IN THE SPRING of 1940, Minnesotans and most other Americans were stunned by the downfall of the Allies in Europe. With surprising ease, German Panzer divisions overran Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France and forced the almost miraculous evacuation of British and some French forces from Dunkirk. Only the British and the Atlantic Ocean stood between Adolf Hitler's military might and the United States.

This shocking display of Nazi power certainly added new voices to those already calling for changes in America's cautious foreign policy. Yet, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the effect that the blitzkrieg had upon opinion in Minnesota. Although the collapse of Western Europe eventually helped blunt the dynamic of isolation, even this cataclysmic event did not immediately dispel the tenacious hold isolationist sentiment had upon Minnesotans.

For more than two decades the rhetoric of isolationism, in all its variant forms, had been proclaimed throughout the state. Minnesota's political leaders rarely challenged the assumptions buttressing the isolationist faith. Rather, they accepted those assumptions and encouraged an isolationist foreign policy. During the late 1930s, the task of contesting the isolationist position was left largely to the metropolitan press and a handful of academicians, practically none of whom were active participants in the political process. Even those few politicians who questioned the wisdom of a policy of isolation were unable, because of their own preconceptions, to abandon all of the positions which lent substance to the isolationist view.

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that not a single influential political leader in Minnesota was willing to attack the isolationists directly during the campaign of 1940. The tradition was too strong, the
sentiment ran too deep, and finally the startling events abroad broke too rapidly to make such an attack politically appealing. Clearly, Minnesota’s thirty-three-year-old governor, Harold E. Stassen, knew this and his actions in 1940 bear out this judgment.

Stassen disagreed with Minnesotans who feared that aid to Great Britain meant war. Two days after the French surrender of June 22, 1940, Stassen stated in his keynote address at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia that the United States was “too woefully weak to give the Allies” the aid it wanted to. The death of Minnesota’s isolationist Senator Ernest Lundeen in an airplane crash August 31, 1940, unexpectedly gave Stassen a further opportunity to demonstrate his disapproval of the isolationist view. Ignoring the political claims of several prominent Republicans, most of whom were isolationists, Stassen conferred the interim appointment upon Joseph H. Ball, then a political reporter for the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Ball’s views on foreign policy were not widely known, but Stassen had carefully ascertained them before making the appointment. Ball was an internationalist. Naming him senator was a significant initial step in altering the isolationist complexion of the state’s congressional contingent, but at the time it incurred more surprise than opposition. This presumably was the reaction Stassen anticipated. His major objective in 1940 doubtless was to unify rather than weaken the party in Minnesota, as he hoped the Republicans might carry the state for Wendell L. Willkie in his campaign to defeat President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was running for an unprecedented third term. Certainly, too, Stassen knew that party unity could not be achieved by a direct attack upon Minnesota’s isolationists.  

To achieve his end, Stassen chose to cooperate with the man most prominently identified with the isolationist cause in Minnesota. The Republican ticket could be strengthened significantly if it included a senatorial nominee with broad public support. In 1940 the state’s most successful politician was willing to accept the Republican nomination. Waiting until the last day to file, Farmer-Labor Senator Henrik Shipstead switched his allegiance to the Republican party. For years Shipstead had cultivated the image of political independence. This and his isolationist convictions were articles of faith for Shipstead. He never disowned them. During the campaign for the nomination, Stassen remained silent. While there is little evidence to support the position that he favored Shipstead’s nomination, there is even less to indicate he disapproved. (Stassen’s opponent for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1940, Ernest F. Jacobson, charged that Stassen was supporting Shipstead in exchange for the latter’s pledge to support Stassen in 1942 in a projected senatorial campaign against Ernest Lundeen.) In any event, Shipstead’s actions during the campaign must have pleased the governor. Initially tepid in responding to Willkie’s candidacy, Shipstead threw his full support behind the Republican nominee before the campaign was over. Considering Stassen’s objective, he no doubt welcomed Shipstead’s nomination despite the latter’s isolationist convictions.  

Stassen correctly gauged the temper of Minnesota’s electorate, for throughout the

1 New York Times, June 25, 1940, p. 17; Minneapolis Tribune, June 25, 1940, p. 4 (both have the Stassen quote); Ivan Hinderaker, “Harold Stassen and Developments in the Republican Party in Minnesota, 1937-1943,” unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1949, p. 610. Stassen wrote in 1965 that “views on foreign policy did have a very important bearing upon my appointment of Joseph Ball as United States Senator. . . . I knew of his views and we had discussed them before he was appointed.” Stassen to author, February 3, 1965, letter in possession of author.

