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# Private Interest Groups and the Lend-Lease Debate, 1940-1941

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The Lend-Lease bill of 1941 was one of the most significant steps in American foreign policy in the months leading up to Pearl Harbour. Not only did the legislation enable President Roosevelt to lend goods directly to democracies such as Britain, but it moved the United States further away from the isolationism of the 1930s and one step closer to participation in the war itself. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, sympathy for the Allies led to Congress amending the Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1937 and significantly including a cash-and-carry provision for arms sales to the Allies in place of the previous embargo. Nevertheless, by the end of 1940, with Britain fighting alone and rapidly running out of dollars, the need to extend credit to Britain became urgent. The Johnson Act of 1934 had forbidden further loans to nations who had defaulted on their earlier war debts, so a method was required to sidestep this still contentious issue. Roosevelt duly provided such a method in the form of the Lend-Lease bill, which would temporarily lend goods to Britain that were to be returned once the immediate crisis was over. Unlike the destroyer-bases deal of the previous autumn, the bill required Congressional approval. This was obtained, but not before two months of fierce debate that involved the entire nation.

The Congressional debate over Lend-Lease is not a new topic for historians. Yet the role of the public in the debate over Lend-Lease has not received detailed scholarly attention, despite Roosevelt's statement after the bill's passage: "We have just now engaged in a great debate. It was not limited to the halls of Congress. It was argued in every newspaper, on every wave length, over every cracker barrel in all the land; and it was finally settled and decided by the American people themselves."[1] The missing element in the study of Lend-Lease has been this public role.

The numerous references to "the public" and "public opinion" made by FDR and his Administration were not just lip service to a democratic ideal. James C. Schneider notes that "time and again in private messages to foreign leaders and in conversations with officials, FDR cited public opinion as one determinant of his actions". While Warren Kimball admits that sometimes "public opinion was as much an excuse as a reason for Roosevelt's hesitation", the shadow of Woodrow Wilson was prominent in FDR's mind. If this may have led him to overestimate public opinion, he rarely underestimated it.[2]

While the role of isolationist groups has been studied in depth, the extent of the interaction between the Roosevelt Administration and internationalist private interest groups has not been fully analysed. Michael Wala has recently suggested that the emergence of internationalist groups supporting aid to Britain "was a carefully planned effort, conducted in close co-operation with the Roosevelt Administration."[3] Also, most of the work done on private groups of this period does not effectively bring out the connections between these groups and the Roosevelt Administration; the state and the private. Similarly, by taking one group at a time, the connections *between* private groups are left largely unexplored.[4] Within these groups there was a wide range of opinion, from the internationalists, who advocated aid short of war to the allies, to the interventionists, who openly suggested joining the war immediately. Kimball suggested

that “the entire question of public opinion during this period is in need of detailed examination, particularly in the area of interest groups and their influence”.[5]

The largest and most significant internationalist group to develop between the outbreak of war in Europe and Pearl Harbour was the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (CDAAA). Although it was not the first example of private individuals organising to mobilise opinion on foreign policy issues, it would prove to be the most influential. Previous examples had stemmed largely from the peace movement, with the League to Enforce Peace during the First World War, and groups in the inter-war years such as the League of Nations Association and the American Union for Concerted Peace Efforts. The League of Nations Association in particular led to the development of the Non-Partisan Committee for Peace Through Revision of the Neutrality Law (NPC), which was led as the CDAAA initially would be, by lifelong Republican William Allen White, editor of the Emporia, Kansas, *Gazette*.

The NPC dissolved with the passing of the revision of the Neutrality Acts, but this did not stop the internationalists from continuing with their efforts, through the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, launched in December 1939. This Commission, set up as the research affiliate of the League of Nations Association, evolved from a number of other internationalist groups, and these continued connections between organisations led to the formation of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies at the end of April 1940. Building again upon the existing League of Nations Association in response to German advances in Europe, more than three hundred local chapters had been established in forty-seven states by July 1.[6] The chapters became centres for public meetings and debates, distributed official CDAAA literature, and sent numerous letters to Congress.

