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THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT
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OWL AND HOT H2O

OWI stands for Office of War Information. Hot H2O means-hot water. The equation seeks to represent that OWI is in hot water. It is a long tempestuous story. Perhaps we can summarize it. Prior to June 1942, there were many bureaus in the government which gathered facts, figures and information of all kinds and made such information available to the public. There was the Office of Facts and Figures known as OFF which issued booklets, pamphlets, press releases and statements in connection with our war effort. There was the Office of Government Reports (OGR) which issued selected clippings from newspapers and magazines, operated as Information Office and published a manual on the whole Federal Government. There was a Division of information in the office of Emergency Management which kept the country informed of our endeavors in the production of war goods munitions and weapons. There was a Coordinator of Information which issued printed matter of all kinds including that which went to foreign countries. It was truly an amazing aggregation of agencies spending public funds and issuing releases, pamphlets, stories, pictures, and what not by the ton. On June 13, 1942 the President issued an order creating the Office of War Information which would consolidate most of these agencies and functions under one head for the purpose of keeping our own people informed of the war effort and for the further purpose of carrying on propaganda in foreign lands as an aid to our troops. This was the beginning of OWI. Elmer Davis, one-time radio commentator was selected as the Director of OWI with rather full authority to carry out these functions

TROUBLE BEGINS

After OWI had been operating for sometime, it appeared before Congress in May 1943 with a request for appropriations for the year beginning July 1, 1943 in the sum of 47 million dollars. This afforded an opportunity for the House Committee to probe into the operations of OWI and examine it's record. The same thing was done in the Senate, and as a result, several million dollars were lopped off of the request. In recent weeks, OWI came back to Congress with a request for an additional five million dollars and this but aggravated the controversy which began in May 1943 and the question is whether OWI shall receive additional funds or no money whatsoever on the basis of it's record of operations.

WHAT IT DOES WITH THE MONEY

As of May 1943, OWI had 4227 persons in it's employ and intended to increase this number to 5436 if sufficient money was provided. About 1500 of this number were employed in what was known as the Domestic Branch and the remainder in the Overseas Branch. The Overseas Branch was engaged in making motion pictures, newsreels, printing pamphlets, leaflets and a host of other things which were designed to stimulate the morale of our own troops, weaken enemy resistance, and develop a friendly spirit among natives of foreign countries occupied by the enemy. As an example, 20,000,000 leaflets were scattered among the natives of Tunisia and other leaflets printed in Japanese were disseminated among natives of Japanese-held islands in the Pacific. The Domestic Branch on the other hand issued movies, pamphlets, circulars and releases setting forth war news, urging Victory Gardens, dealing with scrap drives, recruiting, rationing and a host of other items. Both branches used the Radio freely. The Overseas Branch especially used short wave radio to broadcast to enemy and occupied countries.

THE REAL POINT OF FRICTION.

The real frictions developed in connection with the Domestic Branch. It on one occasion issued 200,000 copies of a statement on "How to Raise Sixteen Billion Dollars" which was a discussion of taxes and generally regarded as an attack on the Ruml Plan. To make matters worse, these were distributed to Office of Civilian Defense workers for use in group discussions throughout the land and at once raised the cry of politics and propaganda. It issued another pamphlet under the title "Shall we Have A Compulsory War Service Act." Only recently, both major labor organizations issued a criticism of OWI charging that the labor division of OWI emphasized the role of Communist leaders in the United States, dealt in trivialities and retained a man at the head of it's labor desk who was pro-communist in his leanings and definitely unacceptable to both CIO and AFL. In addition to all of this, OWI has been generally suspected of using it's facilities and funds to influence the election of 1944 and thus OWI finds itself in extremely hot H2O.