2 St. Paul Pioneer Press, August 27, p. 6, August 31, p. 1, 5, 1940. The week preceding the primary, Republican leaders accused Shipstead’s supporters of using unfair tactics by trying to convey the impression that the state central committee was backing his candidacy. See the Minneapolis Tribune, September 1, 1940, p. 2.
campaign politicians invoked the spirit of isolation. Congressman Harold Knutson asked that President Roosevelt be impeached for the deal swapping fifty over-age destroyers for British bases in the Western Hemisphere. Representative Oscar Youngdahl informed his constituents that the administration was surveying the productive capacity of the nation’s casket industry. “No doubt a million or two under arms,” he wrote, “means eventual casualties if we intend to use these men for war.” Congressman August H. Andresen told a Rochester audience that Roosevelt had done everything possible to provoke the European nations and to incur their wrath. Assuredly, most of the congressional candidates believed a policy of isolation served the national interest. Assuredly, too, they agreed with Ball’s assessment of opinion within the state. After attending a dinner at which Senator Burton K. Wheeler of

Montana stridently denounced Roosevelt’s foreign policy. Ball estimated that Minnesotans were overwhelmingly opposed to war and strongly adverse to the president’s recent moves.9

IT WAS in this atmosphere that the Minneapolis unit of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies was organized. It in effect became the state unit. Announcement of the formation of the national group bearing that lengthy name was made May 20, 1940, when the Nazis were having their way in Europe and increasing numbers of United States citizens felt that their country should not only shore up its defenses but, short of war, also aid the Allies with supplies and money. Chairman of the nonpartisan national committee was William Allen White, noted liberal Republican editor of the Gazette of Emporia, Kansas, and a good friend of President Roosevelt. The national committee’s executive director was Clark M. Eichelberger, who worked from headquarters in New York. Using the press and other media to arouse public opinion, the committee by July 1, 1940, could count some three hun-

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dred self-financed, self-controlled local units, including one in St. Paul. The Minneapolis unit was activated in July but, beset with organizational difficulties, did not announce its formation publicly until September 13, 1940. It soon established headquarters in the Foshay Tower at 813 Marquette Avenue. Edgar M. Jaeger, an investment trust executive for the Northwestern National Bank and Trust Company and a naval officer in World War I, agreed to be the unit’s permanent chairman. He remained chairman until he resigned in January, 1942, to serve in the navy again in World War II. Other original officers of the Minneapolis unit of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies were: secretary, Mrs. Folwell W. Coan, wife of the vice-president of the Central Lumber Company; treasurer, Charles F. Keyes, an attorney and president of the Minneapolis Taxpayers Association; and, executive secretary, Harriet Webb Libby, daughter of a vice-president of the First National Bank and Trust Company of Minneapolis and former assistant director of the New York office of the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America.

Acutely sensitive to the isolationist temper of the electorate, the local unit at first was not prepared to lend effective support to those few congressional candidates who represented something of a break with isolationist policies. The unit’s officers admitted as much. They refused to circulate a foreign policy questionnaire, prepared by the national organization, giving as their reason both the isolationist record of congressional incumbents and the lack of internationalist sentiment among their opponents.

This discouraging situation did not diminish the organization’s enthusiasm. While it never succeeded in recruiting the 10,000 members it hoped to attain, the Minneapolis unit enjoyed rapid growth at the outset. Starting with 150 members in August, 1940, the unit grew to 1,500 by mid-October. A year later the committee had more than doubled its size, enrolling nearly 4,000 members.

Although the committee tried to enlist persons from all walks of life, it drew most of its active support from business, professional, or academic communities. Of 159 members who had joined by early September, 1940, 107 were listed as from business or professional fields, 44 from academic circles, and 6 from the ranks of retired persons. An outline of inception, growth, and activities of the Minneapolis unit, prepared in March, 1941, for circulation to prospective members, gives membership figures as nearly 4,000 for the Minneapolis unit, over 500 for the St. Paul unit, and several hundred outstate. Both of these items are in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.

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4 For details on the formation and growth of the national committee, see Walter Johnson, William Allen White’s America, 524-554 (New York, 1947).
5 Minneapolis Tribune, September 14, 1940, p. 1; Minneapolis Star Journal, September 14, 1940, p. 9; typescript copy of a manuscript history of the unit prepared by Robert Hefty in March, 1941, Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, Minneapolis Unit Papers (hereafter cited as CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers), in Minnesota Historical Society.
6 M. W. Goldsworthy of the local unit to Mrs. Harrison Thomas of the national committee, October 24, 1940, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
7 "An Outline of Inception, Growth and Activities of THE COMMITTEE TO DEFEND AMERICA, MINNEAPOLIS UNIT," dated September 30, 1941. An undated letter, probably prepared in March, 1941, for circulation to prospective members, gives membership figures as nearly 4,000 for the Minneapolis unit, over 500 for the St. Paul unit, and several hundred outstate. Both of these items are in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
ber, 1940, forty-five were executives or wives of executives, thirty-four were educators or their wives, thirty-eight were other professional men or their wives, six were clergymen, and seven were public officials. Only twenty-nine were employees or wives of employees. Before the Lend-Lease Act became law March 11, 1941, more than 136 faculty members at the University of Minnesota belonged to the committee.

The committee, moreover, was heavily dependent financially upon a small group of men and women who were prominent in Minneapolis business and social circles. The largest contributions — more than $600 in each case — were made by Mrs. John Cowles, wife of the president of the Minneapolis Star Journal, and Mrs. George Chase Christian, member of a prominent Minneapolis milling family. Mrs. Christian was noted for her philanthropies, and the bulk of her contribution technically was given through the Citizens Aid Society, an organization she headed and to which she gave extensive financial support. In all, the Minneapolis unit raised slightly more than $10,000. Despite efforts to broaden the base of its financial support, the committee got most of its receipts from contributions of $25 or more, although there were numerous gifts of from 50 cents to $5. Nearly half of the funds came from a select group of contributors who gave $100 or more.