The first real issue for the CDAAA was to provide support for the destroyer-bases deal whereby 50 overage destroyers were exchanged for 99 year leases on 6 Canadian and Carribbean bases, 2 more of which were given as gifts. However, the CDAAA was not the only group working toward the destroyer transfer. Published in national newspapers on June 10, “A Summons to Speak Out”, signed by thirty prominent men and women, urged the United States to declare immediate war on Germany. It led to the formation of an informal group, known either as the Century Club group, after the exclusive location where it met, or as the Miller group, after one of its leaders, Francis Miller. Miller’s membership of the Council on Foreign Relations developed contacts that led to the expansion of the group. Lewis Douglas, a CDAAA member, hosted the first informal meeting on July 11, and six of the original signatories of the “Summons” were CDAAA members. Other Century Club group members included former assistant to Cordell Hull, Ulric Bell; *Louisville Courier-Journal* editor and Pulitzer Prize winner Herbert Agar; Ward Cheney, a manufacturer who contributed half of the group’s expenses; scriptwriter John Balderston; President of Harvard University James Conant; and playwright Robert E. Sherwood.[7]

The principal difference between the Century Club group and the CDAAA is that the former were interventionists whereas it is more accurate to refer to the latter as internationalists. Whilst William Allen White, a classic internationalist, advocated maximum aid to Britain, he had no desire to see the United States at war, an opinion shared by the majority of the American public. The Century Club group advocated an immediate declaration of war, although if this could not be attained, then they too supported maximum material aid to Britain. While there was some degree of co-operation between the two groups, the underlying difference in attitude and conviction would be disruptive, leading to resentment and White’s eventual resignation.

Between July and September 1940, the two groups did work closely together for the destroyer-bases deal, educating the nation as to its merits, but it was the focus on one proposal rather than broader issues of foreign policy that enabled the internationalists and interventionists to overcome their differences.[8] Once the specific destroyer-bases initiative had been passed, the differences in the long-term aims of the two groups resurfaced.

A number of other internationalist groups appeared in 1940. Friends of Democracy, established by L.M. Birkhead, used startling images of Nazi brutality to put its message across. In one notable pamphlet in March 1941 the isolationist America First Committee was described as a "Nazi Transmission Belt," as Friends of Democracy pointed out how the Nazis endorsed America First policies and how supporters of America First were often members of pro-Nazi organisations. Clarence Streit, leader of Union Now, suggested that English-speaking nations should join together as a federal unit in order to defeat fascism. Although this was never a realistic possibility, the movement had support from Anglophiles and more vehement interventionists, with columnist Dorothy Thompson an especially notable supporter.[9]

The Council for Democracy took a slightly different approach to the anti-Nazi and anti-America First propaganda of the other organisations. Set up by Henry Luce and C. D. Jackson of *Time/Life* along with radio commentator Raymond Gram Swing, it adopted what Mark Chadwin describes as a "lofty moral" tone, refusing to discuss specific foreign policy issues. Instead, it focused on promoting democratic ideals and studying the freedoms guaranteed under the Bill of Rights. The Council was not, however, promoting an American entry into the war. However, the Council had links to the CDAAA and the Century Club group, and while it had no grass roots organisation, the three groups worked together to create new organisations.[10]

The traditional assumption that women and mothers would take a pacifist approach was challenged by a number of women's groups that supported aid to the allies. The Women's Committee for Action operated informally alongside the Century Club group, seeing itself as opposition to "the influence of the women lobbyists for peace who are giving Congress very effectively the idea that all women are against war and help to Britain if it involves any danger to ourselves".[11]

The CDAAA had its own Women's division, and Labor and Student divisions were also set up to provide a focal point for workers and students who supported aid or intervention. This was necessary because the traditional interest groups in the workplace and academia had conflicts within their memberships. As James MacGregor Burns put it, "No group was monolithic. The division over foreign policy within business, labour and liberal groups seemed as sharp as the divisions between them."[12] The American Student Union, for example, was against any connection with the war, leaving students with a more internationalist outlook to search elsewhere for representation and an opportunity to express their beliefs. The American Federation of Labor was more evenly divided, as were religious groups and veterans' associations.

Whether these were long standing interest groups with no previous involvement in foreign affairs or groups set up specifically to consider international matters, the direction of US policy overseas and its domestic repercussions were at the top of the agenda for almost all of them following the election of 1940. Private citizens who felt the need to support Roosevelt's policies, who wanted to do more to help Britain, who felt it was in America's interest to give as much aid as possible, and even those who wanted an immediate declaration of war used the available committees to publicise their

opinions. By December 1940, this growing private network was prepared to support FDR with almost any proposal he could invent as long as it would assist Britain and work toward a Nazi defeat and a victory for democracy. The opportunity quickly arose.

