

# ZIP YOUR LIP

The story of a West Coast army-civilian campaign to stop loose talk about military matters. From juke boxes to editorials. A model for other states.

Los Angeles.

FORT ORD is located on the Monterey Peninsula—an area popularized by John Steinbeck in his *Tortilla Flat*. Until recently it had a heavy population of persons born in enemy countries. Undoubtedly there is fifth column activity around Fort Ord, as there is around any sizable army cantonment. Hence the necessity for complete silence regarding troops moving in and out of the Fort. This, however, is not easy. Civilians in Monterey, Salinas, Watsonville, Carmel, and Pacific Grove—the cities most frequented by soldiers—are a friendly sort. It is only natural that they should ask a soldier his home town, his unit, how many other men there are at the Fort—never dreaming that such information is useful to the enemy.

Yet it is just such information which the Military Intelligence of every army is out to get. To know everything possible about enemy troops before meeting them in battle—the size, characteristics, average age, training, morale, and movements of the troops—this is the job of "Intelligence."

Small wonder that the commanding officers of Fort Ord were anxious to stop loose talk among the civilians of Monterey. So a "Zip Your Lip" campaign was initiated. Conceived by the Fort's public relations office, it was launched under the direction of Col. Charles H. Mason, post executive, with the approval of Col. Roger S. Fitch, post commander. Its success makes it worth study for nationwide application.

DIRECTORS of the campaign faced certain difficulties at the outset. The necessity for secrecy surrounding troop movements was readily understood by both soldiers and civilians, who could envision submarines and sinking troop ships off the coast. But why the same secrecy should be observed regarding units stationed at the Fort—this was harder to explain. The campaign, therefore, was directed toward silencing everything that might convey military information, with no fine distinctions between "vital" and "not vital."

Another difficulty was the peculiarly delicate relationship that obtains between the military and the civilian population. The latter do not like to be "told" by the military what they may and may not do. Voluntary civilian cooperation must be enlisted, and whatever suasion is necessary must be applied by civilian sources. So the campaign was designed to promote a feeling of deep personal responsibility for stopping rumors and discussion of military subjects. And since soldiers are the chief source of military information, the campaign was started among them.

One day the camp paper, *Panorama*, which

is read by all soldiers at Fort Ord, ran a front-page box headed, "Dummy Up, Boys, Dummy Up." This was the first of a series of lead articles, editorials, and cartoons reporting the progress of the campaign and generally popularizing it among the men. A public address system was rigged up in the Fort's central bus station on Saturday and Sunday nights, when the largest number of boys leave camp. The last thing they heard as they went out was the loudly voiced caution: "Zip your lip, don't talk military matters when you're in town."

Even the juke boxes were used. More than twenty post exchanges at Fort Ord are equipped with these boxes, operated by telephone through a central exchange. You put your nickel into a coin slot, then tell the operator what number you want played. A series of ten-second transcriptions of jingles, with sound effects, etc., plugging the "Zip Your Lip" message, was cut at a local radio station. These were played over the juke box system before the requested number. They became so popular that soldiers often asked the operator to play three or four of them instead of a musical number. The system was also placed in effect in Monterey, which has a similar central juke box exchange with outlets in bars and restaurants throughout the city.

A fine public relations job was done by a Fort Ord liaison officer through the newspapers of Monterey, Salinas, and Watsonville. First he explained to editors the objectives of the campaign and offered the assistance of the Fort's public relations staff in the preparation of news stories and pictures. Without exception the newspapers pitched in. News stories and editorials, written by both soldier and civilian reporters, immediately began to appear in papers throughout the peninsula.

The area's two radio stations—KHUB in Watsonville and KDON in Monterey—agreed to do their part. A spot announcement was broadcast every half hour, then ten times a day, from each station: "Here is a message from the Public Relations Officer at Fort Ord.

We are at war. Keep military information out of your conversation."

Handsome posters with the admonition "Keep Military Information Out of Your Conversation" were furnished at cost to local Chambers of Commerce, which distributed them to business establishments in the communities near Fort Ord. In addition the public relations officer outlined the campaign to Chamber secretaries and, in some cases, to membership meetings.

Since most public conversations take place in bars, restaurants, and beauty parlors, a small army of bartenders and waitresses was enlisted in the "Zip Your Lip" drive. They were asked to keep their ears open for discussion of military topics, and to take steps to stop it. Newspapers carried picture stories showing how information might spread from these public places.

Signs reading "Keep Military Matters Out of Your Conversation" have been posted in every telephone booth at Fort Ord. Western Union and Postal Telegraph installed a form of "voluntary suggested censorship" in the Monterey Peninsula area. A telegraph clerk who spots military information in a message asks the sender if he wouldn't like to delete that part. So far no one—soldier or civilian—has refused to cooperate. (Before the campaign 5,000 telegrams were sent out in one day, containing the information that the Fort had been "alerted.") If anyone should refuse to delete the military facts, the clerks are instructed to report him to the post intelligence officer.

IMPRESSED with these results, the public information committee of the State Defense Council, with the aid of the Fort Ord public relations office, prepared an outline for a statewide campaign that is now receiving serious consideration. This outline might well serve as a model for the other forty-seven states in blanketing the nation with silence concerning matters vital to its security. Briefly the plan is for the campaign to originate with the State Defense Council, but to operate through the local defense councils in order to bring it close to the average citizen. In addition to regular spot announcements, radio dramatizations, and radio contests for slogans, with war savings bonds as prizes, would be tremendously effective. The schools, movies, posters, stickers, buttons, and many other devices could be used.

