Consumptionism is the name given to the new doctrine; and it is admitted today to be the greatest idea that America has to give to the world; the idea that workmen and masses be looked upon not simply as workers and producers, but as *consumers*. . . . Pay them more, sell them more, prosper more is the equation.

—MRS. CHRISTINE FREDERICK,
Selling Mrs. Consumer (1929)

1 "Shorter hours, higher wages . . ."

In 1910, Henry Ford instituted the "line production system" for "maximum production economy" in his Highland Park, Michigan, plant.[1] The innovation, though in many ways unsophisticated, and hardly educated as to its own implications, was the beginning of a momentous transformation in America's capacity to produce. In quantitative terms, the change was staggering. On the 1910 line, the time required to assemble a chassis was twelve hours and twenty-eight minutes. "By spring of 1914, the Highland Park plant was turning out over 1,000 vehicles a day, and the average labor time for assembling a chassis had dropped to one hour and thirty-three minutes."[2]

Mass production was a way of making production more economical. Through his use of the assembly line, Ford was able to utilize "expensive, single-purpose" machinery along with "quickly trained, single-purpose" workmen to make a single-model, inexpensive automobile at a rate which, with increasing sophistication,

continued to dwarf not only the production levels of premassified industry, but the output of less refined mass production systems.[3]

By the 1920s, interest in and employment of the industrial potential of mass production extended far beyond the automobile industry. In recognition of such industrial developments, the United States Special Census of 1921 and 1923 offered a study of productive capacity[4] which was one of the first general discussions of its kind.[5] Consumer goods manufacturers were coming to recognize that mass production and mass distribution were "necessary" steps toward survival in a competitive market. Edward Filene, of the Boston department store family, a businessman founder of the consumer union movement, articulated the competitive compulsion of mass production. Competition, said Filene, "will compel us to Fordize American business and industry."[6]

And yet, what Filene and others meant by "Fordizing" American industry transcended the myopic vision of Henry Ford. While Ford stubbornly held to the notion that "the work and the work *alone* controls us;"[7] others in the automobile industry[8] and, (for our purposes) more importantly, ideologues of mass industry outside of the auto industry viewed the strategy of production in far broader social terms. Before mass production, industry had produced for a limited, largely middle- and upper-class market. With a burgeoning productive capacity, industry now required an equivalent increase in potential consumers of its goods. "Scientific production promised to make the conventional notion of the self-reliant producer/consumer anachronistic."[9]

The mechanism of mass production could not function unless markets became more dynamic, growing horizontally (nationally), vertically (into social classes

not previously among the consumers) and ideologically. Now men and women had to be habituated to respond to the demands of the productive machinery. The corollary to a freely growing system of goods production was a "systematic, nationwide plan . . . to endow the masses with more buying power," a freely growing system of consumer production.[10] The modern mass producer could not depend upon an elite market to respond to his productive capacity. From a dependence upon local markets or localized markets scattered nationally,[11] the manufacturer was forced to "count on the whole United States if he [was] . . . going to manufacture a large enough quantity of goods to reduce the cost to the point where he [could] . . . compete with other manufacturers of the same goods"[12] and subsequently distribute his mass produced wares more efficiently and profitably. He was required to create an ideological bridge across traditional social gaps—region, taste, need and class—which would narrow prejudices in his favor.

Considering the quantitative possibilities of mass production, the question of "national markets" became one of qualitatively changing the nature of the American buying public. In response to the exigencies of the productive system of the twentieth century, excessiveness replaced thrift as a social value. It became imperative to invest the laborer with a financial power and a psychic desire to consume.

By the end of the depression of 1921, "productive machinery was so effective that even more so than before much greater markets were absolutely necessary than those provided by the existing public buying power."[13] As the question of expanding old and creating new markets became a function of the massification of industry, foresighted businessmen began to see the necessity of organizing their businesses not merely around the production of goods, but around the cre-

ation of a buying public. "The changes that we shall be obliged to make in production," noted Filene, "will lead to pretty thorough overhauling of our machinery and methods of distribution, and, in the end, both the quantity and quality of consumption will be dictated by them."[14] As the "twentieth-century industrialist . . . realized to a greater extent than did his predecessors, that he must understand the living world contained by his factory,"[15] so too did he realize that he must understand and manipulate, as part of his productive apparatus, the total world occupied by his workers. The necessity to "influence human conduct," the knowledge that goods production meant social production, encoded within the rhetoric of some businessmen a revealing idiom; "human conduct" or the "consumer's dollar" became equivalent to industrial discoveries, more valuable to manufacturing "than the uses of electricity or steel."[16] Within an ideal of a "scientifically" managed industry, raw materials and consumers were both viewed as malleable. They both would have to be shaped by the demands of the production line, pecuniary interests, and the newly emergent managerial tools of capital.

As capitalism became characterized by mass production and the subsequent need for mass distribution, traditional expedients for the real or attempted manipulation of labor were transformed. While the nineteenth-century industrialist coerced labor (both on and off the job) to serve as the "wheelhorse" of industry, modernizing capitalism sought to change "wheelhorse" to "worker" and "worker" to "consumer."[17]

For the workers, the movement toward mass production had severely changed the character of labor. The worker had become a decreasingly "significant" unit of production within the modern manufacturing process. "The man who had been the more or less

creative maker of the whole of an article became the tender of a machine that made only one small part of the article."[18] The time required to teach the worker the "adept performance" of his "operation on assembly work" was a matter of a few hours.[19] This development had significant repercussions both in terms of the way in which a laborer viewed his proletarian status and in terms of the manufacturer's need to mass distribute the mountainous fruits of mass production. The two phenomena merged in the redefinition of the proletarian status. While mass production defined labor's work in terms of monotony and rationalized its product to a fragment, some businessmen spoke of "economic freedom" or "industrial democracy"[20] as the blessing promised the worker by modern production methods. Yet the "freedom" and "democracy" offered by mass industry stopped short of a freedom to define the uses or to rearrange the relationships of production. "The industrial democracy I am discussing," Filene assured those who might fear its anticapitalist implications, "has nothing to do with the Cubist politics of class revolution."[21] What was meant, rather, was that modern industrial production required that workers be free to "cultivate themselves" among the uncontestable fruits of the new industrial cornucopia.

The endowment of the masses with "industrial democracy" was seen as a complex and involving process. Their traditional role in capitalism had afforded them neither the cash nor the conviction to be so "democratized." It was imperative that the worker "desire a larger share in the mental and spiritual satisfactions of the property of his daily job much more than . . . *a larger share in the management of the enterprise which furnishes that job.*"[22]

Not only was this alleged democracy designed to define the modern worker as a smoothly running unit

of industrial production, it also tended to define protest and proletarian unrest in terms of the desire to consume, making these profitable as well. By the demand of workers for the right to be better consumers, the aspirations of labor would be profitably coordinated with the aspirations of capital. Such convictions implicitly attempted to divest protest of its anticapitalist content. Modern labor protest should have no basis in class antagonism.[23]

By the twenties, the ideological vanguard of the business community saw the need to endow the masses with what the economic historian Norman Ware has called the money, commodity, and psychic wages (satisfactions) correlative and responsive to the route of industrial capitalism.[24] There was a dramatic movement toward objective conditions which would make mass consumption feasible: higher wages and shorter hours. Giving official sanction to such visions, Herbert Hoover noted that "High wages [are the] . . . very essence of great production."[25] In 1923, Julius Barnes, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, spoke of the need to *prevent* the overconcentration of wealth, which threatened the development of a "broad purchasing market necessary to absorb our production."[26] Certainly the movement to higher wages preceded the twenties, but it is mainly in the twenties that this movement became linked to a general strategy to consumerize the worker. As early as 1914, Henry Ford had instituted the five-dollar work-day wage, but his innovation coexisted with a nineteenth-century Protestant value system which the worker was expected to maintain.[27] This system significantly clashed with the "economic freedom" that, out of necessity, attempted to subvert the moderation earlier valued for the masses.

The question of shorter hours was also tantamount to offering labor the "chance" to expand the consumer

market. And yet, this notion of "chance," like the notions of "industrial democracy" and "economic freedom," were subterfuges in so much as these alleged freedoms and choices meant merely a transformed version of capitalism's incessant need to mold a work force in its own image. "As modern industry . . . [was] geared to mass production, time out for mass consumption becomes as much a necessity as time in for production."[28] The shortening of hours was seen as a qualitative as well as quantitative change in the worker's life, without significantly altering his relation to power over the uses and means of production. In addition to increasing the amount of leisure, it was hoped that shorter hours would productively determine "to some extent, the use of leisure and consumption. . . ."[29] Shorter hours and higher wages were seen as a first step in a broader offensive against notions of thrift and an attempt to habituate a national population to the exigencies of mass production. A capitalism that had previously required the worker to "live, move, and . . . [have] . . . his being *there on the job*"[30] was now, in some industries, trying to undo such notions. Now priorities demanded that the worker spend his wages and leisure time on the consumer market. Realizing that earlier conditions had not been "favorable to such a worker's finding in, say, the sector of his home the sought-for satisfactions of forward movement and distinction," Whiting Williams, personnel director for a steel company and an ideologue of "scientific" management, felt that labor had developed a "suspicion" of such "sought-for satisfactions." Once again linking the rhetoric of freedom to the necessities of capitalism, Filene noted that,

> modern workmen have learned their habits of consumption and their habits of spending (thrift) in the

> school of fatigue, in a time when high prices and relatively low wages have made it necessary to spend all the energies of the body and mind in providing food, clothing and shelter. We have no right to be overcritical of the way they spend a new freedom or a new prosperity until they have had as long a training in the school of freedom.[31]

Within the vision of consumption as a "school of freedom," the entry onto the consumer market was described as a "civilizing" experience. "Civilization" was the expanded cultural world which flowed from capitalism's broad capacity to commodify material resources. The experience of civilization was the cultural world this capacity produced.

And yet the "school of freedom" posed various problems. The democratic terminology within which the profitable vision of consumption was posed did not reveal the social and economic realities that threatened that vision. In terms of economic development, the financial growth of industrial corporations averaged 286 percent between 1922 and 1929. Despite wage hikes and relatively shorter hours in some industries,[32] the average manufacturing wage-earner showed a wage increase of only 14 percent during this same period.[33] The discrepancy between purchasing power and the rate of industrial growth was dealt with in part by the significant development of installment selling[34] which grew as an attempt to bolster "inadequate" markets in the economically depressed years of the early twenties.

Despite the initiation of a corporate credit system which offered consumers supplementary money, the growth of the productive system forced many industrial ideologues to realize the continuous need to habituate people psychically to consumption beyond mere changes in the productive order which they inhabited.

2 Mobilizing the Instincts

> The man with the proper imagination is able to conceive of any commodity in such a way that it becomes an object of emotion to him and to those to whom he imparts his picture, and hence creates desire rather than a mere feeling of ought.[35]
>
> —WALTER DILL SCOTT,
> *Influencing Men in Business* (1911)

Modern advertising must be seen as a direct response to the needs of mass industrial capitalism. Second in procession after the manager of the production line, noted Whiting Williams, "came the leader who possessed the ability to develop and direct men's desires and demands in a way to furnish the organized mass sales required for the mass production made possible by the massed dollars."[36] Advertising, as a part of mass distribution within modernizing industries, became a major sector for business investment. Within the automobile industry, initiated by the broad and highly

diversified G.M. oligopoly, distribution came to account for about one half of that investment. Among producers of smaller consumer goods, the percentage of capital devoted to product proliferation was often greater.[37]

In the 1920s, advertising played a role of growing significance in industry's attempt to develop a continually responsive consumer market. Although committed national corporations saw advertising as an invaluable component of critical economic planning,[38] its acceptance was hardly universal. In its early days the mass advertising industry that developed in concert with the mass needs of industrial corporations continually had to sell itself to industry. Between 1918 and 1923, a greater percentage of articles in the advertising trade journal, *Printers' Ink*, were devoted to ways of convincing "ancient" corporations that advertising was a given of modern industrialism than were devoted to advertising and merchandising techniques. During the 1920s, however, advertising grew to the dimensions of a major industry. In 1918, total gross advertising revenues in general and farm magazines was $58.5 million. By 1920 the gross had reached $129.5 million; and by 1929, $196.3 million. Such figures do not include newspaper revenues or, more significantly, direct-to-buyer advertising, which still comprised a major, though declining, sector of the industry.

