

# SOME PRINCIPLES OF MASS PERSUASION

## SELECTED FINDINGS OF RESEARCH ON THE SALE OF UNITED STATES WAR BONDS

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*During the recent war social psychologists were called upon to conduct research on many problems of importance to the war effort. Many of the data obtained in these research projects had significance and interest only in the immediate situation for which they were collected. Some findings, however, contribute information to basic or recurring problems of social psychology. In order to illuminate some of the basic processes involved in the induction of mass behavior, this paper draws upon the extensive program of wartime research conducted for the War Finance Division of the United States Treasury Department by the Division of Program Surveys of the Department of Agriculture. The immediate aims of the research program were to help guide policy decisions in the development of a program of inflation control through the sale of Saving Bonds.*

*Due to the large number of separate studies drawn upon for data in this paper, it will not be possible to describe in each case the exact research methods employed. In general, the data are all drawn from intensive, open-ended interviews conducted with a representative sample of the population in question. Sampling methods employed were those known as 'area' or 'proportional' sampling. Many research workers were involved in the collecting of these data, and without the contributions of all of them the studies would not have been possible. The author of this article was in charge of the total program.*

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Among the many technological advances of the past century that have produced changes in social organization, the development of the mass media of communication promises to be the most far-reaching. Techniques making possible the instantaneous transmission of visual and auditory messages around the world have greatly heightened the interdependence among ever larger numbers of people. It has now become possible from one source to influence the thinking and behavior of hundreds of millions of people. One person can

now address at one time a major portion of the world's population to educate, entertain, incite, or allay fears. Only psychological and social factors make it impossible at the present time to assemble into a single audience virtually the entire population of the world.

This heightened interdependence of people means that the possibilities of mobilizing mass social action have been greatly increased. It is conceivable that one persuasive person could, through the use of mass media, bend the world's population to his will. Writers have

described such a state of affairs, and demagogues have tried to create one, but nothing so drastic has yet even been approached.

Perhaps because of fears aroused by such a possibility, there has been a tendency to exaggerate both the possible evils of mass persuasion and its powers to influence behavior. An examination of the actual effectiveness of campaigns of mass persuasion may contribute to objective thinking.

In the course of a year in the United States alone, literally scores of organizations make use of a significant part of the mass media in order to carry on some campaign. Only the financial cost of using the media seems to limit their use for these purposes. One need mention but a few examples to suggest an almost endless list. The financing of social welfare agencies throughout the United States, for instance, is accomplished largely through annual campaigns designed to enlist contributions from the general public. Political campaigns are an essential part of any democratic political system. During the war the various governments relied upon campaigns to organize public behavior behind their national war efforts. And campaigns are currently under way to induce people to drive in such a way as to reduce traffic accidents, to eat the kinds of food that will create better standards of health, to take steps necessary to cure cancer, to contribute to the endowment of educational institutions, to participate in food production programs of the government, to support or oppose specific legislation, etc., etc. Most of the activities of businesses intended to promote the sale of goods by means of advertising should be included in this list.

Despite the great reliance placed upon campaigns by organizations of all types,

it is none the less evident that campaigns do not necessarily succeed in inducing desired behavior among any substantial proportion of the population. As research techniques have become available to evaluate the actual effects of campaigns, it has become a rather common experience for organizations and agencies to spend substantial sums of money on such activities only to find from objective appraisals that little perceptible effect was accomplished. It is not yet possible on the basis of research to state exactly how large a campaign of what kind is required to produce a given amount of influence on mass behavior, but evidence is accumulating to indicate that significant changes in behavior as a result of campaigns are rather the exception than the rule.

During the recent war there arose an opportunity to collect some data relevant to this problem. The United States Government undertook, as a part of its inflation control program, to sell Savings Bonds to the population by means of campaigns. Regular research projects, undertaken to make these efforts as effective and efficient as possible, provide some data concerning the effects produced by campaigns of various kinds and magnitudes. Since the major part of the effort going into these campaigns was contributed voluntarily, it was not possible to get a precise measure of their magnitude even in terms of the money value of their costs, but fairly good estimates were possible. Some illustrative findings may be cited. During the Second War Loan it was estimated that slightly more than \$12,000,000 worth of measurable advertising was displayed through the various mass media. In addition to this there were countless rallies, meetings, editorials, feature articles, and the like. In other words, during a period of approximately two months there was

developed an unusually concentrated campaign of social pressure to induce people to buy War Bonds. What were the measurable effects? A national survey conducted after the campaign found that 62 per cent of the adult population could recognize the name of the drive and that 20 per cent of those receiving income had bought bonds for the drive. Comparable figures for the Seventh War Loan provide an indication of the effects of an even larger effort. During this campaign over \$42,000,000 worth of measurable advertising was displayed; now 94 per cent of the adult population could recognize the name of the drive and 40 per cent of the income receivers bought bonds for the drive.