Once established, the Minneapolis unit vigorously pursued its goals. Its most ambitious effort was to sponsor a public mass meeting on January 29, 1941, at the Minneapolis Auditorium to demonstrate support for the Lend-Lease Bill (H. R. 1776) then being debated in Congress. With such mass meetings the national committee and its local units not only sought to back Lend-Lease as the logical means of aiding Britain in its stand against Nazi Germany but also to counter the influence of a rival pressure organization, the America First Committee. It and other isolationist groups opposed the bill because they feared it might make President Roosevelt a dictator and would force the United States to go to war.

The local arrangements committee, of which attorney Thomas Vennum was general chairman, worked hard to line up a speaking program that would draw a large crowd and thus show area congressmen that the administration's foreign policy enjoyed considerable support in Minnesota. The crowd of about 4,000 that showed up, however, was rather disappointing, as at least 8,000 were expected. The meeting was judged a financial success, though, with its total take of $1,574.68. It also netted substantial newspaper coverage, including unexpected publicity from objections raised by Wever Dobson, head of the Minneapolis chapter of the America First Committee. The lack of a Hollywood headliner was given as a principal reason for the failure to attract a larger crowd.

"Whether we like it or not," wrote Jaeger to a member of the national committee's staff, which had promised a film celebrity, "the presence of a movie star does more to fill an auditorium than half a dozen heavy weights." In the same letter Jaeger wrote: "You must remember that Minneapolis and Minneapolis Unit Papers. The original executive committee of the unit included: Eleanor Leerskov, Eve Read, Muriel Stewart, Mary Warner, Thomas Vennum, Mrs. Stuart Wells, Jr., Mrs. Charles Fuller, Mrs. C. A. Taney, Jr., Karl R. Aadrensen, Russell H. Bennett, John Boscoe, F. Stuart Chapin, Mrs. George Chase Christian, Mrs. John Cowles, Everett M. Fraser, Martin W. Goldsworthy, Almon C. Greenman, George B. Leonard, David Winton, Polwell W. Coan, Addison Lewis, Edwin Dodge, Harold Tearse, and Gordon A. More. After Jaeger resigned, Coan and then Lewis eventually served as chairman of the unit.

4 Financial Statistics, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers. Although it is difficult to determine the exact amounts given by all donors, the following were among those who contributed $100 or more: Helen H. Bennett, George B. Leonard, Robert Pack, Cargill, Inc., Merritt L. Carpenter, Leonard Carpenter, Alice W. Whitney, O. C. Coan, Russell H. Bennett, Mrs. Franklin Crosby, Dorothy B. Atkinson, Samuel C. Gale, Helen Winton Jones, Alfred Pillsbury, Mrs. John H. Queal, F. B. Wells, Wheelock Whitney, Mrs. Stanley Hawks, Mrs. Charles J. Winton, and David Winton.
Listening while Ernest W. Gibson addressed the January 29, 1941, mass meeting were other speakers: (from left) Edgar A. Mowrer, Clark M. Eichelberger, Edgar M. Jaeger, Dr. Charles J. Turck, and Admiral William H. Standley.

St. Paul are probably the heart of the isolationist country; and if we do not make a success of this meeting . . . the cause here in the Northwest will be irretrievably harmed.” The names of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Constance Bennett, Madeleine Carroll, Melvyn Douglas, Miriam Hopkins, Myrna Loy, and Franchot Tone were mentioned while plans were being made for the meeting, but no representative from Hollywood attended. The crowd had to settle for telegrams from Miss Bennett and Fairbanks. Among others who sent communications were Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia of New York, Elizabeth Morrow (mother-in-law of “America Firster” Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr.), and John Cowles, who was in London with Wendell Willkie and cabled that both believed England would not surrender short of extermination but that the English needed “much help” if they were to be victorious.10

“In person” speakers at the rally were Clark M. Eichelberger, the group’s national director; Admiral William H. Standley, retired former chief of naval operations; Ernest W. Gibson, former senator from Vermont who succeeded William Allen White as national chairman of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies; and Edgar Ansel Mowrer, foreign correspondent for the Chicago Daily News. Dr. Charles J. Turck, president of Macalester College and chairman of the St. Paul unit of the committee, presided after being introduced by Jaeger. The speakers agreed that all-out, immediate aid to Britain was necessary or the United States eventually would have to fight the Nazis alone. Their speeches were given generous coverage in Twin Cities newspapers. A resolution was adopted at the meeting calling for prompt enactment of the Lend-Lease Bill and for increased and rapid production of defense weapons “so that we may both send these lavishly to the Allies and build up our own reserves.” 11

10 Minneapolis Tribune, January 29, p. 1, January 30, p. 1, 9 (Cowles quote), 1941; Minneapolis Star Journal, January 30, 1941, p. 17, 27; manuscript history by Hefty, p. 59; Jaeger to Jerry Crowley of the national committee, January 23, 1941 (quotes), CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.