In an address to the American Association of Advertising Agencies on October 27, 1926, Calvin Coolidge noted that the industry now required "for its maintenance, investments of great capital, the occupation of large areas of floor space, the employment of an enormous number of people."[39] The production line had insured the efficient creation of vast quantities of consumer goods; now ad men spoke of their product as "business insurance"[40] for profitable and efficient distribution of these goods. While line management tended to the process of goods production, social management (advertisers) hoped to make the cultural milieu of capitalism as efficient as line management had made production. Their task was couched in terms of a secular religion for which the advertisers sought adherents. Calvin Coolidge, applauding this new clericism, noted that "advertising ministers to the spiritual side of trade."[41]

Advertising offered itself as a means of efficiently creating consumers and as a way of homogeneously "controlling the consumption of a product."[42] Although many corporations boasted of having attained national markets without the aid of advertising, the trade journal *Printers' Ink* argued that these "phantom national markets" were actually inefficient, unpredictable and scattered agglomerations of heterogeneous local markets.[43] The significance of the notion of efficiency in the creation of consumers lies in the fact that the modern advertising industry, like the modern manufacturing plant, was an agent of consolidated and multi-leveled commerce. As Ford's assembly line utilized "expensive single-purpose machinery" to produce automobiles inexpensively and at a rate that dwarfed traditional methods, the costly machinery of advertising that Coolidge had described set out to produce consumers, likewise inexpensively and at a rate that dwarfed traditional methods. To create consumers efficiently the advertising industry had to develop universal notions of what makes people respond, going beyond the "horse sense" psychology that had characterized the earlier industry.[44] Such general conceptions of human instinct promised to provide ways of reaching a mass audience via a universal appeal. Considering the task of having to build a mass ad industry to attend to the needs of mass

production, the ad men welcomed the work of psychologists in the articulation of these general conceptions.[45]

The vanguard of the business community found the social psychology of such men as Floyd Henry Allport extremely useful in giving an ideological cohesion to much of what one sees in the advertising of the twenties.[46] Explicating his notion of the way in which man develops a sense of himself from infancy, Allport asserted that "our consciousness of ourselves is largely a reflection of the consciousness which others have of us. . . . My idea of myself is rather my own idea of my neighbor's view of me."[47] This notion of the individual as the object of continual and harsh social scrutiny underscored the argument of much of the ad texts of the decade.

Whether or not the general conception of "self" as propounded by Floyd Henry Allport had a direct bearing on the *Weltanschauung* held by advertising in the 1920s is not clear. It was generally conceded, however, that a "knowledge of people—human nature"[48]—was as necessary a constituent of social production as the line manager's knowledge of his raw materials was to goods production.

While agreeing that "human nature is more difficult to control than material nature,"[49] ad men spoke in specific terms of "human instincts" which if properly understood could induce people "to buy a given product if it was scientifically presented. If advertising copy appealed to the right instincts, the urge to buy would surely be excited."[50] The utilitarian value of a product or the traditional notion of mechanical quality were no longer sufficient inducements to move merchandise at the necessary rate and volume required by mass production.

Such traditional appeals would not change the disposition of potential markets toward consumption of

given products. Instead each product would be offered in isolation, not in terms of the nature of the consumer, but through an argument based on the intrinsic qualities of the item itself.

The advertisers were concerned with effecting a self-conscious change in the psychic economy, which could not come about if they spent all their time talking about a product and none talking about the "reader." Advertising literature, following the advent of mass production methods, increasingly spoke in terms of appeals to instinct. Anticipating later implementation, by 1911, Walter Dill Scott, psychologist/author of *Influencing Men in Business,* noted that "goods offered as means of gaining social prestige make their appeals to one of the most profound of the human instincts."[51] Yet the instinct for "social prestige," as well as others of a broad "constellation"[52] of instincts, was channeled into the terms of the productive system. The use value of "prestige," of "beauty," of "acquisition," of "self-adornment," and of "play" were all placed in the service of advertising's basic purpose—to provide effective mass distribution of products. Carl A. Naether, an advocate of advertising for women, demonstrated how the link might be effected between "instinct" and mass sales.

> An attractive girl admiring a string of costly pearls just presented to her would in no few cases make the one seeing her in an advertisement exclaim: "I wish that *I, too,* might have a set of these pearls and so enhance my personal appearance." Such and similar longings are merely expressions of real or fancied need for what is advertised.[53]

The creation of "fancied need" was crucial to the modern advertiser. The transcendence of traditional consumer markets and buying habits required people to

buy, not to satisfy their own fundamental needs, but rather to satisfy the real, historic needs of capitalist productive machinery. Advertising was a way of making people put time and energy into what Calvin Coolidge referred to as their "education"[54] to production. The investment of time and energy in deliberation over an advertisement, as described by Scott,[55] enacted in microcosm the commitment of one's total time and energy to consumption. Advertising demanded but a momentary participation in the logic of consumption. Yet hopefully that moment would be expanded into a life style by its educational value. A given ad asked not only that an individual buy its product, but that he experience a self-conscious perspective that he had previously been socially and psychically denied. By that perspective, he could ameliorate social and personal frustrations through access to the marketplace.

In light of such notions as Allport's "social self" and other self-objectifying visions of popularity and success,[56] a new cultural logic was projected by advertising beyond the strictly pecuniary one of creating the desire to consume. The social perception was one in which people ameliorated the negative condition of social objectification through consumption—material objectification. The negative condition was portrayed as social failure derived from continual public scrutiny. The positive goal emanated from one's *modern* decision to armor himself against such scrutiny with the accumulated "benefits" of industrial production. Social responsibility and social self-preservation were being correlated to an allegedly existential decision that one made to present a mass-produced public face. Man, traditionally seen as exemplary of God's perfect product, was now hardly viable in comparison with the man-made products of industrial expertise. The elevation of man's

works in the cosmos which had underlined the half-way covenant among New England Puritans was now being secularized into the realm of mass social production. It was felt that capitalism, through an appeal to instincts—ultimately feelings of social insecurity—could habituate men and women to consumptive life.[57] Such social production of consumers represented a shift in social and political priorities which has since characterized much of the "life" of American industrial capitalism. The functional goal of national advertising was the creation of desires and habits. In tune with the need for mass distribution that accompanied the development of mass production capabilities, advertising was trying to produce in readers personal needs which would dependently fluctuate with the expanding marketplace.

Exposing an affirmative vision of capitalist production, Calvin Coolidge reassured the members of the ad industry in 1926 that "rightfully applied, it [advertising] is the method by which the desire is created for better things."[58] The nature of this desire, and not incidentally the nature of capitalism, required an unquestioning attitude toward the uses of production. The use of psychological methods, therefore, attempted to turn the consumer's critical functions away from the product and toward himself. The determining factor for buying was self-critical and ideally ignored the intrinsic worth of the product. The Lynds, in their study, *Middletown*, noted that unlike ads of a generation before, modern advertising was

> concentrating increasingly upon a type of copy aiming to make the reader emotionally uneasy, to bludgeon him with the fact that decent people don't live the way he does. . . . This copy points an accusing finger at the stenographer as she reads her motion picture magazine and makes her acutely conscious of her

> unpolished finger nails . . . and sends the housewife peering anxiously into the mirror to see if her wrinkles look like those that made Mrs. X in the advertisement "old at thirty-five" because she did not have a Leisure Hour electric washer.[59]

Advertising hoped to elicit the "instinctual" anxieties of social intercourse. Cutex Hand Preparations made of well-tended hands an armor against failure. Hoping to prepare the psyche for such an argument, Cutex advertisements declared in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1920:

> You will be amazed to find how many times in one day people glance at your nails. At each glance a judgment is made. . . . Indeed some people make a practice of basing their estimate of a new acquaintance largely upon this one detail.

Even those whose physical appearances were marketably "safe," who appeared to be "the picture of health," were warned of the inscrutable perils with which they traveled. Listerine was offered as an agent to militate against "The Hidden Wells of Poison" that lurk and conspire against the "program[s] of pleasure" of even the most beautiful women.

The Lynds saw advertising "and other channels of increased cultural diffusion from without . . . [as] rapidly changing habits of thought as to what things are essential to living and multiplying optional occasions for spending money."[60] The critical analysis offered by the Lynds found unwitting support in predominant advertising theory. It was recognized that in order to get people to consume and, more importantly, to keep them consuming, it was more efficient to endow them with a critical self-consciousness in tune with the "solutions" of the marketplace than to fragmentarily

argue for products on their own merit. Writing in *Printers' Ink*, Frederick P. Anderson spoke of the industry's conscious attempt to direct man's critical faculties against himself or his environment, "to make him self-conscious about matter of course things such as enlarged nose pores, bad breath. . . ."[61]

In mass advertising, the consciousness of a selling point was precisely the theorized "self-consciousness" of the modern consumer which had occasioned the Lynds' remarks.[62] This consumer self-consciousness was clearly identifiable with the continuous need for product proliferation that informed modern industry. Linking the theories of "self-consciousness" to the exigencies of capitalism, one writer in *Printers' Ink* commented that "advertising helps to keep the masses dissatisfied with their mode of life, discontented with *ugly things* around them. Satisfied customers are not as profitable as discontented ones."[63]

3 Advertising: Civilizing the *Self*

In his sympathetic book on the *History and Development of Advertising*, Frank Presbrey articulated the conception of a predictable, buying, national population in proud and patriotic terms. "To National Advertising," noted Presbrey, "has recently been attributed most of the growth of a national homogeneity in our people, a uniformity of ideas which, despite the mixture of races, is found to be greater here than in European countries whose population is made up almost wholly of people of one race and would seem easier to nationalize in all respects."[64] Presbrey's conception of "national homogeneity" was a translucent reference to what Calvin Coolidge saw as "the enormous capacity for consumption of all kinds of commodities which characterizes our country."[65]

The idea that advertising was producing a homogeneous national character was likened within the trade as a "civilizing influence comparable in its cultural effects to those of other great epoch-making developments in

history."[66] Yet not all of the conceptions of advertising were expressed in such epic and transhistorical terminology. Sensitive to the political and economic context of such notions as "civilizing," "national homogeneity" and "capacity for consumption," William Allen White bridged the gap between "civilization" and civil society, noting that modern advertising was particularly a formation of advanced capitalist production. Aiming his critique at internal and external "revolutionist" threats to capitalism, White turned contemporary conceptions of revolution on their head. Reasserting the efficacy of the American Revolutionary tradition, he argued that advertising men were the true "revolutionists." Juxtaposing the consumer market to revolution of a socialistic variety, White presented a satirical political strategy to halt the "golden quest" for consumer goods. "I would cut out the advertising and fill the editorial and news pages with material supplied by communists and reds. That would stop buying—distribution of things. It would bring an impasse in civilization, which would immediately begin to decay."[67] Identifying ad men with the integrity and survival of the American heritage, White numbered advertising among our sacred cultural institutions.

Through advertising, then, consumption took on a clearly cultural tone. Within governmental and business rhetoric, consumption assumed an ideological veil of nationalism and democratic lingo. The mass "American type," which defined unity on the bases of common ethnicity, language, class or literature, was ostensibly born out of common desires—mass responses to the demands of capitalist production. Mass industry, requiring a corresponding mass individual, cryptically named him "Civilized American" and implicated his national heritage in the marketplace. By defining himself and his desires in terms of the good of capitalist

production, the worker would implicitly accept the foundations of modern industrial life. By transforming the notion of "class" into "mass," business hoped to create an "individual" who could locate his needs and frustrations in terms of the consumption of goods rather than the quality and content of his life (work).

Advertisements aimed at transforming pockets of resistance contained the double purpose of sales and "civilization." Resistance to the "universal" appeals of modern advertising was often dealt with in racial or national terms. In an article referring to immigrant readers of the domestic foreign language press, a writer in *Printers' Ink* noted that these *less American* elements of the population had not yet been sophisticated to the methods of modern advertising. While other Americans were portrayed as responding to appeals to universal instinct, the author noted that "Swedes and Germans . . . study the most minute detail of anything they consider buying."[68] It was felt that a particular form of advertising had to be developed to temporarily accommodate immigrant and other defined resistance to nationalization. While it was suggested that for immediate sales, ads could be written offering extensive proof of a product's intrinsic worth, other forms of advertising assumed the task of the "democratization" which Edward Filene had exalted. "Antidote advertising" and other, less theoretical tactics were designed to repudiate antique beliefs which had no place in *the social style* of modern industrial life. Often, such ads were geared to make people ashamed of their origins and, consequently, the habits and practices that betrayed them as alien. The Sherwin Cody School of English advertised that a less-than-perfect mastery of the language was *just* cause for social ostracism. "If someone you met for the first time made . . . mistakes in English . . . What would you think of him? Would he inspire your respect? Would

you be inclined to make a friend of him? Would you care to introduce him to others as a close friend of yours?"[69] Rather than arguing that a knowledge of the language would be helpful in conversation and effective communication, the ad argued that being distinguishable from the fabricated national norm, a part of advertising's mythologized homogeneity, was a justification for social failure.

In an attempt to massify men's consumption in step with the requirements of the productive machinery, advertising increasingly offered mass-produced solutions to "instinctive" strivings as well as to the ills of mass society itself. If it was industrial capitalism around which crowded cities were being built and which had spawned much of the danger to health, the frustration, the loneliness and the insecurity of modern industrial life, the advertising of the period denied complicity. Rather, the logic of contemporaneous advertising read, one can free oneself from the ills of modern life by embroiling oneself in the maintenance of that life. A 1924 ad for Pompeian facial products argued that

> unless you are one woman in a thousand, you must use powder and rouge. Modern living has robbed women of much of their natural color . . . taken away the conditions that once gave natural roses in the cheeks.[70]

Within such literature, the term "modern living" was an ahistorical epithet, devoid of the notion "Modern Industrial Society," and teeming with visions of the benefits of civilization which had emerged, one would think, quite apart from the social conditions and relations to which these "benefits" therapeutically addressed themselves. On the printed page, modern living was defined as heated houses, easy transportation, and the

conveniences of the household. To the reader it may have meant something considerably different: light-starved housing, industrial pollution, poor nutrition, boredom. In either sense, modern life offered the same sallow skin and called for a solution through consumption. Within such advertisements, business called for a transformation of the critique of bourgeois society to an implicit commitment to that society.

The advertising which attempted to create the dependable mass of consumers required by modern industry often did so by playing upon the fears and frustrations evoked by mass society—offering mass produced visions of individualism by which people could extricate themselves from the mass. The rationale was simple. If a person was unhappy within mass industrial society, advertising was attempting to put that unhappiness to work in the name of that society.