There are of course many other effects of such campaigns in addition to those listed here, and comparable data are needed from campaigns of a different sort before safe generalizations can be made, but it is reasonable to conclude from these data that even the most efficiently conducted campaigns do not produce major effects upon mass behavior cheaply nor without considerable effort.

We may ask why it is that campaigns seem to require so much effort. One obvious variable influencing the outcome of campaigns is the relation between the behavior encouraged by the campaign and the behavior which the population desires. It is easier to get people to do something they want to do than something they oppose. But this seems to be only part of the story. Another reason that campaigns may fail to be fully influential is that the techniques for using the media are not always the most effective. Research on readership, listening behavior, and the like shows that some techniques, *qua* techniques, are better than others in

attracting attention, creating favorable attitudes toward the media, etc. But again the evidence available indicates that the amount of improvement in the effectiveness of a medium that can be obtained by refinement of techniques is limited.

A more fruitful approach to this problem would seem to lie in an analysis of the psychological processes involved in the induction of behavior by an outside agent. What happens psychologically when someone attempts to influence the behavior of another person? The answer, in broad outline, may be described as follows: To influence behavior, a chain of processes must be initiated within the person. These processes are complex and inter-related, but in broad terms they may be characterized as (i) creating a particular cognitive structure, (ii) creating a particular motivational structure, and (iii) creating a particular behavioral (action) structure. In other words, behavior is determined by the beliefs, opinions, and 'facts' a person possesses; by the needs, goals, and values he has; and by the momentary control held over his behavior by given features of his cognitive and motivational structure. To influence behavior 'from the outside' requires the ability to influence these determinants in a particular way.

It seems to be a characteristic of most campaigns that they start strongly with the first process, do considerably less with the second, and only lightly touch upon the third. To the extent that the campaign is intended to influence behavior and not simply to 'educate,' the third process is essential.

Let us now elaborate these principles in more detail, calling upon the data concerning the sale of War Bonds to provide illustrations and documentation.

## CREATING A PARTICULAR COGNITIVE STRUCTURE

It is considered a truism by virtually all psychologists that a person's behavior is guided by his perception of the world in which he lives. Action is taken on the basis of a person's view of the 'facts' of the situation. Alternatives are chosen according to beliefs about "what leads to what." The content and relationships among parts of a person's psychological world may be called his cognitive structure, and it may be stated that a person's behavior is a function of the nature of his cognitive structure. It follows from this formulation that one way to change a person's behavior is to modify his cognitive structure. Certain kinds of changes of behavior, moreover, seem to be possible only if certain changes of cognitive structure take place. This principle applies to all efforts to influence behavior, whether in a face-to-face situation or by communication through a distance.

The modification of cognitive structure in individuals by means of the mass media has several prerequisites. These may be stated in the form of principles.

**1. The 'message' (i.e., information, facts, etc.), must reach the sense organs of the persons who are to be influenced.**

Stated in such a bald fashion this principle seems obvious enough. Yet it has practical consequences which are not so commonly recognized. Research upon readership and listenership has made it clear that putting a message on a national radio network or in a national periodical by no means assures that it will actually reach the sense organs of a significant proportion of

the population. Only a fraction of the population listens to the radio at any given time, and quite small proportions see a given issue of a periodical. For the most part, people choose the media and thus the 'messages' which are to reach them at any given time. They decide whether they will listen to the radio, read a magazine, go to the movies, or attend a political rally. There is no guarantee, therefore, that providing the opportunity for mass stimulation of the entire population will result in the actual stimulation of any large segment of it.