11 A copy of the resolution is in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers. Before accepting them as speakers, committee members were afraid that Standley was too controversial and Gibson too lacking in force. See transcript of telephone talk between Jaeger and Helen R. Nicholl of the national committee, January 20, 1941, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
Although Jaeger described the meeting as "very encouraging," it suffered in comparison with a similar one four months later in which Lindbergh headed an America First Committee program that filled the Minneapolis Auditorium to overflowing.\textsuperscript{12}

PRIOR TO the final passage of Lend-Lease, committee members telephoned citizens at random to urge them to contact their congressmen and plead for the bill's passage. A speaker's bureau filled numerous requests for people to make talks both in the Twin Cities and outstate, and it attempted to assess the effectiveness of each speaker. The papers of the unit include an undated list of available speakers. On the list is Hubert H. Humphrey's name and below it is the notation: "About 28. Enthusiastic in cause of Lend-Lease. Spirited but tactful. Very good in Q & A." Cognizant of the need for publicity, the committee persuaded metropolitan newspapers to give substantial coverage to its activities. Indeed, some opponents of the committee's objectives alleged it received preferential treatment from the press largely because John Cowles and Gideon Seymour, president and editorial editor respectively of the \textit{Star Journal}, were indirectly affiliated with the committee.\textsuperscript{13}

The committee's work was done almost entirely by volunteer effort. In addition to sponsoring meetings, providing speakers, and flowing publicity to various media, the committee's staff did many routine tasks. These included sending out many thousands of mimeographed letters to members and the general public asking for contributions and support of the committee's

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Minneapolis Star Journal}, January 30, p. 17 (quote), May 11, p. 1, 1941.

\textsuperscript{13} Jaeger to Eichelberger telegram, March 7, 1941; undated list of available speakers (quote), both in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers; interview with J. D. Holtzernann, January 20, 1965. Holtzernann, a Minneapolis businessman, published a weekly newspaper called the \textit{Minnesota Beacon} for several weeks during the late summer and early fall of 1941. The paper was dedicated to keeping the United States out of war.

Participants in the America First mass meeting of May 10, 1941, included: (from left) Hanford MacNider (who introduced Lindbergh), Senator Henrik Shipstead, the Reverend Richard C. Raines, and Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr., chief speaker.
Admiral Standley, Edgar M. Jaeger

cause. Volunteers also dispensed thousands of pamphlets, dodgers, broadsides, “V for Victory” stickers, special letter stamps, “Stop Hitler” matches, and aid-to-Britain Christmas cards, among other things. Much material was handed out from a committee booth at the 1941 Minnesota State Fair.  

In addition to its work in Minneapolis, the local unit assumed responsibility for creating support outstate. Early in 1941 the committee received a subsidy from the national organization to underwrite the expenses of Mrs. Arthur J. McGuire of St. Paul who was to serve as an organizer in the Northwest. The New York office further expected that the Minneapolis unit would advance the interests of the committee in North Dakota and South Dakota. Jaeger was asked to consider those states as “your bailiwick too for the time being” as the national staff didn’t “know any other good way to promote interest in our cause in North and South Dakota unless you people help us by taking the lead.” Jaeger responded positively. In fact, upon completing a tour of northwestern Minnesota in late April, he had already reported: “There is certainly no isolation in the country. People are realistic. Many of them are demanding the repeal of neutrality and the use of convoys.”

In May, the unit acted as host for a statewide conference which gave birth to the Minnesota unit of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. Members from the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, Waseca, Rochester, and St. Cloud units attended and so did other individuals from around the state. Dr. Donald J. Cowling, president of Carleton College, was elected state chairman. Named other officers of the Minnesota unit were: Folwell W. Coan, Minneapolis, vice-chairman; George W. Morgan, St. Paul, vice-chairman; James G. Nye, Duluth, vice-chairman; and Mrs. Silas Bryan, Minneapolis, executive secretary. The executive committee included Jaeger, Julian B. Baird, Pierce Butler, W. Hubert Kennedy, Charles J. Turck, and J. Russell Wiggins. Following this conference, the Minneapolis unit and the Minnesota unit, while they possessed different sets of officers, functioned almost as a single organization that utilized the staff facilities of the Minneapolis committee.

Though cautious at first, the Minneapolis unit became bold enough to assume positions in advance of the administration’s actions. The day after President Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Act, for instance, a prominent member of the Minneapolis unit, Russell H. Bennett, clearly outlined the committee’s next objective. It was futile “for the American public to bend its back to the heavy load of producing armaments for Great Britain,” he wrote, “unless there is assurance that these armaments will arrive in Great Britain.” Observing that his opinion was ahead of that of the majority of Americans, he concluded by affirming the committee’s willingness to act courageously. Members of the unit agreed. By telegraph on May 24, 1941, some 200
committee members and others attending the organizational conference of the Minnesota unit urged Roosevelt to use the navy for convoy duty in the Atlantic and observed that "strong action, even armed action, entailing greater sacrifices will be required of us." 17

After the fall of the Japanese cabinet headed by Prince Fumimaro Konoye on October 16, 1941, the executive council again telegraphed Roosevelt advocating a continuance of a firm policy toward Japan. Avowedly speaking not only for its members but for "the large majority of citizens in Minnesota," the council asserted that "a show of weakness in this present crisis will only lead to misfortune in the future. France and England went to Munich, let it not be said that America went to Tokio." 18

INTIMATELY CONNECTED with the Minneapolis unit's campaign to win support for the foreign policy of the administration was its effort to moderate the isolationism of the state's congressional delegation. As it became apparent that most members of the delegation were adamant in their opposition to Roosevelt's foreign policy, the committee intensified its efforts. As early as January, 1941, Jaeger informed Eichelberger, the national director, that "A sharp battle is developing in this state between the Committee and Senator Henrik Shipstead, who is very decidedly isolationist. . . . We are going to need every bit of ammunition we can muster to . . . alter Shipstead's course, or to discredit him." 19