In an attempt to boost mass sales of soap, the Cleanliness Institute, a cryptic front group for the soap and glycerine producers' association, pushed soap as a "Kit for Climbers" (social, no doubt). The illustration was a multitudinous mountain of men, each climbing over one another to reach the summit. At the top of this indistinguishable mass stood one figure, his arms outstretched toward the sun, whose rays spelled out the words "Heart's Desire." The ad cautioned that "in any path of life, that long way to the top is hard enough—so make the going easier with soap and water." In an attempt to build a responsive mass market, the Cleanliness Institute appealed to what they must have known was a major dissatisfaction with the reality of mass life. Their solution was a sort of mass pseudo-demassification.

A good deal of drug and toilet goods advertising made even more specific references to the quality of industrial life. Appealing to dissatisfaction and insecuri-

ties around the job, certain advertisements not only offered their products as a kind of job insurance, but intimated that through the use of their products one might become a business success—the capitalist notion of individual "self-"fulfillment.

Listerine, whose ads had taken the word *halitosis* out of the inner reaches of the dictionary and placed it on "stage, screen and in the home," offered this anecdote:

> He was conscious that something stood between him and greater business success—between him and greater popularity. Some subtle something he couldn't lay his hands on . . . Finally, one day, it dawned on him . . . the truth that his friends had been too delicate to mention.[71]

When a critical understanding of modern production might have helped many to understand what actually stood "between them and greater business success," this ad attempted to focus man's critique against himself—his body had kept him from happiness. Within the world view of a society which was more and more divorcing men from any notion of craft or from any definable sort of product, it was also logical that "you couldn't blame a man for firing an employee with halitosis to hire one without it." The contingency of a man's job was offered a nonviolent, apolitical solution. If man was the victim of himself, the fruits of mass production were his savior. Ads constantly hammered away at everything that was his own—his bodily functions, his self-esteem—and offered something of theirs as a socially more effective substitute.

In addition to the attempt on the part of advertising to habituate people to buying as a solution to the particular realities of a growing industrial society, ad men presented products as means to what they viewed as instinctual ends. Speaking often to women,[72] ads

offered daintiness, beauty, romance, grace, security and husbands through the use of certain products. Traditional advertising had conceived of these "ideals" as integrants of a Protestant notion of thrift and moderation. The dainty woman, a pillar of sense and temperance within the home, had been characterized as physically divorced from the marketplace, not to mention herself. Increasingly, within the texts of ads in the twenties, these desires are fulfilled in the marketplace. Thrift no longer cohabitates with daintiness, but threatens to prevent it. Within the rhetoric of these ads, the accumulation of various products, each for a separate objectified portion of the body, was equated with the means to success. Correlative to Allport's vision of "social self," advertising offered the next best thing—*a commodity self*—to people who were unhappy or could be convinced that they were unhappy about their lives. Each portion of the body was to be viewed critically, as a *potential* bauble in a successful assemblage. Woodbury's soap was offered as a perfect treatment for the "newly important face of Smart Today;" another product promised to keep teeth white: "A flashing smile is worth more than a good sized bank account. It wins friends." After she has used Caro Cocoanut Oil Shampoo, a dashing gentleman informs the lady, "I'm crazy about your hair. *It's* the most beautiful of any here tonight." Within the vision offered by such ads, not only were social grace and success attainable: they were also defined through the use of specific products. You don't make friends, your smile "wins" them; your embellished hair, and not you, is beautiful. "Smart Today" required one to compete on a social marketplace, though whatever was defined as smart would be gone tomorrow, yielding its momentary, though cataclysmic importance to a newly profitable "Smart Today." As the ads intimated that anything natural about the consumer was worthless

or deplorable, and tried to make him schizophrenically self-conscious of that notion, they offered weapons by which even people with bad breath, enlarged nose pores, corned feet and other such maladies could eclipse themselves and "succeed."

As notions of failure were to be perceived within a style of self-denigrating paranoia, notions of success were likewise portrayed in purely self-involved terms. Though the victorious heroines of cosmetic advertisements always got their man, they did so out of a commodity defined *self-fetishization* which made that man and themselves almost irrelevant to the quality of their victory. Their romantic triumphs were ultimately commercially defined versions of the auto-erotic ones of Alban Berg's prostitute, *Lulu*, who declares that "When I looked at myself in the mirror I wished I were a man—a man married to me." ("*Als ich mich im Spiegel sah hatte ich ein Mann sein wollen . . . mein Mann.*")

During the twenties, civil society was increasingly characterized by mass industrial production. In an attempt to implicate men and women within the efficient process of production, advertising built a vision of culture which bound old notions of Civilization to the new realities of civil society. In what was viewed as their instinctual search for traditional ideals, people were offered a vision of civilized man which was transvaluated in terms of the pecuniary exigencies of society. Within a society that defined real life in terms of the monotonous insecurities of mass production, advertising attempted to create an alternative organization of life which would serve to channel man's desires for self, for social success, for leisure away from himself and his works, and toward a commoditized acceptance of "Civilization."

TWO
The Political Ideology of Consumption

Big business in America is producing what the Socialists held up as their goal: food, shelter and clothing for all.

—LINCOLN STEFFENS (1929)

1 Assembling a New World of Facts

With the wide-scale implementation of mass production in the 1920s, advertising and the ideal of mass consumption were catapulted to the foreground of modern economic planning. In the internal arguments of the business community as well as in their more public expressions, American businessmen celebrated the coming of the new industrial age as one which would accelerate social progress among the masses and at the same time vindicate "the great stream of human selfishness" of which they were an undeniable part.[1] And yet the economic and social presence of a mass industrial machinery was not something that could arouse popular fidelity by virtue of its productive capacity alone. For as an increasingly large fraction of the material world became the domain of American business enterprise, the organization and manipulation of a responsive social context became clearly imperative. Faced on the one hand with the crisis of overproduction which prompted Bernard Baruch to issue the warning

that while "we have learned to create wealth . . . we have not learned to keep that wealth from choking us,"[2] and on the other hand the emergence of tendencies and movements among the working classes which questioned the basis of capitalist wealth *per se*, businessmen sought to utilize their technology for their own political purposes. It became a central function of business to be able to define a social order which would feed and adhere to the demands of the productive process and at the same time absorb, neutralize and contain the transitional impulses of a working class emerging from the unrequited drudgery of nineteenth-century industrialization.

More and more, the language of business expressed the imperative of social and ideological hegemony. Such a development was not without its precedents in American history, or that of other nations, however. John Adams had spoken of the political requirements of industry. "Manufactures cannot live, much less thrive," he cautioned, "without honor, fidelity, punctuality, and private faith, a sacred respect for property, and the moral obligations of promises and contracts."[3] So too is much of American industrial development punctuated by attempts to channel thought and behavior into patterns which fitted the prescribed dimensions of industrial life.[4]

In a nineteenth-century society basically devoted to industrialization and regulating patterns of work, the arena of business manipulation was concerned predominantly with the basics of production. As Paul Nystrom, one of America's first consumer economists, wrote retrospectively of that early era: "under such conditions, society itself becomes industrialized. It develops its own ideals of life and puts its high stamp of approval on such virtues as working efficiency, special working ability,

industry, thrift and sobriety. Respect and honor are paid to the principles of industrialism, and reverence is offered its founders and leaders. The captains of industry become popular heroes. These are the characteristics of a true industrial society, a society in which ideals of production rather than of consumption rule."[5]

With the development of methods of mass production and the expanded notion of markets that this entailed, the ideology of "private faith" to which John Adams had alluded became a matter that extended beyond the strictures of industry and of work. For the "new order" was one which sustained itself not merely around the question of labor fealty to the mechanical process of capitalism, but one which demanded a dedication of *all* social energy to a world being fashioned by industrial technology. It is out of such a modern imperative that Jacques Ellul, critic of technological society, has developed a common conception of *technology* and *technique* as a constellation of devices for the "technical management of physical and social worlds."[6]

By the 1920s businessmen had reached a considerable awareness of the political and social roles that the process of consumption and the advertising that stimulated it must play. Putting aside the buoyant ad rhetoric of progress and beneficence for a moment, *Printers' Ink* put the need for social control in the frankest terms: "modern machinery . . . made it not only possible but imperative that the masses should live lives of comfort and leisure; that the future of business lay in its ability to *manufacture customers* as well as products."[7] Elsewhere the business community was infused with a political messianism which implied that the mere selling of products was no longer an adequate goal of advertising. Writing in the twenties, Walter Pitkin, professor of marketing at the Columbia School of Journalism, spoke

of goods advertising, even sophisticated "national" market goods advertising, as merely an initial step "in a direction toward which we must go a long way further." Even institutional advertising, a public relations scheme which tried to boost a whole sector of industry, did not meet the political demands of mass industrial society. What was necessary, rather, was a broad scaled strategy aimed at selling the way of life determined by a profit-seeking mass-productive machinery. Pitkin ordered a campaign for an entire industrial value system, imploring his colleagues "to go beyond institutional advertising to some new kind of philosophy of life advertising."[8]

Consumerism, the mass participation in the values of the mass-industrial market, thus emerged in the 1920s not as a smooth progression from earlier and less "developed" patterns of consumption, but rather as an aggressive device of corporate survival. Edward Filene, the Boston department store merchant and a man who had developed an international reputation as "the mouthpiece of industrial America,"[9] spoke frankly of the role and purpose of consumerizing the broad American population. The attempt to create a national, unified culture around the social bond of the consumer market was basically a project of broad "social planning."[10] Industry, Filene argued, could "sell to the masses all that it employs the masses to create," but such a development would require a selective education which limited the concept of social change and betterment to those commodified answers rolling off American conveyor belts. "Mass production demands the education of the masses," Filene axiomixed, "the masses must learn to behave like human beings in a mass production world."[11] Such an education, however, was to be one with extremely proscribed horizons. Fearing the implications of the kind of education that might

suggest an adversary relationship between the interests of American workers and those of the captains of industry, Filene presented a vision of education into industrial and social democracy within which the element of conflict was eradicated from the world of *knowledge*. Education, for Filene, became a task of building a culture on the basis of "fact-finding." Just looking at the given "facts" about what is being produced rather than questioning the social bases upon which those facts lay was what modern education should be all about. Education should be a process of acclimating and adjusting the population to that world of *facts*, to make it their own. "The schools do their best to teach patriotism—loyalty to the political state . . ." Filene observed, "But what are the schools doing to interpret the machine civilization" to the citizenry?[12] "The time has come," he argued, "when all our educational institutions . . . must concentrate on the great social task of teaching the masses not what to think but *how to think*, and thus to find out how to behave like human beings in the machine age."[13] (My emphasis.)

The concept of "facts" as the essential world to which a worker should address him or herself is something that bore implications beyond the process of consumption. Although Filene's notion of *fact* was largely circumscribed by the wares of the commodity market, the notion of workers feeling comfortable in a world of fact reflects basic transformations in industrial life that characterize machine production and mass production in particular. As long as the apprentice-craftsman system had endured, earning a living was comprised of both productive activity and the social relations of commerce. Goods were made and sold for individuals, and the relationship between craftsmen and individual purchasers essentially affected the definition

of work. In a highly mechanized machine production, however, where both commercial interchange and the interchange of long-term training had been eradicated, human intercourse had been largely excised from the work routine of laboring classes. Robert and Helen Lynd, in *Middletown*, their 1924 study of Muncie, Indiana, described how the world of people and the world of things had been cleaved from each other in the industrial process:

> Members of the [working class] . . . address their activities in getting their living primarily to *things*, utilizing material tools in the making of things and the performance of services, while members of [the business class] . . . address their activities predominantly to *people* in the selling or promotion of things, services, and ideas.[14]

Presenting "education" as an indoctrination into the world of facts of the marketplace—as opposed to the social relations of production and distribution—was a replication of developments which had shaped patterns of production. Consumption was but a reinforcement of the basic transformation that had increasingly characterized the world of work—a response to *things* rather than *people*, this time extended into daily life and leisure.

Widespread within the socially oriented literature of business in the twenties and thirties is a notion of educating people into an acceptance of the products and aesthetics of a mass-produced culture. Industrial development, then, became far more than a technological process, but also a process of organizing and controlling "long pent-up human impulses" (Filene) in such a way that these impulses might serve to provide social underpinnings to the industrial system.[15] Branding all patterns of life which resisted the domination of culture

by the industrial machinery as "puritanism in consumption," Leverett S. Lyon's 1920s contribution to the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* called for a training in industrial aesthetics to combat traditional patterns of culture. "What is most needed for American consumption," he wrote, "is training in art and taste in a generous consumption of goods, if such there can be. Advertising," he continued, "is the greatest force at work against the traditional economy of an age-long poverty as well as that of our own pioneer period; it is almost the only force at work against puritanism in consumption. It can infuse art into the things of life; and it will [!] . . ."[16]

Yet the argument for "education" that became so frequently heard among businessmen in the 1920s, and grew quite frantic as economic crisis appeared at hand,[17] was one which confronted many varieties of historical resistance. First of all, while the adoption of a consumerized mentality among working people might effect a political loyalty to the capitalistic premises of the industrial system, there was too little materially—during the 1920s—to secure such loyalties. Despite rhetorical calls among business people for "higher wages" as a tactic of social integration, wages among the vast number of working people remained too low and the desire for expanding profits among business too high to create a high level of material participation by workers in the commodity market.

