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ABSTRACT

This study describes the patriotic public rituals, the propaganda materials, and the censorship activities that were part of the school experience in Missouri during World War I. It also examines the apparent responses of two rural Benton County communities to those rituals, materials and activities. Benton County is a rural area of central Missouri about 100 miles southeast of Kansas City. The population was comprised of many German-speaking immigrants, who came to the area in the mid-1800s. Benton County had an ethnically heterogenous population on the eve of World War I. The paper examines newspaper stories, civic agencies' efforts to inculcate patriotism in the schools, citizenship rallies and oaths, essay contests, and other community efforts to build support for the war effort. The study concludes that German-Americans suffered far less at the hands of the public schools than many current studies suggest, if the communities of Missouri under study are indicative of the experiences of similar German communities elsewhere. (Contains 87 footnotes.) (EH)

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Propaganda, Censorship and Civic Education in Rural Missouri Schools during World War I: The Benton County Experience

The purpose of this study is to describe the patriotic public rituals, the propaganda materials, and the censorship activities that were part of the school experience in Missouri during the Great War as well as examine the apparent responses of two rural Benton County communities to these. Benton County is situated in a rural area of central Missouri about one hundred miles southeast of Kansas City. Settled in 1838 by families from the upper South, the county soon became a mecca for German-speaking immigrants from the Kingdom of Hanover in what is today northwest Germany.

By 1900, three principal communities had developed: Warsaw, Lincoln, and Cole Camp. Separated at ten mile intervals, these communities are strung out on an axis with Warsaw, the county seat, to the south. Lincoln is situated in the middle and Cole Camp lays near the northern boundary of Benton County.

Like Missouri, Benton County had an ethnically heterogenous population on the eve of World War I. The descendants of the original Anglo-Scot-Irish settlers clustered about Warsaw while the German-speaking population centered at Cole Camp.

Despite a common size and agricultural base, differing ethnic cultures and animosities dating back to the Civil War bred

tension between the two halves of the county. During the latter conflict the residents of Warsaw and Cole Camp had clashed in a bloody battle during June, 1861, that may have claimed several hundred lives.[1]

When the United States joined the struggle in Europe against Germany in 1917, the populations of the two halves of Benton County naturally eyed each other warily. The support of German settlers in the American war effort was by no means assured. Thus the First World War was more than a foreign conflict in the minds of local leaders, it was also a struggle for national unity. The war, in Benton County as in the whole country, became in the words of propagandist George Creel, "the fight for the minds of men, for the 'conquest of their convictions', and the battle-line ran through every home in every country...The trial of strength was not only between massed bodies of armed men, but between opposed ideals, and moral verdicts took on all the value of military decisions."[2] This war of ideals resulted in a civic education campaign unprecedented in the nation's history, one that used propaganda, censorship, and participation in public rituals to build social cohesion. One facet of that campaign was an effort to use the schools to mold public opinion and forge support for war-time national goals.[3]

A characteristic of American culture has been the widely-held perception that education is a palliative of national ills.

Leaders have sought to use education as a means to improve the material well-being of the country, stabilize society, and unite heterogeneous ethnic groups with a national spirit. Within this context, the propaganda targeting schools during World War I sought to use the children as conduits to transmit the government's will into the home.

Both Warsaw and Cole Camp had weekly newspapers that catered to the interests of local readers. Not surprisingly, the respective attitudes reflected in these newspapers toward the First World War differed greatly. Those attitudes provide a perspective as to the communities' responses to the war, the varying experiences of students and teachers in the war, and popular expectations as to the role of the school in American society. The local publishers, as transmitters of news and manipulators of public opinion, treated the conflict in markedly dissimilar ways. The Benton County Enterprise, the newspaper published at Warsaw, carried extensive news coverage of the war between January and April, 1917, including stories on battles, diplomacy, and war-related domestic concerns.

The publisher's blatant patriotism was displayed in efforts to build support for American involvement. He gave world events a prominent place in the news. To remind readers of the potential danger posed by German-Americans, he published tales of German espionage accompanied by statistics on German immigration

to Missouri during the preceding decade. The editor frequently expressed belligerent opinions on war-related issues. In March, 1917, editorials appeared which attempted to discredit pacifism. One issue carried a story boldly captioned "War and Manhood" that proclaimed "...in these days of pacifism and of the preaching of the heresy that disgrace is to be preferred to armed defense of the nation's honor and integrity, the virile action of any body to citizens is grateful."[4]

In contrast to the Warsaw newspaper, the editor of the Cole Camp Courier downplayed the growing overseas conflict. The Cole Camp Courier ignored the war in Europe in seven of the ten issues published during the same period in which the Benton County Enterprise focused on military issues. When a popular pacifist drama, The Battle Cry of Peace: The Call to Arms Against the War, was scheduled to be performed in Cole Camp, the editor appealed to local citizens to enter their automobiles, then a novelty, in a "Battle Cry of Peace" parade organized for the afternoon of April 13, 1917.[5]

Pacifist voices within German communities such as the Cole Camp appeared to drive Anglo ethnic prejudice against German-Americans and fueled the development of the pro-German sentiment it so feared. This phenomenon occurred in St. Louis prior to the American entry into the war in an incident that must have heightened anxious fears in Benton County patriots.