The first suggestion of action by Roosevelt since his re-election came on December 17, when he sketched the vague outline of what would become the Lend-Lease bill with his famous garden hose analogy. Sherwood later argued that the analogy won the fight for Lend-Lease, but at the time it was made, the Lend-Lease bill had not even been drafted.[13] Roosevelt was extremely vague in describing how the plan might work, but the President had finally raised the issue of aid to Britain, and also the possibility of getting industry working seven days a week. Yet while it played no role in the creation of Lend-Lease, the limited detail of the press conference was enough to put the CDAAA on the offensive. While awaiting the specifics of the initiative to aid Britain, CDAAA executive committee chairman Hugh Moore and Dr. Frank Kingdon, chairman of the New York chapter sent a festive telegram to Roosevelt on Christmas Eve.[14]

Their goodwill was not being extended to William Allen White, who had highlighted the divisions within the CDAAA and sparked a debate over the future direction of the group. He stated, in response to criticisms of warmongering: “The only reason in God’s world I am in this organisation is to keep this country out of war.....If I was making a motto for the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, it would be “The Yanks Are Not Coming.””[15]

This led to vicious attacks from both internationalists and interventionists over the Christmas period, leading to White’s eventual resignation on January 2. What saved the committee and enabled it to continue following White’s departure was the fact that even though the CDAAA was often known simply as the “White Committee”, White alone was not the Committee. A solid and established committee structure still existed with an Eastern leadership that had considerable experience in running non-governmental organisations. Despite White’s presence as a figurehead, National Committee director Clark Eichelberger continued to run the committee’s daily operations. As member Herbert Bayard Swope claimed on December 29, the committee was “bigger than any individual”.[16]

The unfortunate outcome of the internal squabble over White’s departure was that the interventionists’ first real show of support for the President’s new “lease and lend” plan was overshadowed. When it was announced that Roosevelt would be addressing the nation on December 29, Century Club group members James Conant and Lewis Douglas circulated a telegram urging Roosevelt to “make it the settled policy of this country to do everything that may be necessary to insure defeat of the axis powers.” This Conant-Douglas “round-robin” was signed by 170 prominent public figures and was delivered to the White House without having been made public. The intention was to push Roosevelt into using his Fireside Chat as an opportunity to convince the nation of the seriousness of the situation, and to urge greater aid to Britain.[17] Although the round-robin had little effect on the content of the forthcoming chat, being drafted from within Government ranks, the President had another use planned for the telegram.

On December 26, FDR made the telegram public, using it as what Langer and Gleason called a trial balloon “to test the latest changes in the intensity and direction of the winds of opinion. The balloon descended without recording any remarkable variations in the political climate.”[18] There had, of course, been reaction from the isolationist camp, but that was only to be expected. As Mark Chadwin noted, the telegram helped to “set the stage - ‘warm up’ the audience, as it were” for the forthcoming Fireside Chat.[19]

The use of the Conant-Douglas telegram by FDR gave the signal to non-governmental organisations and private citizens that their efforts could be effectively utilised by formal government.

The divisions of the CDAAA continued to work for support despite the group's leadership problems. The Women's division in New York announced that they would assist anyone who wished to send a message of support to the President in advance of his Fireside Chat. Not only were telegraph slips and postcards available, messengers delivered them for transmission. In Illinois, the CDAAA was working hard to encourage telegrams from a largely isolationist public. Local chairman Adlai E. Stevenson reported activity not just in Chicago but across the state. White House Press Secretary Stephen T. Early noted an unusually large amount of suggestions coming in for the President's speech, some spontaneous, some clearly derived from "organisational work." Despite the committee urging writers to express themselves in their own words, many were clearly inspired by committee work, which usually led to their being discounted by Congressmen or White House staff.[20]

The Fireside Chat of December 29 may not have been directly influenced by the active committees, but it contained exactly what they wanted to hear. Roosevelt's insistence that the United States become "the great arsenal of democracy" announced to the nation the policy of aid to the allies that had been expected since the election.[21] The speech was co-written by Century Club group founder Robert Sherwood, now a familiar face at the White House. Apart from the usual isolationist dissenters, the speech was brilliantly received, with the White House reporting telegrams 100-1 in favour.[22] The public attitude at the beginning of 1941 was clearly different from that of a year earlier.