During the 1920s, notes historian Irving Bernstein, wage earners "did not enjoy as great a rise in income as did those in higher brackets."[18] Citing figures worked out in Paul Douglas' 1924 study of "Wages and the Family," Bernstein argues that a majority of American working-class families throughout the twenties failed to earn a living which would make them consumers of any

great amount of goods beyond subsistence.[19] If an "American" standard of consumption required at least $2,000 to $2,400 annual income, as Douglas argued, most wage-earning families (16,354,000 families according to Bernstein's calculations) received less than $2,000 per year. While mass consumption rose steadily throughout the twenties, it did not significantly alter the amount of capital in-flow from working-class sectors of the population. Where consumption rose among workers, it rose largely as a result of installment buying on the one hand (this was also an aspect of middle-class consumption) or the forgoing of one set of goods for another. Regarding the latter, the Lynd's study, *Middletown*, indicates that the widespread consumption of automobiles during the twenties, even among working-class families, was often done at the expense of clothing, food or the mortgaging of family property, where it existed.[20]

Beyond this, and perhaps more important to the consciousness of many, were the indigenous networks of social structure that carried premises and values which generated mistrust or open opposition to the corporate monopolization of culture. Traditional family structures, agricultural life styles, immigrant values which accounted for a vast percentage of the attitudes of American working classes, and the traditional realms of aesthetic expression—all these were historically infused with an agglomeration of self-sufficiency, communitarianism, localized popular culture, thrift and subjective social bonds and experiences that stood, like Indians, on the frontiers of industrial-cultural development. It was these subjective experiences of traditional culture that stood between advancing industrial machinery and the synthesis of a new order of industrial culture. And it was incumbent on industry, in formalizing the new order, to find a means to sacrifice the old. It was within this historical circumstance that the creation of an industrialized *education* into culture took on its political coloration.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the contiguity of industrialization and social control came to the fore in the United States and elsewhere. As Max Horkheimer, a social critic from the Frankfurt School, has noted in discussing monopolizing industrialism: "the rule of economy over all personal relationships, the universal control of commodities over the totality of life" must in the face of historical resistance become "a new and naked form of command and obedience."[21] Much as in the case of totalitarian Nazi Germany which he was addressing himself to, the advance of corporate industrialism required that "the objects of organization [be] . . . disorganized as subjects."[22]

2 Commercializing Expression

In the propagation of an aesthetic of mass industrialism, it was in the realm of artistic creativity itself that the organization of objects and the dissolution of the subject took perhaps its most obvious toll. The business of advertising and marketing was one which drew heavily on creative human resources in order to formulate its product. The utilization of art in business promotion, wrote Walter Dill Scott, must maintain the primacy of profits. "To substitute the standard of the artist for the standard of the capitalist would be impossible in business," he noted decisively. Yet, understanding the ways in which the further use of the aesthetic dimension might enhance the social viability of capitalist mass production and distribution, Scott added that "a harmonious working of the two is [nonetheless] . . . possible."[23]

Not coincidentally, the enormous growth of the advertising industry and the commercialization of art that it entailed took place along with the gradual

depletion and demise of traditional sources and arenas of artistic expression and localized cultures. Artistic patronage, a province of the wealthy since ancient times, now was doled out through the economic avenues provided by advertising and its related industries (packaging for example). The effect on the graphic, literary and performing arts in America was to be monumental.

Newspapers, which throughout the nineteenth century had provided an arena for literary serialization and popular expression and whose diversity had provided for varied audiences, became increasingly commercialized and centralized in their direction. From 1900 through 1930 the number of daily newspapers in America declined steadily if not monumentally.[24] More important, there was an even greater decline in the existence of a diverse press. In 1909–10, 58 percent of American cities had a press that was varied both in ownership and perspective. By 1920, the same percentage represented those cities in which the press was controlled by an information monopoly. By 1930, 80 percent of American cities had given way to a press monopoly.[25] The role and influence of advertising in all of these developments is marked. In the period 1900–1930, national advertising revenues multiplied thirteen fold (from $200 million to $2.6 billion), and it was the periodicals, both the dailies and others, which acted as a major vehicle for this growth.

The immigrant press was particularly hard hit by commercial pressures. While the diversity of immigrant communities in America would have appeared to make the foreign language press an exception to the monopolistic development of American culture, that was hardly the case. In fact, it was within this press that some of

the most naked forms of commercial control were exercised.

The American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers, under the direction of Louis N. Hammerling, was an advertising agency which catered specifically to the immigrant press. The association, formed by a back-room consortium of such corporations as Standard Oil, Consolidated Gas, American Tobacco Company and some members of the Republican National Committee, had first recruited Hammerling in 1909 out of the Wilkes-Barre lumber industry, where he had been an immigrant worker, to run the Republican campaign in the foreign language press.[26] As the head of the advertising association, Hammerling provided ads (both political and consumer) for most of America's non-English-language newspapers, and exerted a vast control over their political and economic orientation. Robert Park, a contemporaneous student of foreign-born communities in America, noted that Hammerling "could give advertising or he could take it away. He could promise the struggling little publisher that he would either make him or break him."[27] Frank Zotti, editor of *Narodni List*, described Hammerling's policy as one which was aimed to "secure patronage of large corporations, and through that patronage to subdue or at least control these smaller newspapers that were barely making an existence; and eventually to put Mr. Hammerling in the position of dictator to the foreign-language press."[28]

Hammerling did not merely feed ads to the non-English American press. Senate investigations into Hammerling's activities revealed that he also fed editorials and news material to these papers and required that they be published without the remuneration usual-

ly paid for advertising. Functioning as a "press bureau," the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers was able to forge a political and social direction which was tantamount to almost total corporate control.[29]

Even after Hammerling was discredited in 1919 for forcing his clients to sign a pro-German "Appeal to Americans" in the early days of World War I and ousted from his position in the Association, the agency maintained its dedication to corporate development and the "Americanization" of immigrants. Under Hammerling's successor, Frances Alice Kellor, the association continued to equate the acceptance of American products with patriotism. Striking out for the destruction of all cultural distinctions within the nation, and dedicated to producing "one people in ideals"[30] through the unification of "racial and native born thought in this country,"[31] Kellor offered the commodity market as a bond which would insure that "the American point of view will prevail."[32]

Writing about the foreign language press in America as "an American institution, an American Advertising Medium, an Americanization Agency," Kellor offered a program for political consolidation:

> National advertising is the great Americanizer.
>
> American ideals and institutions, law, order and prosperity, have not yet been sold to all of our immigrants.
>
> American products and standards of living have not yet been bought by the foreign born in America . . .
>
> If Americans want to combine business and patriotism, they should advertise products, industry and American institutions in the American Foreign-Language press.[33]

Such a policy, argued Kellor, was crucial in order to combat heritages and behavior that were "so different from our own" as to constitute a threat of "action that is inimical to our national purposes, or that interferes with our social machinery."[34]

This centralization of control in the immigrant press is filled with political implications, but for now let it suffice to say that advertising in this press was of no small significance. By 1914, *Printers' Ink* noted that "foreign advertising is now about 20% of all the advertising in newspapers, and is constantly increasing."[35] By 1919, at his own admission,[36] Hammerling was a conduit for 5 percent of the entire national advertising revenues in the United States (around $145 million) and exerted commensurate economic influence in over 700 newspapers throughout the country.[37] Beyond Hammerling's operation, the centralization and commercialization of control was a phenomenon that spanned the widest range of publications, and the long-term effect of such a development on what kinds of creativity received publication and support has undoubtedly left a significant mark on American intellectual and cultural development in the twentieth century.

The relationship that developed between advertising and the whole question of artistic creativity was fundamentally connected to the broader process of consumerization. While advertising attempted to turn people away from traditional life-styles, within the confines of the ad industry itself, the sacrifice of creativity to the authority of commerce was also taking place. The proliferation of artists and writers employed in the ad industry was marked, as was the psychological attrition that they experienced in this association.[38] Artists, often gifted in their sensitivities and sympathies to human frailties, were called upon to use those sensitivities for

manipulation. The result may be seen in the bitter renunciation of modern commerce that marks the writings of ex-ad men Sherwood Anderson, Wallace Stevens, and James Rorty (poet, and later editor of *New Masses*). All three, in their noncommercial writings, indicate the sense of artistic strangulation that capitalistic "patronage" of the arts had produced. Anderson's decrying of commerce as a system which has effected a "dreadful decay of taste, the separation of men from the sense of tools and materials"[39] is only echoed by Rorty's romanticized denunciation of commerce as a world which "is fueled by the organic cultural life which it disintegrates and consumes, but does not restore or replace."[40] While such flailings tend to glamorize preindustrial workmanship, they are nonetheless statements of anguish felt by the artist whose art has been conscripted and deformed.

This crisis in the arts, the emergence of advertising and the commercial mentality as a growing and increasingly exclusive arena for artistic endeavor, was a theme among writers who were not involved in advertising *per se*, but who nevertheless felt the demands of industry closing in on them, forging their profession. Based on real characters, Theodore Dreiser's novel, *The Genius*, dealt with the destruction of a painter (artist Eugene Witla) who found his "success" in the world of advertising as early as 1909. The commercialization of creativity may be found as a theme in the writings of Dos Passos, Randolph Bourne, Gertrude Stein and others. One of the most intense denunciations of the effect of commerce on intellectual life is James Agee's in the opening chapter of his study of southern sharecroppers, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* While ending up with a defense of elite culture against an overcommercialized one, Agee too strikes to the heart of the crisis in creativity:

> . . . the weak in courage are strong in cunning; and one by one, you have absorbed and have captured and dishonored, and have distilled of your deliverers the most ruinous of all your poisons; people hear Beethoven in concert halls or over a bridge game or to relax; Cézannes are hung on walls, reproduced, in natural wood frames; van Gogh is the man who cut off his ear and whose yellows became recently popular in window decoration; Swift loved individuals but hated the human race; Kafka is a fad; Blake is in the Modern Library; Freud is a Modern Library Giant; Dovschenko's *Frontier* is disliked by those who demand that it fit the Eisenstein esthetic; *nobody* reads *Joyce* any more; Céline is a madman who has incurred the hearty dislike of Alfred Kazin, reviewer for the *New York Herald Tribune* book section, and is, moreover, a fascist; I hope I need not mention Jesus Christ, of whom you have managed to make a dirty gentile.[41]

Fearing the fate of all artistic endeavor in the modern world, Agee pleads for his book. "Above all else: in God's name don't think of it as Art."

For many, the conscription of the arts by the industrial machine was a personal crisis. But perhaps more importantly, it represented a broad cultural tendency that was central to the ideology of consumerism—the eradication of indigenous cultural expression and the elevation of the consumer marketplace to the realm of an encompassing "Truth."

3 Advertising's *Truth*

The elevation of the goods and values of mass production to the realm of a *truth* was a primary task among those who sought to educate the masses to the logic of consumerism. Walter Pitkin's desire to create, through advertising, a *philosophy of life*[42] as well as Edward Filene's attempt to characterize the consumer market as *the* world of *facts*[43] are but representative examples of the process which Jung termed the transvaluation of the "word" into a system of "credulity."[44] This attempt to turn modern marketplace precepts into a "universal validity" (Jung) was, especially in the face of traditional cultural attitudes and patterns of consumption, central to the stability and survival of modern industrial capitalism.

Thus the elevation of advertising was significant not so much in terms of what it accepted and defined as reality but more in what it excluded from its reified conception of the world. Max Horkheimer, in his essay "The End of Reason" (1941), argued that the presenta-

tion of modern industrial society as *the world of facts* played a role which turned people away from their own needs, their ability to speculate on the solution of these needs, and ultimately from the notion of self-determination as a *democratic* principle. Appearing to be answering Filene's invocation of "fact-finding" directly, Horkheimer evaluated such principles:

> Today man needs factual knowledge, the automaton ability to react correctly, but he does not need that quiet consideration of diverse possibilities which presupposes the freedom and leisure of choice. . . . In the monopolistic apparatus none possesses that time and range.[45]

Elsewhere, this attack on the gerrymandered reality of industrial capitalism was equally vociferous. In 1921, Hungarian social critic Georg Lukács described this process of reification in telling detail, and here too (as will be demonstrated) the critique seems to answer directly the ideologues of mass consumerism. Writing in *History and Class Consciousness* (1921), Lukács described the obfuscation of social relations by the world of "facts" as follows:

> The essence of commodity-structure . . . is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus takes on a "phantom objectivity," an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.[46]

The thought of American businessmen themselves gave substance to the arguments of the critics that *Truth* and social control were largely interconnected. Within the schema of the businessmen the very notion of truth emanated not from any social values or ethics external

to their business, but was a product of their business. As such, it is not at all surprising that the Progressive era's truth in advertising legislation, enacted in various states in the years following 1910, was not a move by irate citizens to clean up the ad business, but part of a public relations campaign which attempted to legitimize the ad industry's own conception of honesty. Paul Nystrom, the consumer economist, noted approvingly in 1929 that "the movement in the United States for truth in advertising has been sponsored by and promoted largely through advertising men. The International Advertising Association has for years carried on an intensive campaign to eliminate untruthful advertising, as have many local advertising groups. For many years the periodical *Printers' Ink* Weekly has carried on through its columns a promotion of a model statute to secure the elimination of untruthful advertising. The *Printers' Ink* statute has been passed by several of the state legislatures in the United States."[47]

The truth is that the *Printers' Ink* statute was rather soft and had few teeth in it. While making unlawful and punishable as a misdemeanor any ad which "contains any assertion, representation or statement of fact which is untrue, deceptive or misleading," the law was in no way armed to confront the problem of psychological manipulation; nor was it meant to.[48] Daniel Pope, in his unpublished dissertation, *The Development of National Advertising*, has expounded on the ways in which *Printers' Ink* developed a long-term struggle to circumvent the problems raised by consumers over such shucks as patent medicine.[49] Back into the nineteenth century, the magazine's concern with "truth" had been circuitous, and the self-regulation imposed by their model statute was, at best, minimal.

