

UNE LETTRE DE WALTER LIPPMANN (1917) :

Dear Colonel House,

I am leaving for Washington tonight and shall see Secretary Lane¹ tomorrow. I want to take this opportunity to give you an outline of the progress of the work which you asked me to do yesterday :

The chief item of importance is that I have found the nucleus of an organization already in existence which is ready and competent to take up the work of a press bureau. It is an organization built up by Professor Pitkin² at the Columbia School of Journalism and is fully trained and ready. Professor Pitkin is going to Washington with me tonight and we shall look over the ground there together. We are also drawing up the budget and the administrative chart, which I shall be ready to give you on Tuesday. The task of the bureau I have tried to phrase for myself somewhat as follows :

"American strategy in this war has raised a peculiar psychological problem. For a year at least the nation's enthusiasm cannot be focused upon great naval and military operations. Bread and boats and training camps, finances and taxes, organization, manufacture, and munitions are all prosaic, but they are the fundamental and decisive things. **The enthusiasm which in other wars is reflected from the battlefield will have somehow to be centered on a gigantic industrial operation.** Moreover, the objects for which we are at war are delicate and difficult. We are fighting not so much to beat an enemy as to make a world that is safe for democracy. **We shall be working this next year for objects which are new to warfare by methods which are new in warfare."**

This is the justification and the chief spirit of the bureau I have in mind³. As for its more concrete activities, I conceive them as follows :

- 1: It must be a clearing house of information for the activities of the government.
- 2: **It must invent a form of publicity which will enlist attention in the comparatively prosaic tasks of industrial warfare.**
- 3: It must be able to supply special articles supporting the government policy.
- 4: It must keep a close watch on the movement of public opinion in this country in order to supply the government with ideas and criticisms and to be able to advise and warn and suggest to editors.
- 5: It must follow and report upon the allied, neutral and enemy press.
- 6: It must deal with the moving picture situation.
- 7: It must be prepared to run down rumors and lies.

The type of organization I have in mind would consist of a very small council, one member of which would be the executive head of the organization. Another member would be the state, military and naval censors; a staff of reporters; a staff of men from the trade journals who can popularize technical news; a group of copy readers and a corps of special writers who would volunteer their services. [...]

Walter Lippmann, Lettre au Colonel House, conseiller spécial du président Wilson, 12 avril 1917.

¹ Franklin K. Lane (1864-1921), *Secretary of the Interior* du gouvernement Wilson.

² Walter B. Pitkin (1878-1921), auteur des premiers best-sellers de la psychologie populaire (*Le secret du bonheur*).

³ Ce bureau sera créé deux jours plus tard sous le nom de **Committee on Public Information (CPI)** dirigé par George Creel. Ce bureau de propagande sera chargé pendant deux ans de convaincre la population américaine du bien-fondé de l'entrée en guerre des Etats-Unis, alors que Woodrow Wilson s'était fait élire à la présidence en 1916 sous le slogan « *He kept us out of war* » !