

M2020

WORLD WAR II HISTORICAL STUDIES MADE BY
THE BUREAU OF THE BUDGET, 1943-1946

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INTRODUCTION

On the single roll of this microfilm publication, M2020, are reproduced 18 historical studies written from 1943 to 1946 by Harold Foote Gosnell of the War Records Section of the Bureau of the Budget. These records are part of the Records of the Office of Management and Budget, Record Group (RG) 51.

Background

The Bureau of the Budget (BOB) was established in the Department of the Treasury by an act of June 10, 1921 (42 Stat. 20), and was under the immediate direction of the President. It was transferred to the Executive Office of the President by Reorganization Plan No. I, effective July 1, 1939. BOB was renamed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1970, effective July 1, 1970.

On August 4, 1941, BOB established within the Division of Administrative Management a small project entitled "Administrative History of Defense Organization," the purpose of which was to collect and analyze materials within the Bureau and in various other Federal agencies on the administrative history of the emergency defense program. This project received encouragement from the President, who, in a March 4, 1942, letter to BOB's Director, suggested that the Bureau keep a record of its wartime administrative experience and urged other agencies to do likewise. On March 22, 1942, the project was transformed into the Committee on War Records Section, the purpose of which was to carry out the President's suggestion. In 1943 its name was shortened to War Records Section, and on June 30, 1946, it was abolished.

The section assembled records dealing with government war activities from various divisions of the Bureau; made copies of relevant documents of other agencies; interviewed government officials for information about the war program and prepared reports on these interviews; and wrote reports on the administrative experience of the government in various fields of war-related activity. These included the war information program; wartime control of power and fuel supplies; price control and wage stabilization; the shipping and transportation program; regulation of labor and manpower; fiscal management and war finance; civilian defense, welfare, and housing programs; wartime food administration; international activities; and war production, demobilization, and reconversion. These studies were the basis for the Bureau's general administrative history of the government during the war, *The United States at War: Development and Administration of the War Program by the Federal Government* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), which was prepared by the section.

Records Description

The historical studies reproduced in this microfilm are Units 155 to 171 of the General Records of the War Records Section, BOB Series 41.3.

The studies describe the issues and problems encountered by the Federal Government in establishing temporary wartime agencies responsible for certain intelligence-gathering activities and for the development and dissemination of materials intended to shape public opinion, maintain morale, and generally further the war effort on the home front.

The agencies studied include the Division of Information of the Office for Emergency Management of the War Production Board, Coordinator of Information, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service of the Federal Communications Commission, and the Offices of Censorship, Civilian Defense, Facts and Figures, Government Reports, Price Administration, Strategic Services, and War Information. Persons mentioned in the reports include:

Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress, concurrently served as Director of the Office of Facts and Figures and later as the Assistant Director of the Office of War Administration;

Robert Sherwood, playwright, head of the Office of Foreign Information Service Branch of the Office of the Coordinator of Information;

Harold Lasswell, psychologist, pioneer in the study of propaganda techniques, worked on the Study of Wartime Communications at the Library of Congress;

William Donovan, Director, Office of Strategic Services, previously the Coordinator of Information;

Elmer Davis, broadcaster, Director of the Office of War Information;

Nelson Rockefeller, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs;

Gardner Cowles, publisher, Director, Domestic Operations Branch of the Office of War Information; and

Donald Nelson, Director of the War Production Board.

The studies provide valuable insights into the problems inherent in establishing and operating agencies of this kind, including the difficulties encountered in developing a clearly defined statement of the agencies' missions and the national, and sometimes international, areas in which they were to

function. Other problems relate to staffing levels, locating appropriate personnel, and obtaining adequate funding. The studies describe many instances of interagency competition and "turf protection."

In addition to agency histories, studies include discussions of the generation of domestic propaganda, censorship during national emergencies, the wisdom of centralizing management of public information, and the role of the Federal Government in influencing public opinion. There is also information on the development of public opinion measurement techniques, the direction of propaganda toward particular ethnic groups, and problems of demobilization as it affected these agencies.

The final file, Unit 171, is an overview and summary of the preceding files, with emphasis on the years 1940-42.

For further information about World War II civilian agencies and their activities and records, see *Federal Records of World War II, Volume I, Civilian Agencies*, National Archives Publication No. 51-7 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950).

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