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INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC OPINION

5 May 1947

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THE INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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PUBLICATION NUMBER L47-121

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INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC OPINION

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GENERAL MCKINLEY: Gentlemen, this morning we are going to go into the subject of public opinion seriously. We have had one or two introductory lectures in the course, but this morning we start in very seriously.

Today we are particularly fortunate in having with us Dr. Harwood L. Childs, of Princeton University. Dr. Childs is one of the country's outstanding authorities in the field of politics and public opinion. Besides a rich academic background, he has had considerable practical experience in this field.

He was founder and editor of "Public Opinion Quarterly," published by Princeton University since 1937. He is the author of important works on labor, capital, national politics and propaganda. He has compiled guides to the study of public opinion and has contributed numerous articles to professional journals.

During the war, Dr. Childs served as head, Regional Specialists (Overseas Branch), Office of War Information.

This morning Dr. Childs will speak to us on "Introduction to Public Opinion" I take pleasure, indeed, in introducing Dr. Harwood L. Childs.

DR. CHILDS: Thank you, General McKinley.

Notwithstanding my age and gray hair, I am always a little bit awed by military personnel and it may take me a few minutes before I really get warmed up to my subject and can forget that fact.

There are four questions I would like to discuss this morning as an introduction to public opinion. I would like to deal, first, with the question, What is public opinion? Second, Why is it important? Third, What do we know about its formation?--especially in a democratic country such as ours. And, finally, What are some of the basic problems of public opinion in the United States today?

I think we can dispose of this question of definition rather quickly. Over a hundred years ago, an English author, George Cornwall Lewis, writing on the subject of public opinion and government said, "Where all people talk on the same subject, they should be agreed about the vocabulary with which they discuss it; or, at any rate, they should be aware that they are not agreed."

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I think we will agree that we ought to agree as to the meaning of the term we are discussing. The literature of the field of public opinion is replete with innumerable definitions. I should like to define the term "public opinion" simply as any collection of individual opinions. In that sense, the term is virtually synonymous with the term "group opinion;" that is, by public opinion we mean any collection of individual opinions, any group opinion. The important problem in each case is to define clearly the public in which we are interested.

In order to make just a little clearer the meaning of our definition, we might add that by opinion we simply mean any expression of attitude in words; any verbal expression of attitudes. By an "attitude" we mean any tendency to act or react in a certain direction. So that by the term "public opinion" we simply mean any tendency on the part of the group to react in a certain direction.

In view of this simple definition of terms, how may we account for the fact that in the literature of the field there are so many different definitions? I think the explanation is fairly easy. Writers undertake to focus our attention on certain aspects of public opinion which they think are very important and are important--and then undertake to restrict the meaning of the term to "collections of individual opinions having those particular aspects." For example, in the minds of many, public opinion means majority opinion. In other words, attention is focused on one aspect of any collection of individual opinions, namely, the degree of agreement. And the author says, in order to have public opinion you must have a collection of individual opinions in which you have majority agreement, or some specified degree of agreement.

Another aspect which is frequently used to restrict the meaning of the term is the method of opinion formation. Frequently you will find definitions which undertake to restrict the meaning of the term to collections of individual opinions that have been formed in a particular way. Writers will say that in order to have public opinion you must have collections of opinions which have been formed rationally.

There are many aspects of public opinion that might conceivably be taken as the basis for restricting the meaning of the term; not only the degree of agreement, not only the method of formation, but also the quality of opinion, the intensity with which the opinion, or collection of opinions, is held; the influence or the effectiveness of the opinion, and many other aspects.

The point I want to stress is that these various aspects of collections of individual opinions are extremely important. But there is no useful purpose to be served, in my opinion, by attempting to restrict the meaning of the term to collections of individual opinions having these particular aspects. In other words, the term "public opinion" is a very general term. It refers to any group opinion.

The important thing in any discussion of public opinion is to identify the public, or the publics, with which we are concerned. Then, having

identified the public, we may proceed to consider all of these different aspects because they are all important. For example, in connection with the work of this group, I think it is extremely important, at the very outset, to identify, or try to identify, the important and significant publics which are in any way related to the problems of industrial and economic mobilization.