Members of the committee were already attempting to do just that. On January 5, 1941, forty-seven prominent citizens of the Twin Cities telegraphed Shipstead demanding that he state, in unequivocal language, his views on foreign policy. They were particularly incensed at Shipstead's trenchant criticism of Roosevelt's policy. Responding caustically and with considerable justification, the senator said he had been stating his views for twenty years. He denied that England was fighting America's battle or "that our safety is dependent on her efforts." If that were true, and Shipstead did not believe it was, then America "should, in all honesty, declare war on Germany and her allies now, and not resort to subterfuges which deceive no one." 20

Although Minnesota's senior senator proved unyielding, the committee continued its efforts. Before the final vote on Lend-Lease, Jaeger visited Washington to present the committee's views to the representatives from Minnesota and to assess their response. In Jaeger's opinion, Congressman Oscar Youngdahl was "concerned with building his own fences and nothing else."

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17 Bennett to Jaeger, March 12, 1941, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers. These also include a copy of the telegram to Roosevelt.
18 A copy of the telegram is in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
19 Jaeger to Eichelberger, January 14, 1941, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
20 Copies of the telegram and of Shipstead's reply are in the Shipstead Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society.
He understood that Youngdahl would never change his position as long as he believed his constituents were opposed to war. Jaeger was not as critical of Congressman Richard P. Gale, possibly because Gale was socially close to several of the committee's most prominent financial backers and certainly because he appeared to be more receptive to the committee's position. Nonetheless, Jaeger knew that Gale would not back the committee's goals because he feared they meant war. Even before jaeger's visit, Gale had revealed his hesitancy to support full-scale aid to Britain. While agreeing that the British needed help to survive, the third district congressman believed that extensive aid meant convoys. Therefore, it was "a question, not of all-out aid to Britain but of going to war, and I do not think that the people are ready for war nor that we could carry on a war if the people did not want it." 21

In May, 1941, the committee mailed every Minnesota congressman a copy of the message the unit sent to Roosevelt requesting that he use the navy for convoy duty. The replies from Youngdahl and Joseph P. O'Hara were noncommittal. August Andresen referred rather tartly to an article in the Reader's Digest which convincingly demonstrated, he believed, that the United States "is not prepared to begin a war in any way." Gale wrote that he could agree with the committee "as far as helping Britain, but not to the extent of open warfare." Siding with the committee, Ball agreed "that since the loss of the battleship Hood it is more important than ever that the United States move swiftly in this crisis." 22

Even when the issue was essentially one of national defense, the unit made little headway in impressing its views upon the delegation. During July, 1941, Youngdahl and Gale were asked to support the bill which extended the service time of draftees inducted under the Selective Service Act of 1940. Youngdahl objected on several grounds. He maintained that the administration had not been consistent in stating its case. He pointed to the fact that young men alone do not make an army and noted that equipment to train them was lacking. "I for one," he declared, "detest making a political issue out of the lives of our young men who are now in camp." Gale was more specific in spelling out his reasons for being opposed. He believed that "unless the dangers which threaten us become more acute and unless there is a more actual need for the use of our army . . . it would be wise to keep the term of service as it is . . . . The navy and the air force are by all means the first line of defense and they are not affected by the draft." As something of an aside, Gale wrote that the "army comes into its own about once a generation and I cannot say that I really blame them for their enthusiasm." 23

Gale's position was a severe disappointment. Jaeger, angry and disheartened, prepared a heated reply; then, thinking better of it, he waited over two weeks before responding. In the letter he finally sent to Gale, Jaeger freely allowed his pent-up frustrations to show: "... the stand you took on the bill extending the service period of draftees is now a matter of history. I am sure you are aware that this stand was much regretted by every member of our Minneapolis committee as well as the hundreds of members of our State Committee located outside of Minneapolis. . . . If the

Minutes of the Minneapolis unit, March 21, 1941 (quote); Gale to Mrs. Jaeger, February 8, 1941, both in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers. Jaeger corresponded more frequently with Gale than with any other congressman. Although they often differed, their letters were usually friendly.

Youngdahl to Mrs. Harriet Webb Libby, May 23, 1941, O'Hara to Mrs. Libby, May 24, 1941; Andresen to Mrs. Libby, May 23, 1941; Gale to Mrs. Libby, May 23, 1941; Ball to Mrs. Libby, May 26, 1941, all in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.

Youngdahl to Folwell W. Coan, July 28, 1941; Gale to Jaeger, both in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers. Every Minnesota congressman except Melvin Maas had voted against the Selective Service Act in 1940. In 1941, William Pittenger was the only Minnesota congressman to vote for extension of the act, although Ball was recorded in favor of it and Representatives Maas and Richard T. Buckler did not vote on the issue.
present situation is not filled with dynamite and the danger to this country most appallingly, then I and millions of others who feel as I do are nothing but crack-brained alarmists. What in heaven's name do you demand in the way of threats or danger in order to be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary for the preparation of our defense?

