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Henry Irving, A Communication History of Paper Salvage in Britain during the Second World War

Abstract

This article builds upon recent scholarship on the recycling – or ‘salvage’ – schemes organised by the British government during the Second World War. Viewing the act of recycling as part of an interactive ‘communications circuit’, it uses records produced by the Ministry of Information to analyse the development of publicity produced for the National Salvage Campaign. Particular attention is paid to the public’s role in shaping the development of the campaign. By demonstrating that a disjuncture between publicity and perceptions of inaction led to a sense of frustration, the article suggests that this example complicates the notion of a ‘people’s war’.

Introduction

Historians have become increasingly interested in the recycling – or ‘salvage’ – schemes organised by the British government during the Second World War. Despite the subject being given just two and a half pages in Angus Calder’s seminal *The People’s War*, recent studies have demonstrated that these schemes were an important part of life on the home front.¹ This re-appraisal began in 2008 when an article by the environmental historian Tim Cooper was published in the pages of this journal. His study, undertaken alongside another by the human geographer Mark Riley, demonstrated that British recycling figures grew rapidly between 1939 and 1945. Presenting recycling as an integral part of the civilian war effort, both writers invoked the idea of a ‘people’s war’ defined by ‘active citizenship ... social responsibility and participation’.² Although conscious of its limits, they argued that the

¹ Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain 1939-45* (London, 1992), pp. 345-7; Tim Cooper, ‘Challenging the “Refuse Revolution”: war, waste and the rediscovery of recycling, 1900-50’, *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), 710-31; Mark Riley, ‘From salvage to recycling – new agendas or same old rubbish’, *Area*, 40 (2008), 79-89; and Peter Thorsheim, ‘Salvage and destruction: the recycling of books and manuscripts in Great Britain during the Second World War’, *Contemporary European History*, 22 (2013), 431-52.

² Sonja O. Rose, *Which People’s War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2003), p. 19.

‘particular moral geography of the war’ encouraged recycling by overcoming a peacetime stigma of refuse and providing new incentives to save.³ The practical reasons for this shift were given particular attention by Riley, who argued that an accompanying National Salvage Campaign persuaded the public to recycle by using posters, press notices, radio, film and roadshows to ‘piggyback [on] the wartime broadcasts of the Ministry of Information’.⁴ Similar themes, albeit with a rather different conclusion, emerge from a more recent analysis of the recycling of books and manuscripts undertaken by Peter Thorsheim. He maintains that Riley and Cooper are wrong to view salvage as an example of conservation because it extended to cover items of cultural value, yet invokes similar evidence of publicity and popular participation.⁵ The same is true of work which touches on salvage from the perspective of the end use, for example Valerie Holman’s earlier account of wartime publishing.⁶

The techniques of ‘publicity and promotion’ cited within existing studies tend to be drawn from a handful of colourful examples. Cooper, for instance, illuminates his argument about the temporary reconceptualisation of waste with allusions to a special committee of female MPs that was established in 1940 to advise the Ministry of Supply and the deployment of the Women’s Voluntary Service (WVS) to run ‘salvage shops’.⁷ Thorsheim’s article is similarly illustrated by a description of the enthusiastic fervour which surrounded a ‘National Salvage Contest’ held in 1942 (with towns and cities vying to win part of £20,000 prize fund). His argument about wilful destruction matches this with analysis of a ‘Book Recovery Programme’ which resulted in millions of volumes being destroyed.⁸ The latter scheme is also used by Holman, who describes the competitive collection of ‘miles of books’ during 1943 in

³ Riley, p. 87 and Cooper, p. 719.

⁴ Riley, pp. 81-3.

⁵ Thorsheim, pp. 431-52.

⁶ Valerie Holman, ‘Carefully concealed connections: the Ministry of Information and British publishing, 1939-46’, *Book History*, 8 (2005), 197-226, at p. 207.

⁷ Cooper, pp. 717-8.

⁸ Thorsheim, pp. 432 and 443-7.

particular detail.⁹ One might also point to the reproduction of vivid posters which urged the British public to ‘Save paper and help feed the guns’ and reminded them that ‘Salvage hastens victory’ by heritage organisations like the Imperial War Museum.¹⁰ While Cooper and Riley stress that public attitudes towards refuse remained complex, they argue that such examples encouraged ‘large proportions’ of the population to recycle by blurring the lines between civilian and military actions.¹¹ Indeed, viewing the National Salvage Campaign as something akin to an experiment in behavioural economics, Riley even suggests that the techniques used during the war provide a ‘potential blueprint’ for contemporary policymakers.¹²

This scholarship has cemented the importance of British recycling in the Second World War as a topic for historical analysis, but it also suggests the necessity of additional research. This is particularly true of publicity because the conclusions reached conflict with established arguments about the effect of domestic propaganda during the Second World War. Most studies dealing with wartime publicity have instead focused upon the difficulties encountered by those responsible for shaping public opinion. In fact, in a field that has remained relatively under-researched, Ian McLaine’s impish description of the Ministry of Information as a department that was ‘roundly and widely condemned for inefficiencies, for comic blunders and for irritating rather than reassuring the public’ continues to be influential.¹³ The assumption that the examples cited above are constituent parts of a coherent propaganda campaign devised by the Ministry of Supply’s Salvage Department and put into effect by the Ministry of Information can also be questioned. Indeed, by highlighting the complicated social dynamics of domestic propaganda, recent work on the ‘Careless talk’ campaign by Jo Fox suggests that it is naïve

⁹ Valerie Holman, *Print for Victory: Book Publishing in Britain, 1939-45* (London, 2008), p. 65.

¹⁰ London, Imperial War Museum (IWM), PST 14771, Unknown artist, ‘Salvage Hastens Victory’, undated and Kew, The National Archives (TNA), EXT 1/72/7, Unknown artist, ‘Paper for Salvage Helps to Feed the Guns’, undated. See also, Richard Slocombe, *British War Posters of the Second World War* (London, 2012), p. 47.

¹¹ Riley, p. 80 and Cooper, p. 718.

¹² Riley, pp. 86-7.

¹³ Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London, 1979), p. 1.

to imagine that any campaign could have been as stable and successful as salvage is claimed to have been. Instead of accepting a linear model she implores others to 'place more emphasis on public agency in constructing their own meanings from official communications'.¹⁴ However this remains undeveloped within a literature that has failed to contextualise changes within the National Salvage Campaign and relies almost exclusively on reports drawn from newspapers and the trade press (Thorsheim's focus on opposition to the Book Recovery Programme being an obvious exception). Add to this the fact that there are precious few attempts to situate the campaign within government propaganda policy more generally, and one begins to appreciate the need for further consideration.

This article will engage with the complexities of mid-twentieth century recycling by applying techniques from the emerging field of communication history to the example of paper salvage (which was the most important single constituent of the National Salvage Campaign). Communication history seeks to understand the ways in which information is transferred and received, as well as the impact of these processes on the information itself. Invoking a framework first used by Robert Darnton to describe the book trade in pre-Revolutionary France, the article views the separation of waste paper as part of an interactive 'communications circuit'.¹⁵ This circuit runs from those who instigated the campaign to those who promoted it, those who were responsible for collection, those who contributed material, and those who sought to measure its effect. The following sections trace the six revolutions of this circuit that took place during the course of the Second World War. This has been made possible by the analysis of material produced by the Ministry of Supply, Ministry of Information, Wartime Social Survey and Mass Observation. While many records have been destroyed, these collections shed new light on the methods chosen to publicise the campaign and allow nuances in public opinion to be drawn out more clearly than before. They reveal that paper salvage was dependent upon a delicate balance between popular and governmental action. Indeed, because all of

¹⁴ Jo Fox, 'Careless talk: tensions within British domestic propaganda during the Second World War', *Journal of British Studies*, 51 (2013), 936-66, at p. 966.

¹⁵ Robert Darnton, 'What is the history of books?', *Daedalus*, 111 (1982), 65-83, at p. 67.

those involved had the power to influence and transform the campaign, the relationships between each part of the circuit were interactive and dynamic. Moreover, as the government deliberately sought to stress the importance of recycling in a bid to foster spontaneous popular effort, the campaign was often accompanied by a sense of frustration that the state itself was doing too little. These findings suggest that the subject matter complicates – rather than confirms – the notion of a ‘people’s war’.

The importance of wartime recycling

The economic importance of recycling in wartime had been demonstrated by experience during the First World War. In 1918, when interruptions to international trade led to domestic shortages and increased prices, the government responded with the creation of a National Salvage Council chaired by the Secretary of State for War.¹⁶ During the nineteen-thirties, this experience informed preparations made by the Committee for Imperial Defence to deal with the likely economic implications of a future war.¹⁷ Their planning gathered pace after the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938 and was given form by the creation of a Ministry of Supply in July 1939. This new department – alongside the Board of Trade and Ministries of Labour, Food and Production – was to become responsible for a swathe of decentralised ‘controls’ operated under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act.¹⁸ Amongst the first established, on 1 September 1939, was a Paper Control headed by the industrialist Ralph Reed. It readied itself for a system of regulated bulk purchase by closing commodity markets and capping prices at their pre-war levels.¹⁹ And, when global prices jumped 20 per cent

¹⁶ Cooper, p. 727.