To protest anti-German comments published in the Post-Dispatch, an overflow crowd gathered in Turner Hall. The protest changed into a frightening testimonial to German nationalism. A leading German language newspaper, the Westliche Post, recorded the following scene:

> Who can ever forget the moment when thousands-filled by one desire only-stood up as one man to join in the powerful war song, "The Watch on the Rhine"...only a few eyes remained dry when from thousands the vow "Germany, Germany above everything" rose to the skies. Pictures of the beloved Fatherland came back to their memory; of dear relatives, perhaps already dead on the field of honor fighting for their Fatherland; scenes from their own-oh so distant childhood. And an urgent wish filled their hearts: "Why can't I be with them when our brothers march against the foe to fight for every inch of our sacred soil."[6]

As the United States joined the hostilities, the residents of Benton County slipped into an agitated state of paranoia. Wild rumors about local fifth-column activity circulated extensively. Tales of civil disturbances and persecutions of ethnic minorities abounded. Stories from the adjacent Henry County community of Windsor told of the raising of a Prussian flag by German sympathizers and the arrest of a pro-German businessman by federal agents.

Rumors of an alleged sighting of a German submarine in the Osage River spread north from Warsaw and were widely circulated in Cole Camp.[7] The Courier calmed its readers with assurances that the rumors were unfounded and admonished outsiders that "although many of the people in this community regret that war has been started they accept the situation in the same manner as elsewhere and if necessary will do their part in defense of their country." [8]

The newspaper's assurances not withstanding, Cole Camp citizens had reason to fear local animosity toward people of German descent. In May, 1917, a German merchant in the village of Edmonson was assaulted by six Anglo-Americans and stabbed with a knife. Though the culprits were duly prosecuted and ordered by the court to pay damages as well as banished from the county, distrust remained.[9]

Anglo-American residents felt no more secure. In August, 1917, a schoolmistress from Warsaw took three young ladies from the Kirksville Normal School on a hiking trip through the Ozark hills south of town. When a thunderstorm broke, the ladies sought shelter in the village of Edwards. The inhabitants, fearful that the young bloomer-clad women were German spies, refused to provide shelter to them. Cold, soaked, bedraggled, and burdened with wet packsacks, the unhappy women trudged the 14 miles through the downpour back to Warsaw.[10] In such a climate

of opinion, the schools could not long remain unaffected. Missouri's educational system was highly decentralized in 1917, consisting of three types of schools. These included one room rural schools administered by an elected County Superintendent, town schools governed by six-member local boards of education independent of state or county control, and private elementary schools operated by various religious congregations. All three types of schools were targeted for patriotic civic instruction but with the absence of centralized control, compliance depended upon the successful manipulation of public opinion.

In accordance with the traditional American value of volunteerism and dislike of government interference with private matters such as education, the responsibility for the implementation of patriotic civic instruction and the application of sanctions against uncooperative educators were delegated to quasi-public agencies. Among the organizations active in promoting citizenship programs were the Council of Defense, the Red Cross, the Committee on Public Information, the National Security League, and the National Board of Historic Service.

The Council of Defense was an agency with broad functions. Organized at the national level in August, 1916, it was one of the most visible agencies to attempt to use the schools for propaganda. Though the Council had few formal powers and depended on the cooperation of various federal departments and

private industry, it quickly established a hierarchical organization with tendrils reaching down to the local school district level.[11]

Missouri was one of the first states to organize state, county, and township Councils of Defense.[12] Shortly after President Wilson's war proclamation, the Secretary of War wrote various governors asking them to organize state Councils of Defense. Missouri's Governor Frederick Gardner responded to the call by inviting select individuals to attend a War Conference held on April 23, 1917, in the new Capitol Building in Jefferson City. The primary purpose of this meeting was to decide upon the most efficient means of mobilizing Missouri's resources in support of the conflict. With food production a national priority, the Dean of the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, F. B. Mumford, was appointed Chairman of the state Council of Defense. Hence many of the Missouri Council's propaganda activities were actually initiated under the auspices and in the name of the College of Agriculture.[13]

Charged with the task of consolidating support for the war and mobilizing the state's resources, the Missouri Council of Defense sought to include school authorities and school children in its mission. It recognized that the schools afforded a superb opportunity for the dissemination of nationalist ideas as well as propaganda information and that they would "serve no better

patriotic purpose than in joining forces in furthering the practical and intelligent program for bringing the state to the highest efficiency in war."[14]

President Wilson directed the federal Bureau of Education to initiate the campaign. Through the Council of Defense, every rural school was requested to hold a School House Rally on April 24, 1917. At this rally, local citizens were informed that "America must be Americanized as never before and school houses should be the place of frequent community meetings to discuss the questions of vital importance to the country."[15]

In Benton County, the Council of Defense was headed by two prominent businessmen, Charles Petts and C. H. Miles. Petts and Miles were instructed by the state Council to ensure that the county's children "should see the American flag floating from every public school building."[16] To accomplish that goal, a series of Patriotic Day celebrations were proclaimed. The first of these was held four days after the School House Rally, on April 28, 1917. Local school administrators assumed responsibility for organizing the event.[17] To commemorate the occasion, the county government purchased an American flag with a 60 foot pole to be erected on the Court House lawn at Warsaw.[18]

The local newspaper recorded that the celebration began with a parade. Uncle Sam and Columbia surrounded by a full accompaniment of attendants led an auto cavalcade through the

streets. Carloads of Civil War and Spanish-American War veterans followed these patriotic symbols. Next came horseback riders dressed in colonial garb followed by representatives from the Improvement Society, members of the local Women's Christian Temperance Union, the local Red Cross, volunteer citizens, and pupils from the Warsaw public school.[19]

At the Court House, a flag-raising ceremony was held that included prayer and music performed by the town band. Primary grade children were called upon to sing patriotic songs while the grammar students performed marching drills. All the children then saluted the flag and took the following oath:

> We, the boys and girls of the United States are citizens of this Great Republic. We believe our flag stands for self-sacrifice for the good of all the people. We wish, therefore, to be true citizens, and will show our love for our country by our work.

