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13th March 1940

WAR CABINET

COMMITTEE ON ISSUE OF WARNINGS AGAINST DISCUSSION OF
CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS IN PUBLIC PLACES.

NOTE BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION

In accordance with Conclusion 13(iii) War Cabinet Meeting No. 84 of 15th November 1939, I circulate for the information of the War Cabinet a brief report on the action so far taken.

J.C.W.R.

ANTI GOSSIP1. POSTERS.(a) Printing:

2,250,100 posters, varying in size from $6\frac{3}{4}$ " x $5\frac{3}{4}$ " to 60" x 40", have already been printed. The most important numerically are the "Official Warning" (1,242,500) and the Fougasse series (734,200). A reprint order has been placed for 453,500, including 248,000 of the latter.

(b) Distribution:

Over 1,500,000 have already been posted on voluntary sites. Requests are coming in daily, particularly for the Fougasse series.

(c) Future designs:

The production of new posters is under consideration, but the present designs are so much in demand that it may not be necessary to incur more expenditure yet.

2. PRESS CONFERENCES.

A Press Conference was held on February 1st, 1940, under the chairmanship of the Director General of the Ministry of Information. An excellent press resulted and copies of the posters were reprinted in practically every national daily paper, in many of the provincials, and in two American papers.

The D. of I., Air Ministry, spoke to the Press on March 7th; and it is hoped that the D.N.I., Admiralty and the D.M.I., War Office will do likewise. It is proposed to draw particular attention at such Press Conferences to the danger of leakage through the conversation of journalists.

3. FILM PUBLICITY

Three ten-minute Anti-Gossip Films are in course of production at the Ealing Studios and will be released at fortnightly intervals, beginning about 22nd March. They will be distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer by agreement with the trade, and each film is expected to cover at least 2,000 cinemas.

4. CO-OPERATION WITH THE B.B.C.

- (a) Ten Anti-Gossip talks have already been given by the B.B.C.
- (b) Five-minute talks will be included at irregular intervals in the new "Post-script" series, following the nine o'clock news. The first of these was given on 5th March.

5. PUBLIC MEETINGS.

Public speakers are being asked to mention the Anti-Gossip Campaign wherever possible.

6. WRITERS.

Various well-known writers, including Somerset Maugham, Agatha Christie and E.M. Delafield are being asked to supply articles or stories on the results of careless talk.

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7. ANTI-GOSSIP TALKS TO THE SERVICES.

Warning lectures have been given to officers and men in all three Services and also to women's organisations attached to these Services. A special anti-gossip pamphlet of an informal nature is being prepared for distribution to all units stationed in this country.

The Services are being asked to continue regular talks and to give frequent warnings against careless talking. There is evidence that these are having a good effect in the Army.

8. PREVENTING GOSSIP IN PUBLIC HOUSES.

The Brewers' Society are co-operating with the Ministry of Information by writing to the licencees of all public houses asking them to warn their customers against indiscreet gossiping.

9. LETTERS TO THE PRESS.

Certain responsible people are being encouraged to write to the Press giving instances of the dangers of gossip (for example, the letter signed 'Michael Hamilton' in the "Daily Telegraph" of 2nd March.)