

# **At your service!**

The National Board for Historical Service and its role in  
society and politics during Wartime America.

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## **Introduction**

When a democracy makes war, it firstly has to create a war psychosis, and to create a war psychosis is to risk corroding the values of democracy. You have to lie, you have to exaggerate, you have to distort and so on.<sup>1</sup>

The Iraq war of 2003 was without doubt one of the most criticized wars the United States has ever fought. Heated debates were going on before the invasion started, only to get more intense when the reasons for starting the war (Iraq was a terror state supposedly possessing weapons of mass destruction) turned out to be false. The discussion, whether or not to invade Iraq, contained a remarkable feature. Tony Judt, as quoted above, was one of the anti-war commentators in the US. The famous historian, known for *Postwar* and *Ill Fares the Land* saw himself: ‘in the first place a teacher, second a writer, third a historian and fourth a public commentator which is where controversy happens.’ In one of his last published books *Thinking the Twentieth-Century*, which is more of a transcription of the interview conducted by Timothy Snyder, Judt explained that he as an anti-war commentator received much criticism. During a television show, Judt was asked:

But surely you trust Donald Rumsfeld? He’s got so much experience; you’re not going to tell me that you’ve got a better view of national security than Donald Rumsfeld?

According to Judt, this kind of thinking was terribly dangerous. He explained to Snyder:

What we have here is the argument of imputed authority. The secretary of defence must know better because he’s in charge. And the whole point of critical intellectual engagement is to say the opposite: if someone is in charge, that puts a special onus upon the rest of us to interrogate them very hard, rather than to back off and say “daddy knows best.”<sup>2</sup>

Judt explained that intellectuals were very much needed in a democracy, otherwise the gap between the rulers and the governed would not be bridged.<sup>3</sup> A striking resemblance with the First World War can be noticed surrounding the example of Judt.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Judt & Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (New York 2012) 310-311.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, 312.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, 306-307.

When the United States joined the Entente in 1917, many intellectuals from a large variety of fields of expertise put their abilities to work in order to support the government. Historians themselves played an important role in spreading propaganda that supported the US involvement in the conflict. Criticism from a small minority of intellectuals was dismissed. John Franklin Jameson founded the National Board for Historical Service (NBHS) in 1917 at the Carnegie Institute. The NBHS came forth out of the question, what historians could provide to the country during wartime. Co-founder of the NBHS Frederic L. Paxson described the board in later years as an organization for ‘historical engineering’.<sup>4</sup> For example, a NBHS study on the German press concluded:

Voluntary co-operation of the newspaper publishers of America resulted in a more effective standardization of the information and arguments presented to the American people, than existed under the nominally strict military control exercised in Germany.<sup>5</sup>

In 1977, Noam Chomsky, an American linguist and philosopher, held the Johan Huizinga Lezing at the University of Leiden. He claimed that the example of the NBHS illustrated a very interesting point about propaganda and the intelligentsia. For example, a totalitarian society has very clear and simple transparent mechanisms of indoctrination. The technocratic and politically oriented intellectuals are expressing the official doctrine of the state. Therefore the doctrine can be easily identified as propaganda. However in a capitalist democracy, the situation becomes more complex. In such a society the press and the intellectuals seem to be independent, anti-establishment, hypercritical and antagonistic. Reality, Chomsky explained, appears to be different. Although criticism exists, it remains within narrow bounds. Critics are assuming the basic principles of state propaganda. The state propaganda does not express a position to which everyone must adapt, or to which they may privately oppose. The state is seeking to determine and limit the spectrum of thought:

The official doctrine at one extreme, and the position of its most vocal adversaries, at the other. Over the entire spectrum, the same fundamental assumptions are insinuated, though rarely expressed. They are presupposed, but not asserted.<sup>6</sup>

Without doubt, Chomsky said, any expert on indoctrination would confirm the far more effective method of constraining all possible thought within a framework of tacit assumption.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge 1988) 128.

<sup>5</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Johan Huizinga Lezing 1977, Intellectuals and the State* (Leiden 1978) 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, 30-31.

Rather than trying to impose a doctrine by force. The American propaganda system has elevated it to high-art, and some of its achievements are attributable to the method of feigned dissent, practiced by intellectuals. The final task, according to Chomsky for a propaganda system, is to restore faith in the transcendent purpose. Not only does it have to demonize the enemy, it also has to re-establish its own moral purity of the nation. The propaganda system rose magnificently on this point to the present occasion.<sup>7</sup> Important for this research is to be conscious of the fact that the US always refers to its foundations of freedom and democracy. Therefore it seems a contradiction that in such a state a propaganda system of this magnitude was created.

Chomsky's arguments, considering state propaganda in a capitalist democracy such as the United States, offers the historiographical framework for this research on the NBHS. The argument of tacit assumption suggests that for intellectuals and their arguments to be taken seriously, they had to offer something in the states interest. Otherwise intellectuals, or historians in the case of this research, would be victim of the tacit assumption. The *Action Intellectuals* of John Richard Murnane indicate the same. In his dissertation *The Guardians of Progress: the First Generation of "Action Intellectuals" and America's failed search for a New World Order since 1917*, Murnane claimed that intellectuals became involved with state affairs during the Great War. President Woodrow Wilson played an important role, since he assembled an academically staffed commission *The Inquiry* in September 1917. Murnane argues that this helped to institutionalize the ideas that were deeply rooted in the progressive era (roughly 1870 till 1919) of the United States.<sup>8</sup> The action intellectuals introduced, do also reflect on a changing of political culture in the US, since a link between the academic world and Washington was established, without tacit assumption of these intellectuals being involved. This was a relatively new phenomenon for the US, as the development of the American higher education system did not lead to such involvement before. Jonathan Macauley Nielson has written in his dissertation *American Historians at the Versailles Peace Conference, 1919: the Scholar as Patriot and Diplomat*, about this development. The NBHS seemed to position itself as an agency that was used by the US government as a spokesman for its propaganda. After research however, the board appears to be a reflection of change. Change in political culture, national identity and the role of the intellectual in society. Despite the theoretical independence of the board, there are connections between government agencies and the NBHS that prove otherwise. It is therefore that this research tries to define its position in society, government affairs and intellectual engagement. Why was the National Board for Historical Service important for the intellectual history of the United States?

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, 32.

<sup>8</sup> John Richard Murnane, *The Guardians of Progress: the First Generation of "Action Intellectuals: and America's Failed search for a New World Order since 1917* (Massachusetts 1999) 1.

To answer this question, the research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will be focussed around the figures of John Franklin Jameson and Woodrow Wilson. Both played a very important role in the question of why it was possible for the NBHS to be created. Along with those figures, the moral and philosophical dilemma's of the nineteenth-century historian, especially in the light of the American higher education crisis, needs to be researched. The academic system in the US has experienced important developments. It is only in the light of these dilemmas, developments and persons that we can fully understand the creation of the NBHS. In the second chapter, the publications of the NBHS will be analysed. The publications, in light of Chomsky's, Murnane's and Nielson's arguments contain a better understanding of the NBHS. The research will show what kind of history the board published. These publications demanded a sacrifice in professionalism. When taken into consideration what is available without going trough the archives in the US, they fairly represent their publications. In the third chapter the meaning and intentions behind the NBHS publications are researched, by looking at general intellectual engagement in 1917. The sacrifice aspect does play an important role in order to understand why intellectuals supported the war. Those intentions and sacrifices are of great importance, since it turned out that the NBHS was part of some greater development in the US. With this research it can be concluded that: the First World War, the United States, the NBHS, Jameson, Wilson, political culture, national identity, intellectual engagement and the development of the American higher education system (including the historical profession itself) are all connected. Our thoughts and assumptions about these subjects will be influenced by this research.

## Chapter one

We formed a National Board for Historical Service, ... I believe that much good will come from the movement, and that many history-men, eager to serve the country, but not seeing precisely how, will by these means find an opportunity to be useful.<sup>9</sup>

To understand the creation of the National Board for Historical Service it is obvious to research the role of its initiator. John Franklin Jameson's publications from the 1920's contain valuable insights in how he thought about the historical profession. More importantly, a struggle within the historical profession can be noticed. How to be useful for society with your profession was a question many historians faced. Another important reason why Jameson's takes an important role in this chapter (and research) was given by George T. Blakey, who wrote in *Historians on the Homefront: American propagandists for the Great War* that Jameson's career symbolized the professionalization of the historical profession in the United States. Therefore he was considered as an unofficial leader.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, this chapter's focus is laid upon the American higher education crisis. This research will show that the climate in which the NBHS could be possible was in some part created by the development of the American higher education system. That climate made it possible for the academic and political world to become intertwined. In other words, it was the start a changing political culture in the US. However, to answer the question with full confidence, a third aspect has to be looked at, in the person of Woodrow Wilson. During his presidency, not only the national identity of the country on the foreign policy aspect was changed, but also the US political culture on a more permanent basis during. Those factors have greatly contributed to the question why it was possible for the NBHS to be created in 1917. The NBHS turned out to be a result of those factors.

### **John Franklin Jameson and the development of the historical profession**

John Franklin Jameson, who was not only the head of the Department of Historical research of the Carnegie institution of Washington but also an editor of the *American Historical Review* (AHR), was a major figure in the professional activities of historians in the early twentieth century.<sup>11 12</sup> Jameson's father, John, was a schoolteacher, lawyer, and postmaster.

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<sup>9</sup> John Franklin Jameson, Letter to Frank A. Golder, May 23 1917, In: Elizabeth Donnan and Leo F. Stock, *An Historians World, Selections from the correspondence of John Franklin Jameson* (Philadelphia 1956) 206-207.

<sup>10</sup> George T. Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront: American propagandists for the Great War* (Kentucky 1970) 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Carol S Gruber, *Mars and Minerva, World War I and the Uses of the Higher learning in America* (Louisiana 1975) 120.

<sup>12</sup> To awaken an interest in the memory and achievements of Jameson, Ruth Anna fisher compiled the book: *John Franklin Jameson: A Tribute*, in 1965. Jameson died in 1937, and since some contemporaries of Jameson were still

Jameson attended public schools before he went to the Roxbury Latin School. Although he was admitted to Harvard University, he attended Amherst College in 1875 because his family moved there. During the next four years John W. Burgess, a political science professor and history professor Anson W. Morse were of much importance for Jameson's intellectual development. After his graduation, Jameson wanted to study in Germany.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, he relied upon financial aid from family acquaintances, which declined further assistance to study abroad; he was unable to do so. However, Herbert Baxter Adams, whom also played an important role in Jameson's intellectual development, offered him a place as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins since both were Amherst Alumni. Adams had built a history and political science department at Johns Hopkins. In 1882 Jameson received his first doctorate in history. During the eight years Jameson spent at Johns Hopkins he earned many achievements such as: winning a fellowship and promotion to the rank of associate. Most importantly however, he developed a reputation as a scholar of institutional history and the middle states. Although Social history was one of his other interests, he did not pursue it personally since patrician instincts prevented him to. His career in historiography and his role as an academic entrepreneur however, gave him the possibility to encourage others to pursue social history. The tight institutional framework in which this period took place was a very frustrating part for Jameson.<sup>14</sup>

In 1888, Jameson received and accepted the offer for a professorship at Brown University in New England. Although he was not happy with the general atmosphere at Brown, his outlook changed. His marriage with Sara Elizabeth Elwell in 1893 is probably one of the reasons, since Jameson was a very introvert person before he met her.<sup>15</sup> Thereby a new president was appointed to Brown in 1889. His work, although not exhaustive, included the improvement of the instructional resources at the university, publishing articles on political party history in the United States as well as producing an edition of the papers on the politician John C. Calhoun. These were published in the annual report of the *American Historical Association* (AHA) in 1899. In 1884 it was Jameson who helped to establish the association and therefore it is no surprise that the AHA became an outlet for his publications. The Leaders of the AHA appointed him in 1895 to be the first chairman of the Historical

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alive she wanted to publish a tribute to remind of what a great scholar he had been. She described Jameson as a gifted man of which his formidable achievements were the least of his remarkable features. With phenomenal learning, awesome memory and at home in four languages he also knew how to write. The writing was beautiful and clear so that there was never any mistaking in his meaning. Even though he could have written great books, Jameson choose not to, since he only wanted to interest young American historians in the history of their country, and also providing them with the means to present its story fully and factually.

Ruth Anna Fisher & William Lloyd Fox, *J. Franklin Jameson: A Tribute* (Washington 1965) vii-8.

<sup>13</sup> German historical scholarship was of much prestige and was an unavoidable model for the American.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Donnan and Leo F. Stock, *An Historian's World, Selections from the correspondence of John Franklin Jameson* (Philadelphia 1956) 1-3.

<sup>15</sup> Morey Rothberg & Jacqueline Goggin, *John Franklin Jameson and the Development of Humanistic Scholarship in America*, Volume 1 selected essay's, (Georgia 1993) xlv.



Manuscript Commission. Which made him the first managing editor of the American Historical Review. His career with the AHA has been very successful. Not only did he remain in that position until 1928, with the exception of the years 1901 to 1905, in 1907 Jameson was the first historian who became the president of the AHA.<sup>16 17</sup>

On April 29 1917, Jameson convened a meeting of seventeen historians, while just a few weeks before on April 6 the United States had declared war on the German Empire. For two day's the historians discussed on the question; 'What the members of that profession, as such, could do for the government or the public in time of war.'<sup>18</sup> The result of this discussion was the formation of the National Board for Historical Service. Mainly the function of the NBHS was:

To serve the nation, in a time when the national problems of war and of ultimate peace cannot receive their best solution without the light of historical knowledge on the one hand, and on the other hand the government and the public who need it; in a word, to mobilize the historical forces of the country for all the services to which they can be put.<sup>19</sup>

Carol S. Gruber argues in her book *Mars and Minerva, World War I and the Uses of the Higher Learning in America*, that the passing of historical interest is the only actual achievement of the NBHS. However, the importance of the organization was found in the commitments elicited from the scholars who served it, together with its exposure of the contradictions between the scholars' public and professional roles.<sup>20</sup>

When the development of the historical profession in the United States is explored between 1830-1900, philosophical and methodological dilemma's become apparent. The dilemma was whether or not the historian, in his search for objective truth, should judge the moral implications of decisions made in a given context by reaching beyond the empirical evidence. Historians have struggled since the beginning of historical inquiry to resolve this problem between the conviction that subjective interpretation had no place in analysis, known as presentism, and the contrasting view that truth was relative and only gained meaning as

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<sup>16</sup> Donnan and Stock, *An Historian's World*, 3-9.

