter attacked the CIO relentlessly, calling John L. Lewis a dictator and asserting that strikes in the auto and steel industry were similar to strikes in Italy that led to the rise of Mussolini.(FN41)

During the latter part of the decade, commentators George E. Sokolsky and Fulton Lewis, Jr., joined Carter in the assault on labor and the New Deal. Sponsored by the NAM but also on the payroll of the American Iron and Steel Institute, Sokolsky made weekly broadcasts during which he charged that the unions were dominated by racketeers. He also defended the steel industry in its struggle against the Steelworkers Organizing Committee.(FN42) In 1937, Fulton Lewis, Jr., began a more than two-decade run on radio, delivering his commentary five times a week in the early evening over the Mutual Network. By 1943, Lewis ranked fourth in a newspaper editors' poll of the public's favorite radio commentator. At the height of his popularity, his audience approached nearly ten million. The NAM paid for some of Fulton Lewis, Jr.'s, earlier broadcasts, but during most of his years on the air Lewis was sponsored by a variety of local businesses. Lewis may have been technically independent of the National Association of Manufacturers, but his commentary closely meshed with that organization's conservative philosophy. He regularly defended the freedom of individual enterprise as the "most important, the most vital freedom of all" and attacked almost any kind of government intervention in the economy or society as "dangerous, un-American state control." A June 1945 commentary, flatly stated, "If something is done by a Government, it's most likely to be bad."(FN43)

Both Upton Close and H. V. Kaltenborn gained notice during World War II by attacking Roosevelt's foreign and domestic policy. Beginning in September 1942, Shaeffer Pen Company hired Upton Close to provide a Sunday afternoon political commentary on NBC. Close had appeared sporadically on the network's news programs from 1934 to 1941, but with corporate sponsorship he felt freer to express his opinions. He attracted a large audience during the first years of the war when his bitter denunciations of the Roosevelt administration, American labor, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain "seemed to express the pent-up feelings of a sizable group of listeners."(FN44) For much of the thirties, H. V. Kaltenborn was an obscure CBS news analyst whose unsponsored newscast was carried by the network at a variety of unpopular times. In September 1938, however, Kaltenborn rose to national prominence as he provided an anxious American public with almost continuous coverage of the Czechoslovakian crisis. In the aftermath of this exposure, General Mills briefly became Kaltenborn's sponsor. The company already sponsored a variety of radio programs, including Jack Armstrong and three soap operas.(FN45) General Mills viewed the Kaltenborn program as institutional advertising, "differing materially from product advertising in that its primary function is to create goodwill." In addition, the company hoped that Kaltenborn would help create "a better understanding of American institutions and principles." General Mills promised Kaltenborn complete "freedom of selection and expression." But after just thirteen weeks, the firm backed out of the relationship when Catholics, angry at Kaltenborn's views on the Spanish Civil War, threatened to boycott the company's products. Kaltenborn found a more supportive sponsor in Pure Oil, which picked up his program in the spring of 1939 and shifted it to NBC, which broadcast the show five times a week during prime evening hours. Kaltenborn's show became one of the top-ranked news programs.(FN46)

During the war, Kaltenborn was highly critical of the administration's management of the economy. He argued that government policies hindered war production, and he

carried on a virtual crusade against the labor movement. Day after day Kaltenborn attacked labor, contending that "labor union practices are injuring and destroying America's war effort." (FN47) He opposed wage increases for workers and lashed out bitterly against wartime strikes. In covering strikes, he frequently quoted partisan statements from company officials and ignored the union response. For instance, on October 9, 1942, he reported the Chrysler Company's view of a dispute at one of its plants, quoting a management spokesman who described a walkout as "definite sabotage against the nation's war effort." Kaltenborn blamed strikes on "a pro-labor Administration" that had "granted vast powers to labor unions." Indeed, "for ten years, we have pampered the labor unions to the point that they act like spoiled children whenever they don't get what they want." The commentator charged that the "administration has the obligation of enforcing union responsibility." Business groups were so pleased with Kaltenborn's broadcasts that they asked NBC if they could buy recordings. One Dallas employers association wanted to rebroadcast them to the local community over a sound truck. (FN48)