"You speak of the damage to the morale by keeping the present crop of draftees indefinitely in service. Dick, you voice again that sentiment which it seems to me expresses your position, namely that you are more fearful of what the American people may do than of what Hitler may do. I am not concerned about the morale of our men, unless it may be that their morale is undermined by men such as Wheeler, Lindbergh, Shipstead, Nye, and the rest—they are doing more to destroy our morale than events themselves." 24

THE INTRANSIGENCE that most Minnesotans and adherents of isolationism are displaying certainly discouraged members of the committee. Nearly as discouraging was the reluctance of politicians whose views were similar to those of the committee to commit themselves fully to a more forceful policy. Early in August, 1941, Eichelberger discreetly asked Jaeger if Stassen should receive consideration for the vacant chairmanship of the national organization. Jaeger, after carefully making inquiries in Minneapolis, replied that Stassen sympathized with the objectives of the committee but warned that the governor's appointment would be a mistake. Voicing resentment over Stassen's failure to ally himself with the committee, Jaeger wrote that the new chairman "must feel that this cause is more important than any possible political considerations, and he should be the kind who would not only be willing, but glad to make any sacrifices for the cause. I don't mean to sound extreme, but what this country and the committee need are a few more men like Nathan Hale." 25

The morale of the committee remained high in spite of frustrations. Aware that they were fighting an uphill battle, committee members nevertheless believed that events were on their side and that isolationist sentiment in Minnesota was waning. In May, 1941, the committee tried to offset

The committee ran this newspaper ad after a Lindbergh speech in 1941.

**RATTLESNAKES IN THE ATLANTIC ... DUSES AT HOME**

After five deliberate Nazi attacks on American ships, Charles A. Lindbergh still accuses our government of "creating incidents."

Mr. Lindbergh says he clarifies the issues and uses no subterfuge... yet after Germany's invasion of fifteen countries he still stresses the point that war was declared by England against Germany.

The American people, like President Roosevelt, have no illusions about the gravity of the situation, but they are 100 per cent with him when he says to the Nazis: You have attacked our safety; you shall go no further.

What are the motives of those who, through the person of Charles A. Lindbergh, are turning the greatest national emergency in our history into a political attack on our government?

Which side are you on—Lindbergh's... or America's?

**MINNEAPOLIS CHAPTER**

**COMMITTEE TO DEFEND AMERICA**

013 Marquette Ave. Phone: Main 7906

Summer 1969
the effects of the massive America First rally at which Lindbergh spoke. It worked hard to provide a sympathetic audience for Ball when he addressed a rally in Minneapolis the week following Lindbergh’s appearance. Enthusiastic about the outcome, the executive secretary informed Ball that his speech had changed opinions whereas Lindbergh had merely reinforced the convictions of those who already were isolationists.25

An editorial appearing in the New Ulm Daily Journal on July 5, 1941, gave Jaeger further cause for hope. Edited by Walter Mickelson, a close friend of Shipstead, the New Ulm paper was judged by the committee to be the only daily in outstate Minnesota dedicated to the cause of isolation. In an item entitled “Shall We Quit Writing ‘War’ Editorials?” Mickelson rather defiantly asked his readers to indicate whether or not they believed the paper had the right to oppose a war until the United States formally entered it. Jaeger, taking cognizance of the editorial, hopefully wrote that possibly Mickelson did “feel a little bit shaky about his present position and I suppose we should be thankful for that.”26

While they never forgot that the isolationists still were strong in Minnesota, the leaders of the Minneapolis unit became increasingly optimistic during the fall of 1941. Their optimism did not, however, prompt them to relax their pressure on congressmen. Besides indicating their unwillingness to support a soft policy toward Japanese demands, committee leaders urged Minnesota’s congressmen to act favorably on the second Lend-Lease appropriation and on the proposal to repeal the 1939 Neutrality Act. Significantly, these efforts were not undertaken in the belief that many of the congressmen could be converted. Rather, they were viewed as preliminary maneuvers in preparation for the 1942 congressional elections. Writing to Ball, Jaeger revealed the optimism which prevailed. He told the senator that the committee intended to put the congressmen on the spot as frequently as it could, that many Norwegians were “beginning to get mad, and the madder they get, the better it will be for you.” In his prompt answer, Ball agreed that continued pressure upon the delegation was beneficial because he understood that the America First Committee in Minnesota would be active in the 1942 campaign.28

On the eve of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, discerning Minnesotans knew that foreign policy would be the issue in the 1942 campaign. For months it had been evident that isolationists welcomed the opportunity to defeat Ball. During the autumn of 1941 it was just as evident that other Minnesotans, led by those affiliated with the local units of the Committee to Defend America, were equally eager to unseat the most willful isolationist congressmen. The congressmen whom the committee undoubtedly would have liked to have defeated were Oscar Youngdahl, August Andresen, H. Carl Andersen, Joseph P. O’Hara, and Harold Knutson. Senator Shipstead was not a candidate for re-election in 1942 or he certainly would have been a member of the group, all of whom identified themselves consistently with the isolationist position. No doubt a part of the electorate continued to wait upon the course of events before making a decision; nevertheless, the intensity of feeling was marked for those who had already decided.

Mrs. Libby to Ball, May 28, 1941, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.

27 Undated list of newspapers noting those presumed to be isolationist (five weeks were included); Jaeger to Gideon Seymour, July 11, 1941, both in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers; New Ulm Daily Journal, July 5, 1941, p. 2.

28 The executive council of the committee was concerned with the large amount of radio time the isolationists procured. The council also knew that people in small towns outstate were sympathetic to the committee’s stand but afraid to say much because of the impact their views might have on their businesses. See minutes of the Minneapolis unit, August 15, 25, 1941; executive council letter to congressmen, September 25, 1941; Jaeger to Mrs. Silas Bryan, November 12, 1941; Jaeger to Ball, September 27, 1941; Ball to Jaeger, September 29, 1941, all in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
FOR MERRY CHRISTMAS NEXT YEAR

Local units sold this Christmas card in 1940.