As the fight for Lend-Lease began in January, a substantial network of private groups was in place to support the bill. In fact, the network would continue to grow as the debate progressed. As the debate began, the experience of this network would take on three distinct strands. Firstly, there was the direct involvement of the CDAAA, by far the largest group, in terms of new chairman Ernest Gibson's leadership, state-private contacts, public debates, and propaganda pamphlets. Secondly, there was the CDAAA and the Century Club group's creation of and direct co-operation with new organisations that targeted specific sections of society. Thirdly, there was the recognition by the foreign policy groups of the independent strategies of well established private groups such as the American Federation of Labor and the League of Women Voters, although groups such as these were known to interact with the foreign policy organisations from time to time. The debate over Lend-Lease would see all three strands woven together to create maximum public support for the bill.

The Lend-Lease bill had the full support of the internationalist committees from the very beginning. Despite the belief of some of its members that focusing on an individual limited aid bill would distract from the more pressing concern of declaring war, the Century Club group fully backed the President's plan. Many expressed satisfaction that aid was finally going to be "lent", rather than sold to Britain. From the beginning, the Century Club group remained in contact with the bill's proponents in the White House and on Capitol Hill. Ulric Bell spoke with someone close to Roosevelt - almost certainly Sherwood - before the bill was introduced, and he reported back to the group, "The President wants aid from the outside on the Lend-Lease plan because party lines are apt to be formed against him and his plan, which is bound to cause delay in passing the bill."[23] The committees recognised that what FDR had done was to turn over to them

the promotion of the Lend-Lease bill to the public. They accepted the responsibility with relish.

The CDAAA took on a great deal of promotional work and was the main focus of attention for Roosevelt's supporters during the public debate. But although the committee was unquestionably the most prolific group when it came to the promotion of the Lend-Lease bill, it was by no means the only one. Throughout the two month debate, a number of interested groups of private citizens would give their backing to the President's plan, and many would do it with CDAAA help. What had previously been an Eastern and elite effort at state-private co-operation now began to broaden, creating links with new leaderships to target new audiences.

One new group that came to prominence during the Lend-Lease debate was the Student Defenders of Democracy. The group had formed on January 2 and was led by Dorothy Overlock, a recent graduate of the University of Chicago. Despite beginning with just eleven student leaders, the group announced on January 16 that a policy statement had been signed by 231 students from 115 universities and colleges. The students included student council leaders and college newspaper editors, and came from a variety of locations, including Brown, Princeton, New York University, Notre Dame, Vanderbilt and the University of Chicago.[24]

Although it may have appeared at the time as if this new organisation had sprung up independently, Student Defenders of Democracy was actually created by the Century Club group in association with the CDAAA and the Council for Democracy. It was intended to work alongside the Women's Committee for Action, the informal women's arm of the Century Club group. Particularly significant is the fact that the national headquarters for the new student organisation were in New York, at 8 West 40th Street, which also happened to be the location of CDAAA national headquarters. The group had been set up to counter the common feeling on University campuses that it was young and able men, such as undergraduates, who would be sent to battle in the event of a war.[25]

Students were not the only section of the public working to support the Lend-Lease bill. On January 17, the League of Women Voters announced its support for the President's plan. The League's support was based on its stand, adopted the previous year, that supported "a foreign policy as a nonbelligerent which permits discrimination against an aggressor and favours the victims of aggression." The League's national board had voted ten to two in favour of supporting the bill, but despite some feeling on the board that the United States should enter the war, the approach taken in promoting Lend-Lease assumed it was the best chance to stay out of the war.[26] This of course, was the approach taken by the Roosevelt Administration and the CDAAA, although the League was more clearly united behind a purely internationalist viewpoint.

Local League organisations held special meetings to discuss Lend-Lease, urging their members to express their support to their Congressmen. Again, the local CDAAA lent its support. Kenneth Colegrove of Northwestern University spoke at a Cook County forum on Lend-Lease, and the League issued copies of the CDAAA pamphlet "The Truth About the Lend-Lease Bill.".[27] In her work on women interventionists, Margaret Paton Walsh discusses three other women's organisations - the American Association of University Women, the National Women's Trade Union League, and the National Council of Jewish Women - who all found themselves increasingly drawn to following internationalist policies, including the Lend-Lease bill.[28]

It is important to note that groups like the League of Women Voters and the National Council of Jewish Women were well established and independent of foreign policy oriented organisations such as the CDAAA and the Century Club group. They were not part of the network of new organisations fostered and encouraged by the Eastern elites during the debate. Nevertheless, in supporting FDR's policies, they adopted a parallel role and there were specific occasions when such groups did work together. While these parallel groups, which normally focused on domestic matters, lacked the unity of the internationalist committees on foreign policy issues, their leaderships provided the appearance of full backing for Lend-Lease at the very least.