<sup>17</sup> Boyd C Shafer, the AHA executive director from 1953 till 1962, wrote about Jameson as editor. Based on his experience as editor of the AHR he wrote that Jameson was a scholar that upheld the highest historical standards. Whether he was writing articles, reviews or editing them, he knew also how improve them. Jameson set standards for historical editing in America. Shafer even put Jameson on the same height as Leopold von Ranke and Gabriel Monod. Claiming that Ranke set the standards for the *Historische Zeitschrift* and German historians, Monod did the same in France and Jameson, in this case, for the United States. Nevertheless, Jameson once claimed that he never could be an excellent historian, his talent lied in the direction of heuristic. Helping other historians writing their great works.

Boyd C. Shafer, 'Jameson as Editor,' In: Fisher & Lloyd, *John Franklin Jameson*, 94-96.

<sup>18</sup> 'Historical News,' In: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1917, 917-956, 918.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, 918.

<sup>20</sup> Gruber, *Mars and Minerva*, 120-121.

historians understood the past in the light of contemporary events. The question of presentism versus subjective participation has been inherited from nineteenth-century amateur historians, who did recognize the conflict and choice in man-made decisions, and thus moral judgement.<sup>21</sup> It could not be more characteristic for the role American historians took upon themselves during the First World War. Their publications were full of moral judgement, which surpassed the empirical evidence of their research. The main goal of the NBHS could be seen as a clear reflection of those developments. For the first generation of professional academic historians, the rise of professionalism in the history of the nation's institutions of higher learning had significant consequences. Post Civil War developments swept the academic world. For example, the rise of professionalism and believing society could be served at its best by the application of trained intelligence in the public sector. Reforms as such however met resistance in the form of public distrust of the intellectual and scholar. The distrust of them could only be turned gradually. Most apparent was the transformation of the Old College (the colonial institution and its academic curriculum).<sup>22</sup>

These changes found origin during the 1830's and 1840's, when professional public lectures started to offer their services due to a growing public demand for practical knowledge. Professors and college presidents were in many cases the people that carried out such lectures. By portraying themselves as experts on a certain subject, the lecturing offered status, authority and income. Public speaking was used to expand their professional roles and asserting public leadership. For the traditional social and moral leaders of that time (the clergy and politicians) it meant that their pre-eminence was being subverted. Along with the development during the 1830's and 1840's, people like Ralph Waldo Emerson offered challenges to the scholar, who should be in his own opinion, a man of action. He had to be involved with the world, its concerns, and generate a moral force to rejuvenate the nation. Emerson found little support, his appeal to participate in public affairs found some support.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>24</sup> A connection between Emerson and the NBHS can be noticed. The demand for public knowledge, the way professionals tried to supply such, the question of presentism versus subjective participation and the ideas of Emerson indicated the problem historians faced during the First World War; how to be useful to society with their profession. When looking at some of Jameson's publications, it gives an interesting insight in what kind of historian he was, and thus how he would eventually find a solution for that problem.

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<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Macauley Nielson, *American Historians at the Versailles Peace Conference, 1919; The Scholar as Patriot and Diplomat* (Santa Barbara 1985) 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> Emerson's method of writing consisted out of skimming works of literature and philosophy of all types and from all cultures. Doing that he kept an eye upon ideas and phrases he could appropriate for his own use. This was Emerson's notion of research. It was based upon the conviction that organized study dulls the mind and that genuine insight arises spontaneously from the soul. Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, (London 2002) 58.

In 1926 Jameson published the book *The American Revolution, Considered as a Social Movement*. Jameson (still director of the Department of Historical research at the Carnegie institution of Washington) tried to explain how the revolution, especially its remembrance, influenced the status of persons, the land, commercial activity and the mind. For instance, Jameson claimed that the anniversary stimulated the popular interest in US history. An example being the founding of the *Magazine of American History*, which took place one year after the start of the 100-year anniversary of the American Revolution (1876). For Jameson this indicated the rising interest in history by the American citizen. Other aspects that proved him right were the passion for colonial furniture and the rise in amounts of history students, along with the number of professors in history. It was in Jameson's opinion that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution would certainly have brought forth the same effect. Due to the advances the historical profession had undergone in fifty years there were however some differences.<sup>25</sup>

Jameson's most important argument was that the commemoration in 1925 contained a much broader view on the events than ever before. The commemoration was based on three main pillars. The first being based on a significant rise of respect towards the British and Loyalist by the American people than there had been in 1875. Jameson claimed that it was the duty of rational beings to hear both sides, in this case the British and Loyalists on the one end, and the Revolutionaries on the other. The rise of history students was one of the reasons for this thought, since they saw no reason not to look at both sides. The second pillar contained an adjustment of the number of heroic deeds and people. Between the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1825 and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1875 the number of heroic deeds and people rose significantly. Some extreme cases marked the whole society brave and heroic. Although such imagery of heroism and bravery may not be seen as harmless, it was not wholesome Jameson wrote. Especially not when it is compared with later generations. Remembrance should contain a fair image to the moderns, not a fabricated image of a golden age America in 1776. The third and last pillar of the commemoration in 1925 was that the American Revolution itself was considered as something much bigger than just military or political.<sup>26</sup>

Especially the first and second pillars raise questions about Jameson. The NBHS supported the government during the First World War and the service these historians offered were not in line with his point of rational research and not to fabricate history or a story. For example, the NBHS supported the line of the government claiming the Germans were the sole aggressor of the war. This created image of good versus evil was in sharp contrast of what Jameson claimed in his book, written only a decade later. Did Jameson change his mind about how a historian should work? It was not the case. The difference between Jameson of around

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<sup>25</sup> John Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement*, (Princeton 1926) 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, 3-8.

1917 and of 1926 is that he emphasises the same aspects, but in a different way. During the Great War he supported the government line with creating an image of good versus evil, while in 1926 he claimed the government did to some degree an intelligent job. For the past fifty years the American democracy was built upon the experience of the revolution.<sup>27</sup> He was still in line with the government, but researching the Revolution in a completely different way than the Great War. Although it is difficult to find an explanation for this sharp contrast, it serves as an example for the struggling of historians with their profession.

### **The American higher education crisis**

Problems the historians faced in the early twentieth century were not solely bounded to just them. Gruber wrote that The Great War meant a crisis situation for the academic profession. The war brought to the surface some key problems of higher learning in America that consisted of defining the nature, function and social value of it.<sup>28</sup> He wrote also about those professors whom defined the war to be a challenge of its sort, although they put their own position and value for society into question. Jonathan Macauley Nielson argues more or less the same in his dissertation on American historians and the Versailles peace treaty. The scholar became a diplomat and also a patriot, of which the NBHS is a striking example. The question that comes to mind is why the American Academic world suffered such a crisis. To understand, this research has looked at three aspects of it. First of all the differences between the American and the European higher educational systems will be explained. Those explain why a crisis appeared in the US educational system. Secondly, changes that have been set into motion during the late nineteenth century show how a climate was shaped in which later the NBHS had the possibility to emerge. Third and last, the American University as institution deserves a closer look, since the struggles surrounding those offered historians a chance to have multiple interpretations of their work.

Nielson explained that the United States had inherited the European educational philosophy and practice. This inheritance however, was without the class, political exclusivity and civil bureaucracy. Not only bureaucracy required a great number of trained personnel, whom enhanced the power and prestige of the professor. It also helped linking the academic world directly to government affairs.<sup>29</sup> In other words, the United States academic world was not serving the nation since it was a decentralized institution. Little or no interaction took place between the federal government and the academic world. In England or Germany for example, the higher education institutions were, mainly for political reasons, a monopoly of the state. Furthermore the study of history had allegiance to the government. Not only

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 40, 72.

<sup>28</sup> Gruber, *Mars and Minerva*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Nielson, *American historians at the Versailles peace conference*, 8.

because of the lessons the study was presumed to teach, but also to evoke pride in civic duty, patriotic nationalism and the enhancement of integrating politics with society. In general, Europe and Great Britain shared the same objective of scholarship; serving the specific needs for society and government. Social utilities and the province were well defined. Those foundations were not shared in the United States higher education system. Nielson defined it as sectarian, social ambivalent, and disdainful on public affairs. Professors of moral philosophy faced all the consequences of this blurring identity in the dilemmas they faced.<sup>30</sup>

The difference between higher educational systems between the US and Europe indicate why the academic world suffered a crisis. Nevertheless more research on the American higher education needs to be done; therefore it is important to look at the late nineteenth century. After the Civil war (1861-1865), the reconstruction of American higher education began due to social factors, for example urbanization and industrialization created a rising demand in scientific and technological knowledge. Industrial tycoons and other fortunate men began to see why education was of the essence to expand their businesses. In order to achieve, private capital was invested in the educational system. In Chicago the municipality started working with Chicago University around 1880. Along with increasing public funds from federal and state authorities, the Civil Service Reform Act in 1883 was passed (also known as the Pendleton act).<sup>31</sup> Although not exhaustive, it decided that political affiliation no longer would decide if someone could obtain a government job. Instead such a job was to be achieved by someone's own merit.<sup>32</sup> The logical outcome would be that politicians, along with the effects of industrialization and urbanization, saw it necessary to support public affairs such as higher education. In other words, the academic and political world became linked. The political culture of the United States started to change because of this act, at least on paper. From this moment the political core of politicians and the elite was added with scholars, who helped to serve political interests.

Although the American higher education system experienced changes, it did not help to solve the problems for the classical curriculum (philosophy, history etc.) on the universities. Instead it worsened them, mainly due to the fact that the increasing recognition of work in science and engineering meant a growing gap with the classical studies. History, although part of the classical curriculum, did little to experience the dilemma of the scholar's role in society, but this was mainly due to the fact that not many academic historians were teaching as professionals. When in 1884 the AHA was founded the historian began to emerge as a professional specialist, but still only a few found teaching jobs. This situation went on until the early twentieth century. From the late 1890's historians began to exercise influence

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 8-10.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, 8-10.

<sup>32</sup> Ari Hoogenboom, 'The Pendleton Act and the Civil Service,' In: *The American Historical Review Vol. 64, No. 2, (January 1959) 301-318, 302-303.*

in historiography and public affairs, while, for example, moral philosophers had done this already in the late eighteenth century. Already historians believed in the important social benefits and its uses of studying history.<sup>33</sup> This process was of much importance for historians becoming a more professional affair than it had been before. Amateur historians, although influential, were the biggest group of people working with history. To become a professional, and thus make a living out of history, it had to offer something to make it valuable to teach. The role, in both substance and appearance, changed for the academic professional during the second half of the nineteenth century. The impact on historians and the fledgling profession itself was striking. For example, two historians during this time involved themselves in public affairs and politics.<sup>34</sup>

George Bancroft and John Lathrop Motley can be seen as examples of how some historians changed in this century. Bancroft, according to Nielson, was a New England intellectual who wrote about America's history in the light of triumphant democracy and nationalism so prominently, before 'scientific history' emerged to underline the new professionalism with tenets of detachment and objectivity. While Motley was more a nineteenth-century scholar, self-taught, of New England family, and America's most prominent authority in European history. Both were accomplished historians, both found that the study of the past enriched by participating in the events of their day, but Motley blended his research of historical figures with an acquaintance of heads of government and affairs of state.<sup>35</sup> It is important to point out however that much criticism was expressed towards their work. For example Charles McLean Andrews called Bancroft's work: 'Nothing less than a crime against historical truth.'<sup>36</sup> Professionalism of the historical profession was during this time hard to merge and justify with political participation. Jameson however wrote slightly different about Bancroft, that his: 'warm heart and enthusiastic, ardent temper...laid him open to dangers of partiality which, it must be confessed, he was far from wholly escaping.'<sup>37</sup> The importance of Bancroft and Motley lies therefore in the fact that later in 1917, the vices of amateur history returned on a professional basis.

However, this still does not fully explain why American higher education faced the problems it did. To fully understand this the American university as institution needs to be looked upon. George W. Pierson, a professor of history at Yale University, wrote in an essay in the 1950's about the development of the American university during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Aspects, such as the role of the universities, old and new ideas and functions point out the conflict of concepts within the country. But also between generations

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<sup>33</sup> Nielson, *American historians at the Versailles peace conference*, 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 22-28.

<sup>36</sup> Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 46.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 46.

and other countries, England for example. Furthermore he pointed out the victories and compromises, which determined the nature of the early twentieth century university, and also the problems that have remained until that day.<sup>38</sup> The struggle of the university itself had multiple aspects. First of all, the word university in its definition is rather general and has shifting terms. The first adopted definition in America was that of Samuel Johnson, an English writer in the eighteenth-century, who many refer to as Dr Johnson. His definition focussed on that the university was a school, where all the arts and faculties are taught and studied.<sup>39</sup> Later, in 1828, Noah Webster, one of the Founding Fathers, redefined Dr Johnson's definition in his dictionary:

An assemblage of colleges established in any place, with professors for instructing students in the science and other branches of learning, and where degrees are conferred. A university is properly a universal school, in which are taught all branches of learning, of the four faculties of theology, medicine, law and the sciences and arts.<sup>40</sup>

In 1891 William D. Withney edited the definition:

An association of men for the purposes of study, which confers degrees, which are acknowledged as valid throughout the Christendom, is endowed, and is privileged by the state in order that the theoretical problems which present themselves in the development of civilization may be resolved.<sup>41</sup>

The main question according to Pierson was: did American Universities ever be what they said they were? To answer that question he explained that the American university as a concept experienced different stages. The first was right after the American Revolution. With the American independence, the country needed its own institutions of higher learning. While some like Harvard and the university of Pennsylvania had already been founded before, the legal titles of those and the newly founded universities did not create the substance. During the 1820's the second stage started, universities became based upon the unlimited freedom of the mind. Along with the creation of universities in the 1840's and 50s, this stage marked an impressive forward movement. From 1865 till 1876 the great university building began, White at Cornell and Barnard at Columbia are just some examples. Despite those

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<sup>38</sup> Margaret Clapp, *The Modern University* (New York 1950) V.