¹⁷ W.K. Hancock and M.M. Gowing, *British War Economy* (London, 1949), pp. 41-5; Joel Hurstfield, *The Control of Raw Materials* (London, 1953), pp. 33-54; and Neil Rollings, ‘Whitehall and the control of prices and profits in a major war, 1919-1939’, *The Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), 517-540.

¹⁸ H. Hartley, ‘British war controls – the legal framework’, *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, 11 (1940), 163-76.

¹⁹ TNA, CAB 68/1/23, Burgin, ‘First monthly report submitted by the Minister of Supply covering the period to 8th September’, 27 Sept. 1939, p. 4 and *The Economist*, ‘Government control of industry’, 9 Sept. 1939, p. 502.

during the first weeks of fighting, it reacted by requisitioning existing stocks and imposing new licencing restrictions.²⁰ These controls on imports, exports, sales and usage gradually superseded voluntary schemes (the newspaper industry had, for example, set up its own purchasing company to pool supplies in September 1939)²¹, and would contribute to a sharp fall in UK paper consumption from 3.9 million tons in 1939 to 2.5 million tons in 1940.²² Yet restrictive controls on trade could not increase available supplies, and maximum prices had to be increased when rising production costs threatened the public purse in October 1939.²³ It was for this reason that they were matched by efforts to bolster Britain's recycling infrastructure.

Salvage during the interwar period had been somewhat haphazard. Most local authorities had not offered householders the option of a separate collection, and precious few national statistics had been collected.²⁴ This would prove to be a significant challenge for Leslie Burgin, the Minister of Supply, who spent two months considering proposals for 'the more systematic collection' of materials.²⁵ An important step in this direction was made when a small Salvage Department was established inside the Ministry of Supply on 11 November 1939. H.G. Judd, a chartered accountant who had worked in the Ministry of Munitions during the First World War, was appointed as its Controller one week later.²⁶ He was instructed to take a rounded view that would draw together existing schemes for civilian and

²⁰ TNA, CAB 68/2/39, Burgin, 'Supply and production: third monthly report covering the month of October', p. 18 and *The Economist*, 'Government control of industry', 9 Sept. 1939, p. 502.

²¹ TNA, CAB 68/2/1, Burgin, 'Supply and production: second monthly report covering the period to 30th September, 1939', p. 10 and R.J. Minney, *Viscount Stansfield* (London, 1954), p. 321.

²² Thorsheim, p. 437.

²³ TNA, CAB 68/2/39, Burgin, 'Third monthly report', pp. 17-8.

²⁴ Cooper, pp. 727-8; *The Times*, 'Salving from refuse', 29 Sept. 1939, p. 5 and 'Money in dustbins', 30 Sept. 1939, p. 3.

²⁵ TNA, CAB 68/2/1, 'Second monthly report', pp. 9-10.

²⁶ J.D. Scott and R. Hughes, *The Administration of War Production* (London, 1955), pp. 68-78 and 213-232 and Cooper, p. 717.

military salvage.²⁷ The Ministry regarded this work as being primarily about co-ordination – and the press drew a parallel to the National Salvage Council which had briefly operated in 1918.²⁸ Nevertheless, it was still a wide-ranging responsibility that saw the Department simultaneously working to promote the reclamation of military waste, the pooling of industrial discards and the doorstep collection of everything from batteries to bones. The latter was entrusted to the Deputy Controller for Civilian Salvage, Jesse Cooper Dawes, a former Public Cleansing Superintendent for Keighley, who had been the assistant director of the National Salvage Council and was a four-time President of the Institute for Public Cleansing.²⁹ Both men were enthusiastic about the potential benefits that could be wrought from an effective recycling system.

Of course some of the better known examples of wartime recycling were more spontaneous. The chaotic ‘Pots to planes’ campaign organised by the Ministry of Aircraft Production in June 1940 is a case in point. A personal appeal by Lord Beaverbrook led then to a short-lived burst of recycling as aluminium cookware was donated to the war effort; it resulted in resentment when the material proved to be inadequate and new saucepans began to appear in shops.³⁰ The often impulsive felling of cast iron railings and street lamps on behalf of the Ministry of Works is similarly well documented in popular histories of the war.³¹ Yet these examples were not representative of the system as a whole. Schemes for recycling paper were, by contrast, more carefully planned. Moreover, because of paper’s use inside ammunition and a variety of electrical components, not to forget the vital role of packages in the effective transportation of armaments, they were strategically more important. Its significance was heightened by the fact that Britain’s peacetime paper supply had been almost entirely dependent

²⁷ *The Times*, ‘Salvage Controller’, 20 Nov. 1939, p. 6 and *The Economist*, ‘Defence measures’, 2 Dec. 1939, p. 324.

²⁸ *The Times*, ‘Using up waste products’, 11 Nov. 1939, p. 8.

²⁹ Lewis Herbert, *The History of the Institute of Wastes Management, 1898-1998* (Warwick, 1998), p. 30.

³⁰ Calder, pp. 345-7 and Arthur Marwick, *The British and the Second World War* (London, 1976), p. 90.

³¹ Raynes Minns, *Bombers and Mash: The Domestic Front, 1939-45* (London, 1980), p. 147 and Peter Lewis, *A People’s War* (London, 1986), p. 169.

upon imports of wood pulp from Scandinavia and North America. This trade had involved approximately 300 shiploads a year. It was now exposed to military threats and a potential drain on Britain's balance of payments. These related factors explain why paper was identified as a key material by the Salvage Department. Dawes aimed to save 250,000 tons per year – which was a third of expected wartime consumption.³²

Judd and Dawes depended upon the support of local authorities to achieve their goal. Indeed, apart from encouraging the participation of voluntary societies, the Salvage Department had no independent means of ensuring materials were recycled. It was for this reason that one of their first actions was to appeal directly to each of Britain's 2,000 local authorities in the first of a series of 'salvage circulars'. The letter, which was publicised by a press conference, called on councils to 'improve their waste collection services' by doing more to separate paper, rags, metals and foodstuffs. The appeal gave practical advice on methods for collecting paper in 'containers attached to [existing] collecting vehicles' and explained that up to a million tons had been allowed to go to waste in the first half of 1939.³³ A linked survey of the existing apparatus highlighted the challenge that was faced. Not only did 1,600 local authorities fail to respond; only 324 of those that did reported any existing mechanism for collection.³⁴ Unperturbed, Judd and Dawes were keen to draw upon those few examples of best practice, and organised a series of conferences which brought practitioners from different areas together. The largest of these was attended by representatives from 120 different local authorities.³⁵ Such activities were augmented by the appointment of twenty-two honorary District Salvage Advisors who were charged with promoting recycling at a local level. However it was also

³² *The Times*, 'Salvage from the dustbin', 25 Jan. 1940, p. 8.

³³ TNA, CAB 68/3/29, Burgin, 'Supply and production: fourth monthly report covering the month of November', p. 14 and *The Times*, 'The salvage of refuse', 1 Dec. 1939, p. 10.

³⁴ TNA, CAB 68/4/27, Burgin, 'Supply and production: fifth monthly report covering the month of December 1939', f. 233 and CAB 68/6/34 Morrison, 'Supply and production: ninth monthly report covering the month of April 1940', p. 10.

³⁵ *The Times*, 'Salvage from the dustbin', p. 8.

recognised that a broader public relations effort was needed. After all, as Cooper reminds us, recycling has always depended upon its economic viability, an infrastructure, and a positive public attitude.³⁶

Initial approaches to publicity

While ‘publicity and promotion’ are central to existing studies of wartime salvage, the complicated relationships between various interested parties have tended to be overlooked. Initial plans for wartime publicity had presumed that the Ministry of Information would undertake all such work in the event of war. However, Neville Chamberlain’s government had retreated from this intention in 1938, and the frantic planning undertaken during the summer of 1939 left the situation unresolved. This led to immediate tension. In fact, while the Ministry maintained that it must be more than ‘a mere servant’, most Whitehall departments retained – or, in the case of Supply, created – their own publicity offices.³⁷ It was for this reason that a wide-ranging recycling campaign proposed by the Ministry of Information during the second week of the war came to nought. Indeed, although A.P. Waterfield, the Ministry of Information’s Deputy Director General, and Professor John Hilton, its Director of Home Publicity, were both enthusiastic about the opportunity for ‘practical publicity’, progress stalled as they sought to clarify a workable division of responsibility.³⁸ Professor Hilton was subsequently left with little option but to wait for further instruction.³⁹ Internal wrangling between the Ministry’s Home Publicity and General Production divisions complicated matters further because both claimed an executive function. Without any mechanism for co-ordination, the latter began to plan its own ‘anti-waste’ campaign in October 1939 without any consultation with the former. It was

³⁶ Cooper, p. 728.

³⁷ TNA, INF 1/340, Waterfield to Hale, 5 Dec. 1939 and Mariel Grant, *Propaganda and the Role of the State in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford, 1994), p. 245.

³⁸ TNA, INF 1/238/A, Hilton to Waterfield, 12 Sept. 1939; Hilton to Waterfield, 17 Sept. 1939; and Waterfield to Hilton, 19 Sept. 1939.