What publics are of particular significance? Is the general public, including all the voters in the United States, or all the people living in the United States, a significant public? Or should we be primarily concerned with certain smaller publics, which may be far more effective publics:

In talking with a government official recently about public opinion, he said, "I am not interested, governmental officials are not particularly interested, in the general public. What we are interested in primarily are the intelligent and, more particularly, the effective publics."

So much, then, for the problem of definition.

I want to turn now to the question, Why is public opinion, particularly in the sense of mass opinion, in the sense of the opinions of a public, including at least all of the voters in the United States and probably all the residents of the United States, extremely important?

In the first place, the importance is due, in my opinion, to the scale of government and public undertaking, which is so great today, and the need for public support in both war and peace. If we trace the development of public administration in the United States, we will note that within the last few decades there has been a tremendous change in the character of public undertakings, particularly in peacetime; an increase in emphasis upon service and promotional undertakings in contrast to purely police and regulatory undertakings.

This change in the nature of public administration and this increase in scale of operations entails a degree of public support hitherto unknown. It is not enough simply to pass a law or to issue a directive. It is necessary to win, to a certain extent, the support of large masses of people in order to have those acts effectively implemented. It is not only true in the field of agriculture, in the operations of which we see the A.A.A., or in the field of price rationing, but it is true in a great many other fields.

Another important reason why mass opinion is so tremendously important today is the speed of social change. I do not need to dwell on that point. I think we are all conscious of the tremendous speed with which social change, economic development, political developments are taking place. There never was a time in the history of the world when the problem of adjusting public opinion to these changes was so important.

Another factor is the intensity of the struggle for control over public opinion. We find that struggle going on in the international sphere and between states. We find it going on within countries, on the domestic plane. This intense struggle for control over the minds of men has raised to new levels of importance this whole question of opinion management.

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Not only that but in this country public opinion, in the sense of mass opinion, has been vested with over-increasing responsibilities due to the number and frequency of elections and to the widespread employment in our States of the initiative and referendum and, more recently, to the advent of public-opinion polls. There never was a time in the history of the country when the common man, the average citizen, the mass public, was as responsible as it is today for the direction of public affairs.

And, finally, we might mention in this connection the tremendous improvements in communication and contact; the instruments for moulding public opinion which are present. These factors and influences, taken together, account, in a large degree, for the tremendous importance of public opinion, particularly of the government agencies.

Now with reference to the question of the formation of opinion. This is a tremendous subject. It would be very easy for me to begin a long apology at this point and explain why I did not have the time to deal adequately with this subject--I understand that time is also a very important factor in the conduct of this course, generally--but I am not going to be faced by that aspect of the subject. I am simply going to point out one or two observations which I think are relevant and important in connection with any consideration of the problem of the formation of opinion.

Let me say right at the outset that in spite of all of the research efforts of academic people, and others, our knowledge concerning the problem of opinion formation is still very, very limited. We know all too little about why people opine and think as they do. But let me make a few observations.

I think it is important for us to remember, in the first place, that if we want to find out how public opinion is formed, it is necessary for us to find out how individual opinions are formed. There is no mystery about the matter. There is no such thing as "group opinion." Public opinion is always a collection of individual opinions. And if we find out how individual opinions are formed, then we have the answer as to how public opinion is formed.

Second, it goes without saying that our individual opinions are what they are largely because of the interaction of a multiplicity of factors. Now that is not saying very much. I know that it is a conclusion not unlike that reached by those who have tried to find out the causes of war and why people fight. After reading tomes and tomes on this subject, I think that our conclusion usually is that wars are caused by a multiplicity of factors. Many students of the subject have devoted no little time to trying to list these various factors, and that is an important function. But I do not think it is as important, perhaps, as the problem of trying to determine the relative influence of these different factors.

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We know that our personal opinions are largely the product of the interaction of our heredity and our environment. The very same factors that make our personalities what they are tend to make our opinions what they are. We are not born Republicans or Democrats, but we are born with certain potentialities, with certain capacities, which, affected by the environment, produce certain attitudes and opinions.