<sup>39</sup> G.W. Pierson, 'American Universities in the nineteenth-century: the Formative period,' In: Margaret Clapp, *The Modern University* (New York 1990) 60.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 60.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 60.

developments, almost all institutions that were created could be hardly defined as secondary schools. Even Harvard would only be marked professional after the civil war. Pierson concluded that in 120 years no typical university was created, no single American type. The nineteenth-century therefore was a period of trial, failure, discovering and assembling for each university, while, in contrast, England struggled with capture and redirection instead of creation. The demand for a university came forth out of the rise of nationalism and democracy. Furthermore, as said before, the Industrial Revolution was also an incentive for the growing demand. All those factors brought up the desire to apply new sciences to exploit America.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to point out however, that the period between the Revolution and the Civil War was not of that much important to the university building. Most important what Pierson showed was that the university was an institution and concept that has been subjected to the setting of the time. Since the American higher educational system was all but bound to rules and given standards, it was possible to be very dynamic. Therefore an opening for why historians would be able to have a different interpretation of their work was created. In the case of the historical profession it is interesting to observe that it took place in a country that was relatively new, and founded on democracy and freedom. Despite those foundations, there were many cases of professors that indicated a very poor level of academic free speech. Laurence R. Veysey wrote about it in his very extensive study: *The Emerge of the American University*. Multiple events have happened during the late nineteenth-century that prove the correlation between fear and outbreaks of controversy over the behaviour of professors. Not only when in 1894 partisan political meetings were banned from Harvard Yard, but also when historian John R. Commons was unseated from Indiana State University after a local newspaper had attacked him.<sup>43</sup>

The crisis in the American academic world was not the only important factor of why the NBHS could emerge. Discussion surrounding the American national identity turned out to be of great significance. One person in American history dominates this subject, since he influenced the American national identity and the historical profession on a great scale. He himself was an historian, even the president of the AHA from 1923 till his death in 1924. Most of his influence however was expressed during his career in politics. Becoming president of the United States in 1913, he changed the foundations for the American foreign policy dramatically. In 1914 he seized the opportunity the war offered. Building on the intentions of his predecessor president Theodore Roosevelt. Reinterpreting America's traditions and characteristics, thereby drawing a very clear line between the US and Germany. The self-image of the US was transformed from a model republic to the champion of freedom

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, 59-63.

<sup>43</sup> Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emerge of the American University* (Chicago 1965) 410.



and that of a world leader instead of an example of freedom.<sup>44</sup> This man was Woodrow Wilson.

### **Woodrow Wilson changing the United States**

Research will show that Wilson was of great importance, he changed the US significantly and until this day (although research has already proven otherwise) he is surrounded with a legacy of bringer of peace. Those aspects of his presidency, combined with the connection he established between the political and academic world (a changing political culture) make him a very important figure in the creation of the NBHS. The concept of national identity offers much insight to explain his role, which is, different that one could think, constantly changing. National or local traditions and national holidays are part of it, but do change as well, therefore it is a concept that's easily used in needs of circumstances. The US is a perfect example of being subjected to a changing national identity, with Wilson as the most important figure (Roosevelt had the same aspirations on this matter). The nation was created on certain foundations, with interpretations that have been changed around the First World War. The discussion on what kind of country the US should be even continues until this day. Should it be on the one hand, the nation that brings freedom to other nations that do not experience it as such? Or on the other hand, does the US have to be the model nation for others that will not intervene in their affairs? These fundamental questions are at the basis of another important question that this research tries to answer. Why did historians create the NBHS and support the government policy on the war?

Woodrow Wilson studied history, political science and German Language at Johns Hopkins University from 1883 till 1886. At Johns Hopkins, Wilson and Jameson met during seminary discussions. Those discussions depressed Jameson for assuming his inferiority of his own power compared to those of Wilson's.<sup>45</sup> Strangely enough it was Wilson who supported peace without victors in 1917, balance of power in Europe and the creation of the League of Nations. Wilson also supported a somehow slightly radical policy towards Germany in the US itself. The connection with the NBHS is hard to make, as the correspondence between Wilson and Jameson does not indicate any noticeable lead to suppose he was really involved in the board. Nevertheless, Wilson was the president of the United States from 1913 till 1921 and his government started the radical line towards Germany in domestic policy. The NBHS followed this policy, Jameson knew Wilson personally and they had discussed many issues they were both concerned with on the historical field.

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<sup>44</sup> Wang Lixin, 'Who are we? Woodrow Wilson, the First World War and the Reshaping of America's National Identity,' In: *Social Sciences in China Vol. XXXI No. 2, May 2010 111-129*, 111.

<sup>45</sup> Donnan and Stock, *An Historian's World*, 2.

It seems like a contrast in Wilson's policy, however, it is in line with the change he started in the American foreign policy. Wang Lixin argued in his article *Who are we?* that in Wilson's message to the Senate on January 22 1917, it was the duty of the US government to come up with a fresh and new plan for the foundation of peace among the nations.<sup>46</sup> The policy would not have been in line with the US foundations before Wilson became president. The message to the senate contains multiple aspects that fit into Lixin's sharp analysis. Most importantly were his aims to create a League of Nations and victory for either side.

Lixin argues that due to America's risen influence and economic power at the end of the nineteenth-century, many reconsidered the position of the US in the international perspective. After the Spanish-American War anti-imperialists and imperialists dominated the debate about what its role should be in the world. Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 till 1909 and Albert Jeremiah Beveridge represented the imperialist side. Beveridge was an American historian and United States Senator from Indiana. He was an intellectual leader of the Progressive Era, and a biographer of justice John Marshall and President Abraham Lincoln. Beveridge argued that the US had to give up its traditional identity and role, starting to participate in world politics and become an empire like those of Europe. In a speech given in September 1898 Beveridge said: 'If England can govern foreign lands, so can America. If Germany can govern foreign lands, so can America. If they can supervise protectorates, so can America.'<sup>47</sup> Anti-imperialists did not support such a new role for the US. Firmly believing in the example of liberty and being a model republic for the rest of the world. The anti-imperialist league was afraid the US pursuit for a world empire would inevitably lead to undermining the national character, destroying the foundations and the loss of America's selfhood. The United States had to be a country, 'Which shakes thrones and dissolves aristocracies by its silent example and gives light and inspiration to those who sit in darkness.'<sup>48</sup> Both citations indicate the discussion concerning the role of the US as a superpower. Wilson policy was based on this discussion.

Lixin points out that the US was disturbed by a grave national crisis around 1900. Due to the social contradictions that had arisen due industrialization, polarization between the rich and poor in big cities challenged the myth of equality. The core values of the country had to be redefined, relations with the outside world and national character reconsidered, the national identity reshaped for a long-term direction of national policy. Otherwise the new world power status would not remain for long. With the outbreak of the war in 1914, Wilson was given the opportunity to do as such.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, there is much difference between how the arguments should be interpreted. First of all, Wilson's change of US foreign policy

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<sup>46</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *Why Are We at War, Messages to the Congress January to April 1917* (New York 1917) 5.

<sup>47</sup> Lixin, *Who are we?*, 113-114.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 114.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, 115.

was in itself a contradiction. On the one hand Wilson showed that he was the bringer of peace in the world. On the other hand however, there was only one way to achieve such a peace; getting military involved in the war. Secondly he needed the support of the US citizens for policies were the US government would be more involved in oversee affairs. In order to gain such support, radicalization of the enemy seemed a very useful method. The last point is maybe of less substance than fact, but still very important, Wilson's policy failed. The US government turned its back on Europe on political affairs when the treaty of Versailles was signed. Wilson's League of Nations was founded, but without membership of the US itself. Although Wilson set the change of US foreign policy in motion it would only become reality a few decades later. In 1919, after Versailles was signed, there was no indication it would.<sup>50</sup> Looking at the dissertation of John Richard Murnane, Wilson once said:

The historian is not a clerk but a seer; he must see the things first before he can judge it...We must all in our several degrees be seers, not clerks. It is a high calling and should not be belittled. Statesmen are guided and formed by what we write, patriots stimulated, tyrants checked. Reform and progress, charity and freedom of belief... have at once their record and their source with us.<sup>51</sup>

In September 1917 Wilson's academically staffed commission of Inquiry assembled in secrecy.<sup>52</sup> In the eighteen months that followed, maps, statistical charts and position papers on a wide range of problems after peace had been achieved were drawn up. Many of the scholars that took place in this commission would attend the Paris peace conference in 1919. Murnane argues that the creation of this wartime organization helped to institutionalize ideas that had been deeply rooted in the progressive era. It was the beginning of America's elusive quest for a new world order after 1917. The group professionally trained intellectuals began to play a long-term role in US foreign policymaking. The US stepped forward after 1919 to be the dominant world power, and its foreign policy lay in the hands of die-hard Progressive and former academics. In other words, people like Beveridge. The advice Wilson sought led to the forging of a permanent link between the academic world and Washington.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Edward Bernays (a founder of propaganda in the US) said during an interview in 1991 that at the Paris peace conference he and Wilson and all the others involved worked to make the world safe for democracy. That was the big slogan. The propaganda was that Wilson was the liberator of a people, in other words; a man that had created a new world and was a hero of the masses. Bernays and other propagandists had created this image of Wilson. Documentary: *The Century of the Self*, episode 1 *Happiness Machines*, originally broadcasted march 17 2002, BBC.

<sup>51</sup> Murnane, *The Guardians of Progress*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> The Inquiry was the scholarly group that conducted studies preparatory to the peace conference. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, (Oxford 1980) 315.

<sup>53</sup> Murnane, *The Guardians of Progress*, 1-3.

The link that was established between the academic world and Washington is very important for this research. After looking into the problems the American higher education system had experienced and the differences between the US and Europe, it can be concluded that finally the academic and political world found each other on a more permanent basis. In 1883 the link was created on paper with the Pendleton Act, in 1917 it had become reality with the NBHS. In other words, the change in political culture was completed with intellectual engagement. Furthermore it contributes to the shift in US national identity based on foreign policy, despite the failure of the fourteen points and to some extent the League of Nations.

The link Wilson created makes it interesting to look at the relationship between him and Jameson. Jameson wrote to Woodrow Wilson for the first time on August 7 1887, asking for Wilson's input for his scheme on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution. Jameson wanted to publish combined essays of himself, Wilson and other graduates of their department at Johns Hopkins. The essays were supposed to be about the constitutional history of the United States during the formation period 1775-1789. Jameson thought that, while combining essays of some people, published in a book was both not that time consuming for all of the participants, and of greater importance than a single essay written by himself or someone else. More importantly, Jameson was convinced that such a book could help with establishing a tendency in American historical work that focused on the constitutional side. As he put it:

Little has been done to elucidate the origin and development of the elements generally, and to develop the continuity of institutional life between the colonial and the subsequent period. I should hope that such a volume, concerning as it would our constitutional history in this wider sense, would help to emphasize this need on our historical work.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately for Jameson, Wilson was not as enthusiastic as he was. The reply of Wilson has not been found, but when Jameson's diary is read it becomes apparent that the future president gave little encouragement for the project. On August 7 1887 Jameson wrote: 'It is a bad thing for my book that Dewey, Shaw and Wilson are all doubtful, for they are my best cards.'<sup>55</sup> In September 1888, Wilson replied to Jameson's letters he wrote the month before, inviting him to give lectures at Brown University and checking on the progress of the essay. Wilson wrote in this letter:

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<sup>54</sup> John Franklin Jameson, 'Letter to Woodrow Wilson written on August 7 1887,' In: Donnan and Stock, *An Historian's World*, 41-42.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 42.

Assuredly the fates are against me! I have been delaying my answer to your two last letters, not only because moving and all its legion attendant cares of packing, preparing, unpacking, settling, have robbed me both of all leisure and of all opportunity to write, but also out of sheer reluctance to tell the truth and say “I can’t write the essay, and I can’t lecture in Providence-though I would give my head to be able to.” And yet such is the stern truth. Just look at the case; a topic exactly suited to my tastes and my training, to be written up for a volume I should esteem it a genuine honour and privilege to be allowed to contribute to-and the editor a fellow whose friendship I value as highly as I esteem his scholarship; and yet I’m absolutely barred!<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, Jameson published *Essays on the constitutional history of the United States in the formative period*, in 1889 with other graduates from Johns Hopkins.

Elizabeth Donnan wrote about Jameson in: *An Historians World, Selections from the correspondence of John Franklin Jameson*, that the historians of today are not that conscious of the contributions he has made to the foundations on which they build, despite contemporaries of Jameson’s life warmly endorsed his dictum.<sup>57</sup> Jameson was very critical on himself and his performances as student and later as teacher. He wrote in his diary on January 22 1886:

I question, when I’m blue, whether I’m not already proved a failure; and I don’t know that even when I’m cheerful I feel warranted in denying it very strongly in the face of the obvious facts.<sup>58</sup>

While in Baltimore, according to Donnan, Jameson’s progressions as an intellectual can be measured by the content of his letters. They indicated his interests and activities. Correspondence with European scholars is mentioned, as are his reviews of historical publications in the German *Historische Zeitschrift*. He grew an interest in state history, showing others how that should be done in papers he published. Public lectures he gave in 1887 on Historical Writing became a small volume a few years later. Furthermore the *Essays on the constitutional history of the United States in the formative period* were conceived in this period. He became convinced to write a history of the south, and so building up material on southern history in the university library. He also tried, and failed, to obtain permission

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<sup>56</sup> John Franklin Jameson, ‘Letter to Woodrow Wilson written on August 4 1888,’ In: Donnan and Stock, *A Historian’s World*, 44.