This oath was followed by speeches delivered by prominent citizens H. P. Lay and W. S. Jackson (Both men subsequently were honored by the city by having streets named for them). The keynote speaker, H. A. Phillips of the regional normal school, addressed the assemblage on "The Relation of Agriculture to the War." After more music from the town band, the program ended.[20]

The guardians of civic virtue, the Council of Defense, demanded that schools take part in victory and loyalty

demonstrations. It sought long lines of singing and marching children in patriotic celebrations because it knew the parents would attend and share in the sense of community solidarity and harmony that was being promoted. Teachers were pressured to have their students participate in civic programs.[21]

Such prapoganda programs were frequent events for Warsaw High School students. In the spring of 1917, a civic demonstration was held that included music by the school double quartet and orchestra, recitations by students, flag drill, and skits incorporating such characters as a Red Cross nurse, a soldier boy, Uncle Sam, and the Goddess of Liberty. The highlight of the presentation was a talk on army life given by a local dough boy.[22]

As the war progressed, the celebrations became more elaborate. On April 19, 1918, a Patriotic Rally which incorporated 75 cars filled with school children was held. After the parade, the children again participated in a flag-raising ceremony and sang patriotic songs. The high school students presented musical numbers and a representative from the Speakers Bureau delivered a patriotic address.[23]

The experience of the Cole Camp town school appeared to be very different. School Board minutes are silent on matters of curriculum and everyday school life. Fortunately school functions were not ignored by the newspaper.[24] School activities

were a regular feature of the news. The Cole Camp Courier mentioned the patriotic activities of several outlying rural and parochial elementary schools, but made relatively few references to the town school's participation.[25] This coverage is in marked contrast to that provided by the Warsaw newspaper of the Warsaw town schools with their elaborate parades, contests, and flag-raising programs.

In November, 1917, the newspaper reported that the town school had held a Halloween party but no mention was made of war-related activities. The following month the newspaper duly noted that the dedication of the school's new stage was accompanied by student games and that the Sophomore class had presented a Christmas play. However, no mention of patriotic ceremonies was made.[26] In February, 1918, it made brief references to the town school's participation in Thrift Stamp sales and the continuation of the six day school week. The local newspaper noted in April that a play, "The Time of His Life," was presented.[27] Not until March, 1918, did the newspaper report on a formal war-related assembly. Significantly, elementary students did not participate and efforts were made to link the present experience of conflict with past wars in a literary genre. Guest speakers addressed the assemblage on the Civil War and Spanish-American War while the superintendent read letters from local boys on the front lines.[28]

It may have been the case that in Cole Camp, with a large

immigrant population whose feelings toward American participation in the war were ambiguous, school administrators and board members may have preferred not to fan discord. However, records demonstrate that the Cole Camp community furnished its share of army volunteers, and only a few eligible men failed to register for the draft.[29]

The public schools of Benton County, like their counterparts across the state, were an integral part of the government's efforts to finance World War I. A series of campaigns to raise revenue were initiated, including the sale of Liberty Bonds, Baby Bonds, and Thrift Stamps.

County Councils of Defense and Women's Committees organized drives through local banks to sell War Savings Certificates in 1918. Each state was allotted a quota, which for Missouri was $70,984,380.[30] The Savings Certificates were sold in denominations as low as $5. To enable even the poorest adults and children to contribute, Thrift Stamps were sold for 25 cents. The 25 cent stamps were placed in books of 16, which in turn were exchanged, with the addition of a few cents, for a $5.00 War Savings Certificate.[31]

In his announcement of the Thrift Stamp sale, Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo appealed to every boy and girl to purchase some, advising them to do odd jobs if necessary to earn the recommended individual purchase total of $20.00.[32] The Women's

Committee established Thrift Stamp Clubs in the local schools.[33] In Benton County, it sponsored a contest between schools. In Warsaw, rooms held competitions against each other. Classes one through four competed not only in sales, but also in the construction of war posters. The winning room created a mural titled "Somewhere in France". According to the local paper, the scene included the trenches, barbed wire entanglements, First Aid stations, a Red Cross hospital, an ambulance, nurses, a French village, ruins, heavy artillery, the flags of Germany and the Allies, and soldiers. Room one won the sales contest, selling $246 in Thrift Stamps out of a contest gross total of $505.48.[34] The interscholastic honors and a banner, however, went to the Lincoln schools for selling over $600 worth of stamps.[35] Apparently enthusiasm for this contest was much less in the Cole Camp school than in those at Lincoln and Warsaw.