The public opinion polling experts, in developing their cross sections and their samples, make assumptions about the formation of public opinion upon which I want to make one or two comments.

They assume our opinions are what they are largely because of four or five factors, such as, age, sex, income status, place of residence, possibly race and Party affiliation. In other words, they assume that if we tell them what a person's age is, what his income status is, where he lives, and one or two other things, they can tell us what that person's opinion is on any subject.

The point I want to make in that connection is that studies of polling results show that the primacy of certain factors, the relative influence of certain factors, depends, as we would suppose, upon the nature of the question asked. From them we find that in the case of some questions none of these factors seem to offer the explanation as to why people think as they do.

We should always be on our guard, it seems to me, when remarks are made concerning the all-importance of certain factors in the opinion-forming process. There are some who have built up economic and political philosophies on the assumption that the economic factor is the primary factor determining our opinions. I think that such information as we have regarding public opinion goes to show that any generalization of that sort is likely to be misleading; that our opinions on different questions are the result of different factors, different relativeness in the influence of factors.

There is another thing about this problem of the formation of opinion. I think it is useful to distinguish between the influence of what we may call latent factors and active factors; between those influences such as climate, physical surroundings, geography, topography, cultures, and so on, which undoubtedly do account, to some degree, for the opinions and attitudes of particular peoples but which are not subject to quick change and exercise their influence only over long periods of time.

In contrast, we have what we may call the active factors, those factors which exercise a direct influence on attitudes and opinions and which may produce sudden and widespread changes in opinion. Moreover, they are usually factors which are, to a certain extent, subject to management and control. It is those factors with which we, as students of public opinion, I think, are most usefully concerned, although we should not ignore the long-term influence of these latent factors.

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Among the active factors, of course, communication agencies are of primary importance. To those of us who are concerned with problems of economic and industrial mobilization, the question may very well arise as to the extent to which, even in peacetime, these communication agencies--the press, the radio, and other instruments of mass communication--can be allowed the luxury of complete freedom; one is almost tempted to say, in some instances, complete irresponsibility.

I want to call your attention at this point to the recent report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press which, perhaps, overemphasizes the irresponsibility of some of our communication agencies but calls attention, nevertheless, to the extreme importance of these agencies in the formation of opinion. So that, in any study of public opinion, from the point of view of public administration, I think primary emphasis should be laid upon a study of communication agencies.

Finally, one additional point with reference to the question of opinion formation. I want to emphasize the important role played in this process of opinion formation by what we may call group leaders or opinion leaders. Our problem of dealing with mass publics is, fortunately perhaps, greatly simplified by the fact that we can deal with these mass publics rather effectively through their leaders. There is a tendency for mass publics to follow the leaders. If we can win the support of these leaders to our programs and policies, it may not be necessary for us always to go directly to the mass publics because these leaders, these economic leaders, labor leaders, professional leaders, religious leaders, racial leaders, will convey the message and perhaps can, with a minimum of effort, bring into line large numbers of people. Both from the point of view of identifying public opinion and also from the point of view of influencing public opinion these opinion leaders, group leaders, play a very important role.

So much, then, for these questions regarding the definition of public opinion, the importance of public opinion in the sense of mass opinion, and the formation of public opinion.

What, then, are today the basic problems of public opinion, especially in the United States? I should like to focus your attention on three which I think are basic.

The first of these is, How can public opinion be ascertained? How can it be identified? How can it be measured?

Second, what should be the role of public opinion, in the sense of mass opinion, in the determination of policies in a country such as ours?

And, third, how may the quality of public opinion be improved?

Let us consider for a moment certain aspects of the first problem, the problem of finding out what public opinion is. Later on in the course, I understand, you will devote some attention to the technique of public-opinion polling. I do not want to anticipate the material that will be presented at that time. I merely want to make one or two comments.