**1a. Total stimulus situations are selected or rejected on the basis of an impression of their general characteristics.**

Although the factors determining the way people select stimulus situations are only partially known, there appear to be broad categories which people employ in characterizing stimulus situations, such as entertainment, news, politics, advertising, and the like. Whether or not a person will choose one or another stimulus situation seems to depend upon his reaction to the general category. An illustration of this process is provided by research on the War Bond program. Early in the war the Treasury Department distributed through the mail a pamphlet about bonds to every household in most parts of the country. As a test of its effectiveness a sample survey was conducted in Baltimore, Maryland, to determine how many people had read the pamphlet. Although this pamphlet had been placed in the mailbox of nearly every family in the city, it was found that 83

per cent of those interviewed did not remember having seen it, even after being shown a copy of the publication and being allowed to examine its contents. Of the 17 per cent who recalled having received a copy, about one-third reported that they had not looked through it at all and were able to recognize only the front cover. This means, then, that only about 11 per cent of the adult population had read any part of the pamphlet. In attempting to learn why so many people failed to read the pamphlet after receiving it, it was found that many people had confused the pamphlet with other publications of similar format, such as Sunday newspaper supplements or other advertising matter. A number of people asserted that they had thrown it away because they had thought it was a commercial advertising leaflet. Another group of people took it to be a children's publication and gave it to their children without reading it themselves. What happened, then, was that upon the basis of a first general impression people categorized the pamphlet as something they did not care to read and disposed of it without further scrutiny.

**1b. The categories employed by a person in characterizing stimulus situations tend to protect him from unwanted changes in his cognitive structure.**

Apparently one common consequence of this categorization of stimulus situations is the protection of the person from stimuli which might produce unwanted changes in his cognitive structure. Illustrative of this principle are the tendencies of people to read newspapers whose editorial policy tends to agree with their own and to listen predominantly to political candidates who belong to their own party. Further evidence may be derived from the wartime research program for the

Treasury. In the spring of 1944 Treasury Department officials were exploring the possibilities of using documentary movies in order to heighten citizen identification with the war effort. As an experiment to determine the effects of one particular movie, a week's showing was organized in a public auditorium in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Tickets were distributed widely throughout the population by labor unions, employers, civilian defense organizations, nationality groups, civic organizations, city employees, and many others. During the week approximately five per cent of the adult population of Bridgeport came to the movie. As a part of the evaluation of the effects of the movie on people's interest in participating in voluntary civilian war activities, interviews were conducted with a random sample of those attending and with a control sample of people who did not attend the movie. One of the most striking findings of this study revealed that the people who attended the movie were the ones whose behavior was already closest to that encouraged by the movie. For example, approximately 40 per cent of those attending the movie had offered blood to the Red Cross while only 20 per cent of those not attending had done so. Other measures of activity in community affairs revealed similar differences, and there was evidence that those attending the movie came disproportionately from the upper income levels of the population. In other words, the way in which the appeal to attend the movie was categorized by the public made it less attractive to those very people whom the movie was designed to influence. Had the movie been shown in commercial theaters simply as 'entertainment' it might not have selected such a special group of people.

**2. Having reached the sense organs, the 'message' must be accepted as a part of the person's cognitive structure.**

Even after a 'message' reaches the sense organs of an individual there are many reasons that it may not be incorporated into his cognitive structure. Everyone knows that there is often a considerable difference between telling a person something and having him pay attention to it, remember it, or accept it as true. In general the same factors operate to facilitate or inhibit the acceptance of a given 'message' that influence the selection of stimulation from the media. We may therefore note the following principles.

**2a. Once a given 'message' is received it will tend to be accepted or rejected on the basis of more general categories to which it appears to belong.**

**2b. The categories employed by a person in characterizing 'messages' tend to protect him from unwanted changes in his cognitive structure.**

Anyone desiring to influence the behavior of others must keep constantly in mind a very simple and obvious fact, namely, that everyone, after the earliest stages of infancy, possesses a remarkably stable cognitive structure upon which he depends for a satisfactory adjustment to his environment. Any effort to change behavior through a modification of this cognitive structure must overcome the forces tending to maintain the present structure. Only when a given cognitive structure seems to the person to be unsatisfactory for his adjustment is he likely readily to receive influences designed to change that structure. It is instructive to examine what happens when an item is presented which is at variance with the cognitive structure.

When such a situation occurs a disequilibrium is established which must be restored in some fashion. Characteristically one or more of three things seem to happen.