Towards the end of World War II, General Motors put another prominent critic of labor on the air, hiring Henry J. Taylor as its commentator. For more than ten years on Monday nights, Taylor railed against the expansion of the welfare state, which he equated with socialism, increased taxes (especially on corporate profits), and the growing power of unions. In 1947, he urged passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, designed to limit the power of organized labor. Taylor declared that "as citizens we face monopolistic labor combines. We've all seen the paralyzing results. The public must be protected, and quickly." During 1949 and 1950, when unions were striking to gain pensions, Taylor argued that this benefit would "destroy the individual incentive and freedom on which the prosperity of the whole country depends." (FN49)

If business's institutional programming was at times controversial, its commentators posed an even greater problem to broadcasters attempting to stay on friendly terms with the Roosevelt administration and interest groups like organized labor, which was becoming an important part of the Democratic coalition. Again the broadcasters' policy was inconsistent. In some cases networks forced commentators off the air, but in others they refused to intervene. Boake Carter, broadcasting on CBS, was one of the first commentators to lose his network program. Economic and political pressures were applied to silence him. By mid thirties, Carter's inflammatory commentary had aroused the wrath of the Roosevelt administration and labor. As early as 1936, the CIO called for a boycott of Philco products in response to Boake Carter's attacks on organized labor. Philco had sponsored the commentator for five years, but in 1938, dependent on the sale of low-cost radios to workers, the company dropped Carter. General Foods, whose chairman was an active NAM member, eagerly picked up sponsorship but much to its chagrin it also acquired the labor boycott. At the same time, the Roosevelt administration pressured General Foods to CBS began monitoring the show to prevent the "repetition of unpleasant incidents with labor." Finally, in August 1938, General Foods allowed its contract with Carter to expire and CBS took the him the network. (FN50)

Upton Close, the Shaeffer Pen commentator, posed a similar challenge to NBC. Between 1942 and 1944, Close's extreme criticism of the Democrats and the Roosevelt administration gave NBC "many embarrassing moments" on the air. The network sought to keep him from going "off the deep end as he has occasionally tried to do." Finally, in December 1944, NBC dropped Close from the network. Close was picked up briefly by Mutual which had a reputation for permitting strong partisanship from its commentators. (FN51)

Kaltenborn's crusade against organized labor also generated widespread opposition. In April 1942, Time magazine found his broadcasts on labor "tendentious," and

“shallow in perspective” and warned that “from his treatment of isolated cases of bumptiousness in labor, listeners might easily have become inflamed against labor in general.” Enraged unionists demanded that NBC bar Kaltenborn from the air. In March 1942, the Duluth, Minnesota, local of the Textile Workers Union advised NBC that “labor is fed-up with Mr. Kaltenborn’s false charges” which were “hindering war production.” Moreover, “labor is fed-up with the recrimination against its people.”(FN52) Across the Midwest, unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers launched boycotts against Kaltenborn’s sponsor, Pure Oil. By late spring 1942, Pure Oil dealers were already feeling the impact of the boycott. The local Pure Oil agent in Duluth, Minnesota, asked the company to discontinue the program immediately, and in 1943 the West Virginia agent complained that “business is too damn hard to get at this time to pay somebody to drive business away from you.” F.H. Marling, the company’s advertising director, advised Kaltenborn that “if this sentiment from our field sales organizations spreads, we will be up against serious trouble.”(FN53) Despite this economic pressure, Pure Oil President Henry May Dawes stood by Kaltenborn. Publicly the company contended that it had no control over Kaltenborn’s broadcasts. Privately Dawes urged Kaltenborn to moderate his commentary but not significantly alter it. Dawes confided to Marling that Kaltenborn’s broadcasts “appealed powerfully to all of my personal feelings and instincts. They are the forcible, effective utterances of a patriotic and courageous person, and they are timely.” He continued that “our stockholders would certainly be willing to take any losses” as a result of the controversy. Appreciative that Pure Oil Company was “sufficiently courageous” in the face of the labor movement’s “very vigorous and wide-spread criticism,” Kaltenborn remained committed throughout the war to speaking the “unpleasant truths” about unions.(FN54)