To encourage more participation, the Missouri Department of Public Schools sponsored an essay contest open to all pupils. Students were to write on the topic "How to Help Uncle Sam to Win the War Through Thrift Stamps". Essays were not to exceed 250 words for grades one through four or 500 words for higher grade levels. State Superintendent Uel Lampkin ordered the participation of every teacher in every Missouri school, and announced that each teacher would give a Thrift stamp as the prize for the best essay in the class. Each County War Savings

Committee was asked to contribute a $5 certificate to the county winner. The Benton County prize went to second grader Glen Smith, who wrote:

> I am not old or large enough to be a Red Cross nurse, but Uncle Sam must have our help if we are small...Do anything that is right, raise chickens, sell the eggs, wash dishes, wear old clothing. I get 5 cents a day for helping Momma. I have $2 saved. It will help. We must win. We ought to work hard for we have the best government in the world.[36]

With such support, Missouri led the states in Thrift Stamp sales.[37] The school children of Benton County were used in other fund raising drives, though few of these were as extensive as the Thrift Stamp Sales. During the third Liberty Loan drive, county chairman W. W. Kratzer designated April 6, 1918, as Patriotic Day and planned a special program to be presented in all county schools. Reinforcing the idea that the school children were merely tools to reach a wider audience, every person in the county was notified to attend.[38] Unfortunately, no record was found of the degree of compliance.

Other school fund drives in Warsaw included a Red Cross campaign[39] and a Y. M. C. A. War Fund drive. In the latter campaign, school children were specifically asked to contribute money and the 191 donors contributed to the $3,232.00 raised.[40]

The Junior Red Cross was another organization active in promoting patriotic civic education in the schools. More than a medical relief society, it made the education and patriotic mobilization of school children one of its highest priorities. The Council of Defense asked all schools to participate in the Red Cross program. The Red Cross planned to establish auxiliaries in which membership was open to all children. It appealed to teachers to serve as agents in forming branches in their schools, even if classes had already been dismissed for summer vacation.[41]

In each community the local Red Cross Executive Committee appointed a Chapter Executive Committee to supervise the work. This chapter committee consisted of school administration. It desisignated the school principal as Chairman of the School Red Cross Auxiliary, who in that capacity, supervised the work of members. Teachers acted as local officers over students.[42]

The national organization published posters of medical personnel and patriotic citizens engaged in at-home war work which were circulated to schools to inspire children. It used school children to aid in poster campaigns, canvassing, the distribution of pamphlets, the collection of books and magazines for soldiers, and the packaging of medical supplies.[43] The manufacturing of surgical dressings was a popular activity, confined to the high school grades,[44] classes for which were held

at local schools.[45] Instruction was offered in the essentials of first aid, home nursing, and dietetics. Meetings were not all drudgery but included storytelling, games, lantern slide (slide projector) programs, moving pictures and songs.[46] In the Warsaw schools, with an estimated enrollment of 250 pupils, a typical Red Cross program included a speaker, vocal and instrumental music, and a flag-raising ceremony.[47]

While the Council of Defense and Red Cross were active in pressuring the public schools to get involved in war activities, neither organization was primarily interested in the education of children except to the extent they were useful in public displays to mobilize the adult population. It was the Women's Committee of the Council for Defense that assumed primary responsibility for promoting the patriotic instruction of children.

This organization was created by Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo who considered its work so important that he furnished it with U.S. government franking privileges. The Missouri Women's Committee came into existence on May 28, 1917, under the leadership of Mrs. Philip Moore, during a meeting of state representatives from various women's organizations. The Women's Committee divided the state into eleven districts which together comprised 710 community committees, 237 township groups, and 137 school district organizations.[48] The duties of the Women's Committee in relation to the school were to:

1. investigate cases of children not attending school.

2. aid the patriotic celebration of national holidays.

3. place patriotic literature in the schools.

4. investigate and publicize all war work.

5. work through other organizations including teachers.

6. compile lists of schools either offering patriotic instruction or desirous of doing so.[49]

Much of the work was performed by a state speaker's Bureau which called upon women to carry its message into every community. This endeavor in Benton County was led by Mrs. Charles Petts, County Chairperson, and Town Chairpersons Mrs. Sadie Daniel of Warsaw, Mrs. J. Calvert of Lincoln, and Mrs. Marsten of Cole Camp.[50]

To facilitate patriotic instruction, the Women's Committee disseminated a book and two pageants to the schools. The book, entitled The Mother Goose in War Times, was aimed at educating primary grade children and mothers. It transmitted lessons on conservation, economics, and correct political ideology. Amply illustrated with cartoons, it presented the traditional nursery rhymes but with a propaganda slant.

The two pageants, The Bugles Call the Children and The Progress of Liberty, told school audiences why the country was at war and explained the benefits of winning. Together, these instructional materials represented the Women's Committee of the

Council of Defense's most important educational undertaking.[51]

An area of considerable concern to ardent patriots was the quality of civic instruction in the schools. The Missouri Council of Defense proclaimed that "It is the patriotic duty of teachers both in elementary and high school to make their instruction more efficient than ever before, and no opportunity for lessons in patriotism and economic training should be overlooked.[52]

The perspective of textbooks and other instructional materials were of considerable concern to the manipulators of public opinion. Missouri State Superintendent Lampkin banned the use of books and texts antagonistic to the ideals of democracy or which glorified autocracy.[53]

To help teachers provide the proper instruction, a private group, the National Security League (NSL), sponsored a series of 250 summer workshops in 43 states to aid teachers in developing Americanization programs which were geared to local community needs. These stressed patriotism and the eradication of foreign influences. It has been estimated that over half of all American teachers obtained literature from this program.[54] The NSL published a pamphlet by Claude H. Van Tyne entitled Democracy's Education Problem. This work urged teacher's to point out the differences between American democracy and German autocracy.[55] In Benton County, the NSL requested Warsaw teachers to add to

each day's lessons instruction as to why the United States went to war, the dangers of defeat, and the duty of loyal citizens.[56]

