

America's Enemy Within!

THE BLACK MARKET

America has been attacked within its own borders!

Its precious resources of rubber, oil and steel are being stealthily drained away.

Its fighting forces and its vital war industries are being sabotaged, American men and women are having their morale weakened.

Who are the Axis agents thus threatening our national safety?

Saboteurs? Spies? Traitors? American quislings?

No, they are none of these.

They are "good" American citizens -- citizens who love their country,

But they are uninformed, misguided, thoughtless. They know not what they do.

They are the buyers and sellers of "The Black Market". They are the bootleggers and purchasers of tires, gasoline, steel and irreplaceable critical materials, who evade the rationing laws and rules designed to assure the United States of sufficient military and industrial strength to win the battle for its existence and for the preservation of the rights of free men.

Bootlegger and buyer are equally guilty. And they are equally ignorant of the desperate consequences of their acts.

They must be shown! They must learn that they are enemies of their nation!

Here is a great task -- and a great challenge -- for the motion picture industry. The pages following give the essential facts.

Office of War Information.

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION
BUREAU OF MOTION PICTURES
HOLLYWOOD OFFICE

NOTE: The following information is being sent to you as a supplement to the War Information Manual. Its purpose is to give further amplification to the Government's war program, and to provide material for short subjects and feature pictures. If more detailed information on the subject is desired, it will be furnished to you, on request, by the Office of War Information. Should you wish to use this material in your short subject or feature program, kindly communicate with this office in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.

THE BLACK MARKET

THE PROBLEM: AWAKENING AMERICA TO THE BOOTLEGGING MENACE

Price, priority and rationing regulations have been established to implement the war effort and to protect every individual consumer in the United States.

These regulations cannot be enforced if the people of the United States do not want them enforced. For his own protection everyone must cooperate with Government law enforcement agencies.

Everyone must be made to realize his individual responsibility. The menace to the war effort of illegal selling and buying must be brought home to every American.

Motion pictures are best equipped to give this idea universal currency. It is not enough to tell the people about the menace of illegal selling and buying. They must be shown, dramatically and realistically, how they, as citizens of a nation at war, are imperiled by violators of wartime regulations.

BUYER AND SELLER ARE EQUALLY GUILTY

Restrictions governing the distribution of scarce commodities have brought back the bootlegger. Today he is coining easy money at the expense of his fellow citizens ... risking fines and jail sentences for the prospect of quick profits and big profits ... jeopardizing the whole war effort in order to line his own pockets. But he is only one of the partners to the crime. The other partner is his customer.

The bootlegger has plenty of customers, because only on the "Black Market" can restricted goods such as tires, sugar, and priority articles be obtained simply by paying the price. They will tell you, these customers, that the situation is the same today as during the day of the corner speakeasy. If you're smart, if you have the money and the connections, you can get what you want. Rationing and priorities, like prohibition, are for the suckers. The wise lad can always find a loophole.

That's what those who buy on the black market will tell you, and it's even possible that they believe it themselves. It's just possible they aren't ready yet to concede that they are in the war, that their lives and liberties are at stake. More likely, they haven't stopped to consider how a little ordinary human selfishness on their part can cost the lives of young soldiers who didn't get the right equipment - of top quality - at the right time.

The situation is not the same today as it was during the day of the corner speakeasy. True enough, the racketeers, gangsters and thugs may gain control of the bootleg market, as they did during prohibition.

The organized method of operation, the hijacking, theft and violence may serve to recall the gory twenties. But today the crime of bootlegging and the crime of buying bootlegged goods are not just ordinary law evasions. They are crimes against the American nation. They constitute a betrayal of the democratic cause, of the boys dying to keep democracy alive.

In the old days, speakeasy owners, bartenders and bootleggers got caught. The customer was never prosecuted. Under rationing regulations the consumer or buyer will be prosecuted just as heavily and will receive just as stiff a penalty as the bootlegger.

If anything, the buyer is more reprehensible than the seller. It is he who promotes the law violation. If there were no market for stolen or illicit goods, the bootlegger would be driven out of existence just as surely as disease-bearing insects are exterminated by the destruction of their breeding grounds.

HOW BOOTLEGGING CRIPPLES THE WAR EFFORT

The number one job of civilian America is to supply the fighting front, to produce guns, tanks, planes, ships, food and all other kinds of war material in such quantities that the Axis will be doomed. Everything else - every civilian necessity, comfort or pleasure - is of secondary importance.

The government has established a system of priorities, price ceilings, rationing, and conservation. The first object of this system of restrictions is to speed war production, to give war factories first call on all essential material. The second object is to keep our internal

economic system from hurtling into an inflationary spiral.

By nullifying priorities, price ceilings, rationing and conservation, bootlegging serves both to stimulate inflation and to slow war production by diverting essential goods and materials from where they are most needed.

Here's why:

- (1) Priorities have been established in order that America's raw materials and production machinery shall be devoted as much as possible to turning out weapons and machines of war. Priorities are determined by essential needs, not by the amount of money in the hands of a prospective buyer. The bootlegger, whether he is an illicit manufacturer or seller, is interested only in the highest possible profit. Essential needs mean nothing to him. Consequently he is the number one enemy of the priority system.
- (2) Price ceilings have been established in order to hold down the cost of war and in order to check inflation. The bootlegger, operating outside the law, asks all he can get for whatever he sells. Price ceilings protect the public. The bootlegger is out to mulct the public. As his business increases, price ceilings are rendered less and less effective.
- (3) Rationing laws have been established for the purpose of sharing scarce articles equally, in accordance with our

democratic system. Rationing serves to stabilize production of consumers' goods in order that such production will not interfere with the output of war goods. Bootlegging, like hoarding, creates artificial shortages and throws normal supply and demand completely out of balance.

- (4) Conservation, like rationing, is designed to hold production of consumers' goods at a minimum. The government says, "Take care of your tires." The bootlegger says, "Go ahead and burn up your tires; I'll sell you new ones." It is no concern of his that rubber is desperately needed by our armed forces. He is out to make money. Other people can worry about the war.

DRAMATIZING THE BOOTLEGGING MENACE

Our first job is to hammer home the fact that our regulations are necessary for our safety and welfare, that it is a vicious crime to violate them. Everybody must abide by the regulations, must report all violations to the nearest OPA office or rationing board.

The bootlegger and his customer are actually waging war against the United States. If bootlegging increases, widespread shortages will be created. More and more goods will be rationed. Prices will rise. Our standard of living will decline. Our war production will be hampered. Everyone will suffer. The bootlegger and his customer are fifth columnists, are aiding the Axis just as much as spies who transmit information to the enemy, as saboteurs who wreck our machinery and our factories.

By charging more than the lawful price, by seeking out technical

loopholes, by profiteering on the black market, the seller who violates our regulations is diverting precious war materials to unnecessary or less important uses.

By seizing more than his fair share, by cheating in order to avoid the lesser discomforts of war, by bidding for goods without regard for the lawful price, and by conniving with the seller to cover up the violation, the buyer makes himself a traitor to his country.

Men may die because of this profiteering and petty selfishness.

Bootlegging today is not the same as it was during the prohibition era. There is nothing clever or smart or funny in getting around laws that were enacted to safeguard the country. It is not a laughing matter, and a humorous approach to the subject is plain bad taste.

Our job - and particularly the job of motion pictures - is to shame the bootlegger and his customer out of existence. In Axis countries there are stringent regulations against bootlegging, but black markets flourish nevertheless. Our strength in fighting the bootlegging menace lies in our national unity, in our faith in the democratic system of share and share alike. The bootlegger and his customer must be shown as what they are - Axis friends and our enemies.