Although he often created a storm of public controversy and caused discomfort within the networks, CBS and then NBC regularly renewed Kaltenborn’s contract. In June 1940, after Kaltenborn “gave labor hell for striking” at a New Jersey shipyard, NBC news director A.A. Schechter complained to network President Niles Trammell that the commentator had violated “one of the fundamentals of the news business” by getting “into strikes of labor.” According to Schechter, strikes, “along with religion or politics” were “dynamite!” and thus taboo. Schechter worried that “we are now treading on dangerous ground” and suggested putting “this fellow in a corner” and talking “sense to him.”(FN55) The network, however, never cracked down on Kaltenborn, for “as long as Pure was happy, so was NBC.”(FN56)

Organized labor blamed commentators like Kaltenborn for the growing public hostility towards labor during the war. Union leaders attributed the quick passage of the Smith-Connally anti-strike bill to “the barrage of misinformation thrust into the air by radio commentators.” They cited surveys, such as one conducted in 1945 of the top thirty-three network news and comment programs, which found that for every “discussion approving labor on moral grounds, there were almost five that disapproved.”(FN57)

To combat the business campaign, labor lodged a steady stream of protests with the networks, local stations, sponsors, and the FCC. The networks responded to union complaints by offering labor its own programs, but often at unpopular times. NBC, for instance, countered union complaints about Kaltenborn with an offer of a single fifteen minute weekly program, “Labor for Victory.” The program theoretically offered organized labor a national platform to inform the American public about the AFL’s and the CIO’s contribution to the war effort. It aired, however, at an unpopular hour (Saturday or Sunday afternoons) and only a third of NBC’s affiliates carried the program.(FN58) Sponsors, like Pure Oil, responded to labor’s complaints by claiming to have no control

over the commentators, and the FCC argued that its hands were tied and that the selection of programming was the individual station's responsibility. In 1944, to force stations to provide more balanced coverage of labor, the CIO monitored newscasts for evidence of bias. On the basis of this evidence, the CIO demanded that stations give labor equal time. For support, it cited the Federal Communications Act of 1934, asserting that this legislation required stations to serve the public interest and to present both sides of public issues.(FN59) In one instance, a CIO monitor spotted a NAM broadcast over New York station WOR which presented only the business side of postwar problems. The CIO asked for and received equal time to present labor's viewpoint on this issue.(FN60)

BUSINESS AND POSTWAR ADVOCACY RADIO

As the war drew to a close, the business community committed itself to significantly strengthening industry's public voice. There were a number of major national issues still unresolved, including the relationship of government and the economy, the proper size and activities of the welfare state, and the scope of union power. Worried about its ability to shape the postwar reconstruction, business leaders associated with the NAM, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Committee for Economic Development mobilized to create an environment favorable to corporate growth. As they had begun to do in the thirties, corporate leaders attempted to discredit the ideological underpinnings of New Deal liberalism and to undermine the legitimacy and power of organized labor. Central to this political and economic assault on labor and liberalism was a vigorous attempt to shift the political climate in a more conservative direction. Business looked to public relations to achieve this goal. After World War II, corporate public relations expanded dramatically. Corporate leaders sought to use public relations to sell Americans on the values associated with the free enterprise system, teaching that prosperity could only be achieved through reliance on individual initiative, the protection of personal liberty, and increasing productivity.(FN61)

The NAM stepped up its radio activities as part of the intensified postwar campaign to promote the free enterprise system. The NAM already had a significant presence in the media, but after the war the business association sought to further strengthen its influence. It began sending representatives to meet regularly with local station managers, network officials, commentators, and program directors of major radio shows. Through increased personal contact, it hoped to boost the number of stations carrying NAM programming and to encourage the "incorporation of more of our thinking in program scripts." In addition, the NAM doubled its distribution of "Briefs for Broadcasters," a weekly service which provided commentators with pro-business news stories and editorials. To guarantee that its message got through unchanged, the employers' organization also began furnishing to 240 local radio stations that reached three million homes a recorded commentary entitled *Your Business Reporter*. In 1946, worried that busy and ill-equipped employers were ineffective against opponents "trained in public brawling, armed to the hilt with facts and figures, and bug-eyed with zeal for the Leftist side of the debate," the NAM began training its own radio debaters to participate in the networks' popular forum-style programs.(FN62)