³⁹ TNA, INF 1/316, Fifty-fourth meeting of Branch One, 16 Nov. 1939.

only after an emergency conference on 16 November 1939 that Waterfield was able to negotiate a standard procedure.⁴⁰

This is not to say that there was no 'anti-waste' publicity during 1939. It is, rather, to emphasise that the subject was voiced most loudly outside government. Encouraged to explore the topic by Hilton and spurred by an obvious self-interest in the availability of paper, the press were at the forefront of an initial campaign to raise awareness.⁴¹ *The Times*, for instance, ran a series of stories in late September and early October which called on the government to adopt a similar approach to that taken at the end of the First World War.⁴² The Boy Scouts' Association was also encouraged – this time by Reed's Paper Control – to get involved and began a voluntary effort to collect waste paper by establishing sorting depots in their huts.⁴³ With a nascent 'anti-waste' campaign already underway, the Salvage Department sought to align itself to the existing effort. Judd therefore emphasised that he depended upon public support and called on all members of society to get involved. The Department's first press conference was, according to the *Daily Mirror*, an appeal to 'duke and dustman, countess and cook' from 'Britain's super dustman No. 1'.⁴⁴ This was put into literal effect when the WVS, headed by the redoubtable Lady Reading, agreed to undertake a household canvass to promote recycling in December 1939. WVS members would visit nine million households over the

⁴⁰ TNA, INF 1/340, 'Note of a discussion on the allocation of responsibility for publicity campaigns', 16 Nov. 1939 and Waterfield to Lee, 17 Nov. 1939.

⁴¹ TNA, INF 1/238/A, Hilton to Waterfield, 17 Sept. 1940.

⁴² *The Times*, 'Salving from refuse', 29 Sept. 1939, p. 5 and 'Value in waste paper: salvage work in big cities', 2 Oct. 1939, p. 2.

⁴³ *The Times*, 'Collecting waste paper: co-operation of Boy Scouts', 3 Oct. 1939, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Daily Mirror*, 'Turn waste into wealth for war', 1 Dec. 1939, p. 2.

following six months.⁴⁵ The Ministry of Supply consequently claimed that ‘the salvage of waste paper ... [had] been stimulated by constant publicity’, even if its own ‘efforts had been deferred’.⁴⁶

The campaign accelerated during February 1940 as the Ministry of Supply prepared a paper rationing scheme in a bid to further economise ‘shipping and currency’. Confident that an adequate recycling infrastructure was in place, the Salvage Department appealed directly to households with a press conference and broadcast at the beginning of the month.⁴⁷ Judd and Dawes were joined in their public relations effort by Colonel John Jestyn Llewellyn, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Supply, and adopted a mixture of tones. Accordingly, when Llewellyn stressed that salvage was a ‘patriotic’ act as every ton saved ‘carriage at sea, voyages by our ships, the use of foreign exchange, and the lives of merchant sailors’, Judd declared that he wanted ‘the best scraps’ and claimed that he had adopted ‘It is waste to waste waste’ as his motto. The event encouraged householders to adopt a routine for sorting their waste – ‘to make Saturday night salvage night’ – and sought to apply further pressure on local authorities to make facilities available.⁴⁸ The publicity continued during the following month as Burgin led fifty MPs on a tour of a recycling facility in Tottenham and Judd promoted a salvage exhibition organised by the City of Westminster council.⁴⁹ Such appeals were part of what Dawes called a ‘sympathetic and common sense approach’.⁵⁰ They were also given weight by the endorsement of Queen Mary.⁵¹ Yet they were still not co-ordinated across government. Indeed,

⁴⁵ Ministry of Supply, Salvage and Recovery Department, *Memorandum on Salvage and Recovery* (London, 1944), p. 5.

⁴⁶ *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th Ser. Vol. 336, 24 Jan. 1940, c. 577 and Burgin, ‘Fifth monthly report’, f. 233.

⁴⁷ TNA, CAB 68/5/14, Burgin, ‘Supply and production: sixth monthly report by the Minister of Supply covering the month of January 1940’, 17 Feb. 1940, p. 15.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, ‘Great salvage drive’ and ‘War upon waste’, 3 Feb. 1940, pp. 3 and 7.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, ‘War on waste’, 29 Feb. 1940, p. 5 and ‘Campaign against waste’, 6 March 1940, p. 5.

⁵⁰ J.C. Dawes, ‘Economy in waste’, *Public Cleansing: The Monthly Journal of the Institute of Public Cleansing*, 30, March 1940, 260.

⁵¹ TNA, CAB 68/5/14, Burgin, ‘Sixth monthly report’, p. 15.

despite Waterfield's attempt to arrange an interdepartmental meeting, any hope for collaboration was blocked by the Ministry of Supply's own press office. Its head, F.A. Lawson, was said to have simply 'resented centralisation'.⁵²

The situation became critical when fighting and poor weather in the Baltic began to upset Scandinavian exports. In April, following the disastrous Norwegian campaign, it was admitted that Britain faced a serious paper shortage.⁵³ With documents warning of 'a situation verging on starvation', it was forecast that government requirements alone would create a 655,000 ton deficit unless a 50 per cent cut in paper usage could be enforced.⁵⁴ The response was to send a second urgent circular to local authorities explaining that the collection of waste paper was now a matter 'of *national duty*' as 'every bundle not saved is an irretrievable loss of essential material'.⁵⁵ The political crisis precipitated by the failure of the Norwegian campaign also had important ramifications. The Labour MP Herbert Morrison's high profile appointment as Minister of Supply on 10 May 1940 brought a new sense of urgency to the home front. His rallying call to 'Go to it!' was matched with efforts to extend existing arrangements for salvage. And, after consulting with the female advisory committee noted earlier, he announced that the Ministry intended to make the collection of salvage compulsory in a statement issued on 22 June 1940.⁵⁶ The policy was confirmed on 25 June 1940 by Morrison's new deputy, the Conservative radical Harold Macmillan, and the first Salvage of Waste Order was issued the following day. All local authorities with populations of more than 10,000 inhabitants were now

⁵² TNA, INF 1/340, Bevan to Reith, 8 Apr. 1940.

⁵³ TNA, CAB 68/6/34, 'Ninth Monthly Report', p. 6.

⁵⁴ TNA, T 246/46, Meeting of Central Priority Department, 24 Apr. 1940 and T 246/47, Meeting of Paper Shortage Committee, 10 May 1940.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Supply, 'Salvage circular', 11 Apr 1940 quoted in Thorsheim, p. 439 and *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th Ser. Vol. 360, 1 May 1940, c. 716.

⁵⁶ *Sunday Express*, 'Morrison compels Britain to stop waste', 23 Jun. 1940, p. 7; *Daily Mirror*, 'Everyone must save all scrap', 24 Jun. 1940, p. 11 and *The Times*, 'The collection of salvage', 24 Jun. 1940, p. 3.

required to offer 'efficient' salvage collections – with special attention paid to waste paper.⁵⁷ This led to a renewed urgency in the field of publicity too.

Up housewives and at 'em!

Morrison began the publicity effort on the evening of Sunday 28 July 1940 with a radio broadcast and a newsreel interview. Mixing military metaphors with a gendered appeal, he reiterated that recycling was vital to the war effort, and stressed that it was 'a job for all of us, but in particular, it's a job for women'.⁵⁸ His appeal was immediately followed by a nationwide publicity campaign comprised of 12,000 posters, 3,500 bus streamers, and advertisements in local and national newspapers.⁵⁹ Designed by the Ministry of Information under the strapline 'Up housewives and at 'em!', the campaign depicted three generations of women armed with household waste and explained that paper, metal and bones made 'planes, guns, tanks, ships and ammunition'.⁶⁰ Its content was carefully designed to attract attention and was targeted at a wide readership. For instance, a striking advertisement showing the women hurling their waste at Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito was carried by both the *Daily Mirror* and *The Times* on 8 August 1940.⁶¹ Different artists were also used to maintain interest, with the illustrator Yates-Wilson's original drawings replaced by a complementary series designed by Cyril Kenneth Bird in September.⁶² The obvious humour of both artists' work was matched by instruction as panels of

⁵⁷ TNA, CAB 68/6/34, 'Ninth monthly report', p. 10 and *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th Ser. Vol. 362, 25 Jun. 1940, c. 295. This was somewhat overshadowed by Churchill's confirmation on the same day that France had fallen and that action was likely to be taken against the French fleet. See cc. 301-7.

⁵⁸ *Daily Mirror*, 'Be a miser – war work for housewives', 29 July 1940, pp. 6-7 and *British Pathé*, 40/62, 'Up housewives and at 'em!', 1 Aug. 1940.

⁵⁹ TNA, INF 1/86, General Production Division, 'Printing work, etc., in hand', 27 Aug. 1940.

⁶⁰ TNA, INF 3/219, Yates-Wilson, 'Up housewives and at 'em!', Aug. 1940.

⁶¹ *Daily Mirror*, display advertisement, 8 Aug. 1940, p. 4 and *The Times*, display advertisement, 8 Aug. 1940, p. 2.