<sup>57</sup> Donnan and Stock, *An Historian’s World*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

from the Congress to publish the records of the Virginia Company, which he probably wanted because of his growing interest in the south.<sup>59</sup>

In 1895 he became the first chairman of the newly created *Historical Manuscripts Commission* of the AHA, and managing editor of the AHR. Because of this job, his publications outside the Review came to a stop. It was a difficult and very demanding job for Jameson, of which his high standards certainly contributed to that, and in 1901 he retired as editor, staying on the board of editors for four more years. In 1905 he became head of the Bureau of historical Research of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and again took up the work of editing the journal as a responsibility of the bureau.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

With the first part of this research coming to an end, some interesting points of view have been added to the question of why it was possible for the NBHS to emerge. The development of the historical profession in the nineteenth-century gives much of the answer. How should a historian position himself in his search for objective truth? Are moral judgments acceptable? In other words the discussion of presentism versus subjective participation lies on the basis of the development of the historical profession, and therefore is the basis on which the NBHS emerged later. Jameson's opening citation of this chapter reflects this even more, claiming that much good would come out of the NBHS and its historians because they were eager to serve their country. If most of the challenges for the profession were how to serve the nation or public case, this conclusion seems almost obvious. The crisis of the American academic world makes it an even more plausible conclusion. But the many challenges of the American higher education system were also sometimes solved in the spirit of the time. For example, how to serve the nation as an academic? To some extent the NBHS was founded upon the decades before World War One, as it built upon a tradition of historians searching for how to fill in their profession. To some extent it could even be seen as a logical outcome of that period. Nevertheless the NBHS was not the solution for the question on how a historian could be of use in society. The struggle of historians came forth out of the struggle of the university and the entire higher educational system itself.

The other important aspect for why the NBHS could emerge lies in the concepts of national identity and political culture. These concepts are very important for fully understanding the NBHS, which can be seen as a result of political culture change, which started with the Pendleton Act in 1883. This will be shown in more detail during chapter two and three. The national identity aspect however, is already more visible. Woodrow Wilson tried to reshape the US foreign policy from a model nation to a nation of action, changing US

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<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, 4.

thinking at the same time. For historians it meant the boundaries in which they could operate widened. The NBHS filled that gap since it expressed ideas that fitted exactly into Wilson's new American policy. The board is an example of intellectual engagement in the political culture of the US, just as *The Inquiry*. Only by combining the development of the American higher education system, the development of the historical profession in the US, the shift in national identity and the political culture change in 1883 it is safe to conclude that the NBHS was given the opportunity to be founded. The NBHS was a result of all factors and all are fundamental since the connection they contain. During the next two chapters these connections will be explained further, by using the primary sources of the NBHS. Those sources will show what kind of history the NBHS offered. A history that they thought was necessary during wartime America.

## Chapter Two

With his country at war, the academic man, when called upon by his government to use his academic talents for a war purpose, often faces a problem of duty in two directions and finds difficulty in properly protecting himself.<sup>61</sup>

During this chapter the research will be focused on the question what kind of history and documents the National Board for Historical Service published. It builds upon the conclusions of chapter one, and will show that the NBHS was an expression of a changing political culture and national identity in the United States. This however strengthened the moral dilemma historians faced. Those factors are very much visible in the publications and serve as example of how historians had to sacrifice aspects of their profession to be of service for their country. Not all NBHS publications could be researched, the ones selected do however fairly represent the character of all. Generally the documents were written for the use of government agencies. Interesting is it to keep in mind the fact that while Jameson played an important role in chapter one, he will be less visible during this chapter since his direct involvement is only known in one publication. Different then one could think, this makes the NBHS even more interesting, since it shows that the NBHS was more then just the figure of Jameson.

The NBHS started publishing very soon after Jameson and the other historians formed the board in 1917. The chairman became James T. Shotwell of Columbia, Charles H. Hull of Cornell was appointed vice-chairman and W.G. Leland became secretary.<sup>62</sup> Victor S Clark, R.D.W. Connor (Columbia) Gaillard Hunt, and Frederick T. Turner (Harvard) and Jameson himself, whom also facilitated the accommodations in his offices in the beginning, joined the NBHS.<sup>63</sup> The publications that were written by either the NBHS historians or under the direction of them appear to express objective thoughts on the war. After researching them however, the objective stance is just a false pretence. In many cases after the introduction has been read, the subjective side of the publication appears. *The German Bolshevik Conspiracy* is probably the best example. The famous documents are also known as the Sisson Papers, and have been tested by the NBHS on their truth or falseness. It is especially interesting to see how the NBHS historians tried to hold up the pretence of being objective. Since the first

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<sup>61</sup> Samuel N. Harper, *The Russia I believe in: the memoirs of Samuel N. Harper 1902-1941*, Edited by Paul V. Harper with the assistance of Ronald Thompson (Chicago 1945) 112.

<sup>62</sup> Randall C. Jimerson wrote on both W.G. Leland and Jameson that they remain forever linked in American archival history. Claiming that Jameson remained one of the great architects of American historical profession. Randall C. Jimerson, 'American historians and European archival theory: the collaboration of J.F. Jameson and Waldo G. Leland,' In: *Arch Sci* 6 (2006) 311.

<sup>63</sup> John Franklin Jameson, 'Letter to Frank A. Golder written on May 23 1917,' In: Donnan and Stock, *An historian's World*, 206-207.



chapter concluded that the question of national identity played an important role in the creation of the NBHS, the publications underline this conclusion even more.

The board endeavoured, according to the members itself, to keep into relation as many historical scholars as possible for council and aid. It was claimed they had received from many; 'The most generous promises of assistance.' The board also claimed to be entirely independent from the government; even though it kept close relations with the *Committee on Public Information* (CPI) and the *Bureau of Education*. The CPI, also known as the Creel committee, since George Creel was its chairman, was called into existence to: 'Make this fight for the "verdict of mankind," the voice created to plead the justice of America's cause before the jury of Public Opinion.'<sup>64</sup> In other words, the CPI was the first propaganda office of the United States, with Creel as its dynamic leader.<sup>65</sup> Woodrow Wilson created the CPI in April 1917 because: 'it is not an army we must shape and train for war, it is a nation.'<sup>66</sup> Already in 1889 he wrote about his perspective on persuasion and leadership in an essay *The Leaders of Men* that:

Men are not led by being told what they don't know. Persuasion is a force, but not information; and persuasion is accomplished by creeping into the confidence of those you would lead. Their confidence is gained by qualities which they can recognise, by arguments which they can assimilate: by the things which find easy entrance into their minds and are easily transmitted to the palms of their hands or the ends of their walking-sticks in the shape of applause.<sup>67</sup>

The connection between Wilson, the CPI and the NBHS becomes apparent. The CPI helped Wilson to prepare the nation for war and the CPI used the services of the NBHS. Already in July 1917 the NBHS had rendered services to both the CPI and the Bureau of Education. Mainly due to the appropriate supply of historical information for the publications of both and eliciting expert opinion on problems history teaching faced because of the war. Arrangements with publishers, editors, newspapers or any other organisation that published any sort of documents were made. The NBHS aided in the organizing of historical lectures on the problems the war brought upon the country. They collected material on the war with the cooperation of historical societies and libraries. Auxiliary committees were organized to improve local cooperation between historians. The correspondence with the members of the historical profession was of great value according to the *American Historical Review*. All

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<sup>64</sup> George Creel, *How we advertised America, The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York 1920) 4.

<sup>65</sup> Mock, *Words that won the War*, Vii.

<sup>66</sup> Krystina Lee Benson, *The Committee on Public Information: a Transmedia War Propaganda Campaign*, (Waterloo 2012) 4-5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

activities of the NBHS took place, as the members claimed themselves, within the lines of what was proper historical research for students of that day. It was the understanding of the NBHS that the public could be trusted to choose their own political course, which could be based on the adequate information supplied. The NBHS claimed not to propagate any set of opinions or a course of policy. The AHR wrote that an organization with a strict historical character would have a sufficient function for society. Furthermore, the AHR was convinced it would be right in supplying cordial aid to the NBHS whenever it could.<sup>68</sup> Whether or not the publications are propaganda is something to keep in mind while reading them. Although it is not the main purpose of this research to answer such a question, a preliminary conclusion is that the publications contain many aspects that suggest it was propaganda of some kind. The NBHS obtained the cooperation of the *Historical Teacher's Magazine*, and in the autumn of 1917 the first article in the magazine was published.

### **Opportunities for history teachers. The lessons of the Great War in the classroom**

'Opportunities for history Teachers' was published in the *Teacher's Leaflet*. The publication serves not only in this research as explanation of how NBHS historians saw the role of the history teacher during war. It also proves in a way that the NBHS actively helped to change the US thinking on foreign policy with this publication.

The Teacher's Leaflet was to be used by teachers of history and many writers offered their help, since it contained articles on Ancient, Medieval, Modern English and American history. In the introduction it is mentioned that this was not their attempt to discuss the relative importance of the various historical fields in the school curriculum. Also being mentioned that problems on the pedagogical field were not of the authors concern to deal with. Neither (and for this research the most interesting comment) it was their goal to: 'Furnish its readers with ready-made views on contemporary events.' Primary purpose of the leaflet was to suggest certain aspects of history in the light of the war, mainly because the United States had become one of the belligerent powers.<sup>69</sup> The writers claimed that the articles on modern, medieval and also ancient history, offered interesting new insights upon the war.

Some general suggestions were made for history teachers. Since the US was finally drawn into a great war, the teacher of history was planning his job under conditions that were perplexing and inspiring. Although not exhaustive, this was due to the fact the nation demanded efficient and courageous service for a successful war. Moreover, the nation demanded the cooperation of millions of men and women, both those who did or did not enrol

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<sup>68</sup> 'Historical News,' In: *The American Historical Review*, 918.

<sup>69</sup> 'Opportunities for History Teachers. The Lessons of the Great War in the Classroom, by the National Board for Historical Service,' In: *Teachers Leaflet No. 1*, 1917, 1.

for the fighting forces. The writers asked themselves; what the opportunities or obligations of the teachers of history would be when he remained doing his teaching job? Some propositions were given to which they believed general agreement would exist upon. Firstly, the writers claimed it was important to keep seeing things in the light of reality. This habit was of much importance, the teacher had to fulfil that obligation towards his pupils. A task that turned out to be not that easy, mainly because of the fact that during the war many people ought to have a slight distortion of facts, since it may even be seen as a patriotic duty. It was claimed that the same tactics, used by the aggressors Louis XIV of France and Frederick the Great of Prussia, were used during the present war. Both men were capable of finding enough loyal subjects to provide historical and legal arguments for their actions, which in many cases had already been taken. During the present war, history teachers had to be on guard not to mistake their job with patriotic duty. Loyalty towards the country and history was best served by looking at the facts.<sup>70</sup> Not only could historians stay loyal to their profession by looking at the facts, they also were servicing the country. The members of the NBHS believed that a proper relation between patriotism and history could exist:

There are many formal definitions of history, but most of them assume that it had to do primarily with the corporate or social life of men. History, properly studied or taught, it constantly reminds the individual of the larger life of the community, which was shaped for good or ill by countless generations of those who have lived before, determines our own thinking and acting in various and often mysterious ways, and will continue long after we are gone.<sup>71</sup>

Only by sacrifices made in the present, the current generation could do its part in the continuing life of the community, the state and the nation. At this place history and patriotism meet each other. Since war demanded heavy sacrifices from everybody, with death being the toughest of them all, without sacrifices the defence of national ideals and the success of the nation were doomed to fail. Sacrifices bring forward the conception of membership of a community under citizens. The conception of membership brings forward the real motive for citizens to become patriotic and offer the sacrifices that they are being asked. History teachers fill an important role at this point, since they can show people the facts on which they base their sense of community and ideals upon.<sup>72</sup> Without community creation and ideals it becomes hard to ask sacrifices of your citizens.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibidem, 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem, 2-3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, 3.

Moreover, history teachers were not solely bound to serve the nation based on this community spirit. Since war was a national experience that has been experienced before, it brought forward problems for which the nation and its citizens must be prepared. The history teacher had to take upon himself the important task to explain those problems and how people have dealt with them before. Furthermore, the history teacher helps to commemorate the experiences of war. Despite the war was in many aspects completely different from any war the world had ever seen before, the impact on society would be in essence the same as any other war. The nation faced other problems as well, especially a peaceful nation such as the United States. For instance the government is forced to perform new duties. However, the government is often unprepared to perform those because of the extraordinary powers at work.<sup>73</sup> The Teacher's leaflet becomes rather vague in its argumentation at this point. Although the writers speak in appealing conceptions, they did not clarify the duties or the extraordinary powers. Without explanation, a patriotic feeling is stirred up. One could guess what those heavy duties were that the nation had to face. Fortunately the history teacher helped to steady public opinion. Superficial judgements or hasty conclusions about government policy or the course of events would be tempered. 'The teacher should be able to supply the larger and truer perspective, which is one of the best results of historical study.'<sup>74</sup>

The main problem with such a statement is not that it is wrong to say, or even a complete misinterpretation of what a history teacher can provide for society. Until this day historians are always drawing up a perspective about events that happened in the past or happen in the present. We hope to understand those events better by placing them into the most plausible context. It becomes problematic when truth is put on top of it, which is what the NBHS historians did by claiming to offer the truer perspective. In a broader concept, this truer perspective is without any criticism about the war, government policy and clear explanation. Furthermore while historians these days are in essence also try to find the truer perspective; we do so by criticising views of others, and most importantly, express criticism on our sources. With our sources we try to stay as objective as is humanly possible.

Further down in the publication there are more examples of how the NBHS sees the opportunities for the history teacher, but also how to draw up connections between the modern and ancient or medieval times. It is tried to offer insight into the relation between groups of people, old empires, new modern nations and the struggle of control in certain areas such as imperialistic ambitions in relation with ancient Rome. According to the NBHS historians:

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<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, 3-4.

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem, 4.

The teacher who knows how to stir interest in these connections, which are not really so remote as they often seem, will not only be enriching the lives of his individual pupils, but he will be helping the American people to take an intelligent part in the new responsibilities to which they have been called, responsibilities which look beyond the clash of arms to the establishment of a better international order, a real society of nations.<sup>75</sup>

After reading this citation one name is coming to mind; Woodrow Wilson. The NBHS took up a role in Wilson's desire to change the US foreign policy. The citation above represents that role very clearly. The next publication of the NBHS was also published in the Teachers Leaflet.