"Zip Your Lip" has the advantage of appealing to the public's imagination as well as to its patriotism. It also gives the participants a feeling of personal responsibility which is invaluable for national morale.

TOM CULLEN.



# NEW MASSES

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## Books in the Front Lines

PROBABLY no previous gathering of members of the book industry equalled in importance the Book Mobilization Conference which concluded its sessions last week with a public meeting. For the aim of the conferees was to turn books and book publishing into war weapons. The personnel of the conference was, of course, the key to its success. There were writers and critics, publishers and editors, promotion and production people, booksellers and library representatives, office workers and men from the shipping rooms. Anyone acquainted with the book trade, where the division of labor introduces false and unfortunate distinctions between categories of workers, will see that a tremendous step forward has been taken.

This was reflected in the realistic character of the decisions made by the conferees. They adopted resolutions in support of the President's seven-point anti-inflation program and the immediate opening of the second front. Stressing the need for national unity, they pledged themselves to fight against religious and racial discrimination. They promised to make every effort to eliminate wage differentials which operate to the disadvantage of women in the industry.

Each group of workers also made specific practical recommendations to be carried out by its section of the trade. Editors urged the publication of inexpensive books, pamphlets, and reprints in large quantities. They suggested the government coordination of all publishing to prevent duplication, and strict checking of factual accuracy in all writings on the war. Resolving to do all they could to encourage the writing and reading of works conducive to national morale, they planned to try to prevent the publication of books tending to disrupt unity. Special attention was given to the writing of books for children which would give them a sense of personal security and yet teach them something of the meaning of the war.

Writers spoke of the work done through the agency of the Writers War Board in preparing articles, stories, skits, and radio programs. Booksellers and promotion people suggested devices for attracting readers to the more important books dealing with the war. Among these is a project for a Victory Book

of the Month which would be given the widest publicity by all dealers and librarians.

An excellent report on the conservation of vital war materials was presented by a production representative, who proposed that all book specifications be standardized for the duration. The shipping men had equally good ideas on rationalizing deliveries and binding and to give more employment to local labor. Office workers described their manifold civilian defense activities, which have been most highly organized in the union shops.

A continuations committee was set up to organize the carrying out of the decisions of the conference. There is no doubt but that the work of this committee will be felt in every section of the book trade as a strong practical force for victory. All interested persons are urged to get in touch with the committee, through the Book and Magazine Union, which deserves highest praise for its sponsorship and direction of the conference.

## Question for Elmer Davis

IF THE New York *World-Telegram* (Scripps-Howard) has correctly quoted Elmer Davis, chief of the Office of War Information, Mr. Davis is for barring any Communists or "fellow travelers" from government service. According to the story in the *World-Telegram*—which the OWI director has not yet denied—Mr. Davis bases his policy on the erroneous presumption that Communists give their first loyalty to a "foreign government." All of which is a little surprising, coming from a man with a highly responsible post in an administration which is out to beat the Axis—all the more surprising in view of Mr. Davis' particular position. For his job, first of all, calls for an acquaintance with Axis propaganda and devising means to combat it. Surely the OWI chief must know what appalling use Hitler has made of the "Communist" bugaboo. No one, of course, would accuse Elmer Davis of following a similar line, of intentionally furthering Hitler's game. Yet the truth is that such statements do tend to further it, by turning people's attention to a mythical enemy and by barring the services of men and women who are intensely desirous of contributing as much as possible to the war effort. In China, in republican Spain, in other

nations that have engaged in long conflict with the Axis, it has been found that when Communists are permitted to participate fully in the common fight, that fight is very perceptibly strengthened. Recent reports from Canada and India indicate a growing awareness of this fact.

As it is, too many competent, industrious progressives have been removed from service in Washington on Red-baiting charges. This in itself is a violation of Civil Service Commission rules, as is pointed out by the July Monthly Bulletin of the International Juridical Association. For the Commission provides that no person shall be removed except "for such cause as will promote the efficiency of the service." So far from promoting efficiency, Red-baiting in any form inevitably leads to disorder, insecurity, lessened morale. The OWI faces some highly important and difficult duties; it would be extremely unfortunate to weaken its own strength by any species of witch-hunting.

## New York's Election Campaign

NEW YORK gubernatorial elections have always had an important place in the national political scene, and more so this year than for many decades. Now that Sen. James Mead has entered the race, with President Roosevelt's backing, the issue is sharply clear; a win-the-war policy versus defeatism; unity versus factionalism; the pro-labor forces versus labor haters. Mead is opposed for the Democratic nomination by Atty. Gen. John Bennett; whoever wins that nomination will most likely be opposed by Thomas E. Dewey, Republican.

A glance at the persons and groups backing Bennett and Dewey is very revealing. Dewey, as we have said before, is picked by the defeatist New York *Daily News* to "save democracy" from Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944. Bennett is sponsored by James A. Farley, who soured on the administration some time ago. He is also approved by Westbrook Pegler, who has let the kitty out of the sack as far as Bennett's "liberalism" is concerned: "... he is not a New Dealer," Pegler admiringly wrote on July 22, adding that if Bennett and Dewey were nominated there would probably be a "reaction against" labor unions—which, of course, is just fine by the wild-eyed Mr. Pegler. William Griffin, publisher of the New York *Enquirer*, who was recently indicted by a federal grand jury on sedition charges, is another Bennett booster. It is interesting to note that some of the same groups which have plumped for Tom Dewey are also begging for Bennett as against Senator Mead. Their slogan, apparently, is "Any thing but Mead"—which might read, "Any thing but a Roosevelt man."

Backing Mead thus far is a healthy coa-