⁶² Better known as the *Punch* cartoonist 'Fougasse', Bird had gained plaudits for his 'Careless talk costs lives' posters, and became a high-profile contributor to the salvage campaign, see INF 3/197, Fougasse, 'Paper helps to make munitions', undated [Aug. 1940].

text explained how salvage should be sorted, how it would be collected, and how it would be used. Appeals gave way to reports of 'Huge success' and calls to 'Carry on the good work' as the campaign developed.⁶³ A second national poster showing a well-sorted bin under the strapline 'Here's what YOU do to help' expanded upon this theme – while maintaining the campaign's visual coherence.⁶⁴

The combination of humour and instruction was evident in other media too. One example was the use of window displays provided to businesses by the Ministry of Information.⁶⁵ Another was the Ministry-sponsored film 'Salvage with a Smile' released by Ealing Studios in October 1940. The film depicted a sometimes comic exchange between an older 'professor', his housekeeper, a 'dustman', and a young female character preparing for a talk on salvage. Its caricatured protagonists combined vivid accounts of how recycled materials were used to produce weapons with practical advice about how they should be left for collection.⁶⁶ George Formby was even enlisted to provide a touch of celebrity at the outset.⁶⁷ As one member of the Institute for Public Cleansing later noted, 'people of great eminence ... literally threw themselves into the dustbin' in support.⁶⁸ A more personal appeal was continued by the WVS and via a leaflet about the Salvage of Waste Order that was sent to the twelve million households where it applied. This insisted that:

Your Council will arrange for the collection of all this valuable waste material. But it depends on YOU – on how carefully YOU save it and keep it for collection.⁶⁹

⁶³ *The Times*, display advertisements, 4 Sept. 1940, p.2 and 11 Sept. 1940, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Daily Mirror*, display advertisement, 8 Aug 1940, p. 4 and *The Times*, display advertisement, 6 Aug 1940, p. 7.

⁶⁵ See, for example, 'A unique display at Birkenhead', *Public Cleansing*, 31, Oct. 1940, 43.

⁶⁶ *Salvage with a Smile*, dir. A. Brunel (Ministry of Information; Ealing Studios, 1940).

⁶⁷ *British Pathé*, 40/64, 'Salvage collector', 8 Aug. 1940.

⁶⁸ J. Hindle quoted in Riley, p. 82.

⁶⁹ Sussex, Mass Observation Archive (MOA), 1/2/43/3/E, Ministry of Supply, 'Waste collection is now compulsory', June 1940, f. 1.

Material produced by the government on behalf of individual councils made similar claims about the individual's responsibility.⁷⁰ So, too, did a series of posters bearing the motif 'I need YOUR ...'.⁷¹ With this targeted approach and mixture of media, the 'Up housewives' appeal can be regarded as a benchmark for later publicity. However, to understand it fully, one must consider its genesis and its reception in more detail.

The campaign's ambition owed much to changes in the relationship between the Ministries of Supply and Information. This had been pushed by Morrison, who was adamant that his department needed to move beyond 'ordinary publicity work', and had quickly appointed Samuel 'Clem' Leslie to lead its reconfigured Public Relations Office.⁷² Leslie, the former publicity manager of the Metropolitan Gas Company, had earlier volunteered as an advisor to the Ministry of Information and facilitated its relations with the Salvage Department.⁷³ His task was made easier by administrative changes which had placed the responsibility for such campaigns with the General Production Division. This meant that editorial control effectively rested in the hands of the Ministry of Supply (the only reference to the campaign in the Ministry of Information's policy committee was a brief note on the benefit of including 'specific instructions').⁷⁴ The only person in the Ministry of Information with any editorial influence was the account manager Clifford Bloxham, another former advertising agent. This helps to explain why Leslie and Morrison were able to put their own stamp onto the proceedings; the focus on women – in whose domain recycling was perceived to fall – was their deliberate ploy.⁷⁵ The 'Up housewives' appeal also benefitted from being extremely well-funded. In fact, having been awarded £65,450 by the Treasury, it was the most expensive publicity campaign to emanate from outside of

⁷⁰ See examples in MOA, 1/2/43/3/E.

⁷¹ TNA, EXT 1/72/31, Unknown artist, 'I need YOUR waste paper', undated [1940].

⁷² *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th Ser. Vol. 362, 27 June 1940, c. 630.

⁷³ TNA, INF 1/720, Minutes of the eighteenth meeting of the Home Publicity Section, 25 Aug. 1939 and INF 1/316, Minutes of the twenty-sixth meeting of Branch One, 6 Oct. 1939.

⁷⁴ TNA, INF 1/249, Minutes of Planning Committee, 4 July 1940.

⁷⁵ *Daily Mirror*, 'Be a miser – war work for housewives', 29 July 1940, pp. 6-7.

the Ministry of Information during the first year of the war.⁷⁶ That this was the case can be attributed to the perceived importance of recycling during the summer of 1940, with even the usually prudent Select Committee of National Expenditure urging further publicity spending to stimulate collection.⁷⁷ Moving around the communications circuit, it is clear that the Ministry of Supply's efforts to accelerate recycling gained the support of a broad spectrum of opinion. Newspapers as diverse as the *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Express* described the expansion of controls as 'essential', while the journal *Public Cleansing* (the mouthpiece of the Institute of Public Cleansing) agreed it 'was the only weapon to be used against flagrant defaulters'.⁷⁸ Morrison's military metaphors were taken up with particular enthusiasm by the *Daily Mail*, which described the necessity of his 'offensive' to the broader 'campaign'.⁷⁹ The public's reaction is harder to determine as few attempts were made to gauge their response. This is something of a paradox given that Morrison had included a specific point about the transformative power of public opinion in his initial announcement.⁸⁰ Yet, the only insight was indirect, coming via the daily Home Intelligence reports compiled between 18 May and 27 September 1940. These were based upon evidence from the Ministry of Information's network of Regional Information Officers, questionnaires completed by organisations like the Citizens Advice Bureaux, and reports produced by Mass Observation. They aimed to provide 'a continuous flow of reliable information' about attitudes on the home front. On Wednesday 7 August, for example, it was noted that 'There is a general willingness on behalf of housewives to co-operate with salvage schemes' and claimed that

⁷⁶ TNA, T 162/858/2/C, OEPEC paper no. 456, 'Allied services – schedule for authorised expenditure', 30 July 1940.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, 'Salvage of waste products', 7 June 1940, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *The Daily Mirror*, 'Everyone must save all scrap', 24 June 1940, p. 1; *Sunday Express*, 'Morrison compels Britain to stop waste', 23 June 1940, p. 7; and A.L. Thompson, 'From "may" to "must" – compulsion at last', *Public Cleansing*, 31, Oct. 1940, 62-3.

⁷⁹ *Daily Mail*, 'Salvage offensive begins', 30 July 1940, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Daily Mirror*, 'It's up to you', 29 July 1940, p. 10 and *The Times*, 'Up housewives and at 'em!', 29 July 1940, p. 2.

Londoners were particularly enthusiastic.⁸¹ Morrison and Leslie had both previously commissioned Mass Observation surveys, and correspondence from the period suggests that such findings were likely to have been shared.⁸² However, even if this was the case, the evidence was anecdotal and had little impact on a campaign which measured its success according to the quantity of material collected.⁸³

The raw figures ostensibly demonstrate a growing engagement with recycling. The number of local authorities offering collection had increased from 324 in November 1939 to 650 on the eve of compulsion. The total value of the salvage they collected rose from £29,000 to £75,000 per month in the same period, and would reach £250,000 per month in November 1940.⁸⁴ Moreover, despite the curtailment of available supplies after April 1940, the 225,000 tons of waste paper collected by that date fell just shy of Judd's initial twelve month target. This was reflected in the supplies available to manufacturers. The proportion of recycled pulp used in manufacture rose from 20 to 60 per cent of all raw materials between September 1939 and September 1940, with the proportion of domestically-sourced materials rising from 22.5 to 70 per cent.⁸⁵ However such figures hide important variations. For instance, the monthly tonnage of paper collected grew from 17,000 in April 1940 to 23,000 in June and peaked at 36,000 in July and August, but it had dropped back to 23,000 by September.⁸⁶ By the time that Morrison was transferred to the Home Office in October 1940, *Public Cleansing* was calling on the Salvage Department to ensure that 'the public not only ... "Go to it", but also to "Keep to it"'.⁸⁷

⁸¹ *Listening to Britain: Home Intelligence Reports on Britain's Finest Hour – May to September 1940*, eds Paul Addison and Jeremy Crag (London, 2011), 7 Aug. 1940, pp. 307 and 310.

⁸² MOA, FR 197, 'Propaganda ideas', 13 June 1940.

⁸³ TNA, CAB 68/6/34 'Ninth monthly report', p. 10.

⁸⁴ TNA, CAB 68/6/34, 'Ninth monthly report', p. 10 and 'Exploiting wastes – a challenging and necessary work', *Public Cleansing*, 31, Jan. 1941, 136-9.

⁸⁵ 'Waste paper's importance serving our general needs', *Public Cleansing*, 31, Oct. 1940, 44-6.