### **Outline of an emergency course of instruction on the war**

This second publication gives even more insight in how the NBHS actively supported Wilson's policy, by offering a very detailed outline in how the history teacher should teach on the war. It was published in the fourth Teacher's Leaflet in August 1918. Charles A. Coulomb, Armand J. Gerson and Albert E. McKinley prepared the leaflet under the direction of the NBHS. Just as the Teacher's Leaflet of the autumn in 1917, the importance of history teachers during the great fight for liberty, democracy and civilization was expressed. Although the result of the first leaflet was that a large amount of material had been issued for teachers in secondary schools, elementary teachers needed more definite guidance. The outline offered such guidance. Coulomb, Gerson and McKinley argued that a course on the war should contain the general topic of the US's role in the war throughout every grade. It was however not enough to fall back on incidental instructions that came by during American history, European geography or English literature. To obtain definite results schools had to provide a systematic instruction on the war. For every grade a clear outline was presented with a time schedule included. For example, grades one and two had to spend two fifteen minute periods a week on the subject, while grades five to eight a total of one hour a week (also divided into two periods).<sup>76</sup>

This publication is very interesting since it was described in great detail what kind of war stories should be taught to children. For example, children in grade one and two, had to learn about true incidents of the war that helped to illustrate patriotism, heroism and sacrifice. Not only to admire those virtues, but also to learn of the life in Europe. Furthermore the writers wrote on how teachers could educate the young pupils to help with the war effort.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibidem, 5-6.

<sup>76</sup> Charles A Coulomb, Armand J Gerson, Albert E McKinley, Under the direction of the National Board for Historical Service, 'Outline of an Emergency Course of Instruction on the War,' In: *Teachers Leaflet No. 4, August 1918*, 1-5.

Helping successfully was only to be achieved when children knew why their fathers, brothers or other relatives had to go to Europe: '(1) To protect the people of France and Belgium from the Germans, who were burning their homes and killing people even woman and children; (2) to keep German soldiers out of the country and treating us the same way.'<sup>77</sup>

Children could help in different ways. Saving pennies for thrift stamps, eating less candy and sweet cake, stop wasting food (the clean plate idea). Children had to watch their health and stop spilling water, but also taking care of their clothes so no leather was wasted that was needed for soldiers' uniforms. The writers stated even that children had to be taught being good boys and girls so their parents had less to worry about them and could therefore work more efficiently for the war-effort. The celebration of special holidays was another aspect of the outline for the lowest grades. Not just US national holidays had to be celebrated, but also Bastille Day, since the French were an ally. The celebration had to be centred on the relation with the war. For example, Flag Day was to serve as an occasion to reference the flags of the US allies.<sup>78</sup> The course for grade three and four contained the same topics as Grade one and two, but were filled in with better-suited material for their higher ages. Also extra topics were added. These topics concerned the question of why the US entered the War in 1917, and paying attention to the accomplishment of the US army and the nation.

The topic in these two higher grades that draws the most attention is on the handicaps of German boys and girls, since it is full of stereotyping. The outline described that in Germany the poorer children went to a special kind of school just for them. The German word 'Verboten' (it is forbidden) represented the repression that the German government exercised on society. Child labour was one of the handicaps of the German children, since poorer children were obligated to work at the age of fourteen. But not only the poorest children ended up working, since working class families were not able to pay for higher education almost no child attended it. The US higher education system however, was free for all to attend. The final stereotyping comment was on the German nutrition. Even in peace times only very small amounts of meat or white bread were eaten. All these points were being compared to the opportunities children experienced in the United States. When in a class children of foreign birth or extraction were present this had to be highlighted even more.<sup>79</sup> Stereotyping the Germans was a very common way of propaganda during the war, especially in England. *Punch Magazine* for example used many stereotyping punch pictures. Those pictures presented Germans as fat and the personification of true evil, while the British were decent and of normal posture. Children however were not so much included in this stereotyping. *Punch Magazine* mainly focussed on the German military, politicians and higher

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<sup>77</sup> Ibidem, 5-6.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem, 6-7.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem, 7-8.

classes. Lower classes in Germany were often presented as the victims of those groups. The NBHS stereotyping achieves the same, but it included much more children.

The outline is especially interesting as brings into practise the opportunities for the history teacher that have been presented in the first teachers leaflet. By educating children with the truer perspective the basis for sense of community and ideals can be created, which was very useful a different thinking on foreign policy. By illustrating patriotism, heroism and sacrifice, children could contribute greatly to the war effort since their parents would be more likely to contribute themselves as well. By growing older, a generation with the same ideals was created. The third publication serves as a connection between history teaching for children and adults. It offers insight in what kind of material was used to create the sense of community and ideals.

### **The War Readings**

In 1918, probably around October, the *War Readings* were published. It is important to this research since it served as a book for both children's education and stirring up patriotic feelings with their parents. The book was a bundle of publications selected by a number of historians that stood under the direction of the NBHS. The scholars involved, with the selection of publications, were all from Princeton and from different fields of expertise, ranging from historians to economists or literary scholars. Their goals were to select the best verses written about the war, and to illustrate the many phases of it. For example, some patriotic poems were selected of which the scholars claimed every American knew them. People that had been in active service, but not necessarily had seen the front of the war in Western Europe had wrote most parts of the bundle. The *War Readings* was also supposed to be used in schools as teaching material on the war, for example during the emergency course on the war. Direct result was however, that many stories on the war horrors had to be left aside, since some were not suitable for children.<sup>80</sup>

Different then one would think, the book does not count as pure propaganda for the US war-effort. Therefore the selection of poems, stories or other documents contained a large diversity of meanings. Sometimes no political stance can be drawn out of it. Despite the diversity, in the context of the compilers even those documents can somehow be seen as propaganda. The book, in the end leaves us with an image of the war being fought between good and evil. For instance, one of the poems published was the world famous *In Flanders Fields* by John McRea. The poem on itself had little, maybe no, propaganda purposes, but in the light of the publication the feeling is created. The stories and poems were the practical examples of how the NBHS tried to show that sacrifice was both needed and beautiful. The

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<sup>80</sup> *War Readings*, Prepared under the direction of the National Board for Historical Service (New York 1918) preface III-IV.

three publications that have been looked upon bear the connection of how the truer perspective can be offered by history teachers to create a community feeling, ideals and reasons to offer sacrifices for the state. All aspects do fit perfectly in the change the US experienced. The fourth publication does not focus upon history teachers or children and parents, but is more of a history book.

### **Handbook for Diplomatic History of Europe, Asia, and Africa 1870-1914**

*The Handbook for Diplomatic History of Europe, Asia and Africa 1870-1914*, was published by the NBHS in 1918. Serving as a handbook for anyone who worked in the diplomatic world, the writers, Frank Malloy Anderson and Amos Shartle Hershey, claimed the book resulted from a request for urgent public service. Within a period of 6 months (from February till September 1918) the book was completed, consisting primarily out of articles from different authors. The NBHS was kept in constant touch for advice and assistance. The book can easily serve as main material for a research on such a subject, since the authors did not spare detailed analysis. The brief overview Anderson and Hershey offer on how they approached the period of 44 years of diplomatic history in Europe is of main concern here. To understand what kind of history the NBHS published a brief explanation of how the writers interpreted the period 1870-1914 has to be given.

The whole timespan from 1870 till 1914 was divided into four smaller periods: 1870 till 1878, 1878 till 1890, 1890 till 1894 and 1894 till 1914. All of the periods contain a significant portion of important events that, even today, are seen as important in the question of how and why the war broke out in 1914. The main difference seems to be the fact that the writers interpreted them all as linear events leading up to the war in 1914. The first period described the events from the Franco-Prussian War until the Congress of Berlin. According to the writers, nearly everything that was of much importance in the diplomatic history of Europe during the 44 years was connected to the war of 1870. Otto von Bismarck dominated the European politics from 1871 until 1890 with his *Realpolitik*, and it was his aim to preserve the gains Germany had made by the Franco-Prussian war. In order to achieve this, France had to be isolated and prevented to find allies for a coalition against Germany. European diplomacy was almost solely focussed on European affairs during this period. Anderson and Hersey claimed that only in the following period the problems in Asia and Africa came to the attention of European nations and their diplomats.<sup>81</sup> Bismarck dominated the second period just like he had done during the first one, during the second period in which the Congress of Berlin was held (June 1878). Bismarck profiled himself as the *Honest Broker*, claiming that he did not seek personal or German interest. He acted solely as an impartial

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<sup>81</sup> Frank Maloy Anderson and Amos Shartle Hershey, Prepared for the National Board for Historical Service, *Handbook for the Diplomatic History of Europe, Asia, and Africa 1870-1914* (Washington 1918) 9-11.



friend of all parties and facilitated arrangements of a satisfactory adjustment. About Bismarck's role as honest broker Anderson and Hershey claimed that there was room for a difference of opinion. One of the arguments was that Russia felt aggrieved by the attitude that Bismarck took. The settlement that was reached during the congress resulted that Bismarck could no longer count on the friendship of Russia.<sup>82</sup> Therefore France would be able to escape its complete isolation. The triple alliance was the final outcome of the arrangements when Italy joined a few years later. Furthermore, the second period also was concerned about the colonial enterprises European states undertook. Many conflicts were solved directly by agreements of the colonial powers themselves. However, the colonial rivalry was of much importance to the European balance of power in the years before 1914.<sup>83</sup>

The third period starts with the forced resignations of Bismarck as Reichskanzler in 1890. Therefore new factors could influence the European diplomacy. For example, the system of securing the isolation of France by the triple alliance and the reinsurance treaty with Russia collapsed. France started to play an important role in European diplomacy, forming the Dual Alliance with Russia in 1894. Another important change was the German adoption of a new foreign policy by the German emperor known as *Weltpolitik*. But also the Chino-Japanese War (from 1894 till 1895) had its impact on European diplomacy as it changed the situation in the Far East. Colonial policy offered problems between European nations on a frequent basis. During this period policy shifted greatly, and when in 1903 the Anglo-French arbitration treaty was signed, the way was being paved for the Entente Cordiale.

The last period starts on April 8 1904. Great Britain and France signed a series of agreements, in other words they formed an alliance known as the Entente Cordiale. Other influential events for that period were the signing of the treaty of Portsmouth in 1905, formally ending the Russo-Japanese war, and the Turkish Revolution of July 1908. It is argued that during all four periods, Europe is slowly forming itself into coalitions of enemies. All the articles help to prove the assumption that Europe had thrown itself into chaos, since its nations formed alliances in order to have assurances against the enemy. Franco-German relations were at the centre of those developments. The forced resignation of Bismarck and the later adopted *Weltpolitik* were seen as most important breaking points during the period from 1870 till 1914. German aggression became unstoppable, and that aggression was put into practise in August 1914.

This handbook is an important example of how the NBHS practices history. Being a history of linear form, that takes a point in the past or current time and starts to write towards it. Furthermore it is a history that contains allot subjective participation. Not only does these

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<sup>82</sup> Ibidem, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Ibidem, 11-13.

points make it a history that probably is very appealing for some groups in society or in a given zeitgeist. Also this history indicates a sacrifice from the historian himself for the war-effort. Giving up the primary principles of the profession and starting to engineer history for multiple purposes, they offered the truer perspective to be of service.

### **The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy**

The last researched publication concerns the famous Sisson Documents. Although these documents were not published by the NBHS, Jameson himself along with Samuel N. Harper, professor of Russian Language and institutions at the University of Chicago, contributed in a very specific and direct way in their publication. Just as with the other researched publications, this research will point out the political culture change in the US and a shift in national identity. There is however, one more important aspect to this publication, in the person of professor Harper. He was the personification of a sacrifice the historian had to make in order to support the government. Regretting his involvement later in his life. Therefore the involvement of the NBHS in the Sisson Documents is of much value.

In October 1918 the CPI published a series of communications between the German and the Russian Bolshevik governments. Along with these documents a report written by Edgar Sisson, the special representative in Russia for the committee, was added. Today the publications are known as the Sisson Documents. According to the CPI the documents proved a conspiracy between the Germans and Bolsheviks. Lenin, Trotsky and their associates were German agents in order to stop the war in on the Eastern front. When peace between Russia en Germany was achieved, the Germans could focus all their attention on the western front and probably achieve a final breakthrough in the war. The German general staff orchestrated the Bolshevik revolution and the German Imperial bank assisted with financial aid. The 68 documents were published in the book to prove how the Germans betrayed the Russian working classes, using a Russian government that acts solely in the interests of the German government.<sup>84</sup>

The NBHS played an important role in the judgement on truthfulness of the Sisson documents. The chairman of the CPI, George Creel, wrote in one of his letters to the NBHS to ask for a review of the publications to determine the truth or falseness of all documents. Creel addressed the board in order to bring to their attention the evidence that has been published so far by the CPI. Proving the connection between Lenin and Trotsky and their immediate associates at the German Government. One of the arguments Creel made for the authenticity of the published documents was that publication of the documents itself proved their authenticity. Creel however, wanted to be sure and felt a second opinion by the NBHS was

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<sup>84</sup> Sisson, Edgar, 'The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy', In: *War Information Series No. 20, October 1918*, 1.

therefore needed. All the arguments had to be taken into consideration by the board. He asked the NBHS to appoint a committee that would judge on the truth or falsity of the whole publication. Jameson himself took a seat in the committee, as did Harper.<sup>85</sup> Ten days later they responded to Creel in a letter containing their judgement on the evidence presented.

In response, Jameson and Harper made clear that their findings on the publications were with the utmost frankness, regardless of any publicly taken positions of the government, the CPI or Creel himself. The basis for the work of both was a proof sheet of a pamphlet edition of the documents Sisson had acquired. Creel had issued such a proof sheet, containing all documents that were edited and translated by Sisson. This was the way the documents had been published during some weeks in newspapers. Jameson and Harper started by looking at the translation aspect of the documents. Their conclusions were that the versions that have been put forth for publication in the newspapers were marked by grave imperfections. However, both agreed that those imperfections were the result of the circumstances in which Sisson had to make the translations in Petrograd. Although not exhaustive, Sisson was obliged to have the translations being made by many different hands, resulting in grave imperfections. More important was the remark made on whether or not the translations should be corrected:

Whether the resulting unevenness and other imperfections should be removed before publication of the translations in a more permanent form, is a matter which we, of course, leave to your discretion but we are obliged to allude to them because they have laid the documents open at certain points, some of which will be mentioned later, to suspicions which the originals of those passaged nowise warrant.<sup>86</sup>

Jameson and Harper continued saying:

Upon Mr Sisson's interferences from his documents we do not understand that we are expected to comment, nor do we desire to express, or to be influenced by, any opinion respecting the conduct of Bolshevnik leaders or German official; our present duty, as we conceive it, is confined merely to examination into the genuineness of a specific series of documents.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> George Creel, 'Letter to the National Board for Historical Service, written on October 18 1918,' In: Sisson, *The German Bolshevnik Conspiracy*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> John Franklin Jameson and Samuel N. Harper, Letter to George Creel written on October 26 1918, In: Sisson, *The German Bolshevnik Conspiracy*, 29-30.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, 29-30.