Individual companies followed the lead of the NAM by significantly expanding their community relations programs. They placed a high priority on reaching local communities, forging ties with schools, churches, and community organizations. Businesses relied on all kinds of media to communicate their messages, using newspaper advertising, films, mailings to community leaders and pamphlets, strategically placed on racks in the factory or in barbershops or waiting rooms. But radio remained an essential component. Local business associations and even some

small firms inaugurated radio programs designed to teach the public about the centrality of the company to community well being.(FN63)

Business associations tended to use radio to showcase industry throughout the region. In Wisconsin, the Racine Manufacturers' Association's program, The Cavalcade of Racine Industry, dramatized the "history and romantic growth" of local industry, while the Oshkosh Associated Industries' Wings of Industry gave a firsthand view from the perspective of "ordinary working people" of the part played by industry in community life. Each program focused on a member firm, beginning with a description of the company, the investment required for each employee, and details of plant growth and sales volume. Then the program played interviews conducted with workers in the factory. According to one employer, the show demonstrated that "what is good for business is good for everybody."(FN64) The Bridgeport, Connecticut, Chamber of Commerce aimed at reaching women in the audience. Each week company officials of a Bridgeport firm gave three wives or mothers of their employees tours of their plant, pointing out the advantages of working there. During the tour, the women visited with relatives and learned about their job and the working conditions. Later that week, the women shared their experience during the Chamber's Round the Town morning radio program, using a script based on a discussion generated during the tour.(FN65)

Companies found radio an effective community relations tool, especially during times of conflict. In the thirties, companies as well as unions had begun using radio to argue their case to the public during labor conflict. This practice continued in the following decades. During the postwar strike wave, for instance, General Motors made heavy use of radio in strike-bound communities. Its radio spots were "punchy pieces" that now and then quoted figures but always implied that the UAW was striking against the country's reconversion efforts rather than against the company. One ad asserted, "what America needs right now is production, production and more production. And what is America getting? Strikes, strikes and more strikes."(FN66)

Although a few companies had sponsored local radio programs prior to World War II, in the postwar period more tended to do so. Firms began to see that radio could substantially strengthen their community relations program, providing them the means to reach a larger audience. Some used radio to generate goodwill by associating the company with popular community activities. Armco Steel, Yale and Towne Manufacturing Company, Gardner Board and Carton Company, and the GE Electronics Department in Syracuse broadcast out-of-town high school football and basketball games, using the commercials to describe company operations and to explain what the contributions of industry meant to community welfare.(FN67) In 1950, as a service to local groups, Ansul Chemical Company began sponsoring a short daily program, Your Social Reporter, which announced meetings, bazaars, school and sports events and other community activities. While the company was identified at the opening and close of the program, there were no commercials.(FN68)

Other programs helped integrate the company into the community. In the fall of 1947, Armstrong Cork Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, hired a full time radio program director to produce a program that went on the air Thursday evenings. It soon reached three-quarters of the listeners in the region, mixing company reports with musical entertainment, featuring company employees and members of the community.(FN69) In 1949, to counter the high level of distrust of business among residents of its community, Gerity-Michigan Corporation began sponsoring a daily radio program in Adrian, Michigan. The weekday program aimed at children stressed safety, while the Sunday "hit parade" featured songs suggested by employees. In the mid-fifties, Keystone Steel and Wire Company's Sounds of Our Times, Mooresville Mills' Voice of Moorestown, and F.E. Myers and Brothers' Ashland Today brought the plant

directly into local homes. Taped in the shop, the shows interspersed the sounds, voices and news of the plant with music and announcements of forthcoming community activities.(FN70)