⁸⁶ *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th Ser., Vol. 363, 25 July 1940, c. 989; *The Times*, 'Over £300,000 from salvage', 28 Aug. 1940, p. 4; and 'Exploiting wastes', *Public Cleansing*, p. 139.

⁸⁷ 'Waste paper's importance', *Public Cleansing*, p. 44.

There were also considerable regional variations, with Morrison admitting that the national average for collection was half that of the most proficient areas.⁸⁸ The situation was particularly acute in rural areas where collection remained infrequent and was often entirely dependent upon voluntary groups.⁸⁹ By ignoring such inconsistencies the overall figures arguably exaggerate the success of what claimed to be a national campaign.

Mass Observation's reports for Home Intelligence recorded a variety of complaints about the 'uneven working' of individual local authorities.⁹⁰ Their evidence suggests that the campaign had actually served to highlight existing inconsistencies. This possibility had been foreseen by some commentators. The *Daily Mirror*, most notably, had cautioned that appeals:

Similar to that made by Mr Morrison ... [had] failed completely because, while the housewives did their bit, the Minister's orders were partly ignored and flouted by eight of ten of the local authorities in the country.⁹¹

It was only a week earlier that they had published a critical feature accusing muddling officials of undermining a 'magnificent salvage scheme' by failing to set up an apparatus for dealing with the waste collected.⁹² Yet, while similar complaints had been evident since Beaverbrook's 'Pots to planes' appeal, they became increasingly focused on the Ministry of Supply as the recycling effort grew.⁹³ This hints at a fundamental tension within the government's approach to recycling during 1940. Its urgent appeals had deliberately emphasised that success 'depends on *YOU*' and had assured the public that there were arrangements for local councils to 'collect of all this valuable material'. This was effective

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 'Over £300,000 from salvage', p. 4 and A.L. Thompson, 'How the salvage campaign progresses: a review by the Deputy Controller', *Public Cleansing*, 31, Feb. 1941, 192.

⁸⁹ *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 5th Ser., Vol. 357, 21 Feb 1940, c. 1345.

⁹⁰ *Listening to Britain*, 1 Aug. 1940, p. 289.

⁹¹ *Daily Mirror*, 'It's up to you', 29 July 1940, p. 10.

⁹² *The Daily Mirror*, 'Muddle', 20 July 1940, p. 2.

⁹³ MOA, FR 268, 'Pans to 'planes', 15 July 1940, p. 8 and, *Listening to Britain*, 22 July 1940, p. 255.

in so far as it raised awareness. Yet the campaign did not exist in a vacuum. And, because it rested upon the proposition that Britain could 'no longer afford to bring from overseas one single ounce of anything that can be produced – *or saved* – at home', it was only natural that practical difficulties should assume a far greater significance.⁹⁴ The result, according to those involved in collection, was that the 'spasms of energy' associated with a particular appeal were all too often accompanied by 'reactions of slackness' as the initial excitement wore off.⁹⁵

The campaign frustrated

The Ministry of Information was painfully aware of these contradictions. Indeed, reviewing the situation in January 1941, those responsible for the National Salvage Campaign noted that advertising had been suspended in October 1940 because 'The scheme had been so successful that the transport of collected material became embarrassing'.⁹⁶ Its designers were duly instructed to ensure that any future work also dealt with what was euphemistically termed the 'complexity of the problem'. The Ministry's Policy Committee demanded that they should also be better briefed in future to ensure that 'publicity did not outrun machinery'.⁹⁷ It was well understood that both needed to be in place if recycling was to remain foremost in the 'social and psychological mood of the moment'.⁹⁸ The paradoxical success of the 'Up housewives' appeal was even held up by Home Intelligence as an example of worst practice in domestic propaganda – one which had left the audience 'dispirited' and would make subsequent campaigns 'correspondingly more difficult'.⁹⁹ Andrew Duncan, the successful businessman who succeeded Morrison in October 1940, was understandably keen to address these concerns. His period in charge of the Ministry of Supply saw further responsibilities discharged to

⁹⁴ MOA, 1/2/43/3/E, 'Waste collection is now compulsory', f. 1.

⁹⁵ 'Waste paper's importance', *Public Cleansing*, p. 44.

⁹⁶ TNA, INF 1/340, 'Publicity campaigns', 9 Jan. 1941.

⁹⁷ TNA, INF 1/249, Policy Committee minutes, 13 March 1941.

⁹⁸ MOA, FR 869, 'Salvaging history', 11 Sept. 1941, p. 97.

⁹⁹ TNA, INF 1/251, [Taylor], 'Home front propaganda', Nov. 1941, p. 5.

District Advisors, efforts to improve local authority collection, and the expansion of compulsion to cover smaller towns with 5-10,000 inhabitants from March 1941. Attempts to revivify publicity were, however, frustrated by familiar questions. After Leslie followed Morrison to the Home Office, Duncan had brought in another Director of Public Relations who was keen to assert the Ministry of Supply's position. The emphasis was accordingly shifted away from the Ministry of Information and towards bespoke regional initiatives. Lord Portal, who addressed the first of these 'paper drives', explained that the aim was to ensure the campaign could be adapted to 'widely differing local conditions'.¹⁰⁰

The new approach was spurred on by the growing popularity of local 'War Weapons Weeks' and often involved the use of small travelling exhibitions. These would include displays that showed how salvaged materials were used and included space to reiterate local procedures for collection. Mass Observation believed that the most successful displays were those found in so-called 'salvage shops' because they tended to involve practical demonstrations. Quoting one female visitor to an exhibition in Putney, it was noted that displays which allowed the public to handle equipment made from recycled materials, 'makes you feel it's worth the trouble'.¹⁰¹ Other techniques sought to emulate this success. For instance, the Ministry of Information deployed its own loudspeaker vans and mobile cinema units to ensure that films like 'Salvage with a Smile' were shown across the United Kingdom. The WVS was also given collection figures so that they could undertake a targeted canvass of areas which had proven to be less receptive. Such techniques were lauded by commentators.¹⁰² However collection figures continued to fall short of expectations. In fact, while paper had proved to be the most successful part of the National Salvage Campaign, with a cumulative total of 393,234 tons collected by July 1941, monthly figures fell away during Duncan's tenure. It had been expected that the winter months would be a lean period for collection due to the increased use of paper for lighting

¹⁰⁰ *The Times*, 'New salvage drive', 22 Apr. 1941, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ MOA, FR 871, 'Report on government exhibitions', 12 Sept. 1941, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰² James S. Rae, 'Salvage and other problems affecting the cleansing service', *Public Cleansing*, 31, Aug. 1941, p. 376.

fires. Yet, while the 21,441 tons collected in February 1941 was the lowest point, figures did not pick up thereafter and remained around the 22,000 mark until August.¹⁰³

Mass Observation probed for a potential explanation in July 1941. The organisation's national panel of volunteers were sent a directive that asked them to 'provide an account of the effort' and give personal 'criticisms and suggestions'. Responses were collated into a file report at the organisation's London headquarters at the end of August and are likely to have been submitted to the Ministry of Information at this point.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, while no written evidence survives to confirm that the findings were shared, this would have been one of the last reports written by Mass Observation before its contract with Home Intelligence was terminated on 1 September 1941.¹⁰⁵ The content was certainly aimed at the Ministry. In fact, although they recorded frequent complaints that salvage was being mixed by collectors, it was the subject of publicity that attracted the most suggestions for improvement. The file report noted that 'Many people suggest more publicity in general terms' as 'A few posters and one or two leaflets, often distributed some time ago, are all that some towns have had'. There were specific proposals for the increased use of exhibitions, doorstep canvassing, support from newspapers, the publication of statistics, and greater use of 'inter-district rivalry in salvage drives'. Other suggestions called for the appointment of local 'salvage officers' to take charge on a street-by-street basis.¹⁰⁶ A remarkably similar agenda was pursued by Dawes when he addressed the Institute of Public Cleansing's annual conference in September 1941 (suggesting that the report was

¹⁰³ *Daily Express*, 'You can help Russia', 22 Oct. 1941, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ The July 1941 directive, like most mailed out during 1941, has been lost from the Mass Observation archive. However, the organisation had agreed to submit summaries to Home Intelligence in April 1940, and two File Reports based on the July 1941 directive remain in existence. For more information, see TNA, INF 1/262, Harrison to Adams, 17 Apr. 1940 and http://www.thekeep.info/collections/getrecord/GB181_SxMOA1_3_49

¹⁰⁵ Nick Hubble, *Mass-Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 187.