Another agency that engaged in the production of patriotic curriculum materials was the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Much of the CPI's material was produced for elementary teachers and 94,000 copies of one of its early bulletins, The Battle Line of Democracy, were disseminated to teachers. More popular was a 16 page biweekly current events publication, the National School Service, which contained party songs and patriotic games in addition to news. It reached virtually every teacher in the public schools and was particularly popular in rural areas. George Creel called it the CPI's "most unique and effective publication."[57]

The CPI also acted as a conduit to funnel instructional materials produced by other organizations to American teachers. An example was a syllabus program, The Study of the Great War: A Topical Outline With Extensive Quotations and Reading References for secondary schools and produced by the National Board of Historical Service (NBHS). This program reached a circulation of 700,000 as a CPI pamphlet. It also achieved an additional 40,000 in circulation as a supplement to History Teacher Magazine.[58]

The NBHS, an organization of 25 historians collaborating to produce educational programs, wrote an instructional program and sponsored an essay contest for teachers. The instructional

program incorporated current war issues into regular history assignments to build a case for the righteousness of the Allied cause. In the essay contest, public school teachers were asked to write on "Why the United States is at War." The Missouri Council of Defense appropriated $300 in prizes for the best papers "so treated as to be intelligible and interesting to pupils in the class of schools in which the writer is teaching." The judges for Missouri were Jonas Viles and R. J. Kerner of the University of Missouri, E. C. Griffith of William Jewell College, and C. H. McClure of Warrensburg State Normal School.[59]

Many teachers apparently did not use these materials to the satisfaction of patriots in or out of the profession. The files of NBHS leader Guy Stanton Ford were filled with correspondence from frustrated teachers who were incapable of handling war issues in the classroom.[60] Few teachers were trained well enough to do so. Of the nation's 522,000 elementary teachers, less than one-third had any special training, 50,000 were only educated to the eighth grade, 100,000 were new every year, and 100,000 were 19 years of age or younger.[61] It is reasonable to assume that these characteristics applied as well to Benton County teachers.

The war impacted the composition of Missouri's teaching force, facilitating the transition from a male to a female dominated occupation. Many male teachers enlisted in the military and never returned to teaching. Large numbers of women

found it profitable to take the men's places.[62] The experiences of schools in Benton County bear this out. Faced with a teacher shortage, the Cole Camp board of education increased the pay of first, second, and third grade certificate holders from $40, $45, and $50 to $45, $50, and $60 respectively. Thirty young ladies took advantage of those opportunities by taking the regularly scheduled teachers' examination at Warsaw for certification.[63]

Teachers were called upon to sacrifice infinite amounts of time and money to war causes and their programs of study became centers of controversy. Still dissatisfied, ardent patriots charged that many teachers failed to make their classrooms an effective agent of patriotic instruction.

Censors particularly targeted German language instructors and teachers teaching in the German tongue. The issue of language was of great concern. Across the nation, sentiment against the use of the German language grew. In neighboring Iowa, a politician said that ninety percent of teachers of German were traitors.[64] In Missouri, German was an important vehicle for verbal and written expression. In 1913, German was the most popular foreign language taught in Missouri High Schools with 7,091 students enrolled in classes. The state had six daily German language newspapers and 18 weekly ones.[65]

The Missouri Council of Defense noted that in parts of the state, the English language was not spoken or taught in the

schools. In northern Benton County, German was the language of daily discourse in many neighborhoods. The Council issued a resolution asking the legislature to pass a law prohibiting the teaching of any language except English in all public and parochial schools.[66] When the legislature failed to pass the resolution, the Council of Defense appealed for voluntary cooperation. Governor Frederick Gardner lent executive weight to its appeal by issueing a proclamation ordering that any citizens with pro-German sympathies (use of the German tongue constituted such sympathy) face a firing squad and any such community of persons be placed under martial law and its residents court-martialled.[67]

In Cole Camp, where many citizens, particularly the elderly, were not fluent in English, the Council's appeal for cooperation apparently was not enthusiastically received. Some citizens clung stubbornly to their heritage. A young Cole Camp resident, at school in St. Louis, wrote home to his parents pleading for them to support the war effort. Noting that the Kaiser was Prussian, he appealed to their Hanoverian prejudices, observing that "We Germans do not want Prussian rule and are ready and willing to help the United States win the war."[68]

Numerous small German neighborhoods around Cole Camp were loath to abandon their language but did attempt to use the rural parochial schools to demonstrate their patriotism. In June of

1917, the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church held its first annual school picnic. The students assembled at the school and marched to the banks of Lake Creek followed by a crowd of picnickers. The local newspaper reported that the minister endeavored to show that the parochial schools were educating children to become good citizens, though it did not provide specific information as to how this was accomplished.[69] Likewise, the North Lincoln Lutheran School emphasized its patriotism with a Loyalty Day which included band music, a Red Cross sale, a patriotic speaker, and a short program by the children.[70]

The small one room public schools in the Cole Camp vicinity made similar efforts. The Lake Creek School, with but 16 pupils, published a notice that it had achieved one hundred percent Junior Red Cross membership.[71] Two months later, the Haw Creek German School Number Two and the Prairie Flower School Number Two announced that they, too, had become Red Cross members.[72]

Despite these evidences of loyalty, private schools still clung to the German language. A Lutheran minister from Athol, Kansas, visiting Cole Camp in April, 1918, felt compelled to appeal to the Lutheran congregations as a religious authority to give up the German language in their parochial schools. "Thus you will carry out the mandates of your religion and some day will see the reaction when those who today call you disloyal must

acknowledge that your patriotism was founded upon a greater principle than mere love of country alone but upon the love and fear of God whom you worship."[73] Finally, in May of 1918, State Superintendent Lampkin ordered that no foreign language be taught in any elementary school of the state.