First of all, to what extent can these public opinion polls be relied upon? I think that is an extremely important question in view of the prominence that is now given to these public opinion polls which undertake to tell

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us, day by day and week by week, what the state of public opinion is. I am not going to undertake to answer that question categorically, but I do want to point out the importance, in my opinion, of distinguishing between issue and candidate polls; between polls on candidates for public office (election polls as they are sometimes called) and polls on issues, on policies.

Whereas elections serve as a check, to some extent, upon the results of candidate polls, there is no satisfactory check, as yet, on the adequacy or the accuracy of issue polls. The logic of polling has not reached the stage yet where it can be proved, in all cases, that simply because you have a sample which represents accurately the population with regard to certain factors, such as age or sex, that it will necessarily reflect the opinions of the public on various issues. In other words, the representative character of the cross section in the sampling process, in terms of age, sex, income status, etc., is no absolute guarantee of representativeness with respect to opinions. There will still be, for some time to come, I think, numerous possibilities for error in the framing of questions, in interviewing, in analysis, and in interpretation. So that I think we need to approach this whole problem of measuring mass opinion, by the techniques now available, with a considerable degree of caution.

I would like to specify certain points that I think public administrators should keep in mind in their use of public opinion poll results. First of all, I think public administrators should ask themselves the question, Is the polling agency competent and trustworthy? I know those in charge of some of our nationwide polling agencies and I am sure no one would question their competence or trustworthiness. But there have sprung up in recent years a large number of smaller polling agencies whose trustworthiness, perhaps, and not particularly their competence, may need careful investigation.

Second, the administrator should ask, Is the sample used a purely random sample? It is much more important to know the answer to that question than to know whether or not the sample is truly representative of the population, in terms of age, sex and other characteristics.

Third--now we are getting down to some really difficult questions--the administrator, it seems to me, should ask himself, Was the public competent to pass on the particular question?

Next, how stable is the opinion on which the polling results have been obtained? Obviously, the stability of opinions varies considerably. If you are dealing with a very unstable opinion, the polling results of a week ago may be of little significance today. We know, for example, from very detailed studies of political campaigns, that the opinions of people regarding Parties is very stable. We know, for example, that six months before the candidates are nominated for the Republican and Democratic Parties, 60 percent of the voters have already made up their minds as to how they are going to vote, and they vote that way six months later or ten months later. But when you are dealing with questions of foreign policy, or even with domestic

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policy, you will find that there may be very sudden changes in public opinion.

Again, the administrator should ask, Were all possible efforts made to avoid technical errors?

Again, he should ask, Was the public in a position to consider all possible alternatives as well as the implications of its decision? The results of polls need to be interpreted very carefully, it seems to me, in the light of the alternatives presented. Time does not permit me to illustrate that problem, but I think the force of the observation is clear.

Again, it seems to me important to ask whether the public expected that action would be taken on its answers. I have the definite impression that in many cases the public's responses to policy questions would be very different from what they actually are if they knew the public officials were actually going to do as they advise.

Furthermore, and finally, administrators, it seems to me, should ask, Do other polls on the same subject corroborate or confirm the one in hand?

The gist of the matter is, in my opinion, that we should welcome all advances that have been made in the science of sampling public opinion. We should bear in mind that the results of these polls need to be used with caution; need to be interpreted carefully as they are used by us in our administrative work.

I stated that a second major problem was the problem of defining the role of public opinion. I submit that this is perhaps one of the most important and one of the most difficult problems that we face in this country. This problem may be stated in many different ways. We might ask, When should public opinion prevail over expert opinion? Or we might ask, What is public opinion really worth? Now I know in the minds of a great many people it is not worth an awful lot; that the observations and opinions of the common man, or the average man, are not worth very much.

Or we might ask the question, To what extent should public opinion bind public officials? The framers of our Constitution seemed to have had a very low estimate of the competence of the masses to pass on questions of public policy. The framers of our Constitution did not believe in direct democracy. They set up all sorts of safeguards, checks and balances, to prevent the operation of what they feared would be tyranny of the majority.