There were also women's groups who had symbiotic relationships with the CDAAA and the Century Club group. The Women's Committee for Action was by this time working out of the same office as the Century Club group, providing the latter with weekly activity reports. They saw their role as a counterweight to the isolationist mother's groups invading Washington, parading with banners including "Mothers! Stop H.R.1776 To Save Your Sons" and "Don't Let Roosevelt Sacrifice Our Menfolk".[29]

Walsh notes that the Women's Committee for Action was an informal organisation that relied on "social contacts and networks to promote its agenda", not unlike the Century Club group. Although the private network of women's groups was not as extensive as the larger foreign policy groups, it still worked hard to promote the Lend-Lease bill with a combination of influential contacts and letters to Congress. The Committee consisted of elite women from upper class backgrounds, and even though they attempted to broaden their appeal, the fact remained that notable women and prominent names carried more influence. Even the Women's division of the CDAAA, which had considerable grass roots support, sought to highlight its members with society backgrounds.[30]

Long established organised labour groups also reacted to foreign policy developments. The desire to continue with "business as usual" made organised labour a particular target of the internationalist committees, who realised the need to win labour support in order to keep factory production going. The American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.), announced its 1941 legislative programme on January 12, putting national defence and aid short of war as a priority. Although the right to strike was reiterated as being guaranteed by the Constitution, it was noted that twenty-five A.F.L. unions had volunteered to renounce strikes on defence contracts. Five days later, A.F.L. president William Green announced in front of 2,000 Jewish Labor Committee members that the Lend-Lease plan was essential for American defence.[31]

The CDAAA also added to the support of labour at the beginning of February. Despite divisions within labour ranks, Dr. Frank Kingdon of the interventionist New York chapter of the CDAAA announced the formation of a Labor division to work with the committee. The division would have an initial membership of 173 American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organisations (C.I.O.) leaders, some of whom had previous connections with the CDAAA. The new division issued an statement, urging immediate aid to Britain, as "organised labour is convinced that the defence of America requires the defeat of the totalitarian nations." At the same time, C.I.O. leader Philip Murray announced his more moderate support for Lend-Lease, provided that it did not lead to convoying and labour rights remained intact.[32]

The rank and file C.I.O. members however, ensured that the union would not unite on the Lend-Lease issue. Although there was a fairly even split for and against the bill within the C.I.O., the CDAAA had given enough assistance to those leaders who did support the bill to give the impression of strength, and this enabled labour to be more

effective in backing Lend-Lease than its union organisations would allow. Although organised labour was by no means completely united in support of the Lend-Lease plan, the labour leadership was largely behind the bill. This enabled foreign policy groups such as the CDAAA to work with labour to galvanise support.[33] In the same fashion, leaders of student bodies and women's groups worked together across the United States to stimulate support for the President's plan. Even though the bulk of the promotion was undertaken by groups solely focused on foreign policy, interest groups of all kinds were turning their attention to the growing world crisis. Those who supported the President's Lend-Lease plan, and even those who desired a declaration of war found a network of like-minded groups filled with individuals who shared their opinions and goals. The leaders of these groups, to greater or lesser extents, collaborated to create support for Roosevelt's policies, crystallising public opinion, and attempting to create the united nation that the President so greatly desired.

January 23 saw the beginning of one of the most heated incidents of the Lend-Lease period, centred on the University of Chicago. The location of Chicago was particularly significant as it was still America's second city, and the symbolic heartland of isolationism. That evening, University president Robert Hutchins gave a radio address in which he claimed that Roosevelt was prepared to take the United States to war, an eventuality to be avoided at all costs. One hundred and twenty-five members of the faculty immediately issued a statement urging the passage of the Lend-Lease bill without delay. Significantly, this statement was made public by the Chicago chapter of the CDAAA. The Hutchins address was also criticised by University of Chicago student organisation Youth for Democracy, which set up a petition in support of the Lend-Lease bill on campus.[34]

The significance of the incident is that so much of the private network immediately mobilised to counter Hutchins' remarks. Adlai Stevenson of the CDAAA's Chicago chapter responded with a statement the following day:

> Any course we take is full of risks. We must decide what risks we are willing to take and when. President Hutchins is for no risks now. I think we must take some risks now or far greater risks later.