Studies of the nation as a whole chronicle pressure during the war to contain freedom of thought and expression in the public schools. Curriculum materials that failed to condemn Germany or which emphasized Anglo-American frictions were unpopular, and loyalty oaths were demanded of teachers.[74] Teachers found themselves bombarded with criticism from many sources. The inflammatory rhetoric turned the classroom into an oppressive environment in which teachers were uncertain about the limits of acceptable expression. Widespread disagreement existed as to the limits of official censorship. At the national level, some forms of censorship of communications and news were sanctioned by the government, and Congress gave local federal attorneys wide discretionary powers to censor speech with the Espionage and Sedition Acts. The imprisonment of socialist leader Eugene Debs served as an example to free thinking teachers.

In Missouri, the Council of Defense made every effort to suppress any perceived disloyalty in or out of school. The state plan for suppression was developed and perfected in Henry County,

a county adjacent to Benton County and located only a few miles from Cole Camp. It was deemed so effective that it was emulated in other states and drew praise from leaders in the nation's capitol.[75]

As part of this plan, county chairmen gathered evidence of disloyal activities and filed reports of them with the state headquarters. An anonymous warning was published in the local papers which said in part:

> ...there is another element of alien sympathizers whose poison tongues are wagging with entirely too much freedom. There is the man whose secret fealty gives the lie of his American citizenship; who never loses an opportunity to deprecate the entry of our country into war and regret that our manhood has been called to our country's aid; who by vague hint and guarded innuendo casts doubt upon the justice of our cause and minimizes the great provocations we suffered at the hands of the Hohenzollerns.

The local committee, sworn to secrecy, then mailed a set of red, white, and blue cards, one at a time, to suspected offenders. On the first white cautionary card was written:

> You have been reported to the Committee on patriots and patriotism as in your attitude and utterances dangerous and disloyal. We recommend CAUTION and a complete change of attitude.

If the white card proved ineffective, a blue card was mailed which stated:

> The white card meant CAUTION; the blue WARNING. Every flag in our country waves to protect you - your life and property. Your duty is to defend your country's flag with your life.

Should the blue card not accomplish its purpose, a red card was sent with the following warning:

> If unjustly reported, or if you desire to avoid summary action, report at once your change of front to the postmaster. No harm will come to you if you continue loyal in your devotion to your country in its hour of need. FINAL.

The Missouri state chairman, after receiving hundreds of reports, noted that the white card usually was sufficient so that the blue and red cards were not sent.[76]

The National Security League urged school administrators to begin "weeding out such members of their teaching force as are not enthusiastically supporting America's position in the war."[77] The editors of the Warsaw newspaper chose to publish that organization's rhetoric against teachers. The newspaper admonished that "we look with grave concern upon alleged seditious views of certain teachers as a menace to lives of our army and navy...we urge upon...all cities...to remove from their

teaching staffs forthwith any teacher who is proven not to be supporting the conduct of the war and not upholding the federal government with absolute loyalty."[78] However, no Benton County teachers were publicly charged with disloyalty or criticized in print.

Despite the lack of consistent enforcement, teachers in all communities were threatened by the general coercive support for the war and by the actions of private groups monitoring criticism of the government. The persistent danger was reinforced with the arrest of several citizens in the Cole Camp area who did not guard their tongues closely enough. Three Cole Camp citizens were jailed in Kansas City but released before trial after the armistice was signed. Fortunately, the sedition laws were irregularly enforced in the area.[79]

By late spring, 1918, the Benton County Council of Defense headquartered in Warsaw apparently applied pressure to increase Cole Camp's participation in patriotic rallies. Citizens organized a Cole Camp Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense in May and planned a number of patriotic programs. These included a parade in conjunction with a Red Cross auction. Several community children's organizations were involved, including the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. Though the Cole Camp newspaper mentioned the Trinity Lutheran School's participation, noticeably absent was any reference to the

participation of the local public school.[80] Certainly the town school did not rush to raise funds for the war effort. Perhaps some educators, despite the atmosphere of coercion, were unconvinced that their responsibility was to indoctrinate youth. Perhaps there were also administrators protected by the local Board of Education (most of whom were of German descent) who refused to participate in the many civic demonstrations to accomodate local feelings.[81]

Finally, in June, 1918, a county Council of Defense representative from Warsaw was sent to Cole Camp to organize a Thrift Stamp drive in the town school. This was, however, at the end of the school year.

According to historians David Kennedy, J. R. Mock, and Stephen Brumberg, the nation's schools during World War I became a battle ground where ideological guerrilla warfare was fought by competing groups.[82] Zealous patriots, convinced that the courts were prosecuting traitors too slowly, persecuted free-thinking teachers through such measures as language restrictions, mobbing, whipping, and lynching.[83] Such historians concede, however, that much of the propaganda effort was inefficiently administered.