The merit of the free enterprise system was a recurrent theme in many of these programs. Mullins Manufacturing Corporation's local program, American Opportunity, told the stories of "eminent Americans who took advantage of the opportunities that exist only in this country." Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company's daily program, begun in mid 1948, was harder hitting. Its editorials regularly pointed out the importance of profits in the "American Free Enterprise System," and warned of threats to our "American Way of Life" from those who sought "to undermine the freedom of the individual" by setting up a "Welfare State." Watch out for government handouts, the company advised, for they were the first step to socialism.(FN71) Like the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, the Detroit Trust Company was worried that business had overlooked women. Beginning in 1949, it began sponsoring a series of radio forums aimed at a female audience, convinced that the most important "safeguard against complete government control" was "widespread knowledge of economic realities." The hour-long program, taped before an audience of 350 club women, opened by stating "if the American people have the facts, they have nothing to fear from within or from without our country." While the theme of many of the broadcasts was the profit motive, others focused on contemporary political issues, attacking Truman's proposed housing and health care programs.(FN72)

Timken Roller Bearing Company of Canton, Ohio, had one of the most comprehensive local media programs. It was the centerpiece of an elaborate community relations program that included institutional advertising in local papers, public meetings, weekly mailings to five thousand community leaders, and regular open houses. These activities were part of Timken's campaign to reduce the influence organized labor exerted among its workers. While Timken's plants were organized, the company refused to accept the legitimacy of organized labor and had a sharply adversarial relationship with its unions.(FN73) The company believed that one of the reasons for the continuing conflict was its failure to effectively communicate with its workers and the public. Timken's President William E. Umstatted believed that the more the employees and the public knew about the company—its "problems and policies, its aims and ideals"—the less chance "for the growth of false and harmful misconceptions" that created "ill-feeling and unfriendly attitudes."(FN74) By 1948, Timken was paying for five radio programs, a daily half-hour of recorded popular music, a weekly hour of classical and semi-classical music, daily sports and news shows, and a news commentary program, featuring conservative Fulton Lewis, Jr. The Timken Company gave some of the commercial time on the programs to local or national drives of charitable or patriotic organizations. The rest of the time went to a mixture of institutional and advocacy advertising. Each week during Music Loves America, Timken's classical music program, listeners learned about different aspects of the company's operations. Company executives described in great detail the activities and accomplishments of the various divisions of the company, including advertising, sales, accounting, research, engineering, production and service as well as explaining how various products, like seamless tubes or rock bits, were made. Timken's spokesmen emphasized the firm's commitment to improving quality and increasing productivity while keeping costs low.(FN75)

The company used Music Loves America as well as its other programs to correct the "misconception" that Timken was "anti-labor" and "anti-union." "We at Timken," President Umstatted assured the radio audience, "believe in honest collective bargaining." He blamed the recurring labor conflict on the policies and practices of

union leaders, who created friction by magnifying the complaints of a small “minority of malcontents.” Timken’s messages during the Fulton Lewis program were often political calling for such things as reductions in taxes and government spending. Timken urged listeners to write to their congressmen and “tell them you’re fed up with this spending orgy perpetrated against, and not for, the taxpayer.” All of the company’s programs regularly promoted the fight against communism and the necessity of preserving “our free enterprise system of business.”(FN76)

Like Timken, the Employers Association of Detroit worried that “there are among us many people actively working to overthrow” the American way of life and to substitute “a socialistic or communistic form of government.” In the fall of 1948, to combat these subversives, the Association launched one of the most creative and ambitious of the local business programs, The Mark Adams Show. Broadcast for four years, it sought to remind listeners of the benefits they enjoyed under capitalism and to inform them of the realities of life under a socialist or communist system. The program gave Detroit business the “opportunity to tell its side of the story—to prove that management is not a monster, but the hand that feeds our entire economy—the hand that has built our high standard of living—the hand that has protected individual freedom as set down in our Constitution.”(FN77)