New CDAAA leader Ernest Gibson pointed out that the Nazi propaganda ministry had advance knowledge of Hutchins' speech, and that it had referred to it the previous day on a radio broadcast. Gibson charged that the Nazi regime was a firm supporter of the America First committee, stating, "Our committee is thoroughly disliked by Hitler and Dr. Goebbels and that the America First committee has the blessing of these two." The local branch of the CDAAA began to compile a table of opinion among faculty members, which by the middle of February showed a "score" of 286-106 in favour of the bill.[35]

Gibson arrived at the University of Chicago on January 28 to address a rally that had been arranged before the controversy broke. The rally was jointly sponsored by the local CDAAA and the student group Youth for Democracy. Gibson spoke alongside Youth for Democracy chairman Joseph Molkup, history professor and local CDAAA member Quincy Wright, and Edgar Mowrer of the *Chicago Daily News* Foreign Service.[36]

In New York, the committees took advantage of the more receptive East coast audiences. The CDAAA's Thomas Lamont, a partner at J.P. Morgan & Co., canvassed support from the Merchants' Association of New York at a luncheon speech that was also broadcast on radio. Lamont appealed for "national unity in support of the

President", claiming that maximum aid to Britain would assure an Allied victory. More business support came from the National Retail Dry Goods Association, whose convention delegates voted support for the Lend-Lease bill, although they too desired a time limit. The CDAAA was also quick to react when James Kemper, president of the Chamber of Commerce, testified against Lend-Lease in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Five days later, the CDAAA issued a statement by Julius H. Barnes, three times Chamber of Commerce president, that directly opposed Kemper. Barnes urged all American businessmen to "give all-out support for the bill, and to organise scientific production in overwhelming volume to crush aggression".[37]

Religious leaders in New York also expressed their support for the Lend-Lease bill. At the Church Club of New York's annual dinner, Bishop William T. Manning urged Congress to "give our utmost and unlimited aid to the people of Great Britain in their heroic struggle for all that we hold sacred in human life, before it is too late". Sixteen hundred Jewish leaders endorsed the policy of maximum aid to Britain at a two day conference in January. The end of December had seen the formation of the Inter-Faith Committee for Aid to the Democracies, with 143 Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders calling for maximum aid to Britain. It is worth noting that the chairman of the new Inter-Faith Aid committee was Henry Sloane Coffin, president of the Union Theological Seminary. Coffin was an active and leading member of the Century Club group who had connections to the Roosevelt Administration, having met with Cordell Hull during the destroyer-bases discussions. The new Committee also made its support known in a letter to Senator George, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in which it urged "speedy and unanimous passage and enactment of the Lend-Lease bill."[38]

At the national level, the CDAAA continued in its own efforts to influence the debate. Ernest Gibson was able to give the committee viewpoint directly to Congress in a statement of support presented before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. National committee director Clark Eichelberger appeared on a radio debate, defending Lend-Lease against former Republican Presidential candidate Alf Landon.[39] The CDAAA also moved to give legal support to FDR, much as they had during the destroyer-bases exchange. They released a statement by George Rublee, a known expert on international law who had helped the group with the destroyer-bases argument to deny the charge that the Lend-Lease bill was a dictatorship bill. Rublee's statement insisted, "The Bill of Rights will still operate. This measure does not add to the powers the President already has as Commander in Chief of the Nation's armed forces, and under which powers he could get us into the war today, if he wanted to."[40] The aim of this statement, which took issue with the minority report from the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was clearly to reduce the likelihood of having any damaging amendments added to the bill.

Veterans' groups were another section of society whose reaction to the potential of war was mixed, but on February 21, the tenth annual "Hello America" radio broadcast, sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, supported the idea of full aid to Britain. Sgt. Alvin York, the war hero soon to be immortalised in film, gave his backing to the Lend-Lease plan. The American Legion gave its backing to the plan, as did the Disabled American Veterans of the World War, who sent a resolution to Congress in January backing the bill. Their leader, Vincent E. Schoeck, reiterated their support in early March: "We must make our nation so strong that no dictator or combination of dictators will dare try our strength."[41] Despite the fact that the veterans' groups had no clear connection with the interventionist groups, they too represented part of the parallel network of groups willing to support the President.