Claiming only to judge on the genuineness of the presented documents, they separated them into three groups.<sup>88</sup> The first being documents that were presented as Russian originals or photographs, bearing the numbers 1 to 53. The second group were those presented in circulars printed in German, concerning documents bearing number 56 and 58. The third and last group consisted out those documents of which no original was presented, but solely a translation that rested on mimeographed texts in Russian. This group concerned the documents bearing number 54, 55, 57 and 59 to 68. The conclusion on the first group of documents was that based on the investigation they conducted there was not a reason to doubt the genuineness or authenticity of the 53 documents. Although it remains unclear what kind of tests were used, according to Jameson and Harper the documents were subjected to:

All the applicable tests to which historical students are accustomed to subject documents of the kind, and to as many as others as we could devise and use, consistently with the need of making a reasonable early report.<sup>89</sup>

The verdict on documents 56 and 58 (group two) was of a less confident character. Jameson and Harper explained that errors on typography, spelling and grammar made it impossible to accept the documents as original prints from the General Staff of the German army. Nevertheless, both did not see the printed texts as simple forgeries, neither did they concern them as entirely genuine. On the third group of documents they found general agreement on the less confidential attitude of Sisson himself towards the evidential value of the thirteen documents. Mainly due to the fact the documents were not original German documents, but rather Russian translations. No confident declaration was possible, the final conclusion stated:

Thrown back on internal evidence alone, we can only say that we see in these texts nothing that positively excludes the notion of their being genuine, little in any of them that makes it doubtful, though guarantees of their having been accurately translated into Russian are obviously lacking.<sup>90</sup>

They claimed it remained to consider the specific criticism whether or not the documents are genuine. However, most criticism that was expressed by the New York Evening Post dissipated since documents 1 to 53 were considered to be genuine. Jameson and Harper claimed the German Staff was not unaware of any preparations in Petrograd for a coup d'état.

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<sup>88</sup> Peter Novick wrote about this, that Jameson did not speak Russian and could not read most of the documents. Nevertheless their conclusion was on some matter of detail qualified. The magazine *The Nation* however, claimed labelled it a sham investigation.

Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 125.

<sup>89</sup> Jameson & Harper, *Letter to George Creel*, 29-30.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, 29-30.

The conclusions were mostly based upon the dating of the documents. Some documents therefore were rightly criticised. An explanation was that translation errors had led to the mixing up of dates.<sup>91</sup>

George F. Kennan wrote in 1956 on the Sisson Documents in the *Journal of Modern History*. His conclusion was, not entirely surprising; that the documents were a forgery. Furthermore, the effect of the publication on public opinion was lost due to the course the war had taken during the fall of 1918.<sup>92</sup> The value of Kennan's article to this research is that he commented on passages from Harper's memoirs, published in 1944. Harper commented on his contributions that:

My experience with the Sisson documents showed clearly the presence to which University men are subjected in time of war. My position was particularly difficult because my area of study was under the control of a new group which was talking peace, and I felt it was my academic duty to explain why the Bolsheviks were working against a continuation of the war, not only on the part of Russia but in general. Thanks to the support of Professor Jameson I was able to hold out to a certain degree against a complete abandonment of the rules of the student but it was impossible for a University man not to make a contribution to the development of the war spirit, even if this involved the making of statements of a distinctly biased character.<sup>93</sup>

This citation is of great value, since some of the statements that were made by him are being rejected.<sup>94</sup> Being solely a scholar he could not agree upon those statements. Harper is an example of how fragile the position of the academic men truly was when his country asked him to serve the war-effort. He had to cross a line, and in some way he questioned the integrity of himself as an academic man that abandons the rules he is bound to as scholar in order to serve his country. The *Evening Post* somehow expressed this as well when the report of the committee was published. In short it declared that Harper was unfit because of his commitment to the committee and the report called for a stern rebuke from every historical scholar who valued the good name of their profession.<sup>95</sup> There can be less doubt whether the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, 29-30.

<sup>92</sup> George F Kennan, 'The Sisson Documents,' In: *The Journal of Modern History Vol. 28, No. 2 June 1956 130-154, 130-133.*

<sup>93</sup> Ibidem, 132-133.

<sup>94</sup> Novick claimed that those who had led the propagandist effort (CPI, but also NBHS for example) never gave any signs of second thoughts. Jameson himself was very satisfied with the balance he had struck. Chairman of the Board Shotwell found it a worthwhile effort, though perhaps not of great importance. Frank Maloy Anderson however, was upset by the wartime experience. He thought historians' behaviour had casted a doubt upon the norms of scientific objectivity.

Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 127.

<sup>95</sup> John Franklin Jameson, 'Letter to Andrew C McLaughlin on October 30 1918,' In: Donnan and Stock, *An Historian's World*, footnote 190, 226.

NBHS was, in this case, involved in state propaganda. Despite it being issued by the CPI, Jameson himself however does not seem to have experienced the same dilemma Harper had. Jameson even claimed that they both had a lot of fun going over the Bolshevik documents. For both it was a mighty interesting exercise, Jameson wrote in a letter to Andrew C. McLaughlin on October 30 1918. He even called the Evening Post's treatment of the matter discreditable and was sure the pamphlet edition would be greatly improved to be nearly right.<sup>96</sup>

The Sisson documents were a reflection of the American historian being divided and to highlight the problem of how to serve the nation in wartime as a historian. Harper is a great example of someone that tried to be both, but in the end came to the conclusion that it was very hard to combine the two. The documents turned out to be of less value to the US government and public opinion. However it should be clear that the academic world and the government were much intertwined during this period. Proving the political culture change, as explained in chapter one, now became reality. The NBHS positioned itself in this case as a board that helped prove something that turned out to be false. Somehow it even seems a harmless undertaking, judging on genuineness of documents based on the facts they had beforehand. The conclusion could not have been more wrong. Jameson and Harper offered a conclusion that fitted in the truer perspective the historians was ought to offer. The fact that Harper later showed regret is an indication the NBHS, and therefore Jameson himself, was convinced the historian could take a position between being a scholar and serving the nation. The criticism on the Sisson documents proves that such a position was already questionable during that time itself. One last point has to be taken into account concerning this last publication. The point that Harper sacrificed certain rules to contribute to the war spirit, and sacrificing was something that had to be done by all people in society.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with a citation of Harper, which he made in his memoirs. He said that the academic man faced a problem when his government called upon him. In other words, he has to find the right balance between putting his talents to use for the war-effort and not betraying his academic profession. Harper is the personification of the dilemma historians (or intellectuals in general) faced during 1917 and 1918, the dilemma of sacrifice. It helps us to understand a number of points. First of all, historians, even those who took part in the NBHS activities, certainly did not always fully support their own role. Even though Harper wrote his memoirs many years later, he explained the doubt about his participation on the Sisson documents were there from the start. Second, Harper was one of many intellectuals that took

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<sup>96</sup> John Franklin Jameson, 'Letter to Andrew C McLaughlin on October 30 1918,' In: Donnan and Stock, *An Historian's World*, 226-227.

upon themselves a new role. Serving the nation with their talents to support the war-effort. It seems that Judt's statements (as can be read in the introduction) on the Iraq invasion could also be related back to 1917. The only difference was that back then, intellectuals were on the one hand convinced they had to use their talents for the war effort, and on the other hand jumped into the gap the US government (under president Wilson) created for intellectuals to become involved in state affairs. The opening citation of this chapter therefore could not be a better reflection of this.

The NBHS often wrote in its publications that it became necessary to write them because of the urgent need for public services. However when the publications are being put into perspective with the research done in chapter one, those statements raises many doubts. Not only because the urgency for public service is never explained, but also the urgency itself seems to come forward out of the question of how historians could be of service for the society. One of the foundations for the NBHS was that it was founded on that question. Jameson wrote it himself in his letter to Frank Golder in May 1917. In other words, because historians from that time were in doubt about how they could be of use to their nation, some of them formed the NBHS, and the publications they produced were based on their own created fact that the public needed their contributions, since those were of great importance for the nation at war. Nevertheless this public necessity is never explained well by the NBHS, its historians or even Jameson. The only aspect that keeps coming back when the publications are being researched, is that of historians choosing a way to fulfil their profession because they believed they could be valuable to society, the state and the war effort. The main effect however, was that the moral dilemma historians faced was strengthened, which is of great importance for the third chapter. The political culture change that started in 1883 now became visible in reality; the NBHS and their publications are an expression of that change.

## Chapter Three

What is more essential to the successful prosecution of a great national war than an enlightened, unified, and powerfully-acting public opinion?...the American gun may be the best that science can make it, the man behind it is unsurpassed in quality, but how long will he persist in his fearful struggle of the people at home do not see why he should?<sup>97</sup>

Jameson's statement in the *American Historical Review* of July 1917 does show his true belief in the NBHS's cause; educating the public on the justified war against Germany. Jameson, many other historians and the publications were prepossessed with this idea. This was despite the fact that almost none of the NBHS publications contained any evaluation of the character of the war, and neither contained any reference to the costs or missteps by the Allied countries.<sup>98</sup> By educating the public Jameson found a way in helping the government in the war-effort, maybe even winning it. Remarkable is the fact that Jameson thought the historical journal was not to advise in affairs of how to use the correct historical information that was supplied. Historians were also citizens and since citizens were entitled to speak their minds upon issues of the hour, historians therefore could do the same and had to judge themselves what would do most good. Whatever the choice of the historian was, communicating with the NBHS would serve well for them.<sup>99</sup> As shown in chapter two, the NBHS sources contained the same dedication Jameson had. Dedication however, does not say much about the meaning and intentions of these sources. Those meanings and intentions have to be researched more, to completely understand the role of the NBHS during wartime America. Therefore, during this chapter, the role of the intellectual in general has to be researched. Why did intellectuals support the war in general? And what does that say about Jameson, the members of the NBHS in general and believe in their cause?

### **Crafty Politics**

First of all it is important to understand why Wilson went to war in 1917. It is not the purpose of this research to unravel all the aspects about that. Instead, this research shows how crafty politics of Wilson not only took the US to war, but also shows that that the same crafty politics had to be used to create a favourable war opinion in the country.

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<sup>97</sup> J. Franklin Jameson, 'Historical scholars in War-Time,' In: *The American Historical Review* Vol. 22. No.4 (July 1917) 831-835, 831.

<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, not all historians agreed with the goals of the NBHS, Walter L Lestermann for example. He argued that the NBHS tried to perceive a overzealous response of historians to the war effort and participated only; "to put the damper upon possible tendencies...to prevent historical teaching and the meaning of history."

Rothberg & Goggin, *John Franklin Jameson*, 327.

<sup>99</sup> Jameson, *Historical scholars*, 834-835.



In 1916, William Roscoe Thayer published the book: *Germany vs. Civilization: notes on the atrocious war*. Thayer is important since he was president of the American Historical Association from 1918 until 1919.<sup>100</sup> Jameson, Thayer and the NBHS were therefore definitely tied to each other. Although there is no known correspondence between the two, an ideological connection can be made between them. First of all both were very active members of the AHA. Secondly, his description of German *Kultur* had similarities with the later published NBHS sources. In other words, it fits in the framework of how the NBHS publications were written. That framework is based upon how the NBHS tried to offer the truer perspective, something Thayer was definitely doing too.

Thayer starts the book by saying that Wilson had taken a firm stance when the book was printed. Referring to The February Revolt in Russia and the sinking of the targeted ships on the Atlantic by German Submarines (resulting in many American victims) Wilson began to prepare for war. Even though he was still hoping he would be able to avoid it.<sup>101</sup> Wilson's policy was in essence still the same, since he still very much doubted going to war. Thayer hoped the events would end foreign arrogance, domestic plotting and sedition. Referring to Wilson's foreign policy, just like many Americans, earlier on with great anxiety. The doubt the president expressed let not only to a stifled American patriotism, but also encouraging enemies of the US greatly. This included those who were at work within the US. Thayer assembled in his book the characteristic doctrines of those who shaped Prussian policy, reminding the reader of the essential German elements underlying the atrocious war. The origins of the conflict were found in the German *Kultur*, and *Kultur* was the doom civilization awaited unless it was crushed. Only by understanding *Kultur* thoroughly this could be achieved.<sup>102</sup> Thayer continued his book with his explanation of what *Kultur* is, where it originated from and how it led to German aggression. Most importantly, he exposed a plot to Germanise America. All with one purpose, to show that the US had to become involved in the war or it would fall victim to the doom of German *Kultur*.

Wilson deserves some more attention to fully understand the reasons behind this. Before the declaration of war was approved, Wilson was re-elected due to the slogan "He kept us out of war." The republican's characterized the phrase as misleading and coming from a coward. Nevertheless, both Democrats and Republicans knew what the mood of their citizens was; they didn't want war. The slogan proved its efficiency. Despite his doubt during the campaign about a victory, Wilson beat his opponent Charles E. Hughes. The War had dominated the campaign, partly because of the slogan the Democrats used. Hughes came into

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<sup>100</sup> Emil Pocock, 'Presidents of the American Historical Association: A Statistical Analysis,' In: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (October 1984) 1017.

<sup>101</sup> Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters, Facing War 1915-1917, Volume 6* (New York 1937) 302-304.

