

March/April 2005

Wartime Humor

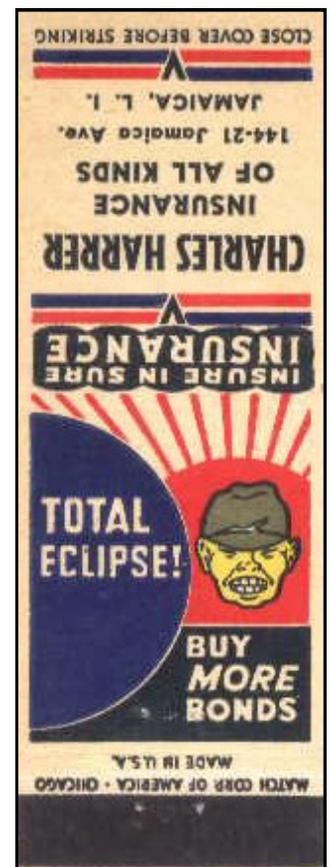
by
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They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. If that's so, then satirical cartoons must be worth ten times that, at least. The best of examples satirical cartoons are, of course, the political cartoons you see each day on the editorial page of your own newspaper.

But, historically, wartime propaganda humor has also had its day in the sun, as well, and matchcover art was a favorite medium for this communication method during World War II.

...A very rich medium, in fact. Looking back with our current fad of politically correct revisionism, we may well cringe at the stereotypes used, but it must all be kept within an historical perspective. Battles were being fought, men and women were dying, fervor and energy had to be maintained on the home front...and the Axis Powers had already been waging a propaganda war for years.

War time matchcover humor, then, served a very real purpose, and it was very effective. It was simple, catchy, and had a direct message. The actual slogans involved varied from artwork to artwork ("Buy More Bonds," "Save Waste Paper," "Keep 'em Flying," etc.), but the basic message was always the same: "Do your part to win the war!" Applying a little amateur psychology to the World War II satirical cartoon humor, we can also see the subtler messages: "The enemy is inhuman;" "The enemy





deserves what he's going to get." The covers in this category are almost always 20-strikes, and, as you might expect, all of the match companies in existence at the time participated in the war effort, of which this was a part. Perusing these covers, one sees all the major names of the day: Lion, Diamond, Superior,, Match Corp., and others. Lesser known manumarks also appear: Douglas, General, Albert Pick, etc.

An often overlooked branch of this category, which is really part of World War II Patriotics, is the Canadian contribution. Canada, of course, had its own rich realm of Military and Patriotic covers, and, as the **examples show here**, their wartime cartoon covers represent the vast majority of 30-strike covers available in this area, and they're quite good. Aside from 20- and 30-strike covers, there are other sizes and types that pop up from time to time. Most notable are the beautiful Lion Contour Spot Strikers, such as the famous one where the match is struck on the seat of Hitler's pants. This really is a fascinating segment of the Patriotic category...one that is sure to elicit positive comments from onlookers.