**2c. When a 'message' is inconsistent with a person's prevailing cognitive structure it will either (a) be rejected, (b) be distorted so as to fit, or (c) produce changes in the cognitive structure.**

Which of these outcomes will actually occur depends upon the relative strength of the forces maintaining the cognitive structure and of those carried by the new 'message.' It will not be possible to explore here the factors determining the magnitude of these forces, but it may be indicated that the forces maintaining a cognitive structure are ordinarily of a very great magnitude. Evidence from the War Bond research may be cited to illustrate two points of relevance here. First, it will be seen that, despite continued efforts throughout the war to get people to understand some of the major purposes the Government had for its War Bond program, there was little actual change in people's beliefs. This is evidence of the stability of cognitive structure and its resistance to change. Second, it will be evident that this stability was maintained by people selecting from the great variety of promotional material developed for the campaigns those features which conformed to their existing cognitive structure and rejecting those which deviated.

After each of the War Loans a sample of the population was asked: "Why do you think the Government is anxious to get people to buy bonds?" The specific answers given by respondents to this question have been grouped under a few major headings in *Table 1*. It will be seen how little the

**Table 1.—Reasons Attributed to Government for Wanting to Sell Bonds**

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>	<i>Fourth</i>	<i>Fifth</i>	<i>Sixth</i>	<i>Seventh</i>
	<i>Loan</i> <i>April</i> <i>1943</i>	<i>Loan</i> <i>Sept.</i> <i>1943</i>	<i>Loan</i> <i>Jan.</i> <i>1944</i>	<i>Loan</i> <i>June</i> <i>1944</i>	<i>Loan</i> <i>Nov.</i> <i>1944</i>	<i>Loan</i> <i>June</i> <i>1945</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
To finance the war, to win the war, to help soldiers	65	75	65	65	67	68
To prevent inflation ...	14	11	14	15	15	14
To get people to save ...	4	4	7	8	7	10
To provide postwar security ...	4	2	2	3	2	3
Other reasons ...	13	8	12	9	9	5
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of interviews ...	1,358	1,583	1,441	1,925	2,148	2,263

answers changed over a period of thirty months of War Bond publicity.

The stability of the percentages in the table is most remarkable. With minor exceptions the variability does not exceed that expected simply from repeated samplings of a population with constant characteristics. Since the same individuals were not interviewed in the various studies it is not possible to determine with certainty that individuals were not shifting from one category to another from one time to the next, but the most likely hypothesis would seem to be that there was remarkably little change throughout the war in people's views as to why the Government was wanting to sell bonds. This stability was maintained in the face of a tremendous barrage of promotion through all the media of communication. Examination of the content of this promotion makes it clear that no single explanation of the Government's reasons was universally pushed, and it is reasonable to suppose that there was

a rough correspondence between the percentage of the publicity devoted to any given reason and the number of people already holding that reason. But the remarkable fact remains that, with the great array of reasons being publicized, people seemed to keep the ones they arrived at in the very beginning of the war.

In the course of the research program considerable attention was given to the nature of popular thinking about the functioning of the economy and the role of War Bonds in the prevention of inflation. From this analysis it became clear, for example, why the promotion designed to explain the Government's interest in bond sales as a means of inflation control did not succeed in changing popular thinking. It became apparent that for many people war finance was seen simply as the collection of dollars by Uncle Sam which were then paid by him to manufacturers of war goods. If Uncle Sam sold the bonds, he could buy equipment; if he

did not sell them, he could not get the supplies. Asked directly whether failure to sell enough bonds would cause a shortage of military equipment, 49 per cent of those interviewed after the Fourth Loan said that it would. With such a conception of the nature of the economy is it not surprising that, when asked whether they thought buying bonds would help keep prices down, 54 per cent either asserted directly that bond purchases had no effect on prices or said that they could not see any relation between the two. Nor is it surprising that during the war there was a slight increase in this percentage since a number of people noted that even though bonds were being sold in large quantities prices were continuing to rise.

From this and similar evidence the conclusion seems warranted that people succeeded in maintaining an early established cognitive structure by selecting from the War Bond promotion those items which conformed to that structure and by ignoring items deviating from it.