<sup>102</sup> William Roscoe Thayer, *Germany vs. Civilization: notes on the atrocious war* (Boston 1916) v-vi.

a difficult position. Since he wanted to avoid war as well, but also attacked Wilson for being a coward not going to war the same time.<sup>103</sup> Only a few months after winning the election, Wilson asked congress for a declaration of war on April 2 1917. Wilson wrote in a letter, just a few days later to his old friend Cleveland Dodge that: 'It was necessary for me by very slow stages indeed and with the most genuine purpose to avoid war to lead the country on to a single way of thinking.'<sup>104</sup> Ray Stannard Baker wrote on the declaration of war:

The neutrality of the United States had ended. Wilson's long struggle to avoid war was over. He was now to begin his effort to achieve by war what he had been unable to achieve during neutrality: a new world order, in which the rights of mankind and the rule of the people would be safeguarded. The nobility of that version was the source of the tremendous personal power he exerted during the history-making years that followed. In him, in his thought, in his faith, and in his courage, the hopes of the peoples of the western world were soon to centre, hopes that raised him for a time to challenging, perilous, awful height of World Liberator.<sup>105</sup>

The citations of Wilson and Baker contain much value for this research, the one out of the letter to Cleveland Dodge because it shows Wilson was on purpose waiting for the right time to enter the war in Europe. Therefore proving his policy before the war was not based on doubt, as Thayer tried to prove, but in fact on crafty politics. Wilson was shaping the nation's thinking during a long process. The second citation pictures Wilson as a World Liberator that went to war.<sup>106</sup> Opinions vary, but many still associate Wilson with the image of a bringer of peace. Described in chapter one, he entered the war to establish a new world order, which was based on the shift in national identity based on foreign policy. Nevertheless, there were many problems the war brought upon the country. Because of the two and a half years of neutrality, the US had to cultivate and manipulate the public opinion favourable to the war. The war became an affair of the mind. Anti-war opinions were found intolerable after April 1917. 'Woe be to the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way' Wilson said in June of that same year.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Baker, *Woodrow Wilson Volume 6*, 288-289.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, 515.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*, 517.

<sup>106</sup> Laurence W. Martin said in *Peace Without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the British Liberals* in 1958 that Wilson was forced to accept the pursuit of peace through victory. However, he kept hope that the victors were to be guided towards moderation.

Laurence W. Martin, *Peace Without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the British Liberals* (New Haven 1958) Vii.

<sup>107</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 45-46.

## The war as an affair of the mind

The NBHS played a very important role for war becoming an affair of the mind. Not only because of what kind of publications they published and their character, also because it helped reshaping the US thinking about war. Historians used the historical profession for political purposes, becoming very much in favour of the war. This research will show that the NBHS was an example, a reflection, of how intellectuals in general took the same turn. Also the connection with that turn and Jameson's true believe in his cause will be drawn up at the end. Showing how he created a new form of scientific history in which his publications were very justified.

The progressive journalist Walter Lippmann sounded a warning in 1917. He wrote about the *Forces of Reaction*, in other words, about those who hoped to turn the war into their advantage.

There are political and commercial groups who see in this whole thing nothing but opportunity to secure concessions, manipulate tariffs and extend the bureaucracies. We shall know how to deal with them.<sup>108</sup>

According to David M. Kennedy, the war opportunities for Lippmann were to be found in the realm of the spirit. The magazine *New Republic* was the highest expression of progressive political wisdom at that time. Lippmann accepted his role (along with his colleagues at the *New Republic*) as prophet. The vision he expressed was that of a purified American democracy. The chastening rigors of collective material endeavour would forge a new American community. In this community, social and political life was to be lifted to a higher noble plane. Since the founding of the magazine in 1914, it had endorsed social reforms.<sup>109</sup> In 1917 it advocated that the war should serve as pretence for foisting innovations for the country. Politicians however, were less sanguine on the prospects for liberal success in wartime than intellectuals and professors of that time. Senator Hiram Jones intended to reform the Republican Party in 1917, only to discover that all efforts would probably fail. 'Everything here is war,' he wrote on April 10 of that year, describing the atmosphere in Washington in a letter to a friend in California. Jones became afraid that any progressive plan would die of inanition. Lippmann's hope and Jones' fear reflected on the war the US was fighting within its own borders. This war had to determine the consequences of the crisis for

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<sup>108</sup> Ibidem, 39.

<sup>109</sup> Walter Lippmann argued that if human beings were in reality being driven by unconscious irrational forces then it was necessary to rethink democracy. What was needed was a new elite, who could manage that what he called the bewildered herd. This would be done through psychological techniques that would control the unconscious feelings of the masses.

The Century of the Self, episode 1 *Happiness Machines*.

the character of American economic, social and political life. Alongside with these problems, Americans struggled to find the symbolic meaning for the war. The CPI was the most visible organ to give the war ideological significance. Wilson said on April 2 that: 'The world must be made safe for democracy.' Furthermore, pro-war propagandists invoked other myths, suggesting that the war was not simply against Germany, but against Europe itself. Meaning, what Europe represented in the American mind; coercive government, irrationality, barbarism and feudalism.<sup>110</sup> Even though the CPI was according to Kennedy the most visible organ, when taken the publications of chapter two into consideration, the NBHS historians brought the ideological significance into practise for the committee. It therefore is a reflection of how the historical profession was used for political purposes.

Philosopher John Dewey preached faith in education and he revolutionized the school during the pre-war period. Education had to be used to nationalize the consciousness of the American people. Necessity and the absence of formal alternative led to the manipulation of mass opinion during the progressive era for political purposes. Wilson, in Kennedy's words; was the consummate practitioner, using publicity adroitly to discipline the congress in the struggle for his *New Freedom* legislation in 1913 and 1914. He used it again in 1917, but now on the whole country. His strategy was to appeal directly to the people, unifying their emotional energy and conviction. This great massed force was to be used directly against their opponents.<sup>111</sup>

Timofej Dmitriev described in his article; *Why are we fighting? A view of the "great war" from across the ocean*, the dispute concerning the meaning of the war among the US leading intellectuals. Dewey's views, since he was the founding father of American pragmatism, take a central stage. When the war broke out in Europe, Dewey was presented a chance to express his views on political and social philosophy. Dmitriev described Dewey as the person destined to make the most significant contribution to the discussion of the character of the global transformations occurring during the war, along with America's place in the process. He wanted to understand the link between the cause, the progress and result of the war with democratic political theory. Which let him to support the entry of the US in the war and the 'New Diplomacy' of Wilson.<sup>112</sup> Dmitriev states in his article that the war made an enormous contribution to turn the US on a new evolving trajectory that characterized the country from that point on. Wilson turned American society and economy in the direction of military socialism. The Fuel and Food administration were introduced, but also the CPI, and many believed that the administrative centralization was created by total mobilization. Dewey became sober after the war, noting that the most radical measures of centralization were

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<sup>110</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 39-42.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, 47-48.

<sup>112</sup> Timofej Dmitriev, 'Why are we fighting? A view of the "great war" from across the ocean,' In: *Stud East Eur Thought* 66, (2014) 51-67, 51-52.

unlikely to survive, but that many actions conceived and created during this period would continue and affect the US society seriously. Along with Dewey, many intellectuals believed the war brought along many changes to solve social problems by government regulation.<sup>113</sup>

The political texts Dewey published during the war, created a dilemma for him between pacifists and pragmatists. Pacifists wanted peace and to end the war at any cost. Dewey had many former friends and students among the pacifists that protested against US involvement in the war. Non-intervention should be the US policy according to them. Criticizing the pacifist movement in his articles *Force, violent and Law* and *the Future of Pacifism*, Dewey seeks to argue as a pragmatist, for intervention depended on the effectiveness and the goals that could be achieved. Among the pragmatists there were abstract supporters of justice and jingoists, whom saw the war as a way to punish Germany. For Dewey, the goal of the war was not to punish, but to establish a long lasting peace; his support for the Fourteen Points is a clear reflection of this thought.<sup>114</sup>

Randolph Bourne, a former student and colleague of Dewey offered the most devastating criticism on his views. Accusing the American intellectuals that assembled around the *New Republic* with betrayal. Dewey, but also Lippmann, changed their calling by putting their pen at the service of war. Bourne wrote:

Assumed the leadership for war of those very classes whom the American democracy has been immemorially fighting. Only in a word where irony was dead could an intellectual class enter war at the head of such illiberal cohorts in the avowed cause of world-liberalism and world democracy.<sup>115</sup>

He reflected on the pacifist thinking of the US as being the shining example of freedom and democracy for other nations. While pragmatic wisdom works well under normal conditions, war brings a completely different set of logic. That logic set its own goals, which was victory. Therefore making pragmatic wisdom powerless in this situation.<sup>116</sup>

Moshik Temkin offers more insight with his article *Culture vs. Kultur, or a clash of civilizations: public intellectuals in the United States and the Great War, 1917-1918*. Temkin argued that many intellectuals in the US, whom supported the war effort, shared a general lack of concern with the realities that war brought along. Intellectuals often took their position based on their view of the post-war world, but also on views of culture and philosophy. Many saw the war being a clash of civilizations, the US as civilized democracy on the one side versus the barbaric savagery on the other. In other words Culture versus Kultur. Temkin

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<sup>113</sup> Ibidem, 61-63.

<sup>114</sup> Ibidem, 63-64.

<sup>115</sup> Ibidem, 65.

<sup>116</sup> Ibidem, 65-67.

claims that most historians of today would be likely to agree on the fact that many US intellectuals in 1917 were enthusiastic about the war. Along with rampant patriotism, fear was the other important factor for this attitude. This was not as one would think, fear for the unknown or fear for the German Kultur, it was the fear for repercussion and persecution. If not on the national bandwagon, repressors of political authorities and intellectuals themselves made it almost impossible for anti-war intellectuals to express their views. Any outspoken opponent of American intervention in 1917 could be considered a traitor. This became even worse when that person, intellectual or factory worker, was not fully American. Temkin intended to assess the historical conditions for the attitudes and conduct of a number of publicly prominent or politically influential American intellectuals during the war. Many of those intellectuals lacked the concern with the realities of the warfare. Few of them realized the political, social and economic context in which the war took place.<sup>117</sup>

Intellectuals were part of the story of the US becoming involved in the war. The public was divided when they had to point out who was responsible for the war. While the US stayed neutral, scholars expressed their dismay at the repression of political dissent in Germany. A general consensus was developing that Germany alone was responsible for the war. It is interesting to point out that most intellectuals hostile towards Germany often had lived and studied there. After the declaration of war, intellectual jingoism increased dramatically. Especially historians left the college campus and started working for the government, bringing up a contradiction for intellectuals. While becoming hostile to German repression of political dissent, their actions were more or less the same of what they attacked.<sup>118</sup> Only difference being that in contrast to Germany, the US government did not have complete autocratic control.

Looking at the NBHS, the contradiction did also relate to these historians. The publications are a clear reflection, especially the *Handbook for Diplomatic History*. The linear history of Western European diplomatic relations was not just written to prove the German responsibility for the war. Neither was it solely written to prove how the Old World, with empires and alliances, had come to an end. The handbook was written with the underlying idea that the US would become the leader of a new world order and that president Wilson was the world liberator. The book proves in this case that the old world had come to an end when the war broke out in 1914.

The idea of Wilson being the world liberator is of course questionable. Not in the first case because he actually went to war, but also due to the discussion about his true intentions. Therefore the discussion on Wilsonianism is a rather interesting one. For example, this paper

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<sup>117</sup> Moshik Temkin, 'Culture vs. Kultur, or a clash of civilizations: public intellectuals in the United States and the Great War,' in: *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 58, issue 01, (March 2015) 157-182, 157-159.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*, 159-165.

started with Judt and the Iraq war. Former president George W. Bush is by some seen as the most Wilsonian president after Wilson himself. He was to complete the job Wilson had begun, following through the essentially liberal vision he had laid out. Opinions do vary on this however. John B. Judis claimed that; ‘Wilson did not believe the world’s greatest powers, acting individually, should impose their political beliefs or economic systems on former colonies or protectorates. Instead, Wilson believed the great nations had to act together within an organization such as the League of Nations.’ On the contrary, David Kennedy asserted that Wilson would have seen in George W. Bush his natural successor.<sup>119</sup> Whatever the true intentions of Wilson, he and his legacy are surrounded with the idea that he was a bringer of peace. This idea is something the US is likely to characterize itself with up until today. The NBHS seems to be a part of that culture, were it is acceptable to (in Bourne’s words) betray your calling. All the NBHS publications that have been studied for this research indicate the same. This conclusion becomes even more shocking for today’s historian, knowing that their involvement was in essence voluntary.<sup>120</sup>

Chomsky’s tacit assumption seemed at the beginning a concept in which the NBHS fitted perfectly. Therefore, the Webb-Culberson legislation is worth looking at, since it was a very extreme legislation for the US. First it was to censorship the press. Second it regulated punishment of any interference with the activities of the armed services, including recruitment. Third, the legislation controlled the mail to prevent their use for the dissemination of allegedly treasonable material. The Webb-Culberson legislation was not passed. After the declaration of war however, the Espionage Act was passed. A less extreme version of the Webb-Culberson legislation, were the censorship of the press was not included.<sup>121</sup> David Laurence had written to Wilson of the misunderstanding and distrust, which had grown up among newspapermen in regard to the censorship situation. Suggesting that the President should invite the Washington correspondents to the White House and give them; ‘such information as you must have which prompts you to ask for some kind of a censorship law.’ Wilson wrote back:

Thank you for your letter...I fear that it would not be wise for me to pursue the course you suggest, just at present, at any rate, because it might look as if I were trying to straighten it out when there is really nothing to straiten out; or, it might look

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<sup>119</sup> John A. Thompson, ‘Wilsonianism: the dynamics of a conflicted concept,’ In: *International Affairs* 86: 1 (2010) 27-48, 27.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Neither propaganda work nor the attacks on it seem to have affected the careers of the participants. For the most part they regarded their extraordinary venture into patriotic service as an aberrant chapter in their lives, an atypical departure from scholarship necessitated by the national crisis and obviating judgment by professional standards.’ It is for this research important to point out that this conclusion by Blakey reflects very clearly on Jameson himself.

Blakey, *Historians on the Homefront*, 140.