Yet, even as business was legislating itself into legiti-

macy, the campaign belied itself as but one more *sell*. In 1924, as the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World convened its annual convention in Great Britain, it revealingly adopted "Truth in Advertising" as its slogan and a "female form which," according to one participant, "was but scantily clothed in the shining garment of Truth" as its symbolic logos.[50] James Rorty attributed the following axiom to a former colleague: "Always tell the truth. Tell a lot of the truth. Tell a lot more of the truth than anybody expects you to tell. Never tell the whole truth."[51]

Purportedly a device of consumer protection, the installation of truth into advertising's ideological pantheon was one more form of attempted domination—not unfamiliar to students of the "big lie" which was emerging as a political tool elsewhere during these years. Not only was truth to be a guiding principle, but it also was an appeal within the ads themselves. "Gimbels Tells the Whole Truth" began one ad for the New York department store. Then, as if in quick response to the raised eyebrow of a skeptical and undoubtedly experienced reader, the ad attempted to cover up for past transgressions. "For years on end, we at Gimbels have been thinking that we were telling the Truth. . . . But what we have been telling was, so to speak, 'commercial truth!' We would tell you, quite honestly, that a certain pair of curtains had been copied, in design, from a famous model, that the colors were pleasing, that the price was very low. Every word of this was scrupulously true. But we may have failed to say that the curtains would probably fade after one or two seasons of wear."[52] Thus, Gimbels' copywriter provided a context within which the store and the reader shared a common ground—a basic distrust of "commercial truth."

While advertising's claim to the truth may have been shaky, it was this commitment to forging a consumer consciousness based on the "facts" of the marketplace that made ad men assume that the world of the ads would eventually become the common idiom of popular expression. George Phelps, whose advertising firm handled the big Detroit automotive accounts of the twenties, spoke aggressively of how advertising would increasingly define the accepted cultural idiom. "Advertising is a sharp and swiftly acting tool of business, and the only one by which a lone individual can engrave his message on the minds of the masses." Presenting the media as the "cannons" in this business offensive, he argued that modern technology provided a capability to relay information in such a way as to surpass traditional culture in its ability to influence behavior. The media, he contended, "have the capacity to multiply or broadcast impressions, to bombard the public with facts and ideas, to stimulate to action."[53] Through the use of media an image was projected in which people saw themselves held together, solving their life's problems through the benefit of commodities. Forerunners of modern TV ads, films of between one and five reels showing dramas in which given products played the heroic role, were produced by the ad industry. *Blow-out Bill's Busted Romance*, an advertising comedy, portrayed a particular brand of tires as the solution to the insecurities of love. Other films, such as *Sole-Mates*, a shoe comedy; *Candy Courtship* (for Lowney Candy Co.); and *Brushing the Clouds Away* (Fuller Brush), were produced in 1920 and 1921. Here, mass-produced commodities were located securely in daily life and shown to captive audiences in movie theaters along with the regular features.[54]

These attempts to alter the popular idioms of communication and "stimulate" behavior were clearly tied to a widespread program to shape a culture which responded to and communicated through advertising. As people increasingly took on the lingo of advertising, so too would basic social intercourse assume the role of stimulating consumption. In a rare articulation of the ad man's version of the utopian future, Robert Updegraff, writing in the magazine *Advertising and Selling*, postulated the "promise of the next quarter-century":

> . . . having learned the value of advertising as a commercial expression . . ., the world will next turn to advertising to make itself articulate in a broad social way. By 1950 men will have learned to express their ideas, their motives, their experiences, their hopes and ambitions as human beings, and their desires and aspirations as groups, by means of printed or painted advertising, or of messages projected through the air.[55]

Another ad man postulated that in the future "advertising will be attentively studied by the public: and will be read for its own sake."[56]

Phelps, the automobile advertiser, presented an elaborate fantasy of how people around the world would follow and trust the paternalistic suggestions of commercial propaganda:

> In luxurious metropolitan apartments and in the better thatched huts on the banks of the Congo River, people will hear from the lips of the president of Tomorrow's Transportation [a fictitious corporation] the description of its new world-wide air travel service and they will see him as he talks. . . . Furthermore, they will be glad to "listen and look in," for they have learned from experience that the great international broadcasting organization does not make "straight broadcasts" as these plain business announcements without garnishing of entertainment are called, unless they are of broad social importance and promise to be of interest to the international millions. Not that the native of the valley of the Congo, or the native in his chalet in the Swiss Alps recognizes their social importance—he and his wife only know that they find them interesting. . . . They will read of this service in the advertising pages of their local periodicals. They will encounter it in various other media of advertising. When they do they will say to themselves, That is what that man with the kindly face told us about that night on the radio [sic] and they will have a feeling of friendliness toward Tomorrow's Transportation, Inc.[57]

Phelps' future was one in which commercial propaganda—elevated to the level of the only truth available—had infested the entire atmosphere. Within such a vision of the future, the notion of truth was "of interest" to the "citizens of industry," who were not expected to recognize or to particularly care about what was of social importance for them. Only the "great international broadcasting organization" was to determine what was important and what was not. Horkheimer's notion of *information* as discrete from the "consideration of diverse possibilities" finds documentation and fruition in the social framework of advertising's self-proclaimed future.

So, too, the relationship between the mass and "that man with the kindly face" is divested of any locus within the exchange process or the social relations that encompass it. Borne out is Lukács' critique of "phantom objec-

tivity," a presentation of the world which obfuscates the fundamental relations of that world. In presenting a completely authoritarian vision of corporate domination, Phelps adopted a tone which clothed that authority in the garb of patriarchal wisdom. The conception of the future was one in which conflicts between people's needs and corporate development did not occur. Rather, the subjects of industry, be they the inhabitants of "luxurious metropolitan apartments" or the *natives* of the Congo, would passively and happily accept the rule of corporate judgment.

4 Obliterating the Factory

Loss of skills, the deification of the time-clock, the eradication of the work patterns of pre-industrial life, and the abomination of hazardous conditions around the machine—these had been both the characteristics of modern production and the fuel of widespread anticapitalist feeling among those who worked in the factories. Advertising's selective version of *Truth* was being formulated in order to bring about a widespread social dependency on the wares of mass production. Yet the immediate connection with industry that many experienced was the monotony of line production and/or the unsafe and poorly lit factory environment. Such work and working conditions were inextricably bound up in both the intensification of production and in much of the labor unrest that characterized industrialization throughout the evolution of the American factory system.

Throughout the nineteenth century, when the labor

force was conceived of as bound up mainly in production, it was felt that any failure on the part of the worker to assimilate the values of production was to be dealt with summarily. In 1869, *Scientific American*, a journal which identified with the science of production, spoke ominously of the fate in store for noncooperating immigrant laborers, promising them "a quiet but sure extermination."[58] In a more ideological vein, the Richmond, Virginia, *Whig* called for a broad educational program in industrial diligence. "[In] educating the industrial morale of the people . . . the work of inculcating industrial ideas and impulses, all proper agencies should be enlisted—family discipline, public school education, pulpit instruction, business standards and requirements, and the power and influence of the workingmen's associations."[59]

By the 1920s, however, industry was aware that the austerity of factory life which most workers experienced undermined the attempt to create a widespread consciousness of industrial commodities as forming an affirmative and indulgent culture. Within business thinking, then, it appeared necessary to eradicate the productive process from the ideology that surrounded the products. In ads, the commodities of industrial society were presented as means of circumventing the ills of industrial life. The reality of life within the factory only tended to cast aspersions on the visions of happiness projected in consumer ideology, and it was an essential principle of commercial propaganda that depiction of this reality be avoided at all costs.

Edward Filene attempted to paint an ecstatic picture of mass-production work. Adopting an authoritative tone, he exalted the democratic joys of monotonous labor. "It is a common mistake," he contended, "to assume that monotonous repetitive work is necessarily

offensive. . . . Engineers have found, on the contrary, that most workers prefer to perform a simple, specialized, repetitive operation. It leaves their minds free to ruminate on other things. They do not abhor monotony, but desire it. . . ." For Filene, such an evaluation of human desires led to a connection between the "benefits" of monotony and the industrial aesthetic. This mass productive machinery "enables the unskilled, unintelligent man to earn more money than before with far less effort and with no harm to his mind and soul. It permits him to have an avocation as well as a vocation. . . . [It] puts the beautiful things it produces within the reach of the masses, and by creating an appreciation for beauty, where it did not exist before, makes the world a much better place to live in. . . . Beauty is the greatest objective of the world."[60]

Few other businessmen felt that an effort like Filene's to integrate an affirmative vision of work with an affirmative vision of the "spiritual truths" of consumer culture could possibly be successful. For the most part among the advertising and public relations elements of business, the success of consumerization depended on the ability to obfuscate the work process, to create an understanding of the industrial world which avoided any problematic reference to production altogether. Paul Nystrom, writing on the economics of fashion, noted that as wealth or social status were the basic selling points of most garments, "the styles should go as far as possible in proving that the owner does not have to work for a living."[61] What Thorstein Veblen had theorized as the conspicuous consumption habits of the leisure class were now propagated as a democratic ideal within mass advertising. In order to sell the commodity culture, it was necessary to confront people with a vision of that culture from which the class bases of dissatisfac-

tion had been removed. Mark O'Dea, a leading New York advertising executive, wrote that the key to successful advertising copy was the ability to "release people from the limitations of their own lives."[62] If these limitations lay within the realm of the industrial process itself, it became all the more important to eradicate factory life as a constituent of visible culture within the ads. Essential to the growing sophistication of advertising technique, *Printers' Ink* noted retrospectively in 1938, was the move away from the objective conditions of the product:

> The first advertising told the name of the product. In the second stage, the specifications of the product were outlined. Then came emphasis upon the uses of the product. With each step the advertisement moved farther away from the factory viewpoint and edged itself closer into the mental processes of the consumer.[63]

Throughout advertising manuals, advertising which made mention of factory life is cited as "bad copy," deleterious to sales. Rather than locate products within an environment with which people had unhappy familiarity, it was argued that products should be placed in an environment tailored both to the psychological processes of the potential consumer and the economic priorities of the corporation. Helen Woodward, the leading woman copywriter of the 1920s, added that in order to write effective copy, the writer should avoid the productive arena religiously. "If you are advertising any product," she warned, "never see the factory in which it was made. . . . Don't watch the people at work. . . . Because, you see, when you know the truth about anything, the real, inner truth—it is very hard to write the surface fluff which sells it."[64]

5 Consumption and Social Change

With the development of an apparatus for the stimulation and creation of mass consumption, business assumed an expansionist and manipulative approach to the problem of popular consciousness. While much of the thinking in the American industrial "war rooms" maintained an adherence to traditional "democratic" rhetoric, the basic impulse in advertising was one of control, of actively channeling social impulses toward a support of corporation capitalism and its productive and distributive priorities. As the growth of American imperialism beyond our political borders had been couched in the Turnerian rhetoric of democracy on the one hand, and aggressive self-interest on the other, so too did the imperialization of the psyche (beyond the borders of production) take on a "trailblazing" aggressiveness toward the social frontiers which business hoped soon to civilize.

The corporate structure was the arena of production, and if the distribution of mass-produced commod-

ities was to succeed, indigenous popular attitudes had to be supplanted where they tended to look elsewhere for the satisfaction of material and social needs. The conscription of social scientists like John B. Watson of Johns Hopkins into the ideological machinery represented the ascendency of such priorities. Watson, a founder of modern behavioral psychology, was a proponent of transferring psychological development away from the traditional arenas of socialization (e.g., the family) and for making the realities of commercial life the guiding principles of child-rearing. "We must face the fact that standards of training are changing," he declared, "and that these standards must now conform to the dominant trends in our changing civilization."[65]

Painting a sordid picture of traditional home life, one in which "unscrupulous nurses" were known to gratify infant wants by stroking, fondling and kissing their children, Watson contended that such nurturing was injurious to the individual and society.[66] Infantile sensual pleasure was, he felt, bad preparation for the social reality of commercial and professional life. Undercutting the home as an institution on which the child might rely, Watson led a move toward accepting the industrial apparatus as a more proper authority. "We have to stick to our jobs in commercial and professional life regardless of headaches, toothaches. . . . There is no one . . . to baby us." While the specific orientation of these pronouncements is geared toward encouraging a passive fidelity to the unsympathetic character of the workplace, Watson also provided psychological avenues by which home life might be supplanted by the stimulation of the senses—a direction toward which business in its advertising was increasingly gravitating. Pleasure that could be achieved by the individual within the home and community was attacked and deemphasized,

as corporate enterprise formulated commoditized sensual gratification. Watson labeled all but the "gratifications" of the marketplace as perverse and psychologically and socially damaging. In 1922, he left Johns Hopkins to become a vice president of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, a place where his commercial proclivities were able to take on more practical forms.