The show centered around Mark Adams, a fictional radio commentator, who was a crusader for the free enterprise system. Each week Adams introduced a radio play that dramatized some aspect of the American economic or political system, often contrasting it with conditions in Soviet dominated Eastern Europe. The show told the story of an immigrant who succeeded in America through hard work and determination and because of the opportunity for personal advancement provided by the private enterprise system. Other common story lines highlighted the importance of private property and profits and the threat taxes and government regulation posed to economic growth. In episode after episode, characters discovered the “fruits of initiative and the joy of profits” or the consequences when business was crippled by taxes and government regulation. The February 15, 1949 broadcast dramatized the story of Will Scott who operated a small canning industry that was the economic mainstay of the small town of Pine Falls. A political reform movement resulted in the passage of a series of taxes and unnecessary regulations and workers struck for “impossible demands.” Harassed, Scott closed his plant and left the town to its own destitution. In his summary, Mark Adams observed that “Pine Falls learned that America is as rich as it is, as free as it is, only because business itself has grown freely. Prosperity and growth have followed only where business led the way ... there are no jobs where there is no private enterprise.”(FN78)

Mark Adams also revealed to his listeners the pitfalls of socialism or any collective efforts at security. In the episode entitled “Security Island,” a crafty corporate leader allowed his workers to set up on a Caribbean island a socialistic welfare state which established a minimum wage and a profit sharing plan and provided housing and health, old age, and unemployment insurance. At first it seemed like Utopia, but then the residents discovered that they had lost many of their freedoms including the freedom to choose among consumer items. Bathing suits, for instance, came only in black. Since security was assured, production lagged and prices rose. Government-sponsored health care was also a disappointment as the system was overtaxed and burdened with red tape. Ultimately, the experiment descended into an impoverished police state. Mark Adams concluded the episode with the observation that “there is nothing so impossible as perfect security ... there is no possible substitute for the incentive, the individual profit or the reward, of private enterprise.” He ominously warned that “this insidious philosophy of socialism,” was creeping into our laws, bit by bit.”(FN79)

In the early fifties, business began to shift its institutional advertising out of radio and into television. In 1953, Du Pont's *Cavalcade of America* and U.S. Steel's *Theater Guild* were transferred to television. Still convinced that Americans needed to be taught that "progress in this country has come about through our free enterprise system—not through a government controlled social state," Du Pont continued to use the televised version of *Cavalcade* to emphasize the benefits of unhampered big business. Similarly, *Bohm Aluminum and Brass Corporation* began sponsoring a program in which the commercial messages warned the public about the dangers of "Socialistic schemes" that looked safe but in reality were a "deadly poison" that limited "individual rights and freedom." The NAM's weekly television program, *Industry on Parade* showcased firms, explaining how products were made and demonstrating what industry gave to the nation. Local firms also moved into television. *Caterpillar* sponsored a weekly half-hour Sunday night news, weather and sports program in Peoria, Illinois, that carried messages about the company.(FN80)

IMPACT OF BUSINESS-SPONSORED PROGRAMMING

What impact did business-sponsored programming have on its audience? Ratings give some idea of the size of the audience. Business' institutional programs could never effectively compete with comedy and variety programs, like *Abbott and Costello*, *Burns and Allen*, or *Bob Hope*. In 1938, for instance, national Hooper ratings indicate that *Ford Motor Company's Sunday Evening Hour* had the highest ratings of the concert music programs, drawing in 8.3 percent of the audience. But its popularity pales in comparison with Ford's direct competitor, the popular *Charlie McCarthy* show, which attracted 40 percent of the Sunday evening listeners. Still, significant numbers of Americans listened. The *Pulse of New York's* 1942 ratings listed *Du Pont's Cavalcade of America* with a respectable 19 percent of the Monday night audience, second in its time slot behind *Vox Pop* with 40 percent. Some business-backed commentators drew even better than the institutional programs. According to 1936 Hooper ratings, *Boake Carter*, broadcasting at the prime evening hour of 7:45, five times a week, attracted more listeners than any other commentator. During World War II, in New York City, *H.V. Kaltenborn's* daily evening program was equally popular. At times it was the highest rated program in his time slot, or it came in a close second behind *The Lone Ranger* or *Blondie*.(FN81)