¹⁰⁶ MOA, FR 845, 'Some criticism and suggestions on salvage collection', 24 Aug. 1941, p. 3.

shared with the Salvage Department too).¹⁰⁷ Significantly, the Institute's membership agreed that 'The absence of publicity work' was the most usual barrier to the 'whole-hearted co-operation of the householder'.¹⁰⁸

These conclusions coincided with three interrelated changes at the Ministry of Information. The first was the result of a Cabinet review of publicity policy undertaken by Lord Beaverbrook in July 1941. Beaverbrook, who had replaced Duncan during a Cabinet reshuffle on 29 June 1941, was chosen for the task because of his experience in such matters. He suggested that there should be a greater centralisation of control, and it was subsequently agreed that 'all organised propaganda ... should be conducted through the Ministry of Information'.¹⁰⁹ This resulted in the creation of a distinct Campaigns Section responsible for managing each government account.¹¹⁰ The second change was attitudinal. It reflected a growing belief that departmental campaigns had failed because they were:

[Slow] to appeal for the co-operation of the public ... [and] have been far too inclined to think that they need only tell the public what they are doing and not why they are doing it. The intelligence of the public has been underestimated.¹¹¹

This approach was accelerated by Brendan Bracken, who became Minister in the wake of Beaverbrook's review, and was of particular importance to the Campaigns Division. As McLaine has shown, the department became increasingly aware of its limits during 1941-45 and gradually moved

¹⁰⁷ J.C. Dawes, 'Notes on the work of the Ministry of Supply Salvage Department and municipal salvage', *Public Cleansing*, 32, Sept. 1941, 8-14 and 'The Blackpool meeting: salvage – the exclusive topic', *Public Cleansing*, 32, Oct. 1941, 38.

¹⁰⁸ 'Compulsory order on public urged' and 'Another salvage discussion', *Public Cleansing*, 32, Nov. 1941, 63 and 68.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, CAB 66/17/10, Beaverbrook, 'Information and propaganda', 21 June 1941, p. 1 and CAB 66/17/15 Churchill, 'Information and propaganda', 26 June 1941, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ TNA, INF 1/1/40, Bamford, 'Campaigns Division', 13 Dec. 1941 and OEPEC paper No. 1088, 'General Production Division', 21 Jan. 1942.

¹¹¹ Michael Balfour quoted in Ian McLaine, p. 250.

from an exhortatory to an explanatory tone.¹¹² The third change was an increasingly systematic approach towards the measurement of public opinion. Thus the decision to terminate Mass Observation's contract with Home Intelligence coincided with an increased use of the quantitative Wartime Social Survey (WSS) unit to test the impact of the Ministry's work.¹¹³ Each of these changes would have a significant impact on the National Salvage Campaign as it was revived during Beaverbrook's term at the Ministry of Supply. This represents the next revolution of the communications circuit.

Beaverbrook's Appeal

The effort to rekindle paper collection began with a high-profile statement issued by Beaverbrook late on 21 October 1941. Directly linking the appeal with an earlier campaign to increase material support for the USSR, the Minister of Supply called for 100,000 tons of paper to be recycled 'forthwith' so that ships could be diverted from Atlantic trade to partake in the Arctic convoys.¹¹⁴ This began the largest concerted publicity campaign since July 1940. A series of predominantly textual advertisements issued during the following month extended the initial appeal by explaining how recycled paper would be diverted into the production of shells and cartridge cases destined for Moscow. These were complemented by a six-minute Ministry of Information short which aimed to situate the appeal against a background of shipping losses. The film, 'A Few Ounces a Day', which was produced by Paul Rotha and was the first to use Isotype 'pictorial statistics', employed a series of diagrammatic sequences to show how small amounts of domestic salvage could make up shortfalls caused by submarine attacks in the Atlantic.¹¹⁵ The theme was continued in four further films and dramatic Ministry of Information posters depicting wrecked ships under the strapline 'Salvage saves

¹¹² McLaine, pp. 250-1.

¹¹³ TNA, INF 1/251, [Taylor], 'Home front propaganda', p. 1.

¹¹⁴ *Daily Express*, 'Urgent: start it today', 22 Oct. 1941, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ *A Few Ounces a Day*, dir. D. Alexander (Ministry of Information; Paul Rotha; ISOTYPE Institute, 1941). See also MOA, 1/2/17/9/C, P. Rotha, 'A Few Ounces a Day', undated [Oct. 1941].

shipping'.¹¹⁶ However, in something of a departure from earlier campaigns, these official messages were accompanied by commercial ones. For instance, an advertisement sponsored by *Picture Post* stressed that it was the public's responsibility to turn out 'every scrap of paper' as even 'The most stringent collection of daily waste won't be enough', while another commercial effort asked the reader 'What are you doing about that 100,000 tons?'.¹¹⁷ This was continued in numerous editorials and feature articles about the importance of paper to munitions production and supply.¹¹⁸ In Palmer's Green, North London, businesses even sponsored the construction of a ten foot high waste paper basket in a bid to raise awareness.¹¹⁹

This was a highly personalised appeal with much of the copy taken directly from Beaverbrook's statement. Indeed, flipping the obvious gendering of Morrison's earlier campaign, Beaverbrook drew upon his public image as a 'man of action', and deliberately invoked earlier calls for increased armament production. The tone was also more urgent than before. Speaking in November 1941, for example, Dawes chose to play down existing collection figures in order to highlight the amount of material that was still being wasted. He explained that the equivalent of two shiploads of wood pulp was burnt, binned or contaminated every month.¹²⁰ Related advertisements claimed that government orders were being held up because a ton of paper was destroyed for every one collected.¹²¹ This approach was designed to overcome earlier criticisms by intensifying the feeling of personal responsibility. It also encouraged households and businesses to regard themselves as the 'experts' who would ultimately make the difference to collection figures. It was for this reason that Beaverbrook

¹¹⁶ TNA, INF 3/207, E. Oliver, 'Salvage saves shipping', undated [1941].

¹¹⁷ *The Times*, display advertisement, 7 Nov. 1941, p. 7 and display advertisement, 15 Nov. 1941, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Home Intelligence calculated that the most enthusiastic newspapers mentioned salvage once every two days during winter 1941. See, for examples, *Daily Express*, 'Opinion', 22 Oct. 1941, p. 2 and *The Times*, 'Save unwanted paper', 23 Oct. 1941, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ MOA, 1/2/43/3/C, J.S. 'World's largest waste paper basket', 3 Feb. 1942.

¹²⁰ 'Mr Dawes at Chislehurst and Sidcup', *Public Cleansing*, 32, Nov. 1941, 76.

¹²¹ Display advertisement, *Public Cleansing*, 32, Oct. 1941, 41.

established the Waste Paper Recovery Association (WPRAs) as a not-for-profit body to organise publicity on behalf of self-interested paper manufacturers and newspapers. The WPRAs immediately ran a newspaper competition offering prizes for ideas that would boost recycling figures.¹²² It then launched the first in a series of national competitions offering £20,000 in prizes for local areas that collected the most paper per head of the population.¹²³ The Ministry of Supply's appeal for volunteer Salvage Stewards (and junior 'Cogs') in February 1942 was made for similar reasons. The volunteers – who were akin to a Home Guard for recycling – were given training and provided with 'distinctive badges' by the Ministry. It was hoped that the scheme would 'personalise salvage by getting people in each street to help their neighbours'.¹²⁴ The fact that 120,000 people came forwards suggests that this was not without success. Similar practices were adopted in the workplace through the work of self-governing 'Industrial Salvage Groups'.¹²⁵

Although Beaverbrook's urgent appeal can hardly be described as 'explanatory', the campaign as a whole did provide more detail than its antecedents. Expanding upon the approach used in 'Salvage with a Smile', it was explained that one ton of paper would produce 47,000 cartridge cases, and that the 100,000 ton target would allow for 25,000 tons of shipping space to be diverted. This was continued in the months which followed as statistics were increasingly employed to demonstrate a direct line between action and effect. In May 1942, Dawes used the technique during a lecture to the Royal Society of Arts in order to showcase more of the varied ways recycled paper was used. He explained that a ton could produce anything from 30,000 cut-outs for target practice to 484,000 washers for mortar bombs.¹²⁶ Ministry of Information advertisements put such figures into more everyday terms. It was explained, for instance, that a single newspaper would make three '25-pounder

¹²² Display advertisement, *Public Cleansing*, 32, Dec. 1941, 101.

¹²³ '£20,000 prizes to start new waste paper push', *Public Cleansing*, 32, Jan. 1942, 128.

¹²⁴ Ministry of Supply, *Memorandum on Salvage and Recovery*, p. 4 and 'Wanted Salvage Stewards', *Public Cleansing*, 32, March 1942, 181.

¹²⁵ Ministry of Supply, *Memorandum on Salvage and Recovery*, p. 5.

¹²⁶ J.C. Dawes, 'Making use of waste products', *Public Cleansing*, 32, June 1942, 272-81.

shell cups' and that even a single 'old envelope [would] make a cartridge wad'. Dawes himself reiterated that if every house saved just 4oz of paper per week an additional 1,500 tons of material would be available for munitions.¹²⁷ The WPRA used similar techniques in its publicity efforts. The best known example is the 'Economy in Design – Paper in Battle Dress' exhibition held at the Savoy Hotel in October 1942. This exclusive display for business executives aimed to demonstrate how economies could be achieved by re-designing publications, forms and stationary. The exhibition was not asking for a dramatic change in behaviour. However for Stanley Bell, the chairman of the WPRA, and managing director of Associated Newspapers, it remained self-evident that 'the saving of paper meant the saving of ships'.¹²⁸

The techniques used after October 1941 were generally well received. The 'simple directness' of Beaverbrook's appeal was praised by the Institute of Public Cleansing, and Mass Observation concluded that it had been 'sympathetically received' by the public at large. In a bid to prove their utility to the Ministry of Information, the latter also undertook a two part survey of audience reactions to 'A Few Ounces a Day'. They found that 40 per cent of a random sample of 550 Londoners had seen the film and that 90 per cent of those had thought it was good. It concluded that the film's experimental use of Isotype had 'aroused an exceptional degree of interest' and had 'made an appreciable contribution towards salvage awareness'.¹²⁹ The WPRA's national competition bore similar hallmarks of success. It was welcomed by almost every local authority in the United Kingdom, gained a national press coverage and helped collection figures reach approximately 40,000 tons per month.¹³⁰ Nevertheless there was still some criticism. Mass Observation felt that some publicity had

¹²⁷ J.C. Dawes, 'Making Use of Waste Products', p. 276.