Elsewhere, the call for a "new economic philosophy, a new business point of view, and . . . a new social system,"[67] was couched in aggressive and militaristic terms. The eradication of social attitudes which were resistant to consumption became a central concern among businessmen. The psychological conscription of consumers, said George Phelps, was simply a question of "influencing minds," or, more pointedly, "the process of getting people to do or think what you want them to do or think."[68] Viewing the potential consumer as a resource of industry, ad men spoke of the need to "reduce the principles of human action to a formula," adding that such was already integral to political manipulation outside of business.[69] Treating all people as mechanically identical, Edward Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud and (along with Ivy Lee) a founder and leader of modern commercial public relations, called for the implementation of a "mass psychology" by which public opinion might be controlled.

> If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it now possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing it. . . .
>
> Mass psychology is as yet far from being an exact science and the mysteries of human motivation are by no means all revealed. But at least theory and practice have combined with sufficient success to permit us to

> know that in certain cases we can effect some change in public opinion . . . by operating a certain mechanism.[70]

Committed to the rhythms of the industrial machinery and its economic priorities, the social psychologists realized machinery as the all-informing idiom of social life. The control of the masses required that people, like the world they inhabited, assume the character of machinery—predictable and without any aspirations toward self-determination. As the industrial machinery produced standardized goods, so did the psychology of consumerization attempt to forge a notion of the "mass" as "practically identical in all mental and social characteristics."[71]

The advertising media then had only to develop a "science of unlocking the human mind."[72] The advertising of the future, declared George Phelps, will be effective in so far as it is able to "leap to the eye . . . leap to the mind."[73] All activity was envisioned as taking place within the corporate walls; the prospects for the consumer were no more than a passive (if "gratified") spectatorship. The human eye became merely a target for visual stimulation, the ear was but an "avenue of entry" for the blandishments of advertising.[74]

And yet, if social passivity was a futuristic political utopia projected by the philosophers of Madison Avenue, so too was it a reflection of the frustrated social world which American industrialization was actually creating.

Just as the factory was eradicated from the affirmative vision of productivity, so too was the propagation of a utopian vision of passivity an attempt to neutralize the frustrated passivity of daily life that, even in the admissions of businessmen, increasingly characterized

industrial society. Industrial growth in America had institutionalized monotony as a feature of work and "disappointment with achievements" as a common malaise, noted business economist Paul Nystrom. It was the absence of any forceful social bonds and the development of a widespread "*philosophy of futility*," he continued, that might be effectively mobilized in the stimulation of consumption. Speaking of the seeming purposelessness of American industrial life itself, Nystrom noted that "this lack of purpose in life has an effect on consumption similar to that of having a narrow life interest, that is, in concentrating human attention on the more superficial things that comprise much of *fashionable* consumption." The mass-produced goods of the marketplace were conceived of as providing an ideology of "change" neutralized to the extent that it would be unable to effect significant alteration in the relationship between individuals and the corporate structure. "Fatigue" with the futility of modern life might, if all other avenues of change are eradicated, be channeled toward a "fatigue . . . with apparel and goods used in one's immediate surroundings."[75]

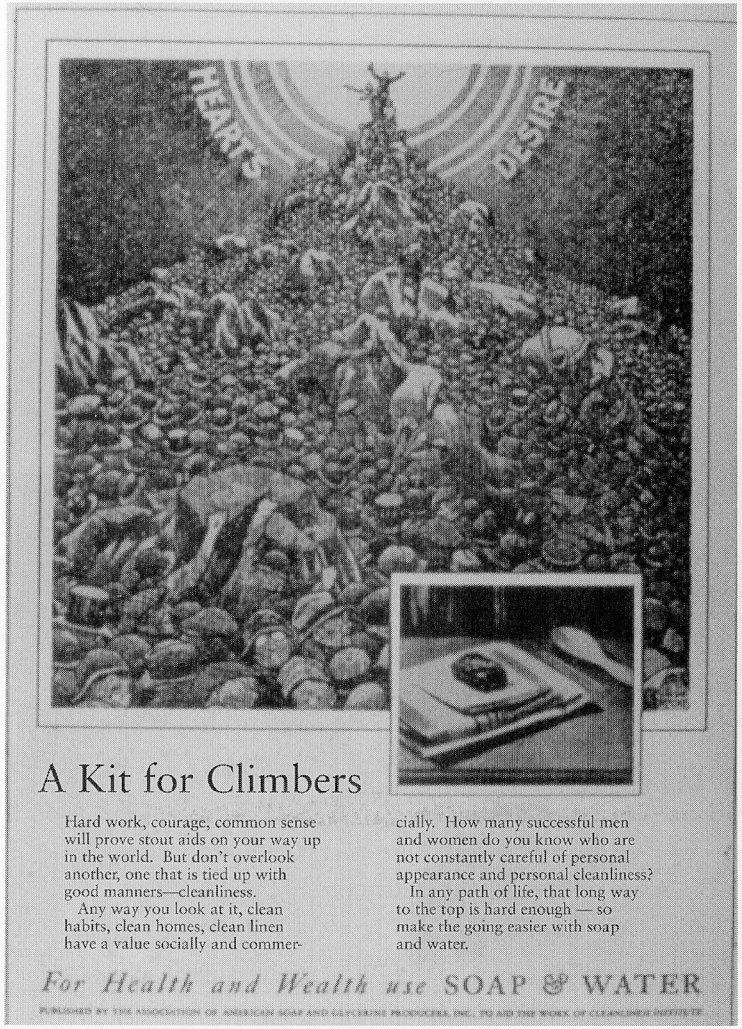
The conception of consumption as an alternative to other modes of change proliferates within business literature of the twenties. Given the recent history of anticapitalist sentiments and actions among the working class, the unpleasant possibility of "deeper changes" gave flight to a more pacified notion of social welfare that emanated from consumerization. Recognizing the irreversability of frustration among those who felt trapped in their surroundings, Helen Woodward spoke frankly of consumption as a sublimation of urges that might be dangerous in other form. Admitting that change would be "the most beneficent medicine in the world to most people," Woodward offered mass con-

sumption as a means of acting out such impulses within a socially controllable context. "To those who cannot change their whole lives or occupations," she began, "even a new line in a dress is often a relief. The woman who is tired of her husband or her home or a job feels some lifting of the weight of life from seeing a straight line change into a bouffant, or a gray pass into beige." The basic issues of industrial capitalism were fractionalized, isolated and reduced to trivialities in her formula. "Most people," Woodward declared, "do not have the courage or the understanding to make deeper changes."[76]

The logic of using consumption and *mass* leisure as ameliorations for boredom and social entrapment was not merely an underlying trend in advertising. Some ads made explicit reference to the inadequacies of modern existence, and frankly offered the culture of modern industrialism as an *ersatz* for meaningful activity. Robert and Helen Lynd culled the following ad from the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1924; an advertisement for the motion picture industry, it lends some credence to Kafka's blanket indictment of the cinema as an art form which puts the eyes "in uniform":

> Go to a motion picture . . . and let yourself go. . . . Before you know it, you are living the story—laughing, loving, hating, struggling, winning! All the romance, all the excitement you lack in your daily life are—in Pictures. They take you completely out of yourself into a wonderful new world. . . . Out of the cage of everyday existence! If only for an afternoon or an evening—escape.[77]

Here meaningful activity is clearly divorced from the context of daily life. The ad speaks for the fantasy value of the cinema—placing the gratification of emotional



THE JEWISH MARKET

PACKAGE foods have begun to enter this market, but only barely scratching the surface of its vast possibilities.

80% of the grocery articles in the Jewish Market are still sold in bulk.

Coffee was sold in bulk until several years ago, when "Yuban" came into this market, and now there is not a grocery store or delicatessen shop in any Jewish community where "Yuban" coffee is not the best seller.

Cotton seed oil in bulk was from time immemorial the only shortening in the Jewish Market. "Mazola" oil in tins is today becoming the largest selling oil in all Jewish communities.

These are but two instances of how quick this market responds to the package appeal.

THE 500,000 Jewish housewives buying food for the 1,500,000 Jewish people in New York City make but one demand of the American manufacturer of package foods—QUALITY.

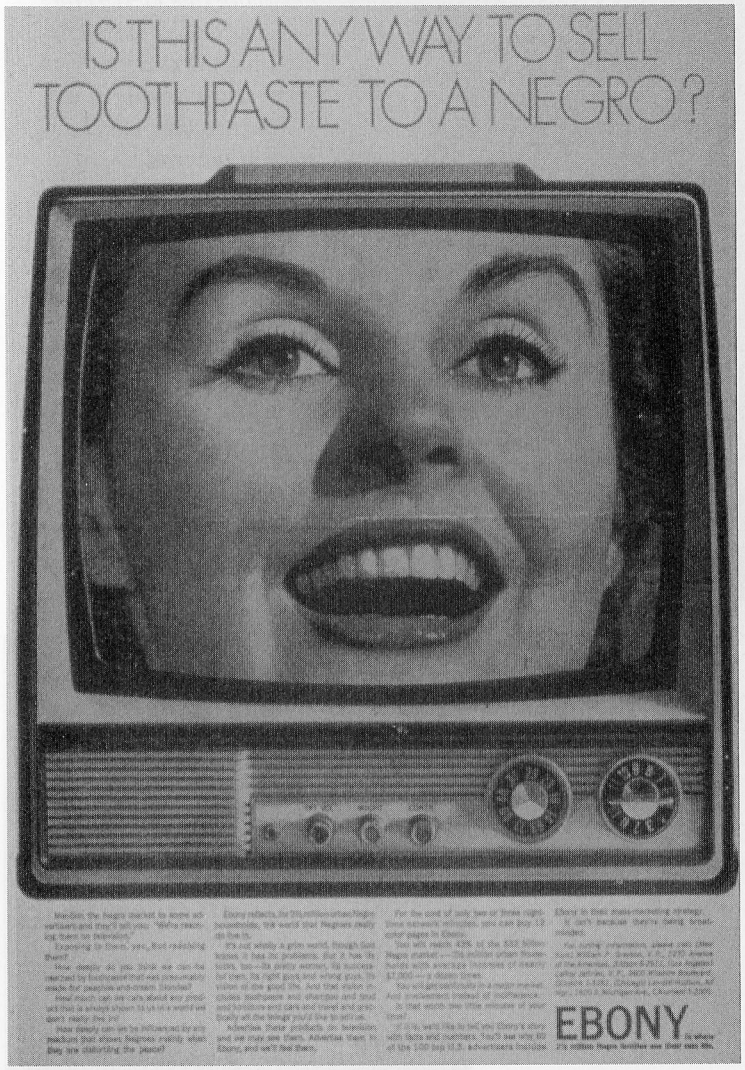
The Jewish Market is today wide open to the introduction of package breakfast foods, cereals, oils, vegetable shortenings, canned vegetables, canned and dried fruits and a host of other table necessities and luxuries.

Submit your marketing problem to any one of the big four Jewish newspapers of New York. You will receive an authoritative and unbiased opinion and a practical plan of campaign for placing and holding your product on the great Jewish Market.

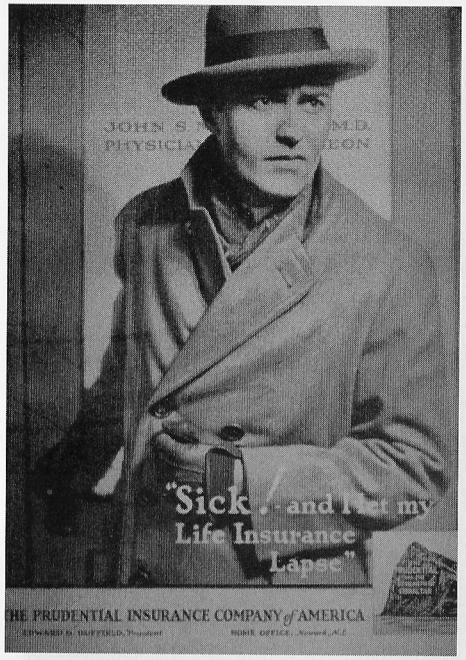
The Big Four of Jewish Journalism in America are household words in every good Jewish home.

Jewish Morning Journal
Jewish Daily Forward *Jewish Daily News*
The Day-Warheit

"The Jewish Market," an advertisement placed in Advertising Age *in 1919, designed to encourage American businesses to advertise in the Yiddish press.*



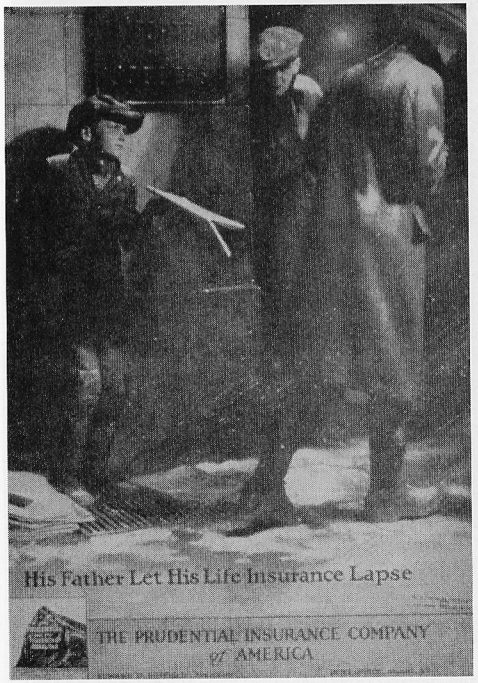
Since the 1920s the targeting of specific ethnic markets has only grown. In this 1960s newspaper ad the image and text encourage mainstream advertisers to advertise in Ebony *and to use black models in order to sell to black consumers.*



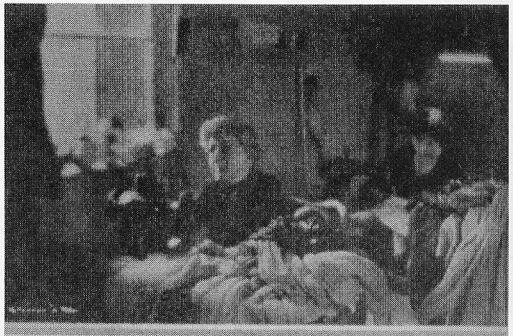
Although each of the following ads (1919) for Prudential Life Insurance originally appeared by itself, when arranged as a sequence they tell the story of the traditional family structure in disrepair, offering a corporate argument for where authentic stability can now be found. In the first ad a father has just learned that he is terminally ill. Without life insurance, his family faces an uncertain future.