Inevitably companies worried about the effectiveness of their radio programs. *Du Pont* and *Ford Motor Company* used fan mail and surveys to help determine their program's influence on public attitudes. In terms of improving the image of the firm, in the late thirties, *Du Pont* found encouragement from letters like one from a Seattle, Washington, listener, who wrote "You have provided me with an entirely different perspective of the aims and purposes of the *du Pont Company*." In the early fifties, *Cavalcade* fan mail included comments such as "It's a very good company and they do a lot for society," and "*Du Pont* is always looking in the future for your benefit and mine." During the 1938-1939 season, *Ford* conducted 5,000 personal interviews with listeners. Based on that survey, it concluded that "*The Ford Sunday Evening Hour* has made friends for the *Ford Motor Company*." Over its years on the air, *Du Pont* conducted increasingly sophisticated surveys of *Cavalcade* listeners to determine the extent of audience absorption of its message.(FN82)

Business leaders acknowledged that the impact of business' radio programs, like institutional campaigns in general, was often difficult to measure. In 1940, *Ford Motor Company* executive *A.R. Barbier* admitted that the "results of such a program (*Ford Sunday Evening Hour*) are quite intangible, but the fact that we are nearing the end of the sixth season is evidence that we have faith in its efficacy. I must say frankly,

however, that this faith is based as much upon logic as it is fact.” It was clear that “a program such as ours can be supported only by the reasoning that if you provide people with worthwhile entertainment, you will cultivate their friendship and good will, and if you reach enough people, the effort will be worth the expense.”(FN83) Similarly, in 1944, Du Pont President, Walter S. Carpenter conceded that “like most advertising expenditures it is pretty difficult to identify the earnings resulting” from the Cavalcade program. Like Barbier, Carpenter believed that “the long run advantages ... make it worth while.” If company officials were often uncertain about the specific impact of their radio programs, advertising executive Bruce Barton had no doubts about the positive effects of institutional advertising. Barton’s public relations firm, Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn had conceived of Cavalcade, and in 1956 he argued that it was a “measurable factor” in helping to transform the public attitude toward Du Pont, influencing “not only the adult audience but the vast audience of young people, and even children, who are now mature citizens and voters.”(FN84)

The content and presentation of some of some of the business-sponsored programs, however, may have limited the effectiveness of their message. Commercial radio observers generally praised the classical music and serious drama programs like Texaco’s Metropolitan Opera, and U.S. Steel’s Theater Guild with their minimal institutional messages. While initially dismissing Du Pont’s Cavalcade of America as “sombre and dubious” entertainment, over the years Variety became increasingly respectful of the program, which won a steady stream of awards and endorsements from educational groups. In 1949, for instance, Variety found that the season’s opening episode on the integration of the telegraph industry was “good listening.” It was “a slick professional job that combines good scripting, topflight acting and all-round production values into an entertaining and informative show.” Even the commercials which plugged the firm’s integrity and skill were worthy of praise, particularly the closing commercial which featured the company’s 100,000th stockholder. A school teacher, she explained how she came to buy Du Pont stock and what she thought of the company after a tour of its plants. Variety concluded that it “was effective public relations.” Still, in 1947, another reviewer poked fun at the “granddad of ‘institutional’ radio dramas,” observing that “if you listen carefully at the sign-off, you might have heard Capitalism’s sigh of satisfaction.”(FN85)

Other business programming, however, received much harsher treatment. Variety often had little patience for overtly conservative, propaganda-laden programming. In 1936, it asserted that the American Family Robinson’s “thinly veiled attack on the policies of the Roosevelt administration” was likely to provoke resentment, even tuning out. Indeed while praising programs hosted by the more moderate corporate-liberal post-war Chamber of Commerce, most of the NAM’s shows were characterized as dull and as “unadulterated propaganda.” Variety also condemned business-sponsored conservative commentators. The NAM’s George Sokolsky delivered “pro-business propaganda” that would appeal only to that “segment of listeners tabbed ‘conservative’ and considered critical of the New Deal.” The show business paper had even harsher words for Upton Close and Samuel Pettengill. Close was full of “hogwash” and Pettengill was “a disgrace to radio.”(FN86)

Variety might easily dismiss this kind of the business programming, but other detractors were not so complacent about its effect on audiences. Unions, in particular, were concerned about the impact of these shows. The CIO repeatedly warned workers that companies were funding “a vast outpouring of propaganda.”(FN87) In 1948, the Pennsylvania Labor News cautioned readers against listening to company sponsored newscasters like Fulton Lewis, Jr. Similarly, the UAW plant paper Ford Facts advised workers to ignore the anti-labor Detroit media, urging “Believe only our union press and radio hookup which is paid for by you and staged by you to tell you the score.”(FN88)