But gradually, with the development of our democracy, the suffrage was extended; the responsibilities of the public, or the voters, were enlarged. You will remember, or some of you may remember, that shortly before the First World War there was widespread discussion in this country regarding the merits and demerits of direct legislation, initiative and referendum.

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The advent of public opinion polls, and the seeming possibility of determining, hour by hour almost, what the state of mass opinion is, has brought to the fore again this question of just what role public opinion should play in the determination of public policy. I know some of you may say this is purely an academic question; whether public opinion should or should not play a particular role. The fact remains that public opinion does play an important role and will continue to play an even more important role. That is true, to a certain extent. But it seems to me that if we have in our own mind certain ideas, certain clear ideas, with respect to what we consider to be the proper role of public opinion, we may do something to keep it within the desirable channel.

I may say that, running over the centuries since public opinion first came into prominence during the eighteenth century, throughout the literature of the field this problem has been in the forefront of attention. A lot of time and effort have been devoted to trying to find the answer. Walter Lippmann, for example, in his little book, "The Phantom Public," written, I think it was, about 1928 or 1929, was one of the later writers to devote a great deal of attention to this problem.

Out of all this literature come certain suggestions, certain tests, for drawing the line between what the masses should and should not do. All I can do is simply attempt to summarize the points made.

It seems to be generally agreed among writers on the subject that a distinction should be made between the public's competence to pass upon persons and to pass upon issues. Writers seem to agree that the masses are more competent to decide between candidates than they are to express their own opinion upon policies.

It is also agreed by many that the public is far more competent to pass upon the results of action taken than to pass upon the probable effects of proposed actions. Some would say that the public's role in that respect should be limited to expressing its opinion of results. People can tell you whether Prohibition worked or did not work, but they cannot express a competent opinion upon the question of whether a particular type of regulation will or will not succeed in the future.

A distinction is also made between questions of fact and questions of policy. A distinction is also made between general and specific questions; between ends and means; between financial and nonfinancial matters; between technical and nontechnical matters; between moral issues and political, social, and economic issues; between grievances and the remedies for those grievances. In other words, there is a tremendous amount of literature dealing with the problem of the role of public opinion in a democracy.

Until the advent of public opinion polls it was generally agreed that the masses were not competent to pass upon all types of questions. But there have been, recently, some statements by optimists, I would call them, to the effect that the public can always be trusted to express a more competent

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opinion than that of any more restricted group. I think we need to work out, much more carefully than we have done, a clearer definition as to just how far we are going in allowing the public to pass upon these questions. It is not a question of trusting the public or not trusting the public. It is a question of realistically and intelligently defining the role of the public.

Finally we come to the problem, the third basic problem, as I see it, of public opinion today, and that is the problem of improving the quality of public opinion. Jeremy Bentham, an old philosopher in the early part of the nineteenth century, put the problem as I would like to put it now. He said, "The basic problem of public opinion is not to find out what it is, but to make it what it ought to be." Or, using his more stilted language, "to maximize the rectitude of the decisions."

But in these days when there is so much talk about measuring public opinion and finding out what public opinion is, I think we do not want to forget the problem of improving the quality of public opinion because, after all, that is, it seems to me, the real basic problem of democracy.

I am not going to undertake to go into that problem at great length. Needless to say, the educational forces of the country have been concerned with the problem for centuries. Our educational forces (schools, colleges and universities) are doing nothing else but that. Far be it from me to try, in two or three minutes, to tell the educational forces of the country what needs to be done.

I merely want to make this observation: It seems to me that from the point of view of governmental officials, and from the point of view of the Armed Services, the problem of adult education is as important, if not more important, than that of the formal education for those in our schools and colleges. Our formal education, frequently, does not take effect for ten or fifteen years afterwards. The men who are today in responsible positions in labor, in industry and in the professions are men who were educated, or who received the basic part of their formal education, fifteen, perhaps twenty or even thirty, years ago. They are operating on the basis of those ideas. If they are going really to keep public opinion in tune with the times, they must devote, it seems to me, far more attention to the educational effect of our channels of mass communication.