GIVE AID TO BRITAIN THIS YEAR

Not even the attack on Pearl Harbor and the unanimity of feeling which came in its wake could immediately dispel the animosities resulting from the struggle over foreign policy. Five days after Pearl Harbor, Folkwell W. Coan, acting chairman of the Minneapolis unit, wrote Ball that "bonfires will spring up under a number of representatives whose type of thinking in the past has so clearly demonstrated that they will be incapable of straight thinking for that very important postwar period which will surely come." The next day Shipstead, in replying to a constituent, indicated that he was interested in any attempt undertaken to unseat Ball.26

WITH THE United States at war and the elections nearly a year away, neither the Committee to Defend America nor the America First Committee found it easy to maintain the cohesion necessary to guarantee that the 1942 election would be waged primarily over the issue of foreign policy. Indeed, even before Pearl Harbor there was noticeable unwillingness to challenge Ball among those isolationist leaders who had frequently been mentioned as the most likely contenders for his seat. Almost certainly this reluctance reflected an awareness among the isolationists that opinion in Minnesota was shifting. One example of this change came in November, 1941, when Ball spoke at Albert Lea and Fairmont during a swing through the state. When M. W. Halloran, political reporter for the Star Journal, attempted to assess the response to Ball’s position, he found people to be strangely quiet. Many of his respondents reported that, whereas earlier most people in the area were isolationists, it now was impossible to tell what they were thinking.30

Nonetheless, the issue of foreign policy did enter into the forthcoming campaign. Some political figures, notably Shipstead, had been committed to isolationist precepts far too long for the situation to be otherwise. Shipstead certainly was aware of the hostility directed toward him. In fact, dur-
Congressman Richard P. Gale

ing the week following Pearl Harbor the executive council of the Minneapolis unit of the Committee to Defend America seriously considered approving the use of its name in connection with the publication of a letter which savagely denounced all that he represented. The letter demanded that Shipstead resign and told him “that a part in the future conduct of the affairs of this nation cannot be entrusted to one who has displayed such abysmal ignorance and complete lack of vision and statesmanship.” After considerable deliberation, the council failed to give its full support to the letter. It therefore was published in the Sunday paper under the writer’s name — Willem Luyten, University of Minnesota professor who was a member of the committee.31

This incident dramatizes the dilemma facing the committee. With the nation at war the committee’s work was finished. A few members, however, agreed with national officials and believed the committee should continue under a new name, Citizens for Victory. The new organization, it was hoped, would serve both to stimulate support for the war effort and to promote America’s participation in a postwar organization. Those who did not want to disband felt that an organized effort was needed to eliminate the last vestiges of isolationism from Minnesota. Even among those who believed the committee’s work was finished, there existed a healthy respect for the vitality of isolationist attitudes. George W. Morgan, a prominent attorney from St. Paul and an active member of both the St. Paul and Minnesota units, wrote Eichelberger explaining at length why he disliked continuing the organization under a different name. Significantly, he stressed that isolationist attitudes would persist as a factor in the response of Minnesotans to foreign policy.32

“There is also in my mind,” wrote Morgan, “the question whether a separate organization, perhaps loosely affiliated with, and cooperating with, a national organization of this sort, organized for the Midwest or perhaps for Minnesota alone, might not be more effective than a mere chapter of a national organization with headquarters in New York, in view of the rather specialized local problems we have here in Minnesota . . . with respect to isolationist sentiment and its foundations. As an example (but by no means the only one that could be cited) is the attitude of the very large

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31 The final draft of the letter is in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers. See also the minutes of the Minneapolis unit, December 10, 30, 1941, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers, and the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune and Star Journal, December 14, 1941, p. 19.

32 The St. Paul unit, although organized somewhat earlier than its Minneapolis counterpart, apparently was never as active. Dr. Charles Turck served as its chairman, Mrs. John W. Thompson as secretary, and John A. Lagerman as treasurer. See Theodore Smith of the national committee to Jaeger, July 28, 1940; Jaeger to Thorold F. Fields of Duluth, August 24, 1940; and minutes of the Minneapolis unit, December 6, 1940, all in CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
agricultural population in this territory toward economic problems and foreign trade and their traditional scepticism as to any political or economic program which involves relatively free exchange of goods, particularly of agricultural products of any kind." Morgan plainly recognized that an intimate connection existed between traditional agrarian suspicions of Wall Street and isolationist attitudes. Moreover, he assumed that this connection would persist.33

It is impossible to determine how many committee members felt the way Morgan did. Most of the business and professional men who had provided much of the financial support for the committee did, however, reject the idea of sustaining the organization during the war years. As a consequence, by February, 1942, both the St. Paul and the Minnesota units had disbanded. The Minneapolis unit continued until after the campaign of 1942, but only as a skeleton organization.34

It was the representatives of the latter on the one hand, and Shipstead and Mickelson on the other, who carried the struggle into the 1942 campaign. Early in June, 1942, four men from the Minneapolis unit met with Dr. Walter H. Judd and encouraged him to run against Oscar Youngdahl in the Republican primary. They were Addison Lewis, last chairman of the committee, Professors Christopher S. Norberg and Willem
Senator Henrik Shipstead

Luyten, and Dr. Charles E. Prosek. Youngdahl's support of a policy of isolation had been a constant irritant to the committee and those now active in the skeleton organization were determined to defeat him. Judd received assurances that the committee would assist him in obtaining financial support. As the race took place in the metropolitan fifth district, the committee was able to support Judd's candidacy because contacts could easily be re-established with those once active. But that was all that it could effectively do. The threatened revolt against the isolationist congressmen who represented outstate constituencies never materialized.  

