

with the U.S. Steel and Gulf Oil corporations. Gulf Oil Corporation was owned by Andrew Mellon, the Secretary of the Treasury.

Two months later, after Detzer reported her findings at the organization conference, WILPF passed a resolution calling for a government investigation of the munitions industry and its influence. With this mandate from WILPF, Detzer found Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota to sponsor a resolution.

Public hearings before the Senate Munitions Investigating Committee began in early 1934 and lasted two years. The final report described how munitions corporations (including General Electric, Du Pont, Boeing, and Colt) bribed foreign officials, and how the extraordinary sales of munitions produced fear, instability, and hostility, increasing munitions orders in neighboring European, South American, and Asian countries. The report also held that European and American munitions dealers greatly profited from German rearmament.

In *Appointment*, Detzer expressed her deep disappointment that the Senate committee's important service and recommendations — presented as interlocking legislative measures that “supplied bulwarks to safeguard the rights of the American people” — were never passed. Detzer felt that the compromise bill that did pass, the Neutrality Act, was significantly undermined by “half-measure provisions.”

### **Lighting the Future**

Shortly before Detzer called for “light” in 1948, the Supreme Court upheld an antitrust suit against the Associated Press, and affirmed that citizens in a democracy need access to diverse and antagonistic sources of information. This decision, like Detzer's concept of political democracy, assumed a pluralist, liberal process with government acting as a neutral arena in which different groups jockey for power and influence.

Yet over the past 50 years what we've witnessed is the growth of an increasingly impenetrable and unaccountable military/corporate industrial complex. We've seen a government that is not responsive to the needs of its people and a corporate-controlled media that doesn't question those in charge. In recent years we've been faced with leaders using the idea of national security as reason to trump our basic rights to assemble, to express dissent, to participate in decision-making and to presume

full governmental transparency.

The Challenge Corporate Power, Assert the People's Rights (CCP-APR) campaign's study of history reveals that this increased appropriation of power is enabled by a political system biased to serve a propertied and privileged minority. This results in corporations having more legal rights than human beings. Meanwhile, the corporate media continues to shape public opinion and divert attention away from democratic processes and expectations.

Detzer's post-WWII belief in the ability to influence the political process does differ from our campaign's present day thinking. Today, given the new realities and our understanding, the CCP-APR campaign is focused on

more than influencing corporate and government decision-making through lobbying and regulation. Instead, we assert the people's fundamental right to decide and define their future. This process involves changing the culture and our laws so that we can do more than pressure munitions corporations and instead be empowered to actively define how, why and what they produce. It also involves advocating a concept of real democracy, and a deep sense

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**Central to Detzer's work was her faith in the legislative process as the cornerstone of American political democracy, and she believed in the will of an active and alert citizenship if they had enough light to make choices.**

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of what a people's sovereignty means and looks like.

As the WILPF Vision Statement makes clear, the CCP-APR campaign envisions a just, sustainable democracy in which “the needs of all people are met in a fair and equitable manner” and where “all people equally participate in the decisions that affect them.” To realize this democracy, and the possibilities of peace, it is essential to directly challenge the legitimacy of corporate rights.

Corporations should have no voice in the halls of Congress or state legislatures. They should have no presence in our electoral or legislative process — no lobbying or political contributions. Representatives of corporations should only enter the legislatures when we, the people, invite them, because we need information. The people should be sovereign, not corporations. This is the light that we can “turn on” for others.

To read the Munitions Investigating Committee Report of 1936, see [www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/nye.htm](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/nye.htm).

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