"Father is now dead. His anxiety-ridden wife and child are on the verge of losing their home."

The younger children await the stern discipline of the orphan asylum.



An older son is left to fend for himself, selling newspapers by day above a grate where he is forced to sleep at night.



The little grey lady

Toil—toil—a merciless cycle of toil is all she knows. Daily the lines on that pitifully beautiful old face grow deeper. Daily those slender, needle-scarred fingers tremble more and more.

Someone is responsible for this—glaringly responsible. A husband, a brother, a son, has failed in his imperative duty.

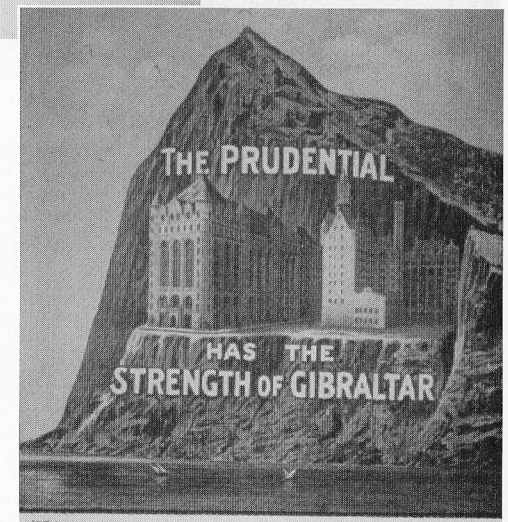
Because life insurance provides a way to give to old age the comforts and consideration it so richly deserves, this forlorn spectacle is less general today than in bygone days. May the time soon come when it will be completely obliterated!

THE PRUDENTIAL INSURANCE COMPANY of AMERICA

EDWARD D. DUFFIELD, *President*

HOME OFFICE, *Newark, N.J.*

Years later, the mother works in a sweat shop, "a merciless cycle of toil is all she knows."



The House Founded On A Rock

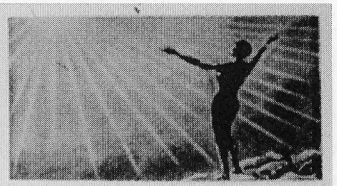
Shall stand. Build your fortunes on the rock foundation of Life Insurance. It has shielded thousands from want, educated thousands of young men and women, and started them in business. Write to-day for information of Policies, with Rates and Benefits at your age. Address Dept. O.

The Prudential Insurance Company of America

JOHN F. DRYDEN, *President* HOME OFFICE: Newark, N. J.

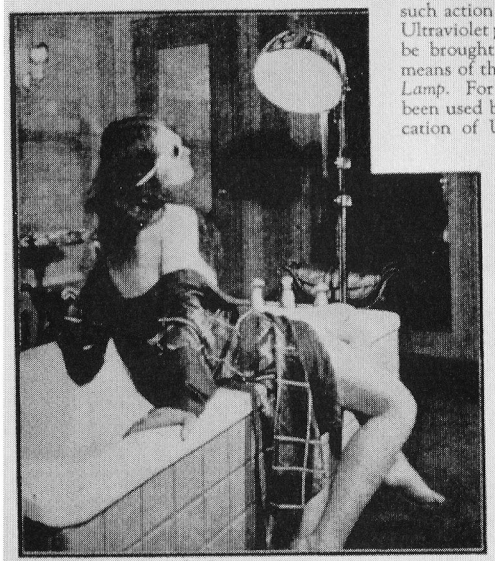
With the stability of the traditional father shattered, it is the corporate patriarch who provides a rock upon which family security can be built.

If you were free to *live*..



WERE you today to throw off the restraints of social conformity . . . would you, too, first satisfy that inborn craving for Ultraviolet? Would you discard the trappings of civilization to spend strenuous health-brimmed days in the beneficent sunlight?

For most convention-ridden people such action is denied. But the vital Ultraviolet portion of the sunlight can be brought right into the home by means of the justly-famous *Alpine Sun Lamp*. For years this apparatus has been used by physicians for the application of Ultraviolet as a powerful remedial agent. Now, with the growth of the preventive ideal, physicians are making it available to their patients for regular irradiation as a means to complete physical fitness.



Modern bathroom fixtures by courtesy of the Crane Co.

To those who accept the obligation of a healthy body for themselv... and their family... who glory in a robust tan throughout the year... the *Alpine Sun Lamp* has a vitally interesting message.

Ask your physician about it... and write for the treatise "*Ultraviolet for Health.*"

The Original ALPINE SUN LAMP *Luxor Model*

Send today for this free booklet and for the economical terms under which the Luxor Model may be tested in your own home under your physician's direction.

HANOVIA CHEM. & MFG. CO., Dept. D2, Newark, N. J.

Please send me, free, a copy of the book "Ultraviolet for Health."

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

My Physician's Name .....

An industrially produced remedy for the discontents of industrial life.

A 1920s advertisement for ODORONO *deodorant. Copy and image were designed to make people "emotionally uneasy" with themselves.*

needs squarely within the symbolic function of mechanically reproduced, spectatorial culture.

The ideologically politicized realm of consumption was clearly seen by industrial society as a device by which social change, the passing of "gray . . . into beige," might be symbolically acted out in the public culture. Through the creation of a spectacle of *change*, frustrations and boredom within the context of industrial society might be mobilized to maintain and sustain that order. Thus the political imperative of legitimizing industry and delegitimizing the individual and the immediate expressions of community as proper realms of authority would be achieved. To quote Denys Thompson, a contemporary English critic, "Advertising tries to conceal the emptiness and make life feel good. It is as if the forces of advertising had decreed that the individual man or woman must not be allowed to develop his or her own potentialities."[78]

Within the symbolic spectacle, the passivity and acceptance of the marketplace was shown to be more favorable for the consumer than other, more radical conceptions of change. "Mass production," contended merchant Edward Filene, "holds possibilities of accomplishing for mankind all of the good that theoretical reformers or irrational radicals hope to secure by revolutionary means."[79] "Business men will continue to oppose political revolutions, but not in the negative way in which they have opposed them in the past," noted Filene. Direct political repression as a policy had peaked a few years before with the "Red Scare," the Palmer raids, and the massive deportation of immigrant workers; now was the time for a more indirect and positive strategy. In the vacuum created in once explosive communities, business could afford to be sensitive to the fact that when "something wrong is happening" in

people's lives, they must "direct their energies" toward meeting the roots of dissatisfaction.[80] But, Filene cautioned, in order to "live successfully in the Machine Age," we must rely on the facts of the modern marketplace and demand "the abandonment of all class thinking."[81]

Frances Kellor, the enlightened director of the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers, spoke even more directly than Filene regarding the political role that advertising would have to play within the vast immigrant and first-generation American communities. "It is the answer to Bolshevism," she declared, a fundamental process of Americanization.[82] If business were unable to provide a commercialized notion of leisure, Paul Nystrom warned, then socialization appeared to be the "only practical substitute."[83]

The idea of mass consumption, or at least an ideology of mass consumption as a commercially viable answer to "class thinking," also found its way into the ads themselves. Goods, as presented in the ads, would provide a bond between groups of people who traditionally were at antagonistic ends of the political structure. In a promotion of one commodity after another, we see bosses treating well-sold workers as equals and firing those who have not bought effectively. Another tack, taken by the Parker Pen Company, appeared in an ad of the twenties. Perhaps proving, at least in its own commercial logic, that the pen is mightier than the sword in solving seemingly irreconcilable social differences, this ad for Parker was signed by the presidents of United States Steel and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad on the one hand, and by labor leader Samuel Gompers and socialist author H. G. Wells, on the other. Where all else might tend to accentuate their differences, it was through the remarkable assent as to the quality of the Parker Pen that all was apparently resolved.

Integrating the mass consumption of goods into the negative political process of combatting bolshevism and "class" politics in general, consumerism also assumed a positive political character in the ideology of business. Within the political ideology of consumption, *democracy* emerged as a natural expression of American industrial production—if not a by-product of the commodity system. The equation of the consumption of goods with political freedom made such a configuration possible. Expounding on the notion of political democracy, Filene noted that within the expanding industrial context, "the masses must be taken into full citizenship. They must achieve, not mere literacy, but culture." The culture to which he referred was one based on the process of "fact-finding"—acquainting oneself with the variety of goods with which one might live in this "machine civilization."[84] For consumer economist Elizabeth Hoyt, a woman who shared the view of consumption as a democratizing process, the definition of this democratic *culture* was part of a task by which industry determined "for a people what they consider worth consuming."[85] Yet within each of these notions of political democracy, there was an implicit acceptance of the centralization of the political process. Democracy was never treated as something that flowed out of people's needs or desires, but was rather an expression of people's ability to participate in and emulate the "pluralism of values"[86] which were paraded before people and which filtered downward from the directors of business enterprise.

In the economics of consumerism, a field that emerged in the 1920s in the works of Elizabeth Hoyt, Hezel Kyrk, Paul Nystrom, *et al*, the notion of "marginal utility" came into being. Here, the notion of value is extended beyond the question of how a given commodi-

ty is to be *used* by people in their daily lives. The concept of "marginal utility" confronts the entry into the economic world of a notion of *value* which is politicized rather than concerned with direct application. Thus, "marginal utility" defines such economic elements as fashion, taste, status-giving function, suggestion of sensuality, a broad range of aesthetic values which apply to a product, and ultimately, the political implications of a commodity, a broad range of commodities, or of consumption itself.[87]

The essential marginal utility of the constellation of goods that defined the modern commodity market was located in a series of object-oriented life alternatives which were posed as a definition for the level of democracy to which American society had climbed. In so far as traditional "democratic institutions" such as the free press, popular education and representative government were of aid in familiarizing the population with the benefits of modern consumption, disaffected ad-man James Rorty pointed out, they too might be considered to achieve the level of democracy which characterized the advertising industry.[88] Education should encourage consumption and an adherence to the pluralism of commodities, noted economist Nystrom. "A democratic system of education," he added, ". . . is one of the surest ways of creating and greatly extending markets for goods of all kinds and especially those goods in which fashion ["marginal utility"] may play a part."[89]

This notion of democratic education was implemented as schools instituted "tooth-brush drills" at the instigation of companies which made toothbrushes. So too did science students see the various stages in the production of cocoa dramatized by models provided conspicuously by the leading producer of cocoa. Democratic education not only familiarized the young with processes but also with products.

Within all of these democratic pronouncements, the essential political impulse was one of entrepreneurial domination, a structure in which *political* choice was limited to the prescriptions formulated by business and *politicized* in its advertising. "The competition of ideas," as propagated in advertising and public relations, argued Edward Bernays, "is an essential democratic process, for then the public can make its own choice."

Even with such a self-protecting conception of democracy, however, there were some among the business community who were to adopt a clearly antidemocratic stance.[90] Fearing the democratic possibilities in the public at large, as well as the problem of governmental intervention and control over business, some businessmen cast continuous aspersions on the traditionally political realms of government and civil society. Such proponents of industrial democracy as Edward Filene suggested that even voting for what and for whom they want "the masses may or may not achieve political democracy."[91] As an alternative for this faulted political system, Filene argued that the process of consumption provided an effective arena for democratic participation. By buying the goods of large industries, and by participating in the economic solvency of these industrial giants, people were electing a government which would constantly be satisfying their needs and desires; the democratic process was becoming one which was turning the political realm away from its traditional governmental concerns and solidifying it within the economic processes of modern industrial capitalism. "It is within the structure of business," contended Filene, that "the wisest and best leadership is actually being chosen by the people." Consumerism was a process

which not only sustained big business economically, but also sustained its ascendency politically. By buying, people were democratically legitimizing the dominant role that industrialists aspired to play in all levels of political life.

Giving substance to his contention that consumption was a political process, Filene announced the political ascendency of business and its productive priorities. Through consumption, he contended, "the masses of America have elected Henry Ford. They have elected General Motors. They have elected the General Electric Company, and Woolworth's and all the other great industrial and business leaders of the day."[92] By far more democratic than traditional representative government, consumption was not merely a process for people to elect "their industrial government" but was moreover a way of "constantly participating in it."[93] Participation in an industrially defined marketplace had become a modern expression of popular political activity, yet it was an activity that maintained American industrial barons as the social directors of the nation, for "participation" in no way implied control or determination. Mass production was, in Filene's words, "*production for the masses*" and however this production encroached on people's activities and proclivities was of little relevance to the new democracy that was being theorized for the emerging mass society.