In my opinion we can do a great deal to improve the functioning of our communication agencies in the direction of more responsible service. We can improve our government information services, and that is a very real issue at the present moment. It looks as though the Congress is going to cut drastically the information services of the State Department. We can do a lot, it seems to me, in training people to think logically because straight thinking means, if it means anything at all, logical thinking. We may be able to do something in improving the thinking of the mass of populations by taking steps to outlaw, what might be called, unfair competitive practices in the propaganda arena. And perhaps something can be done also to bring about order, or greater order, in the arena of public discussion.

To me, improving the quality of public opinion means three things: First, it means teaching people how to think and developing in them the power of logical analysis. Not enough attention is devoted these days, even in schools and colleges, to training in logical thinking.

Second, it means, in my opinion, giving people something to think about; not only the problem of how to think, but something to think about. The fullest expression of opinion and comparative freedom in the propaganda arena are necessary to realize that goal.

And, finally--and this is the basic problem in this aspect--the problem of, somehow, creating in the public an ability or willingness or a will to act as well as they know. That is the sad part about the functioning of public opinion. Very frequently the masses of people do not act as well as they know.

Thank you.

GENERAL MCKINLEY: Are there any questions anyone would like to ask?

A STUDENT OFFICER: In the few months I have been over here from England, I have been very much impressed by the tremendous amount of commercial advertisement in this country as compared with our own. I would appreciate it very much if you could comment on what effect you think this advertisement in your newspapers, your magazines, besides the road, and on the radio, has on the gullibility of the public. It seems to me those advertisements, presumably, must have an effect. For one thing, it certainly costs a lot of money.

If this is being pumped into the pipe the whole time the way it is, do you think that has any effect on public opinion in the world and the method of forming public opinion?

DR. CHILDS: There was a little article on the front page of The New York Times, I think it was day before yesterday, showing the results of polls or surveys by your institution, Mass Observation, a polling institution, in Great Britain. The questions submitted to the British public had to do with the attitude of the British people, the English people, toward the United States, the people of the United States.

As I remember, one of the beliefs of the people abroad is that the American people are the most gullible people in the world. Now you place me in a very embarrassing position. Shall I admit that the American people are gullible and attribute that gullibility to the influence of advertising; or shall I say that they are not gullible and, therefore, advertising has not had any effect in that direction?

I do not see how I can do other than to insist that the American people are not gullible. Is that a fair answer? I do not mean to pass the question off facetiously. Frankly, I do not see how you can really answer that

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question statistically. First of all, what do we mean by "gullibility?" Certainly commercial advertising has been very effective in selling goods, or else it would not have been employed. Commercial advertising in the United States has sold goods. Now has the American public been duped into buying these goods? I, personally, do not know the answer.

A STUDENT OFFICER: One comment on that, sir, is the Reynolds pen which certainly was sold to the public through advertising.

DR. CHILDS: I bought some bonds and stocks in 1929, not as the result of advertising particularly, but they did not turn out as well as these ball-bearing pens.

A STUDENT OFFICER: Do you believe that newspapers, the columnists, that distort the news in order to agree with their editorial opinions, should be restricted?

DR. CHILDS: As indicated, perhaps, by what I said earlier, I do feel that the proprietors of our communication agencies, those in charge of the press and the radio, must realize a sense of responsibility, social responsibility, in this Atomic Age that some papers have not realized in the past.

I think there is real danger in generalizing about newspapers or generalizing about radio stations. I think some newspapers are doing a very fine job, and do have the sense of social responsibility commensurate with the society in which we live. But I am impressed by some of the findings of the Commission on the Freedom of the Press which suggest that there is certainly room for improvement in certain directions in the case of certain papers.

GENERAL MCKINLEY: So far as the newspapers are concerned, do you not think this sensationalism and all this color they put in, is what the public wants and that is the reason they put it in, and is the reason they sell their papers?

DR. CHILDS: That is the dilemma, of course, that the newspapers face. But it is not a dilemma that the newspapers face alone. It is also the dilemma that Congressmen face.

To what extent should newspaper proprietors, newspaper editors, Congressmen, be slaves to public opinion? That is, indeed, a very, very difficult question.