As Ford Facts suggests, labor increasingly came to believe that the best response to business-sponsored programming was for them to emulate business by using the media to compete for the loyalty and political support of the American public. After World War II, labor established non-profit FM stations to provide “propaganda free news” and public interest programming. Although the stations were short-lived, unions also gained access to local and national audiences by purchasing air time from local commercial AM stations and the networks. Labor programs proliferated in the late forties, and in the early fifties, both the AFL and the CIO gained a national voice by sponsoring a daily network evening news commentator.(FN89)

CONCLUSION

Companies have long believed in the importance of public opinion and spent large sums of money to sell their ideology as well as their products to the public. Seeking to reach a mass audience, businesses relied on a wide variety of media. For twenty years, radio was an important component of their public relations campaigns. Corporate programming helped to create goodwill and to promote the values of free enterprise. Particularly after World War II, the probusiness message often seemed to dominate the airwaves. In 1947, business-sponsored commentators, together with other conservative commentators broadcast over 1,724 stations.(FN90) Government regulation placed some limitations, especially at the network level, on business’ freedom to use the airwaves. But government regulation also contributed to radio’s special power to shape public opinion. As media historian Michelle Hilmes suggests, the creation of radio broadcasting “as a government-regulated extension of the public sphere gave the experience of ‘listening in’ more weight and influence than going to the movies or reading a popular magazine.”(FN91) By the mid-fifties, twenty years of institutional broadcasting, combined with other public relations activities, helped business achieve the status of a respected institution in American society.

ADDED MATERIAL

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In the late forties, in addition to “It’s Your Business,” the NAM regularly obtained free air time from the networks to answer attacks against business or to promote the NAM’s political and economic agenda. Shown participating in one of 18 national broadcasts in 1946 are NAM past presidents Charles R. Hook and Robert M. Gaylord; a CBS announcer; Eugene Holman, President, Standard Oil Co. (N.J.); and B. E. Hutchinson, NAM National Vice President. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library.)

The cover of a flyer promoting the NAM’s “American Family Robinson” program. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

A newspaper advertisement promoting H. V. Kaltenborn’s NBC news commentary program, c. 1943. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.)

FOOTNOTES

1 Richard S. Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business, 1900-1950* (Greenwich, Conn., 1979). 31.

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- 10 Richard W. Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society: The Roosevelt Administration and the Media, 1933-1941* (Westport, Conn., 1985), 18.
- 11 Ewen, *PR: A Social History of Spin*, 251; Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society*, 17-25, 127-136; Barnouw, *The Golden Web*, 62-63, 115-116; *Variety*, 4 Jan. 1939.
- 12 Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society*, 20-25, 127-136.
- 13 *Variety*, 19 Feb. 1936.
- 14 S. H. Walker and Paul Sklar, "Business Finds Its Voice," *Harpers Magazine* (Jan. 1938): 122.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Lazarsfeld's study quoted in William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York, 1973), 80-82.
- 17 Samuel Grafton, "Propaganda From the Right," *American Mercury* (Mar. 1935): 257-266; Walker and Sklar, "Business Finds Its Voice," 122; Marchand, "Where Lie the Boundaries of the Corporation," 87; Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 192-93; Barnouw, *The Golden Web*, 89-91; D. U. Bathrick to R. C. Patterson, 9 Feb. 1934, "General Motors to Sponsor Concert Series Over NBC," folder 29, box 27; Press Release, 2 Oct. 1934, folder 28, box 27, National Broadcasting Company Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.; "Wheeling Steel's Show," *Printers' Ink*, 27 Dec. 1940, 16.
- 18 The high wartime excess profits tax and the Treasury's Departments decision allowing corporations to deduct advertising costs from taxable income encouraged companies to engage in institutional advertising, which helped keep brand names before the public. As a result, during the war, a barrage of ads in the most popular weekly magazines touted business' contribution to the effort and urged the preservation

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