Numerous examples of the distortion of 'messages' to make them agree with existing beliefs could be cited, but perhaps the most dramatic are those related to the conviction held by a minority of the population that the Government would not redeem the

bonds. Whenever a change of procedure in the redemption of bonds was instituted, rumors cropped up among these people to the effect that the new change was a step toward 'freezing' bonds. At one point during the war a group of enthusiastic citizens (probably as a publicity stunt) conducted a bonfire in which they burned their bonds as a gesture to indicate their willingness to give money to the Government for the war. This event stimulated rumors among those distrusting the Government's intention to repay that the bonds were no good and that people were burning them because they were worthless.

To summarize the evidence presented up to this point, it is clear that changes in cognitive structure cannot be assured simply by guaranteeing wide coverage of the media of communication. By selecting the stimuli from the media which they will allow to reach their sense organs and by rejecting or distorting messages that deviate too much from existing cognitive structures, people manage to resist much of the effort made to change their thinking by techniques of mass persuasion. To the extent that changes in behavior are dependent upon changes of cognitive structure they, at the same time, resist efforts to modify their usual manner of behavior.

## **CREATING A PARTICULAR MOTIVATIONAL STRUCTURE**

We have now explored some of the implications of the notion that behavior is guided by a person's cognitive structure. For a satisfactory analysis of the process of social induction of behavior, however, it is necessary to examine a bit further what it is that energizes behavior. As a general statement it may be said that personal needs provide the energy for behavior and

express themselves through the setting up of goals in the person's cognitive structure. That is to say, certain activities (like eating, going to the movies, running for Congress, etc.) become attractive when corresponding needs are activated, and the amount of energy that will be devoted to these activities depends upon the strength of the need (i.e., the level of need tension). It



should be noted further that goals have a location in the cognitive structure so that for a given individual some activities are seen as leading to the satisfaction of certain needs and others are seen as unrelated to such satisfaction or even leading away from it. Thus, for one person 'joining a union' may be seen as a path leading to economic security, while for another 'being nice to the boss' may be seen as the path toward the same goal, with 'joining the union' being in exactly the opposite direction.

It follows from these general observations about the nature of human motivation that efforts to influence the behavior of another person must attempt either to modify needs (and goals) or to change the person's motivational structure as to which activities lead to which goals. This means that a person can be induced to do voluntarily something that he would otherwise not do only if a need can be established for which this action is a goal or if the action can be made to be seen as a path to an existing goal. Little is known at the present time about the establishment of needs, but it appears unlikely that any single campaign via the mass media can actually establish new needs. Whether or not this feat is possible, the following principle may nevertheless be stated.

**3. To induce a given action by mass persuasion, this action must be seen by the person as a path to some goal that he has.**

When people were asked during the war why they were buying bonds, they gave answers that could readily be interpreted in terms of the motivational principles outlined here. The most common reasons were related to the desire to win the war. People said, in essence, though they phrased it in many

ways, "I want to help win the war, and buying War Bonds is one way I can help." Stated reasons of this type were the following: (percentages are given to indicate the proportion of the adult population giving them after the Seventh Loan.) (a) Because the country needs the money to pay for the war (64 per cent.). (b) To help the boys, to bring them back (16 per cent). (c) To get the war over sooner (6 per cent).

Another goal for which buying bonds was seen as a path may be loosely defined as 'personal economic security.' People who gave reasons of this type said in essence, "I want to provide economic security for myself and family, and buying War Bonds is one way I can achieve this goal." The most common of these reasons given after the Seventh Loan were: (a) To save for some indefinite personal use in the future (44 per cent.) (b) To have reserves in case of a post-war depression (5 per cent). (c) Because bonds are a good investment (24 per cent).

A third rather common type of goal was "wanting to be a good citizen." Reasons related to this goal tended to be stated in terms of the Government's needs or objectives. To the extent that the Government's objectives were seen as also providing satisfaction of personal financial needs these reasons could also be classified under the previous heading. The more frequent of these reasons were: (a) To help prevent inflation (14 per cent). (b) Because the Government wants people to save (10 per cent). (c) To prevent a post-war depression (1 per cent).

Undoubtedly many people had other personal goals for which buying bonds was seen as a path. It appears, for example, that some people saw the buying of bonds at public rallies as a means of gaining prestige. At first

glance it would seem that the number of goals that could be made to appear attainable through the purchase of bonds would be almost limitless. Further scrutiny of the facts, however, indicates that there were actually severe limitations on the kinds of connections that could be established between bond-buying and personal goals. Unless people could see something in the nature of buying bonds that made this act appear reasonably a path to a given goal, all the power of mass persuasion that could be mobilized could not get the connection accepted.