GENERAL MCKINLEY: It all depends on which way you are going.

DR. CHILDS: It seems to me that in the case of our officials, as public officials, or as newspaper proprietors, or as leaders generally, the obligation to follow public opinion is balanced by an equal obligation to try to improve the quality of public opinion and to bring public opinion around to a more enlightened point of view.

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I do not think we can afford to accept the proposition that, under all circumstances, leaders in the communications field, as well as in the Government, should follow public opinion slavishly. In the case of newspaper proprietors, simply because the public wants this type of thing, is no reason in the world why they need to follow the public slavishly. I think they owe a responsibility not only to the masses, to the majority, but also certain responsibilities to the minority.

It is a difficult question to draw the line and to establish the proper balance between following public opinion and leading public opinion. You have some notable examples, in the history of the American Presidency, of some men who leaned in one direction, following public opinion and some leaning in the other direction. The ideal, from my point of view, is a balance between the two.

A STUDENT OFFICER: My question is a question about public opinion as it affects morale during war.

I am one of those rare Army officers who believes, particularly in time of war, that the press has as much duty to the Armed Forces as they have to the press.

Now take the case in point. We had on the rostrum not very long ago a well-known newspaper correspondent who can best be described as "wrong-horse Charlie." He made a wrong guess about the Resistance Movement having gone wrong in 1939; in 1941, he stated the Russians would be played out in four months.

But to get to the case in point, in 1944 he came out to the Pacific with another group of correspondents, and he gave out the profound opinion that the war would not be over until 1948. That had a very profound effect not only on the officers overseas but also here in the States on the wives and families of personnel overseas.

Now what can the Armed Forces do--you have not been associated with the OWI--in time of war to offset these outbursts so they will not affect the morale of the fighting forces?

DR. CHILDS: I think the problem you present is a real one. Of course, there were numerous instances of, shall we say, bad faith or lack of good judgment on the part of the press and newspaper correspondents. But I do not recall that the number of these instances was exceedingly great.

It seems to me that the answer to the problem is not standoffishness on the part of either side; it is, rather, cooperation. There should be a closer and fuller working together on the part of the military command and the members of the press. I do not think anything is to be accomplished by repression or reversion to greater barriers between the two.

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I think that out of that more cooperative relationship will come a greater and greater sense of responsibility on the part of the press. I think that by and large--there may be some individual exceptions--but by and large members of the press are eager to serve their country in time of war. They are eager to implement military policy. Their failure to do so, in most cases, is due to misunderstanding and lack of information, two factors which can be remedied by this closer cooperation.

A STUDENT OFFICER: Dr. Childs, in order to get this maximum of rectitude that you spoke of, is it the responsibility of the public officials, Cabinet members, the Congress, or is it the collective responsibility of all citizens?

Take, for example, the case in point: The development of Nazism in Germany was not done entirely by force, although force helped to do it. But there was directed opinion. The public was persuaded to follow an opinion because the leaders believed they were on the side of righteousness.

Now whose responsibility is it in this country?

DR. CHILDS: You call attention to the fundamental difference in the philosophies of Fascism and Democracy, with respect to the role of public opinion and to the role of propaganda.

Both dictators and believers in democracy realize the importance of public opinion. Both are aware of the fact that, in the last analysis, public opinion must rule. But they differ in their concept of how to make this public opinion qualify in order to rule. Dictators insist that the way to improve the quality of public opinion is to have experts and leaders tell the public what they should believe. Those of us who believe in democracy believe the best way in which to improve the quality of public opinion is to allow the freest competition of ideas and opinions. We believe that, in that way, the best ideas will survive in the sense they will become acceptable.

This difference in philosophy between the authoritarian and the believer in freedom has gone on for centuries. But I think the result, for example during World War II, demonstrated that it is not necessary, even in wartime, to resort to dictatorial methods of opinion control, such as existed in Germany.

GENERAL MCKINLEY: Dr. Childs, I thank you very much, sir, for a most enlightening and constructive talk.

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