FOR THEIR PART, those who had supported a policy of isolation were not silenced by the war. Mickelson chose to challenge Ball for the Republican nomination. He received warm support from Shipstead. Basing his campaign upon Ball's alleged refusal to be guided by sentiment within the state prior to Pearl Harbor, Mickelson employed the rhetoric of the agrarian isolationists by indicting Ball for representing the Lamonts, the house of Morgan, Wendell Willkie, and John Cowles.  

The primary election of September 8, 1942, was heralded as a triumph over isolation as both Ball and Judd captured the nominations with ease. Judd received 34,835 votes to Youngdahl's 25,699; Ball defeated Mickelson 198,733 votes to 111,834. The Minneapolis Star Journal was exultant that Minnesotans had supported "the kind of leadership — typified by Ball and Judd — which accepts, for our own greater well-being, the responsibility of the United States in the world." In the larger sense the Star Journal was right. The war ended the isolationism of the 1930s. Slowly the congressmen who had supported isolationist policies died, retired, or were defeated. Of those who lost their seats in an election, the isolation issue was not a major factor in their defeat — except in the case of Shipstead. He lost the Republican nomination to Governor Edward Thye in 1946.  

Shipstead's view of America's relationship to the world never changed. Of the two votes against the United Nations charter in 1945, one was cast by Shipstead and the other by Senator William Langer of North Dakota. While he attributed his defeat largely to his vote against the charter, Shipstead never regretted it. Whether he could

35 Lewis to Russell Bennett, June 3, 1942, CDA: Minneapolis Unit Papers.
36 A typescript copy of Mickelson's speech given over KSTP August 17, 1942, is in the Shipstead Papers.
37 Minneapolis Star Journal, September 9, 1942, p. 18. Congressmen Melvin Maas and Richard Gale, neither of whom were identified with the more adamant isolationists, were defeated in 1944 partially as a result of unification of the Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties. Interestingly, Representative William A. Pittenger, whose eighth district became the DFL stronghold in the state, managed to survive until 1946 because his DFL opponent in 1944 — William McKinnon — had been obdurately opposed to Roosevelt's foreign policy.
have survived Thye's successful challenge had he been less intransigent regarding the United Nations is questionable. In any event, Shipstead relied upon an old theme in attempting to secure renomination. He told the electorate that he believed a small, secret group of men intended to defeat him. The group was led by Stassen, the New York bosses, and "the big Eastern Internationalists."  

It was possible to interpret Shipstead's defeat without invoking a conspiracy theory of politics. A onetime admirer from Luverne in Rock County, for example, wrote the senator that he had been ousted because his friends had grown increasingly suspicious after he had identified himself with the "reactionary" Republican party. His correspondent said, moreover, that Shipstead had failed to heed the warning of Mickle-son's defeat in 1942, had depended overmuch on the pro-German element, and consequently had lost his old Norwegian friends. Hardly sophisticated in his presentation, the correspondent probably came closer to a correct analysis of the senator's defeat than Shipstead himself: "... at least in this county [your friends] deserted you at a rate of about 3 out of every 5, for they knew that if all or a majority of the Senate had voted like you did Hitler would have written the terms of peace [sic], and where would that have left Norway or for that matter the rest of the allied Nations. So there you are together with Wheeler, Nye, Clark and others. You have found that isolationism [sic] like crime, does not pay, all of you were obstructionists [sic] befor [sic] Pearl harbor."  

Shipstead's defeat in 1946 was only added confirmation that the isolationism of the 1930s was dead in Minnesota. Yet, the failure to mount a state-wide challenge to Minnesota's isolationist congressmen in 1940 and after illustrates one of the major problems confronting a democracy in formulating its foreign policy. 

Normally responsive only to issues and events which are persistently and immediately before it, the public never acquires the habit of giving consistent attention to foreign policy questions in congressional campaigns. Indeed, its opportunity to do so is severely limited because Americans have been, for long periods of time, in substantial agreement as to what constitutes a viable foreign policy for the United States. 

Not infrequently, as in the 1930s, this consensus hardens and becomes intensely resistant to change. Such was the case in the nation and particularly in Minnesota in the years immediately preceding Pearl Har­bor. Then, it required the momentum of rapidly breaking events and the efforts of determined organizations to break the consensus and to assist in establishing a new one. The Minneapolis unit of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies played such a role in the years 1940 through 1942. It helped elect Walter Judd and re­elect Joseph Ball. The world view it sup­ported assisted in establishing attitudes which were in part responsible for the defeat of Shipstead. Its presence as an organization even served in a minor way to advance the political career of Hubert Humphrey. 

More important than these accomplish­ments, however, was the Minneapolis unit's work in helping establish a new consensus — a consensus which not only emphasized that the United States had widespread responsi­bilities in the world but which, following World War II, hardened and became re­sistant to change just as its predecessor had in the 1930s.