**3a. A given action will be accepted as a path to a goal only if the connections 'fit' the person's larger cognitive structure.**

As documentation of this principle it is necessary only to refer again to the fact that, despite efforts to explain the relation between buying bonds and inflation control, over half of the population still denied that there was such a relationship because it did not fit into their general understanding of the nature of the economy. Similarly those people who believed that the Government would not repay the bonds could not be induced to believe that buying bonds would provide them with personal economic security after the war.

**3b. The more goals which are seen as attainable by a single path, the more likely it is that a person will take that path.**

It is, of course, possible for a given action to be 'seen as leading simultaneously to more than one goal. When such a situation exists, the forces directed toward these various goals will all assume the direction of the one action which is the path common to them all. It is to be expected, then, that

making a given action appear as leading to several goals will increase the likelihood that that action will be chosen. In persuading people to buy War Bonds, this meant that the more reasons they could be led to see for buying the more likely they should be to buy. Evidence from the research program consistently supported this conclusion. Consider the findings of the survey after the Seventh Loan (*Table 2*). It is seen that people who saw more than one type of reason for buying bonds were much more likely to buy, whether solicited or not, than were those who had only one type of reason. In order to be certain that differences in income among those giving different numbers of reasons do not produce these results, it is necessary to conduct this analysis separately within restricted income ranges. When this procedure is followed, it is found that at every income level people who gave more than one type of reason were more likely to buy than were those who mentioned only one type.

**3c. If an action is seen as not leading to a desired goal or as leading to an undesired end, it will not be chosen.**

**3d. If an action is seen as leading to a desired goal, it will tend not to be chosen to the extent that easier, cheaper, or otherwise more desirable actions are also seen as leading to the same goal.**

These two principles are simply elaborations of the general motivational scheme already outlined. They point, however, to exceedingly important practical implications for anyone desiring to influence behavior by mass persuasion. Much of the 'psychological warfare' of competing propagandists or of competing advertising programs is concerned with these principles. In such competition much effort is devoted to the objective of showing how one's

**Table 2.—The Relation of the Number of Reasons Mentioned to Buying Bonds in the Seventh War Loan**

<i>Types of Reasons Mentioned</i>	<i>Proportion buying for drive of those:</i>	
	<i>Personally asked to buy</i>	<i>Not asked to buy</i>
	%	%
Patriotic, personal financial, and national financial ... ..	65	35
Patriotic and personal financial <i>or</i> Patriotic and national financial ... ..	57	22
Patriotic only ... ..	44	9
Number of interviews ... ..	1,232	1,104

own proposed course of action leads to a desired goal while the action proposed by the competitor does not lead to a desired goal or actually leads to an undesired end. The efforts of dictators to monopolize the channels of communication stem largely from the realization that competitors may offer more acceptable paths to accepted goals.

Those people who during the war believed that the Government would not repay the bonds may be cited to illustrate *Principle 3c*. For these people, 'buying bonds' was perceived as leading to 'losing my money.' Needless to say, it was found that these people resisted efforts to get them to buy bonds and were quite ready to redeem their bonds if they were induced to purchase them. In order to make willing bond buyers out of these people it was necessary to change their motivational structure in regard to the consequences seen to be connected with the act of buying bonds. Examples of the competition of paths to the same goal may also be found in the War Bond campaigns. People who chose to invest their money in something more profitable than bonds were choosing a

path to economic gain which appeared to be better than bonds. The following list of the more common reasons given for not buying bonds will be seen to illustrate the operation of both of these principles: bonds may not be redeemed; other investments are safer; bonds aren't liquid enough; bonds give less return than other investments; bonds have too long a maturity period; bonds may be no good because we might lose the war; bonds will be worthless because of inflation; bonds are not necessary for victory; bonds prolong the war; savings should be kept in several forms; and, owning bonds gives the Government a record of my savings.

The analysis presented in this and the preceding sections specifies some of the requirements for campaigns designed to influence behavior. In brief, we have seen that a campaign must reach the sense organs with 'messages,' that these 'messages' must be of such a nature as to be accepted into existing cognitive structures, and that proposed courses of action must be seen as leading to desired goals. It might appear that, if these requirements

were met, a campaign would succeed in inducing desired changes of behavior.