By the end of February, with the Senate debate dragging on with the threat of a filibuster, and public opinion polls dipping slightly in their support of Lend-Lease, the CDAAA renewed its call for immediate passage. Clark Eichelberger took issue at a press conference with the isolationists in the Senate who had no hope of defeating the bill, claiming that they were trying to kill it with amendments and delaying tactics. The executive committee of the interventionist New York chapter of the committee sent telegrams to Vice-President Henry Wallace and New York Senators Robert Wagner and James Mead urging them to bring about an immediate vote in the Senate on the bill. Leader Ernest Gibson insisted on the need to put production on a wartime basis immediately, emphasising the Nazi threat to South America.[42]

The Women's division also joined the call as they announced a nationwide poster campaign, where division chairman Mrs. Rushmore Patterson urged members to appeal to their Senators for swift enactment of the legislation. The division also made public a telegram signed by thirty-one prominent women including Mrs. Sara Delano Roosevelt, the mother of the President, which protested against "a filibuster - declared or otherwise - on the lease-lend bill or on any proposed amendments" The CDAAA was not the only group to react to the Senate debate. The Century Club group, who had been concentrating on other matters, primarily its evolution into the nationwide pressure group Fight For Freedom, were awakened by Ulric Bell to the need for action. Bell feared that further delay could weaken support even further. Petitions were sent to Congress and contacts like Dorothy Thompson were used to attack the isolationist Senators in the press.[43]

The Century Club's Henry Sloane Coffin, last seen organising the Inter-Faith Committee for Aid to the Democracies, began a separate drive to focus support for Lend-Lease to counter the formation of a Ministers' No War Committee in Chicago. Within four days, 250 names had been collected, including CDAAA policy board member Henry A. Atkinson, and committee member John A. Ryan.[44]

The women's arm of the Century Club, the Women's Committee for Action, arranged and sponsored a nation-wide broadcast by Mrs. Dwight Morrow, mother-in-law of America First leader Col. Charles Lindbergh. Although she would not criticise Lindbergh by name, she openly supported the bill, urging immediate passage "without weakening amendments or strangling clauses." Fortunately, much to the relief of the internationalist groups, a declared filibuster never materialised, and the Senate finally passed the Lend-Lease bill on March 8.[45]

The debates over the Lend-Lease bill did not succeed in uniting Americans behind the President's foreign policy. Although they proved that a comfortable majority did back FDR, a vocal minority remained, and the work of the internationalists and interventionists remained unfinished. What the debate had seen was the formation of a network of private interest groups working together firstly to educate the public about the need to pass the bill and secondly to channel the public support for the bill toward formal government, in this instance, Congress. The debate over the Lend-Lease bill did not create this private network, but it saw a marked increase in the number of formal committees and organisations that rallied to support the President and his policy of aiding the Allies. As the foreign policy debate grew wider and the prospect of war drew ever closer, the number of interested individuals who spoke up in support of FDR increased dramatically. Although these groups consisted of men and women from all walks of life, they were led by members of the Eastern Establishment; the established, well-educated society elite that held strong ties with Britain. Many of the committee leaders who worked to promote Lend-Lease had previous connections to non-

governmental organisations, whether they discussed general issues of policy, like the Council on Foreign Relations, or whether they had been part of the peace movement, like the League of Nations Association.

The experience of men like Clark Eichelberger, Lewis Douglas and William Allen White in such organisations meant that they had a considerable number of contacts in formal government. Even for those who were not personally familiar with the President, other Administration members and State Department officials provided a wealth of advice, information and support to sympathetic groups such as the CDAAA. This "vertical interaction" between non-governmental organisations and formal institutions of government meant that private individuals could wield significant influence within government, as the CDAAA and the Century Club group did during the destroyer-bases exchange. The interaction worked both ways, as it also allowed Roosevelt to have an informal propaganda service. As Michael Sherry noted, FDR's Administration avoided official propaganda "in favour of an informal public-private co-operation that would largely prevail for decades after the war".[46]