¹²⁸ *Daily Express*, 'Loose cigarettes are helping to win war', 14 Oct. 1942, p. 3; *The Times*, 'Paper saving in business', 14 Oct. 1942, p. 2; 'Saving paper', *Public Cleansing*, 33, Dec. 1942, 138; and Holman, *Print for Victory*, p. 65.

¹²⁹ MOA, FR 977, 'Report on short diagramatic film', 25 Nov. 1941, pp. 7-8.

¹³⁰ Thorsheim, p. 443 and 'Salvage drive', *Public Cleansing*, 32, June 1942, p. 300.

been 'almost too slick' and warned that few people 'really associated the message with themselves'.¹³¹ Their report on the impact of Beaverbrook's appeal pointed to continued regional variations and highlighted complaints from householders who felt they were already saving all that they could. It was also reported that many respondents had spoken of a belief that too much was wasted by government and inefficient local authorities.¹³² *The Economist* took up similar arguments in November 1941 with a series of articles that censured the Ministry of Supply for continued 'muddle and illogicality'. The groundswell of opinion led to a hurried ban on the production of Christmas cards in an unsuccessful attempt to stem the criticism.¹³³

A more detailed survey was undertaken by the WSS in February 1942. In an effort that dwarfed Mass Observation's earlier enquiry, forty trained investigators were dispatched to twenty-eight areas across Britain and undertook 3,078 interviews with householders, salvage officers, collectors and voluntary groups. Their findings reiterated the general success of the National Salvage Campaign. Almost 79 per cent of the sample were found to collect paper 'regularly' and only six people claimed not to know that the material was wanted. However the survey also found that only 54 per cent were satisfied with local collection procedures and that 39 per cent had doubts about the use that was made of the material collected. These doubts were illustrated by interviews with householders who criticised councils for failing to provide containers, and salvage officials who identified a 'lack of initiative on behalf of the housewife'.¹³⁴ Such doubts appeared significant as the WSS believed that personal experience had more influence over behaviour than any form of national publicity. Indeed their report pointed to a complex interdependence between different parts of the campaign. For example, when asked about memorable pieces of publicity, radio broadcasts had been mentioned by 1090 of the

¹³¹ MOA, FR 977, 'Short diagramatic film', p. 8.

¹³² MOA, FR 961, 'Beaverbrook waste paper appeal', 12 Nov. 1941, pp. 1 and 5. See also MOA, 1/2/43/3/B, 'Paper salvage – Lord Beaverbrook', 7 Nov. 1941.

¹³³ *The Economist*, 'Saving paper', 15 Nov. 1941, p. 592 and 'Salvage and saving', 22 Nov. 1941, p. 623.

¹³⁴ TNA, RG 23/9b, Wartime Social Survey, 'Salvage', March 1942, pp. 3-4 and 9. See also TNA 1/293, Home Intelligence special report, 'Salvage', 21 Aug. 1942.

respondents, newspaper appeals by 980, and local events by 524. More generic Ministry of Information productions were mentioned far less (only eighty-six respondents recalled the impact of a poster and just seventy mentioned a film).¹³⁵ This led the Ministry to suggest that future activities should aim to bring the public into direct contact with the campaign, while posters and films remained as part of a 'general background of educational propaganda'.¹³⁶

Later Developments

Beaverbrook's term at the Ministry of Supply was as short as those of his predecessors (with Duncan re-appointed in February 1942 in the last change before 1945). Nonetheless it was still significant. The decision to put one of the most prolific publicists of the era in overall charge of the effort to promote recycling had led to a marriage of emotive, decentralised, and explanatory approaches. The fact that most of the examples used to illustrate existing studies can be traced back to Beaverbrook shows that this would have a long lasting impact. It is clear, for instance, that the Salvage Stewards scheme invoked by Riley and Cooper had been far less ambitious before it was expanded in the weeks before he left the Ministry.¹³⁷ In a similar fashion, it was his sponsorship of the WPRA that encouraged the increasingly competitive approach to recycling from 1942 onwards. It was this body that organised the national competitions and 'miles of books' cited by Holman and Thorsheim.¹³⁸ The wider 'Book Recovery and Salvage Programme', a focal point for both historians, also gained momentum after Beaverbrook encouraged businesses to weed through their archives. Over 56 million books had been donated by October 1943 and 81 million by March 1944.¹³⁹ It was perhaps most important, however,

¹³⁵ TNA, RG 23/9b, 'Salvage', p. 23.

¹³⁶ TNA, RG 23/9b, 'Salvage', p. 23 and Ministry of Supply, *Memorandum on Salvage and Recovery*, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Riley, pp. 81-3; Cooper, p. 717; and *The Times*, 'Salvage Stewards', 10 Feb. 1942, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Thorsheim, p. 442; Holman, *Print for Victory*, p. 65; and Ministry of Supply, *Memorandum on Salvage and Recovery*, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Holman, *Print for Victory*, p. 66. Thorsheim notes that W.C. Berwick Sayers put this figure at 600 million books, but this is a significant overestimate. See W.C. Berwick Sayers, 'Britain's libraries and the war', *Library Quarterly*, 14 (1944), 95-99.

that the publicity continued to draw a 'clear connection between recycler and recycled goods' as participants were encouraged 'to think of themselves as front-line troops'.¹⁴⁰

Nowhere was this more apparent than in a major exhibition on salvage developed by the Ministry of Information during 1942-43. Their pioneering display contained a mixture of posters, photographs, artefacts and live-demonstrations. An Isotype-inspired panel set the context by explaining how 'A ship carrying paper to replace paper you destroy is a ship wasted', while a photographic sequence headed 'Letter into bullet' showed how paper was shredded, pulped, turned into board, punched into wads and processed into bullet cartridges.¹⁴¹ Backlit display cabinets and a freestanding bench provided opportunities for munitions to be displayed alongside bales of paper, while the addition of an industrial shredder added additional excitement.¹⁴² These parts of the exhibition were offset by panels offering general instructions, posters inspired by the 'Up housewives' campaign, a chalkboard for 'local salvage news', and an information point staffed by local Salvage Stewards.¹⁴³ Recycling bins placed outside the venue provided a more prosaic opportunity for audience interaction.¹⁴⁴ This exhibition had been designed during spring 1942 and was revised following trial showings that summer. On 17 December, after the inclusion of a cartoon curator, it was moved to Charing Cross underground station, and launched with a fanfare under the title 'Private Scrap goes to war'.¹⁴⁵ Versions of this exhibition would be shown until December 1943 and three additional display sets enabled the Ministry to circulate it to thirty-five other venues during same period. Indeed, such was

¹⁴⁰ Riley, p. 84 and McLaine, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ IWM, D 7987 and D 8934.

¹⁴² IWM, D 12774.

¹⁴³ IWM, D 8927 for instructions; D 8929 for 'Housewives give 'em all you've got'; D 11527 for chalk board; and D 8927 for information stand.

¹⁴⁴ IWM, D 11532.

¹⁴⁵ *The Times*, "'Private Scrap' in London", 18 Dec. 1942, p. 6.

the exhibition's popularity, a mobile version housed in a trailer replete with flags, loudspeakers and exterior display panels was produced to undertake a tour of smaller towns and villages.¹⁴⁶

The significance of the 'Private Scrap' exhibition lies in what it can show about the wider National Salvage Campaign. This is particularly true of the way that it developed, because the officers responsible for display were under clear instructions to report on audience response.¹⁴⁷ The fact that the heading of the exhibition's Isotype-inspired display was twice reworded from the elusive '[What] shall [it be]?' to the more direct 'Wood pulp comes in ships' and finally 'Wood pulp for paper comes in ships' hints at how this worked in practice.¹⁴⁸ It is also a further demonstration of the Ministry of Information's gradual shift towards a more educative tone. Such developments were wholeheartedly supported by Bracken, who was adamant that exhortative appeals made the public 'furious ... [and] resentful'.¹⁴⁹ He believed that 'the exhibition technique' was especially well suited to ensuring campaigns were of an 'explanatory and instructional nature', but also pushed for the approach to be accelerated in other media.¹⁵⁰ The result can be seen in educational 'cutaway' posters that showed how 'salvage helps a bomber' by demonstrating that 'one ton of paper jointing [was] used in every mile of concrete runway'.¹⁵¹ It was even evident in a 1944 series of modernist photomontages which sought to explain that cigarette cartons were recycled into mortar bomb carriers and that '20 periodicals [would make] one seat for a pilot'.¹⁵² Attempts to boost collection following the intensification of fighting in the Far East followed suit, with newspaper advertisements explaining that

¹⁴⁶ TNA, INF 1/76, Bloxham, 'Exhibitions: report on 1943-44', 4 Apr. 1944, p. 1 and IWM, D 13540 and D 13548.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, INF 1/328, 'Regional contact with industry', undated [1 July 1942].

