

Towards Victory

National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) Public Relations on the Coattails of the Cold War



Acceleration of NACA public relations practices in the late 1940s and 1950s resulted from new threats to the Committee including industry expansion, military reorganization, and the growing federal research and development sector.

NACA leaders started a grand metanarrative of public relations. In this metanarrative, NACA aviation technology, as an embodiment of superior American values, would save the world from Soviet Communism and preserve freedom.

The NACA and World War II

- Closer relationship of government policy and industrial forces
- Expansion of NACA facilities; fewer employees
- "Militarization" of public information
- New structure of aeronautical community and U.S. military
- Public relations has new importance

The Postwar NACA (1945-1955)

- Industrial influence consolidates
- Research Aircraft Program develops
- Triple threat: internal dissent, intense criticism from military, censure from industry
- Public relations as growing line of defense

The NACA's Earliest Public Relations

- John Victory, the NACA's executive secretary and first employee, also known as "Mr. NACA"
- Annual aircraft engineering conferences
- "Bouquet file"

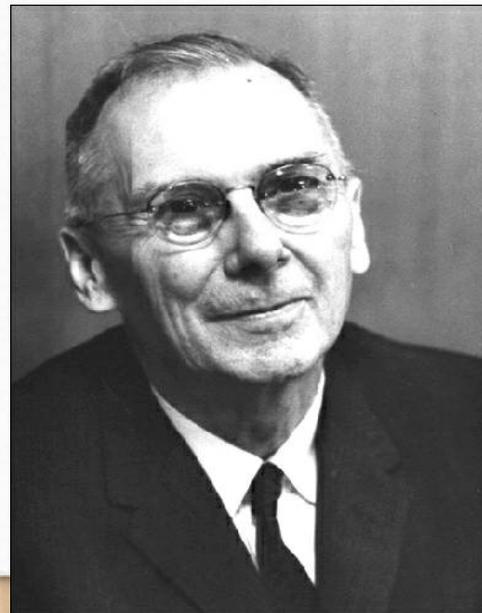


The NACA and Cold War Public Relations Narratives

- Superiority of American democracy and industrial capitalism over Soviet communism and regimentation
 - Component narratives: American technological indigeneity, American national identity, "America first" globalism

NACA leaders build public relations narratives

- John Victory, Hugh Dryden(and eventually Walter Bonney) build the NACA's "mythology"



Walter Bonney and the NACA's Office of Public Information, 1948-1958

- Stresses cooperation with military and industry
- Low-profile publicity
- Research Aircraft Program publicity



The NACA Turns a Corner

- 1955: Technological Capabilities Panel Report leads to more favorable climate for NACA
- 1958 and selection of the NACA for NASA...did public relations play a role?