The evidence indicates, however, that a further requirement exists.

## CREATING A PARTICULAR BEHAVIORAL STRUCTURE

The phrase 'good intentions' suggests the nature of this further requirement. It is quite possible for a person to have a given cognitive and motivational structure for a long period of time without its ever actually gaining control of his behavior. There are certain motivational systems, like those of hunger or thirst, which gain control of a person's action periodically because of a heightened discomfort that arises and persists until action is taken. There are, however, other systems, much more commonly those with which campaigns of mass persuasion deal, which carry with them no insistent prod to action within any clear limitation of time. To the extent that a campaign attempts to induce action in regard to systems of this latter type it must be designed to deal specifically with this problem.

### **4. To induce a given action, an appropriate cognitive and motivational system must gain control of the person's behavior at a particular point in time.**

Needless to say, a person's behavior is at all times under the control of some motivational system, and the problem of inducing a given action is that of getting a particular cognitive and motivational structure in control of behavior at some specific point in time. The competition among various structures for the control of behavior is often very great. When a person is asked why he has not actually done a particular thing that he seemingly had accepted as desirable, he may answer that he did not have the time, energy, or financial resources. Such a statement is equivalent to saying that other motivational

systems have maintained control of his behavior to such an extent that they monopolized his time and resources.

In selling War Bonds this type of competition was most evident. Following each of the War Loan drives a sample of those not buying bonds were asked their reasons for not buying. From one-half to three-quarters of these people replied that they "could not afford to buy bonds during the drive." This answer was, of course, a socially acceptable way of excusing oneself for not having submitted to social pressure, but in most instances it also reflected the fact that other motivational systems (such as those related to the needs for food, shelter, recreation, social status, etc.), had remained in control of behavior throughout the period of the drive. Most of these people held quite favorable attitudes toward bonds, accepted the desirability of their owning bonds, and agreed that buying bonds was a patriotic act. The problem of getting them actually to buy during a campaign consisted, therefore, not so much of creating favorable cognitive and motivational structures as of getting those structures in control of behavior at some specific point in time during the drive.

**4a. The more specifically defined the path of action to a goal (in an accepted motivational structure), the more likely it is that the structure will gain control of behavior.**

**4b. The more specifically a path of action is located in time, the more likely it is that the structure will gain control of behavior.**

Examination of a number of campaigns of mass persuasion will reveal that quite commonly the course of action being encouraged is described in relatively general terms. It is rare that the proposed action is described in concrete detail or given a precise location in time. There are, of course, good reasons for couching the language of a campaign of mass persuasion in general terms: circumstances vary greatly among people in the general population, so that a specific statement may not apply realistically to all and, if a statement is made too specific, it can more easily be rejected. But despite these difficulties, the fact seems well documented that, unless a proposed action is defined quite specifically, it is probable that it will not actually be carried out in behavior, even though it has been accepted as desirable.

The experience of the Second War Loan is especially illuminating in this connection. As we have already seen, more than \$12,000,000 worth of promotion was put into this campaign. Analysis of its content, however, disclosed that the major appeal to action was expressed in the phrase, "Buy War Bonds." Interviews after the campaign revealed that this statement was sufficiently broad for people to accept the desirability of the action without feeling any pressure actually to buy bonds during the time of the campaign. In the interviews many people said in effect, "I agree completely that people should buy bonds; in fact I own quite a number myself." When asked why they had not bought during the drive, many people indicated their belief that they had conformed completely with the requests of the publicity "to buy bonds," even though they had not purchased any during the campaign.

As a result of this type of analysis of the Second Loan, Treasury officials

developed quite a different campaign for the Third Loan. In this campaign the major appeal to action was phrased, "Buy an *extra* bond for the Third War Loan." In addition, an individual quota of a \$100 bond was given emphasis, and other devices were used to make it clear that an extra purchase was being requested during a specified period of time. From the research following the Third Drive it became abundantly clear that the revised promotion had been much more effective. It was found, for example, that the number of people asserting that they had not bought "because I am doing my share" dropped from 19 per cent after the Second Loan to 6 per cent after the Third and that the number of people buying bonds rose from 20 to 39 per cent.