Several factors influenced the effectiveness of propaganda. The early efforts of organizations such as the CPI, NBHS, and NSL to use the classroom for propaganda were unsystematic and half-hearted because a short war was anticipated. Most historians

aimed their propaganda at adult groups. For example, the director of the NSL's Education program considered working with the public school curriculum only his "second line" of operations.[84]

The decentralized nature of America's educational institutions further complicated the systematic administration of propaganda programs. The CPI found it impossible to obtain the names and addresses of local superintendents, let alone teachers.[85]

In Missouri, the state government was slow to take any official action regarding censorship in education. In Benton County, it appears that of the various methods of intimidation, only loyalty oaths and language restrictions were utilized against teachers. The local public schools did not appear to have quickly become battle grounds.

The timing of the war was also a factor. When Congress declared war in April, 1917, there were only two months remaining in the school year. The 1918 school year was only about two months old when the armistice was signed. For all practical purposes, that period was even shorter in Benton County. A deadly influenza epidemic ravaged the population. By early October, a mayor's proclamation issued in Warsaw by order of the Board of Education closed all schools for an indefinite period.[86] A similar edict issued by the Cole Camp Board of Education closed

that community's schools as well.[87] Organizations dedicated to inculcating patriotic values in the local schools had only slightly more than one school year to accomplish their purposes.

In assessing the experience of Benton County schools in 1917 and 1918, it appears that once war was declared, some schools like that in Warsaw rapidly came to support the government and enthusiastically participated in public propaganda programs. Local leaders in education and government, like their national counterparts, did not regard the school as the place to teach critical thinking or encourage freedom of thought. Rather it was a place to teach duty, sacrifice, and nationalistic sentiments.

Despite the widespread distribution of propagandistic curriculum materials in the schools, their use depended on the attitudes and energy of local community leaders. Certainly the schools in Benton County were never subjected to the pressures noted by historians that were exerted on urban schools by government and community leaders. Neither were teachers or students so traumatized. The people of Cole Camp did not quickly accede to government pressure. Though genuinely loyal and patriotic, the community clung to the use of the German language in its parochial schools almost until the end of the war. In a community where German ethnicity constituted the majority culture, local leaders apparently did not partake of anti-German propaganda activities to the extent that heterogeneous

communities with large German minorities, like Warsaw, did. The Cole Camp public school would seem to have been relatively successful in conducting the business of education without becoming deeply immersed in war issues and activities. Significantly, the Cole Camp school board included individuals prominent in leadership roles in the German community. By contrast, few of these were members of the Benton County Council of Defense.

For school administrators, World War I represented a high wire balancing act between their responsibility to encourage the integrity of the academic program while meeting the demands for their schools to adhere to the correct political line and participate in public rituals. For teachers, the war meant constant pressure to examine and re-examine curriculum materials, to compromise ideals and censor one's own speech. It meant constant interruptions and demands for voluntary donations of time and money. For male teachers, it meant shame, a sense that a man's proper place was on the battlefield rather than in the classroom. For females, despite the hostile environment, the war represented high wages and a golden opportunity for escape from the cultural strictures of homemaking. For the student of German extraction, World War I had different meanings. In Warsaw, it meant hostility from within the community. A hostility that served to isolate the child, to separate him from the home and

culture. An examination of the Cole Camp experience implies that efforts to inculcate civic virtue through the involvement of students in elaborate public rituals may have been resisted by the town school. For students in that school, the war meant hostility from outside the community. It forced concessions to public behavior but reinforced ethnic cohesion and group solidarity.

Many national leaders tend to regard the decentralized character of the American educational system as a defect which perpetuates poor academic achievement and cultural isolation. In the case of Cole Camp, that decentralization was possibly a great asset for the teachers and community, protecting them from some of the most severe consequences they might have been subjected to had the national or state government been in control of education.

Many German immigrants to the United States settled in rural areas where their ethnic culture came to dominate their communities, as in Cole Camp, Missouri. If the experience of the Cole Camp town school is indicative of the experience of similar German communities elsewhere, then German-Americans suffered far less at the hands of the public schools than current studies suggest.

Footnotes

1. Since troops on both sides consisted of irregular militia, no official records were kept. Partisan second-hand accounts written years after the battle assert casualty figures ranging from seventeen to over four hundred dead. Leonard Brauer and Evelyn Goosen (Eds.). Hier Snackt Wi Plattdutsch: The Story of a Missouri Community and its German Heritage. (The City of Cole Camp, MO., 1989), 179.

2. George Creel, How We Advertised America (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 3.

3. See Lewis P. Todd, Wartime Relations of the Federal Government and the Public Schools: 1917-1918 and S. F. Brumberg, New York City Schools March Off to War: The Nature and Extent of Participation of the City Schools in the Great War. Todd's work is an excellent study of wartime activities in education from the federal perspective but neglects those activities from the local vantage point. Brumberg does a thorough examination of the extent of the participation of the New York City schools during the First World War.

4. Benton County Enterprise, 23 March 1917.

5. Cole Camp Courier, 5 April 1917.

6. J. C. Crighton, Missouri and the World War, 1914-1917: A Study in Public Opinion (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri, 1947), 28-29.

7. Cole Camp Courier, 3 May 1917.

8. Ibid., 12 April 1917.

9. Ibid., 10 May 1917.

10. Benton County Enterprise, 24 August 1917.

11. David M. Kennedy, Over Here: The First World War and American Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 114-116.

12. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1919), 1.

13. Missouri Council of Defense, Letter 14, Instruction Letters: No. 1-117 (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1919).

14. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report, 89-90.

15. Ibid., 89.

16. Ibid., 89.

17. Benton County Enterprise, 20 April 1917.

18. Ibid., 27 April 1917.

19. Ibid., 4 May 1917.

20. Benton County Enterprise, 27 April 1917.

21. L. P. Todd, Wartime Relations of the Federal Government and The Public Schools: 1917-1918 (New York: Teachers College,

Columbia University, 1945), 40-70.

22. Benton County Enterprise, 3 May 1918.

23. Benton County Enterprise, 19 April 1918.

24. The question arises whether the lack of school participation was a reporting omission by the newspaper. The local historian observed that from his own work it was his impression that the paper was fairly reliable in reporting local activities during this period. Roy Donnell, Personal Communication, November 1989.

25. Unfortunately, the records of the Cole Camp public school system contained only references to business transactions. No policy statements were recorded. According to a retired Benton County Superintendent of Schools, this was not an unusual state of affairs. The town schools with independent Boards of Education frequently recorded few policy records. John Owens, Personal Communication, November, 1989.

26. Cole Camp Courier, 27 December 1917.

27. Ibid., 11 April 1918.

28. Ibid., 14 March 1918.

29. Ibid., 14 June 1917.

30. Missouri Council of Defense, Instruction Letters: No. 1-117, No. 47.

31. Benton County Enterprise, 25 January 1918.

32. Ibid., 18 January 1918.

33. Mrs. Robert Moltey to Blanche Stephens, 24 January 1918. (Blanche Stephens Papers, Columbia, Mo.: State Historical Society of Missouri).

34. Benton County Enterprise, 15 March 1918.

35. Ibid., 1 February 1918.

36. Ibid., 24 May 1918.

37. The Columbia Missourian, 6 April 1918. Blanche Stephens Papers, folder 1.

38. Benton County Enterprise, 29 March 1918.

39. Ibid., 12 April 1918.

40. Ibid., 23 November 1917.

41. Request for Junior Red Cross, Newspaper clipping. Blanche Stephens Papers, folder 2, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia. Blanche Stephens was the wife of Dean Frank Stephens of the University of Missouri at Columbia. A prominent civic worker, she was appointed Fourth District Chair of the Women's Committee of National Defense.

42. Pamphlet on the Organization and Supervision of Chapter School Committees of the Junior Red Cross. Blanche Stephens Papers, folder 5.

43. Benton County Enterprise, 2 November 1917.

44. Blanche Stephens Papers, folder 5.

45. Ibid., folder 2.

46. Benton County Enterprise, 2 November 1917.

47. Benton County Enterprise, 15 February 1918.

48. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report, 75-78.

49. Duty of County Women's Committees as Pertains to Schools, Newspaper clipping. Blanche Stephens Papers, folder 1.

50. Missouri Council of Defense, Directory of County and Township Councils of Defense (Columbia: 1919).

51. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report, 75-78.

52. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report, 89.

53. Cole Camp Courier, 16 May 1918.

54. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 108.

55. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 121.

56. Benton County Enterprise, 28 December 1917.

57. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 108-124.

58. Ibid., 116-117.

59. Missouri Council of Defense, Instruction Letters: No. 1-117, Letter 33.

60. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 107.

61. NEA Bulletin on Teacher Preparation. Blanche Stephens Papers, folder 5.

62. C. A. Phillips, Fifty Years of Public School Teaching: From Rural School Teacher to University Professor (Columbia, Mo.: Missouri State Teachers Association, 1948), 68.

63. Cole Camp Courier, 9 August 1917.

64. Kennedy, Over Here, 54.

65. J. C. Crighton, Missouri and the World War, 1914-1917: A Study in Public Opinion (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri, 1947), 11-13.

66. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report, 97-98.

67. Cole Camp Courier, 11 April 1918.

68. Cole Camp Courier, 2 May 1918.

69. Cole Camp Courier, 14 June 1917.

70. Cole Camp Courier, 30 May 1918.

71. Cole Camp Courier, 28 February 1918.

72. Cole Camp Courier, 4 April 1918.

73. Cole Camp Courier, 25 April 1918.

74. Kennedy, Over Here, 54.

75. Missouri Council of Defense, Final Report, 62-63.

76. Missouri Council of Defense, Instruction Letters, No. 22.

77. Ibid., 109.

78. Benton County Enterprise, 28 December 1917.

79. Kennedy, Over Here, 83. These disloyalty reports were confidential and not open to the public. The arrested Cole Camp citizens never were prosecuted because the war ended before their case came to trial. They were released and returned to Cole Camp. Efforts to interview local residents about the incident met with resistance. Clearly the community was still sensitive to the affair and refused to discuss it with "outsiders."

80. Ibid., 9 May 1918.

81. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 107.

82. Kennedy, Over Here, 53-54.

83. J. R. Mock, Censorship: 1917 (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1941), 28-29.

84. Blakey, Historians on the Homefront, 108.

85. Ibid., 107.

86. Benton County Enterprise, 11 October 1918.

87. Cole Camp School District No. 4, Board of Education Minutes (Vol. 3, March 12, 1917-December 23, 1918), 12-43.

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