As James Madison had defined the spread and variety of factions as a protection of liberty within the early republic, the political theorists of mass industrial America saw the competition of ideas on the consumer marketplace as a modern expression of liberty. While Madison's competition of factions had been designed to ensure that any given faction would not gain ascendency or effectively threaten vested interests, factional

components of the modern political arena were already laundered of any dangerousness or subversion. Variegated expression was now found in the competition of "propagandas" that mass advertising and public relations created, ensuring liberty, as Edward Bernays argued, by the free exchange by "proponents and opponents of every propaganda" that defined the activity of the modern marketplace.[94]

Here, too, the notion of any form of popular direction or determination is neatly cleaved from the modern conception of democracy as businessmen defined it. Speaking of the impracticality of popular democracy, Bernays felt that representative government must now be delegated to the wisdom of industry, to the "industrial government" which had been canonized in Filene's political thought. Speaking for the nation, Bernays surrendered the realm of political judgment and the definition of the socially *possible* to the industrialists whom he had faithfully represented as a public relations man. "We have voluntarily agreed," he began, "to let an invisible government sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issues so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions."[95] Within such a context, it is not surprising that *Scientific American*, already noted for its corporate sympathies, called for a restoration to respectability of that "fine old word *propaganda*." Decrying the totalitarian implications that *propaganda* had assumed, the journal lamented that "there is no word in the English language . . . whose meaning has been so sadly distorted."[96]

For Bernays, marketplace control over popular behavior became tantamount to a "Declaration of Independence" from less developed and more popular definitions of democracy. "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions

of the masses is an important element in a democratic society," he proclaimed. Speaking affirmatively and patriotically of the emergence of the vast media of corporate propaganda, Bernays placed the responsibility for defining the universe of political discourse in the hands of the anonymous inhabitants of Madison Avenue. "We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized."[97]

Freedom became increasingly characterized in authoritarian terms, and at times even the democratic rhetoric was dropped from business pronouncements regarding the desirability of corporate social control. One business theorist contended that freedom and equality could be translated into the ability of each person to emulate or aspire to emulate the tastes of the upper classes; "and what could be a better method of doing this [proving equality] than by consumption."[98] The "fashion cycle," he contended, was an expression of the tastes and values of the wealthy, yet through the mass production of low-priced goods which imitated "high-priced merchandise," upper-class values might be internalized within the culture of the poor. "Reproduction of high-priced goods into lower-priced goods makes it possible for people of lower incomes to participate in the fashion cycle."[99]

For those who might refrain from such participation, the society would provide its own grave consequences. Paul Nystrom warned:

> There will be quizzical looks, doubtful stares and critical estimates. He will be thought queer. He will be judged as lacking in brain power and, perhaps, as an undesirable person. If he persists [in violating the norms of consumption] . . . he will, if he is an employee, lose his job! He will lose customers if he is a salesman; he will lose votes if he is a politician. He will lose his custom if he is a doctor or a lawyer. He will lose all of his friends.[100]

Within such a conception of social security, variation from the norms of consumption as defined by industry, whether in the name of some vague sense of individuality or in the name of the customs and habits of any group of people within the population, was tantamount to disaster. Traditional social bonds and the conformities that they engendered were un-American and suspect. The social bonds of the modern age, argued Nystrom, would be provided over-the-counter, and any other course would lead to "inevitable" ostracism, the loss of esteem and job security. Elizabeth Hoyt noted that most of the hostilities toward the various ethnic communities could be clearly connected to these people's violation of the norms of consumption. "I'd like them better if they didn't wear such queer clothes," Hoyt reported, quoting an alleged *American* housewife "of her foreign neighbors." Elsewhere, she observed, there were a variety of racial/ethnic epithets—"Frog-eating Frenchmen" and "Mackerel Snappers"—that spoke to the primacy of proper consumption habits among *Americans*. Accepting such a definition of *Americans* as those who comment on their *foreign* neighbors, Hoyt noted that there was but a hair's breadth of difference between the problem of "questionable consumption" and that of "questionable consumers."[101]

And so the American political tradition was being forged, in the minds of businessmen, along the patterns of proper and proscribed consumption. Reinforcing the authoritarian political function of a mass-produced marketplace, it was *Harper's Bazaar*, a dictator of the

fashion industry's pronouncements, that commented on the political dilemma that consumption patterns posed for the population at large. Marking the end of true economic competition in the functional world of goods and heralding the distinction between libertarian rhetoric and the actualities of consumption, *Bazaar* noted the eclipse of freedom in the world of goods in a way which harkened to the eclipse of freedom in the world of politics:

> The pioneering hard-fisted, hard-boiled American Male will cheer campaign speeches on the benefits of rugged individualism and whistle laissez-faire, whenever he has to keep up his courage in a financial crisis. He will grow turgidly eloquent on the benefits both to himself and society of doing just what he sees fit when and if he pleases. He will battle to his last breath against any code prescribing a uniform way of running his business, auditing his accounts, educating his children or divorcing his wives. Any form of regulation is to him a symptom of Bolshevik tyranny. But the one moment when he is terrified of freedom is when he buys his clothes. *He is more afraid of wearing a bright orange necktie to his office than of carrying a red flag in a communist parade.* (My emphasis.)[102]

Democratic rhetoric or not, the formulators of the consumer market and the propagandists who publicized it hoped to instill an authoritarian obedience to the dictates of daily life in the machine age. Ad men attempted to convey a picture of the world in which small groups were no longer proper realms for the communication of values—it was within the corporation and the mass-industrial context that people might find a replacement for outdated communities and the sustenance they afforded. Men and women, prognosticated ad man Robert Updegraff, "must awaken to the futility

of trying to express themselves in a handful way." Only within the context of "millions" does modern communication take place.[103] This sentiment was echoed by the leading spokeswoman of home economics, Christine Frederick. Herself a student of advertising—she had been a disciple of Walter Dill Scott at Northwestern—Frederick also inveighed against the attempt to communicate on the level of community. Talking to the issue of consumer protection, she belittled any efforts on the part of people to form their own movements. Such, she felt, was not the *stuff* of modern life. In terms of consumer protection, people had three places to look for help to assure proper quality control: the government, the big consumer groups (such as the Consumer Union—founded and directed by Edward Filene, no less), and the big testing labs and universities. The issue of *consumer protection* was too large to be actuated on the level of popular politics.[104]

While ads continually painted a picture in which people could trust no one (not even themselves) in their immediate surroundings, the corporations were presented as an alternative for communities which were pictured as being eroded by mistrust: people fragmented from one another by such privatized problems as "sneaker smell," "paralyzed pores," "vacation knees," "spoon-food face," "office hips," "underarm offense," and "ashtray breath." The immediate world of the "consumer" was in fact presented as one in which *fear* justifiably reigned. Quoting an AMA report in *Hygeia* magazine, early consumer advocate Stuart Chase noted that "for ordinary people" the basic function of mouthwashes and "their practical use, is confined to scaring us to death."[105] An advertisement for the Yale lock company showed a woman lying in bed, blissfully naïve, with the shadow of an approaching man shed ominously on

her bedroom wall. The caption read as follows: "Night loneliness . . . the sound of stealthy tampering at the door . . . a moment of helpless terror. . . ." As would be expected, the Yale company made no call for better community and social relations, but omnipotently announced, "Yale Banishes Fear! from your home." An ad agency head informed copywriter Helen Woodward how to write an ad for baby food:

> Give 'em the figures about the baby death rate—but don't say it flatly. You know if you just put a lot of figures in front of a woman she passes you by. If we only had the nerve to put a hearse in the ad, you couldn't keep the women away from the food.[106]

One such ad did appear. Although there was no hearse, the illustration showed an ominously empty pair of baby shoes. Refining the notion of the effective use of *fear* in making sales, ad man George Burton Hotchkiss noted: "Fear in itself . . . is paralyzing; it robs one of the power of action. No one buys anything through fear, but rather through the instinct of self-preservation or some other reaction that is almost inseparable from fear."[107]

Morrill Goddard, editor of Hearst's *American* weekly and the man who *invented* the Sunday newspaper, wrote of *fear* as a basic appeal and, according to at least one major New York ad agency, greatly affected their strategy.[108] The head of that agency, Mark O'Dea, spoke of *fear* manipulation in heroic terms. Taking issue with Roosevelt's pronouncement in the early days of the Depression that "we have nothing to fear but fear itself," O'Dea presented a broad historical overview to vindicate *fear* manipulation as "our national salvation." It was, after all, he argued, the "fear of tyranny that drove our colonies into becoming a republic."[109] Expounding further on the beneficent role of fear in history, O'Dea penned this justification for commercial terror tactics:

> Since time began, Fear has been a regulatory part of humanity—our primitive religion taught the vengeance of the gods, our modern revivalists, like Billy Sunday, frightened people with damnation.
>
> Fear of mediocrity drove a little Corsican into becoming Emperor—Europe's fears drove Napoleon into exile. Fear made Patrick Henry a patriot. Fear stalked with Lincoln from his log cabin to his tomb. It was the spur of such men as Martin Luther, Poe, Peter the Great, Chopin, Julius Caesar, Balzac, John the Baptist.
>
> So what's a little Fear in advertising.[110]

> We've a better world with a bit of the proper kind of Fear in advertising . . . fear in women of being frumps, fear in men of being duds.[111]

Within the ads, as I have discussed elsewhere, this fear took on the character of presenting a world in which the individual was constantly judged by others, a world in which there was the total absence of positive bonds between people. The individualism which had been at the heart of liberal bourgeois thought throughout the preceding century and a half, had turned rancid, had become the core of uncertainty and social degeneration.

Yet in the midst of such a manipulated reality, there was one bastion of security, one area in which people were held together—the industrial corporation. By appealing to the emotions in its ads ("Make 'em weep" were one boss's instructions to an inexperienced copywriter), industry hoped not merely to sell goods, but also to capitalize on and conscript the basic emotional structures of people. Even as all else goes wrong, the ads

asserted, the corporation will provide for you. Helen Woodward designed one ad showing "a man lying bandaged in a bed, smiling joyously as a postman came up and handed him a check from the Aetna company."[112] Here was the vision of a precarious social life (whether the man was the victim of an industrial accident is not indicated) ameliorated by a *concerned* corporation.

During the twenties, corporate advertising often worked to create a personified conception of its own beneficence. While daily life was projected as a flux of disastrous and unpredictable events, "image" advertising (often termed "good-will" advertising) studied methods of locating stability and reliability within the corporate walls. Claude Hopkins, a dominant figure in the advertising industry of the twenties, wrote in *Scientific Advertising* (1923), that as a contrast to the hostile and hazardous world portrayed in the ads, corporations must work to create a nurturing image of a permanence which would defy the upheavals of day to day existence: "We try to give each advertiser a becoming style. We make him distinctive, perhaps not in appearance, but in manner and tone. He is given an individuality best suited to the people he addresses. . . . That's why we have signed ads sometimes—to give them a personal authority. A man is talking—a man who takes pride in his accomplishments—not a soulless corporation!"[113]

As quality and craft were eliminated from the workplace, the corporations tried to create an image of themselves as a repository of craft to which people would gravitate. As president of Lord and Thomas Agency, which claimed (1923) to be the largest in the world, we can assume that within the advertising business itself, Hopkins was sensitive to the public relations

requirements of a large corporation. As he spoke personally for his own large business, so too did he espouse "individuality" as a necessary public image. While the advertising public was expected to compulsively change and vary according to the dictates of the market, such fluctuations in a business were not, according to Hopkins, characteristics which would inspire public fealty. In forging a business image, he noted, "we take care not to change an individuality which has proved appealing. . . . In successful advertising, great pains are taken never to change our tone. . . . Appearing different every time we meet never builds up confidence."[114] Thus, the fluctuations in style, fashion and "progress" which characterized those who adhered to the whims of the commodity market might be assumed to undercut any level of mutual confidence, whereas the stable individuality of the corporation would prove increasingly attractive and trustworthy. In advertising campaigns, the image of the corporation was reinforced by such broad strategies. An ad for the telephone company, one which must be seen in the context of *fear* appeals about the immediate surroundings of the potential consumer, projects a rare vision of community and sustenance:

> The biggest thing about your telephone is the spirit of thousands and thousands of people who make up the Bell system. . . . The loyalty of these people to the ideals of their work is reflected in every phase of your telephone service.[115]

A 1928 ad for Maxwell House Coffee presented the product as but a canned version of "Joel Cheek's original blend," blended "patiently and skillfully."[116] The General Motors Corporation offered its own version of *hand-crafted, pre-industrial* quality in their "Bodies by

Fisher," still a trademark. In a 1928 ad for G.M., this artisan concept of quality was miraculously bound to the vast network of oligopoly: "Everywhere you go, note how the cars with Fisher Bodies stand out. . . . It is perfectly plain that the most beautiful cars in every price class are those with Bodies by Fisher . . . those cars whose bodies are the products of Fisher artistry, Fisher craftsmanship and Fisher's unrivaled resources."[117] Another ad for the Bell telephone system noted that talking through a phone conveyed "all the conviction of a human voice," creating a bond between you and the recipient of the call. In terms of "thought, mood, and personality," the telephone was the "road home."[118] At the same time that corporations portrayed their own social fabric with such sanguinity, it must be remembered, the ads which were directed at home life, community and the workplace reminded people that in case of social failure, "Suspect yourself first" (Listerine)!, and then move on to your wife, husband, neighbors, etc.[119]

In drafting an affirmative conception of human characteristics, the business community was setting up itself, or its personified corporate self, as a model for emulation. Ads and public relations portrayed the corporation as a function of social intercourse which created positive bonds where all else had failed. The authority of industry was being drawn as a sustaining *father* figure while the traditional arenas of social intercourse and the possibility of collective action were pictured as decrepit, threatening, and basically incapable of providing any level of security.