There were many ways in which the act of buying bonds could be specified in publicity. The major ways employed in the War Bond publicity were by indicating the amount to be purchased, the time for buying, and the place to buy. Thus, the campaigns said in effect, "Buy an extra \$100 bond during the drive from the solicitor where you work." All available evidence indicates that this type of appeal was far more effective than those couched in more general terms.

**4c. A given motivational structure may be set in control of behavior by placing the person in a situation requiring a decision to take, or not to take, a step of action that is a part of the structure.**

If an action, like buying bonds, has become a part of a person's motivational structure, one way to bring that structure into control over the person's behavior is to place him in a situation where he must decide whether or not he will buy a bond at that moment.

The necessity of making a decision in regard to a specific action requires that motivational structures of which this action is a part be brought to bear in determining the next step in action. When such a decision is required, the action will be taken if the resultant forces in all activated motivational structures are in the direction of that particular action. This means, of course, that forcing a decision will result in the desired action only if appropriate cognitive and motivational structures have been accepted by the person. By the same token, however, it means that the desired action will result if the appropriate structures do exist.

The technique of personal solicitation in selling War Bonds made use of this principle. When a person was solicited, he was asked to make a decision to buy, or not to buy, a bond at that time. A 'solicitor' might also take the occasion to try to create favorable cognitive and motivational structures, but the essential function of solicitation lay in the fact that it required the person to make a decision. From these considerations we may conclude that

personal solicitation should precipitate bond buying among people whose motivational structure was favorable to buying bonds. In other words, a campaign of personal solicitation should greatly increase the number of people buying bonds if it follows an effective campaign of publicity and education. The more effective the publicity (in creating favorable cognitive and motivational structures) the greater should be the effect of solicitation.

The great mass of data collected after each of the War Loans supports these conclusions quite strongly. In *Table 3* are presented only some of these findings, selected to illustrate the results under rather different conditions. It is seen that there is a close relation between the number of people solicited in a drive and the number of people actually buying bonds. Further, the percentage of people buying bonds is much greater among those solicited than among those not solicited. In all the data analyzed the same conclusion was reached: people who were personally asked to buy were always found to be more likely to buy—in every drive, in

**Table 3.—Some Relations between Personal Solicitation and Buying**

	<i>Second Loan April, 1943</i>	<i>Third Loan Sept., 1943</i>	<i>Fourth Loan Jan., 1944</i>	<i>Fifth Loan June, 1944</i>
	%	%	%	%
<i>Of all income receivers:</i>				
Were personally solicited	25	50	51	58
Bought extra bonds ...	20	39	45	47
<i>Of those not solicited:</i>				
Bought extra bonds ...	12	18	25	22
<i>Of those solicited:</i>				
Bought extra bonds ...	47	59	63	66
Number of interviews ...	1,358	1,583	1,441	1,925

every income bracket, in every occupational group, in every section of the country.

The dependence of the outcome of solicitation upon the existence of favorable motivational structures can be seen in *Table 2*. Solicitation among

people with more favorable structures was much more likely to precipitate buying than among those with less favorable structures (among those with three reasons for buying, 65 per cent; two reasons, 57 per cent; one reason, 44 per cent).

## CONCLUSIONS

The principles presented here derive from a more extensive theory of human motivation. They are concerned with the particular motivational problem of inducing behavior 'from the outside.' To the extent that they are valid, they should apply to all inductions, whether through the mass media or in a face-to-face situation. They should also apply to inductions attempted for all types of purposes, whether to sell, to train, to supervise work, to produce therapy, and so on. In all such attempts the process of induction must be concerned with the establishment of cognitive, motivational, and behavioral structures. Only when conditions are proper in respect to all three of these, will the actual induction of behavior occur.

Applied to the field of mass per-

suasion, these principles may serve as a yardstick for evaluating the probable success of any proposed campaign. The principles are by no means exhaustive, nor do they give detailed guides for the creative aspects of the development of campaigns. They do, however, provide a list of essential requirements for the success of any campaign of mass persuasion. It can be seen, moreover, that, because of the inherent difficulties of meeting these requirements, campaigns are not likely to make basic changes in the behavior of large numbers of people unless there is a monopolization of the channels of communication or unless the changes being encouraged are in the same direction as those being stimulated by other influences.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A Biographical note on the author of this paper appeared in *Human Relations*, Vol. I, No. 4.