¹⁴⁸ IWM, D 8928; D 11526; and D 11680-1.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, CAB 66/23, Bracken, 'Propaganda at home', 10 Apr. 1942, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ TNA, INF 1/75, Bracken, 'Notes for Parliamentary debate', undated [July 1943], p. 2.

¹⁵¹ TNA, INF 1/72, Unknown artist, 'See how your salvage helps a bomber', undated [1943].

¹⁵² TNA, EXT 1/72, Unknown artist, 'To waste paper is to waste lives', undated [1944].

increased supply routes meant that 'munitions and spares to fight Japan need an average of nearly three times as much paper as for war in Europe'.¹⁵³

These examples demonstrate an increasingly coherent handling of wartime publicity. By the financial year 1943-44, the Ministry of Information's budget for domestic campaigns had risen to £1.5m, with £250,000 set aside for posters and £436,000 for exhibitions.¹⁵⁴ Crucially, its relationship with other government departments had also been clarified, with the Ministry's responsibility for co-ordination and overall expenditure now firmly established. This was facilitated by the appointment of William Surrey Dane to the Ministry of Supply's Public Relations Office. Dane, the managing director of Odhams press, had helped to set up the Ministry of Information in 1939, and could draw upon an extensive knowledge of the newspaper industry. This ensured that his team of seven publicity officers was well placed to liaise with both the WPRA and colleagues in the Ministry of Information's Campaigns Section.¹⁵⁵ The decision to run the latter along quasi-commercial lines also encouraged further use of 'market research'.¹⁵⁶ Hence the first salvage appeal managed by the Campaigns Section was based upon findings from the WSS survey undertaken in February 1942, and included funding for a Home Intelligence special report on its impact.¹⁵⁷ A follow-up campaign was spurred by the findings of a second Home Intelligence report and included a further WSS survey to determine how far

¹⁵³ Ministry of Supply advertisement reproduced in Minns, p. 142.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, INF 1/75, Bracken, 'Notes for Parliamentary debate', p. 2 and INF 1/76, 'Brief for possible debate', undated [May 1944], f. 3.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, INF 1/140, 'Statement of Campaigns Division's functions', undated [Aug. 1943].

¹⁵⁶ Many of these techniques had their roots in the late 1930s and the Ministry of Information recruited a number of staff from market research firms, see Joe Moran, 'Mass Observation, market research, and the birth of the focus group, 1937-1997', *Journal of British Studies*, 47 (2008), 827-851, at pp. 834-5.

¹⁵⁷ Caversham, BBC Written Archive Centre (BBC WAC), R 34/711/1, Buxton and Room, 'Campaign preliminary memorandum: General salvage', 23 Apr. 1942; TNA, RG 23/9b, 'Salvage', Mar. 1942 and INF 1/293, 'Salvage', 21 Aug. 1942.

attitudes had changed.¹⁵⁸ These efforts were not simply made to calculate the extent to which publicity had made people 'salvage conscious'; they were also a way of determining how the campaign should develop.¹⁵⁹

The culmination of this communications circuit occurred during the summer of 1943 when London played host to the largest salvage drive of the Second World War. The drive, which was focused on the collection of paper, was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Information and involved all of the capital's twenty-eight boroughs. Each area adopted a bespoke series of local events. In Hackney, shelves were erected to create an open air library that the public stocked with books; in Marylebone, elephants were used to transport paper to a depot outside Regent's Park zoo; and, in Islington, the first ever salvage play was staged alongside film screenings.¹⁶⁰ These activities were tied together by 'a spectacular demonstration in Trafalgar Square' which featured a replica ship, exhibits of armaments, and speeches from public figures.¹⁶¹ They were also timed to coincide with a re-opening of the 'Private Scrap' exhibition, the release of the short animated film 'Salvage Saves Shipping' and the launch of a new travelling exhibition housed in a converted railway carriage.¹⁶² These events reinvigorated the national campaign, which, in line with the WSS findings, began to pay particular attention to broadcast talks. Indeed, the BBC put aside its dislike of news about 'purely local efforts' to run a number of reports on the London drive, including a recorded message from the mayor of New York which compared recycling to the 'stick-to-it spirit' of the Blitz.¹⁶³ The corporation also began a

¹⁵⁸ TNA, INF 1/293, Home Intelligence special report, 'The effect of publicity on the volume of salvage collected in the nine months ending 31 March 1943', 29 Jun. 1943 and RG 23/41, 'Salvage', Aug. 1943.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, RG 23/41, 'Salvage', p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ BBC WAC, R 34/711/2, Hayes, 'London salvage drive, 5th-19th June, 1943', undated [28 May 1943].

¹⁶¹ BBC WAC, R 34/711/2, Hayes to Boyd, 17 Jun. 1943.

¹⁶² BBC WAC, R 34/711/2, Buxton and Room, 'Campaign memorandum: London salvage drive', 23 Mar. 1943.

¹⁶³ BBC WAC, R 34/711/2, Hayes to Boyd, 17 Jun. 1943.

nine month series of 'salvage flashes' as part of its continuity announcement programme. These were soon regarded as 'one of the most important weapons in the armoury of the Salvage Campaign'.¹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, while the techniques honed during 1940-41 had set the tone for later developments, it would be a mistake to assume that this was evidence of a straightforward success. Modifications to the National Salvage Campaign were, in fact accompanied by a gradual shift in the balance between publicity and restrictive controls. This process had begun under Beaverbrook, whose departure from the Ministry of Supply coincided with a revision to the Salvage of Waste Order that made the destruction of any paper an offence under Defence regulations. The effect of the revision was to extend compulsion to individuals, with violations punishable by a fine of up to £2,500, or even a two year prison sentence. This was a new departure for a Ministry which had previously aimed legislation at local authorities, and reflected a growing belief in government that attempts to 'use propaganda as an easy way of avoiding legislation [was] a waste of energy, time, and money'.¹⁶⁵ It also appears to have been supported by the vast majority of the public. Mass Observation estimated that 73 per cent welcomed the tightening of controls (even though many of its respondents would be personally effected by the *de facto* ban on using paper to light fires).¹⁶⁶ The WSS, which sought to account for this support in 1943, concluded that the strength of opinion was explained by a continued feeling 'that organisation lagged far behind publicity'.¹⁶⁷ It found that a third of its sample had complaints about the way that material was collected. This validated earlier research suggesting that 'defective arrangements' and a 'multiplicity of appeals' had created 'doubt and confusion and not a little irritation in the public mind'.¹⁶⁸ While the existence of such surveys demonstrate an increasingly

¹⁶⁴ BBC WAC, R 34/711/2, Buxton to Maconachie, 17 Mar. 1944.

¹⁶⁵ INF 1/251, [Taylor], 'Home front propaganda', p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ MOA, FR 1176, Harrison, 'Salvage', March 1942, p. 2. The 9 per cent opposed were apparently the type opposed to 'anything under the sun'.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, RG 23/41, 'Salvage', p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, RG 23/41, 'Salvage', p. 11 and BBC WAC, R 34/711/1, Buxton and Room, 'General Salvage', p. 1.

confident understanding of public relations, their findings show that attempts to promote recycling by using publicity to alter behaviour could lead to a conclusion that the state itself was doing too little.

Conclusion

A total of 4.2 million tons of waste paper were salvaged in Britain between 3 September 1939 and VE day on 8 May 1945 (with roughly half coming from household collection).¹⁶⁹ Such figures suggest that government publicity had been remarkably successful in altering the public's behaviour. However this article has shown that the National Salvage Campaign cannot be regarded as an unqualified success. Two main conclusions can be drawn from the example. Taking a practical perspective, it has demonstrated the complex relationships between those responsible for wartime publicity and highlighted the problems that were caused by an initial lack of communication. It is apparent from this that successful publicity required careful co-ordination. Moreover, while the campaign was influenced by ministerial changes (with Morrison, Beaverbrook and Bracken all shaping its development), this example has also demonstrated that its most celebrated techniques were the work of expert publicists with a background in commercial advertising. The gradual adoption of commercial practices were integral to its evolution, and reflect a more general shift from publicity to public relations. This is linked to a deeper point about the campaign's dynamics. Indeed, while the public certainly responded to calls for co-operation, their relationship with the campaign was not linear. Popular frustration with the perceived disjuncture between publicity and inaction played an important role in shaping the campaign. As Fox has argued in relation to the 'Careless talk' campaign, 'it was not necessarily propaganda that defined the people's war but responses to it'.¹⁷⁰ In this case, the National Salvage Campaign led many to accept that recycling was necessary, but practical failings in the system it was supposed to promote led the same audience to conclude that not enough was being done. This was a complicated reality of the 'people's war'.

¹⁶⁹ *The Times, British War Production, 1939-1945* (London, 1945), p. 23.

¹⁷⁰ Fox, p. 966.