<sup>121</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 25-26.

as if I were trying to correct mistakes which Creel is thought to have made when I do not in my heart believe that he has made any...I cannot help believing that continued intercourse with Creel such as the newspaper correspondents will have will more and more convince them of his unusual qualities not only of sense but of trustworthiness. I depend upon their perceptions and their candor to find those qualities out, and I have very little doubt as to such results.<sup>122</sup>

The monthly magazine that covered the American newspaper industry, the *Editor & Publisher*, published on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1918 a part of the speech from George Creel. In which he calls to unselfish national service to newspapermen. Creel addressed at the annual convention of the North Carolina Press Association to urge US newspapers not to emphasize on tattle and carry, but to focus on the truth. Every citizen of the US needed a clear understanding of the purposes and ideals the country expressed. The speech is very interesting, since it shows how Creel saw the purpose of himself and his CPI, for example claiming that:

Let me sat at the very outset that I am not the censor or even a censor. I took this position because I believed in the freedom of the press and wanted to be in position where I could help guard it...I was not in favor of a censorship law in the beginning, not am I now in favor of the enactment of any legislation...The great need is not that we should keep the press from doing hurtful things, but that we should get the press to do the helpful things...It was upon this theory, when the proposed law failed of passage, that I evolved the voluntary agreement under which the press is its own censor...This is the only censorship exercised by the Committee on Public Information.<sup>123</sup>

George Creel wrote later in his book *How we advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Qospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Qlobe* that:

I was strongly opposed to the censorship bill, and delayed acceptance of office until the president had considered approvingly the written statement of my views on the subject. It was not that I denied the need of some sort of censorship, but deep in my

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<sup>122</sup> Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters, War Leader 1917-1918, Volume 7*, (New York 1938) 517.

<sup>123</sup> *Editor & Publisher* Vol. 51, No. 10, Saturday August 17 1818 (New York) 5-6.



heart was the feeling that the desired results could be obtained without paying the price that a formal law would have demanded.<sup>124</sup>

Despite Creel's statements, his position is characteristic for that time when many intellectuals balanced between betraying their calling and serving the country. It also seems to prove the existence of tacit assumption in US society during those years. However, when taken Wilson's presidency into account it raises doubt about such existence. Different opinions were not necessarily censored, but silent acceptance was neither the case. Not just by passing of the Espionage Act, but also because Wilson tried to manipulate and cultivate a favourable war opinion. Anti-war and peace advocates were not to be accepted. One of the foundations of tacit assumption is that even the different opinions are being accepted and therefore do not matter as much. There seems to be another problem with Chomsky's concept. During the days before the Iraq war, opponents of the war were heavily criticized. So in both the Great and Iraq war tacit assumption was not going according to what Chomsky said. An explanation can be that there are no strict rules to inflict such policy.

More importantly however, is to point out that most progressives that supported the war were in essence anti-war. Most of them tempered their early views instead of abandoning them.<sup>125</sup> The war presented possibilities for social reform. Something these persons had advocated already before the war. Here is the tacit assumption more or less existing. Despite some intellectuals who were pushed into a favourable war opinion it offered opportunities for them. Namely to advocate other reforms, or in the case of the NBHS to educate the people in a way they saw fit. After reviewing these facts, the conclusion is that members of the NBHS, and Jameson in particular, were true believers of their cause. Not only because of the clear conviction in letters of Jameson and the resources that have been studied, but also because of the American higher education crisis. Which brought to the survey fundamental questions about the purpose of the historian (or intellectual) in society. Jameson once said his goals as historians was; 'To set a standard of Workmanship and compel men to conform to it.'<sup>126</sup>

However Morey D. Rothberg<sup>127</sup> claimed he failed in such a task. Partly because of the lingering influence of genteel culture, which vitiated efforts to impose scholarly rigor on historical work. But also due to social and political developments that exerted countervailing pressure on attempt to create a unitary science of history. Being the first editor of the AHR,

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<sup>124</sup> George Creel, *How we advertised America*, 16.

<sup>125</sup> Kennedy, *Over Here*, 50.

<sup>126</sup> Morey D. Rothberg, 'To Set a Standard of Workmanship and Compel Men to Conform to It: John Franklin Jameson as Editor of the American Historical Review,' In: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (October 1984) 957.

<sup>127</sup> Rothberg claimed also that Jameson had been forgotten, while he was the single most influential figure during the professionalization of historical studies in the US. Him being forgotten contained an irony. He helped to construct the profession of history; by doing so he saw his generation engaged in making American history available to the people as a usable past.

Jameson lived during a time that the study of history was fragmented almost beyond comprehension, making the standard of workmanship very hard to achieve. Many other historians shared his vision of a historical profession united behind a single standard of scholarly excellence. Herbert Baxter Adams, Jameson's mentor at Johns Hopkins, made the historical seminar a laboratory, books were treated as mineralogical specimens, passed between historians, examined and tested. The path to sound scholarship had been cleared by Leopold von Ranke for Adams and other scientific historians. A science of history, Ranke appeared to instruct, depends above all else on documentation. Free of any presuppositions, historians would, in the words of their master, establish *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, things as they actually happened. Sharing with Adams a commitment towards nationalism and seeing the college lecture hall as an arena for political activity, Jameson himself saw the world divided between objective seekers of truth and agitators masquerading as intellectuals.<sup>128</sup> Jameson developed scientific history to a new form. During his inaugural lecture at Chicago in 1902 he said that: 'The world cares far less for eloquence than it did a generation ago...Now it wanted fact; realism in fiction had arisen concurrently with the development of "professional or professional history-writing.'<sup>129</sup> In other words, Jameson truly believed his new form of scientific history was the right way to offer facts.

## Conclusion

This chapter offered the intentions behind the NBHS publications by looking at intellectual engagement in 1917. Why did they support the war? The NBHS turned out to be a perfect example for the US intellectual during that time. Their publications, their beliefs reflect very clearly on some important developments in the US. First of all it reflects on how Jameson believed in his Standard of workmanship and also the work of the NBHS. Even though Co-founder Paxson described the work of the board as historical engineering, and Harper later in his life showed regret about his involvement with the Sisson documents, Jameson never took distance from his role. True belief, but also sacrifice is visible in this conclusion. Although Harper admitted the fragile line that he was balancing on during that time (and more importantly, he had knowledge of that) he took it up as his duty to help Jameson. Sacrificing certain rules of his profession. Therefore secondly, this research shows that the NBHS also stands for being a reflection of how historians sacrificed. Thirdly, the board was a reflection of the change going on in the United States. This change concerned some fundamental aspects, such as national identity and political culture. The way intellectuals got involved in supporting the war serves as the best example for this conclusion. That intellectual

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David W. Noble, 'Review of John Franklin Jameson: The Development of Humanistic Scholarship in America. Volume one: Selected Essays,' In: *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 81, No. 2, September 1994, 727-728.

<sup>128</sup> Rothberg, 'To Set a Standard of Workmanship, 957-972.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem*, 961.

engagement came forth out of a war becoming an affair of the mind. This affair was somehow created by the neutrality years before. The nation had be made ready for war and the only way to achieve such readiness was by showing the people why it was important. Intellectual engagement served as the expression for it. In other words, the NBHS reflected on how intellectuals made the country ready for war.

## **Conclusion**

The Supreme test of the nation has come.  
We must all speak, act and serve together!<sup>130</sup>

The supreme test of which Wilson spoke in 1917 contained a deeper meaning than one would think. Not only did the test consist out of unifying the nation to go to war. It also consisted out of changing the United States in its deepest foundations, some of which that has been there since the American Revolution. At least, when we look at it from the perspective this research offers. Tony Judt's opening citation could not express this any better. Based on his expressions, pre Iraq war, the US took the risk of corroding the values of democracy by lying and exaggerating. In 1917 the same happened under Wilson. A war psychosis was created by lying, exaggerating and intellectual engagement in the political culture of the country. There is however one important difference between the two cases. While the same aspects seem to return, it is of the utmost importance to remember that under Wilson the foundations were laid out on which the US government later could develop a war psychosis. Judt was attacked for distrusting the democratic chosen leaders, while according to him; critical intellectual engagement is of great importance in a democracy. In 1917 intellectual engagement becomes reality, due to a changing of political culture and shift in national identity. Those factors come together in the National Board for Historical Service. However, the term critical intellectual engagement is not applicable to this time.

The board was more than a propaganda agency (something that could be claimed when research would focus more on such a subject), as it was more than an anomaly of historians practising their profession. To answer the main research question of this research, why is the National Board for Historical Service important for the United States intellectual history, three important conclusions can be drawn. The NBHS was a result, expression and reflection during a mix of policy change and developments in the United States. First of all, the NBHS was a result of the American higher education development and the similar development of the historical profession in the US. The academic world, developed in the late nineteenth-century, became slowly more intertwined with the US government. While historians struggled with the dilemma of presentism versus subjective participation, their profession developed more or less along the same path. Due to the question how to be of service for your country and developments in the US higher educational system, historians were offered the possibility to have multiple interpretations of their profession. The NBHS was a result; it was an interpretation of how historians could practise their profession. Second,

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<sup>130</sup> Woodrow Wilson, Why are we at war? 79.

the NBHS was an expression. The publications expressed a range of views and suggestions of how historians could be of service, how to educate on the war and most importantly, how to look at the history of that war. That history was based on the collapse of the Old World and the starting of a new world order with America as its sole leader. The result however was a moral dilemma for those who participated. Harper expressed this very clearly with his doubt participating in the Sisson documents. The NBHS expressed not only how a historian, citizen or child could be of service, it expressed a moral dilemma for the scholar in general. The dilemma made scholars sacrifice important aspects of their profession. Third, and last, the NBHS was a reflection of two major changing factors in the US. On the one hand there was the slowly changing political culture, starting in 1883 with the Pendleton act, and fully emerging in 1917 with *The Inquiry*. Murnane's action intellectuals had become fully involved into the political spectrum. On the other hand there was the shift in national identity during Wilson's presidency. This shift was based on foreign policy, of the US becoming a bringer of peace instead of being a shining example for others, was thought to become reality after the Second World War. Although this new foreign policy did not fully emerge after Versailles, the start was made for the US to become the nation Wilson wanted it to be. The NBHS reflects on both changing factors. Not only because the board supported the war effort, but also since its members wanted to be of service for the government and society. Intellectuals in general helped the government with the war effort and criticism was not accepted. In other words, intellectual engagement in politics started in 1917. The intellectuals sacrificed rules and standards their profession asked from them. The sacrifice of the scholar and the position NBHS took in society and politics during Wartime America, leads to another important conclusion that can and should be drawn.

Tony Judt explains the role of the intellectual in a democracy, critical intellectual engagement of extreme value for it to work correctly. Freedom and democracy seem to be typical American values. Wilson does have a legacy of freedom fighter and bringer of peace. However, the NBHS proves it was very different in 1917. This board came forth out of developments of (in how the US describes itself) the greatest nation on earth. In other words, the developments that contributed to the creation of that great nation also created the NBHS, an organization that in the end was contradictory of all the values the US claims to be founded upon. The NBHS stands for something much bigger than just being an episode in the history of the historical profession. This research shows that the US government has, and probably still is, using and misusing science and history for its political purposes. For some this may not seem a shocking conclusion. The surprise however, is seen in the fact that it started decades before World War Two had ended. On top of that historians themselves played a part in this from the beginning. While claiming to base their history on facts, those historians actually diverted from Ranke's *wie est eigentlich gewesen*. Therefore trust in

science, history and politics is being greatly affected. Conspiracy theorists are able to dominate discussions about historical and current events involving the United States. Also we can ask ourselves to what extent this situation is apparent in other countries? Without doubt, history is used all the time in to the advantage of people, politics or nations. However, when referring to Chomsky; in totalitarian regimes this is more visible than in a democracy.

Taken these conclusions into account, it is even more important to think about what we can do with it, for example in the light of Wilson. His career as a politician does reflect very clearly on him as an historian. Being president he plays a role in changing aspects of national identity and political culture with intellectual engagement becoming a fact. He merged the intellectual world with that of politics on a permanent basis. At the same time he was an historian under which a propaganda agency evolved (and the NBHS) which helps Wilson in his policy. Hard evidence about this connection is missing, but it would be interesting to research whether Wilson and the historians were connected. To what extent did historians of the NBHS offer their service because Wilson was one of them? Why was John Franklin Jameson, this major figure in the development of the historical profession and initiator of the NBHS, being put on the same height as Ranke? It is both obscure and interesting. Obscure because it does not fit in our current interpretation of how the historian has to work. Interesting as it indicates that we should not judge ourselves on how history was being practised in the past. The history they conducted was not necessarily bad history, since it definitely fit in the zeitgeist of 1917.

To end on a more positive note, it would be wrong to have no more trust in science, politics or society. Based on this research Jameson truly believed that what he was doing the right thing. No source indicated that Jameson doubted his actions. Historians nowadays also trust their work, the only difference being that this research for example was written without a judgmental value. It does contain however, a critical analysis of the actions and consequences. That is were this research can serve as a start for further investigation. It would be interesting seeing to what extent Jameson believed in his actions, but also to research criticism of contemporaries and later figures, something this research could not unravel to a satisfactory level. Most interesting however would be a research on the connection between Jameson and Wilson, to what extent they corresponded and shared the same thoughts about the NBHS and the policy changes.

To a certain point, we as historians make history ourselves. This research is making history. We do this all the time, and historians of the NBHS did the same. The difference is the intention behind the making of history. The intention for NBHS historians was to engineer history, saying it was based on scientific research, to express propaganda. Differ it greatly from the Ranke saw history making. This research on the other hand does not have those intentions the NBHS historians had. It is merely positioning itself into a debate and trying to

provide it with new insights. We as historians are always subjective, but with our sources and criticism on them we try to be as objective as humanly possible. However the engineering is something the historian does. To some extent this research does the same, but the relevance is not based in how to serve the country. Neither is it being part of a process of shift in national identity or the historical profession itself. The NBHS itself caught my interest; therefore sources were linked together, writing a story in a certain context. That context bears more relevance than just a story on historical events. The NBHS was part of a greater process; that is concerning the US political culture, national identity, foreign policy, academic evolution and presidents with contradicting policies of peace. Critical intellectual engagement was not the purpose of the NBHS. This research was about the United States and intellectual engagement in politics and political engagement in the intellectual world. As it turns out, a subject that is truly worth more research.

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