1940 had seen a large degree of vertical interaction between the Roosevelt Administration and the various internationalist and interventionist groups, but as the Lend-Lease debate began, the amount of direct interaction between the White House and the committees receded. FDR had given the groups the bill they wanted, and he then appeared to leave them to their own devices. As a result the amount of "horizontal interaction" between the committees significantly increased. The organisations often worked in conjunction with one another to create greater support for Lend-Lease. Organisations like the CDAAA and the Century Club group had overlapping memberships from the beginning. These larger groups then established connections with leaders of less overtly political interest groups, at least in terms of foreign affairs, including students, church leaders, women's groups and labour unions. They worked to create new organisations where groups did not already exist, and they set up links with parallel committees that were well established. The aim was to target sections of society that were characterised as anti-war in order to work towards the appearance of unity at the very least. One CDAAA pamphlet displayed this horizontal interaction better than any other. Issued in February 1941 urging the passage of Lend-Lease, it included statements of support from the leaderships of groups as varied as the American Federation of Labor, the Church Peace Union, the American Legion, the League of Women Voters, the National Retail Dry Goods Association, the University of Chicago faculty, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.[47]

While the connections to the Roosevelt Administration became less apparent, the relationships between these groups expanded and many had what was referred to at the time as an "interlocking directorate". The elite leadership of one committee would often overlap with that of another. Establishment figures spread their leadership across the entire network, creating new organisations to fill any gap in society. Chadwin objectively points out that the organisations could be seen as "a carefully cultivated attempt by a determined minority to give the impression of size and spontaneity".[48] It is certainly true that the internationalists and interventionists were a determined minority making a deliberate appeal for national unity behind Roosevelt's policies, but there is no denying the vast public support that was mobilised by the committees.

The Eastern elites were responsible for pulling together the broad support for Lend-Lease and mobilising an interested public opinion that bombarded members of Congress with petitions and letters in support of the bill. Many Congressmen admitted at the time that letters from organised support groups were often discounted, but the

support given by the Committee to Defend America and its affiliates was so vast that it simply could not be ignored.

The Lend-Lease debate also provides an example of state-private cooperation in the sphere of foreign affairs. The 'Great Debate' over intervention was such a crucial issue that for the first time it mobilised national interest groups both for and against war, and some who, like the Roosevelt Administration, fell somewhere in the middle. In such a situation, where public opinion was seen as a crucial factor, it is no surprise that the government should actively support and assist the efforts of ostensibly private groups who backed their policies to the hilt. The fact that Lend-Lease had the full support of both internationalist and interventionist groups from the beginning obscured the close relationship between the private Eastern elite and the Roosevelt Administration, but this enabled the groups to maintain their integrity as independent entities, an essential part of the democratic political tradition. Nevertheless, throughout the months leading up to Pearl Harbour, state-private cooperation mobilised the American public behind FDR, setting precedents and establishing connections that would be built on for decades to come.

Yet while the committees provided FDR with an informal propaganda network, they were not merely products of the Roosevelt Administration. Although committee members consulted regularly with Administration officials, the organisations existed because their members felt strongly about the necessity of aid to Britain. They willingly supported the President because his intentions coincided with their own, and the connections to the White House clearly increased the amount of influence that the group held. Even when FDR significantly reduced the channels of communication to the CDAAA in mid-1941, the group continued its efforts despite the fact that it was no longer as useful to Roosevelt as the interventionist Fight for Freedom committee.[49] However, only with close government connections could the committees wield any effective power. The vertical interaction was essential if the elite organisations were to provide anything more than a limited propaganda role. It was the government that had the power to bestow real significance on the committees, a possibility ignored until after the war.

So what did these groups achieve? At the very least, they were a mouthpiece for an ever expanding interested public, and a limited propaganda source for the government with which they held sympathetic views. At best, they could use their connections to provide direct support to the FDR Administration and utilise channels of horizontal interaction to mobilise public opinion. During the Lend-Lease debate, they did all that was realistically possible in directing public support toward Congress. Although it was not the organisations' finest hour in terms of direct influence, they made a sustained effort to convince Congress and the public to back a bill in which they firmly believed. If anything, it was the vast expansion and development of this private network that marks Lend-Lease out as significant. The debate provides one of the most important examples of the vast support given to the President during this crucial period by non-governmental organisations. While the Eastern elites by no means conspired to pull the United States into the war, they remained as a significant, non-elected, but interested group of society, prepared to work as an informal adjunct to formal government. The significance of such groups lay in their potential for years to come.

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Endnotes

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[32] *New York Times*, February 5, 1941, p.21; *Chicago Daily News*, February 6, 1941, p.5.

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[35] *Chicago Daily News*, January 25, 1941, p.3; February 13, 1941, p.5; *New York Herald-Tribune*, January 24, 1941, p.10.

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