

# CONTACT

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## Follow the Leader

LEROY E. Bowman, of Columbia University, suggests that the question of leadership might be a fruitful one to study. It is his idea that leadership rather than the leader should be examined in order to make clear the sources of this mysterious power. We agree with him. In industrial and social life today, there is no subtle appointment, no mystic voting that brings one man after the other to the headship of his group. A man becomes leader very often merely by assuming leadership.

There is a technic, however, in the assumption of leadership. Certain pronouncements, certain actions presuppose leadership, and the man who enacts them, through his own acts becomes leader. He can hold and strengthen his position by speaking and acting as the chief of his group.

Mr. Bowman's article, an abstract and scientific approach to an unanalyzed subject, will give food for thought to the man who actually knows the practice of leadership, and who knows the strength of authority which a self-ordained leader holds over the group. We quote a paragraph from the *Journal of Applied Sociology*.

"How can one determine what a leadership situation is; when does it begin and end? Clearly the answer is hypothesis only, good for the help it gives in the effort to deal with the subject. A potential leadership situation may be hypothesized as the need of accomplishing a task, the doing of which will benefit the whole group. The method of accomplishment may be largely by the few or largely by the many, with adequate, exorbitant, or very poor returns for the leaders who do or boss the job. Obviously various types of leaders and leadership methods correspond to various degrees of group participation and leadership compensation. Some jobs are soon done and over, others are continuous; and leadership is different accordingly. Some jobs are recognized as urgent and their doing is not only demanded by the group but each participant member gladly subordinates himself. Necessity, danger, urgency, are therefore more related to freedom and democracy than general recognition of excellence of organization form, perhaps more than constitutions and declarations of independence."

## Actions Speak Louder

"SINCE they are always inventing or building something new." We have italicized that phrase in the quotation below, because it illustrates one of our main contentions. A public relations counsel does not try to "get things in the paper." He creates events that are so interesting and important that they inevitably get talked about, in the smoking car, the club house, the radio, the press, the lecture platform, or just in the particular trade world concerned.

He may advise one client to engage a competent art director—thus creating a circumstance that will affect the entire relationship of the client to the public he desires to reach. He may advise another to become a member of a committee of international investigation, thus assuming leadership in his field. As we have said before, the important thing is what a person is and does. What he says is merely the echo of these vital facts.

We quote from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*:

"The General Electric Company and the Radio Corporation of America lead all other organizations in the amount of space they receive, since they are always inventing or building something new. It is, indeed, a poor month that does not find them mentioned in about eight or ten thousand articles. They are followed closely by the Western Electric Company and United States Steel. The Guaranty Trust Company and the National City Bank head the financial institutions."

## Right

"NATIONALIST China to-day offers plenty of aid and comfort to two much maligned institutions. One is Propaganda and the other is the American College. On the first count it will be noted that the same body of American public opinion to whom propaganda is an offense and a byword is extremely eager to point out that the Cantonese victories have not been won by the brutal test of arms but by Cantonese propagandists clad in a righteous cause. The armies of the Northern war-lords have melted away before the impact of patriotic speeches and posters. Agitators have addressed themselves to Chinese nationalist

emotions. It is a perfectly fair way of fighting and certainly a merciful way; and that is the position assumed on several occasions by this department in defense of propaganda. We have never been able to understand why it is wrong to tell the world about something you believe in. We have never been able to understand why it was right for Trotsky to defeat the White generals by propaganda and right for Chiang Kai-shek to defeat the war-lords by propaganda, but why propaganda is nevertheless a wicked and loathsome thing. Since there is no censor to prevent one's making the suggestion, one might suggest that what is sauce for the propaganda, etc."

*The New York Times.*

### Truth

"BUT what we need to-day are instruments of knowledge whereby the public, distracted by a multitude of counsellors, may know who speaks most nearly the truth."

NORMAN ANGELL in *The Public Mind.*

### Beliefs

A broad contribution to the problem of where people's beliefs come from has been made by George Jean Nathan in *The New American Credo*, which Joseph Wood Krutch reviews in the *New York Herald-Tribune*.

Labels are the currency of popular thought. The successful politician is the man who has the most thought labels at his disposal that the public will accept for currency. The most successful merchandising attaches popular labels or slogans to its products. To appeal to the public one must know and understand the general, and often inarticulate beliefs. We quote part of Mr. Krutch's review:

"An American is expected to believe twelve hundred and thirty-one things, which range all the way from the harmless superstition 'that if one sings before breakfast one will cry before night' to a body of historical misinformation which includes the proposition 'that the late war was decided upon years ago by Bismarck, who in formulating his plans, freely consulted Nietzsche.' In addition he is generally convinced 'that a Negro's vote can always be bought for a dollar; that a woman when buying a cravat for a man always picks out one of green and purple with red polka dots; that a boy's best friend is his mother, and that a bachelor expecting a feminine visitor generally, by way of subtle preliminary strategy, smells up his rooms with Japanese punk.' . . .

"Here are the fundamental ideas upon which are based popular humor (that a goat will wax fat on a diet of tin cans and back numbers of *The Saturday Evening Post*), popular sentiment (that all school children are inordinately happy

but don't know it), popular literature (that the work of a detective calls for exceptionally high sagacity and cunning), popular aesthetics (that a sepia photograph of the Coliseum framed is a work of art), popular morals (that all lady poets are loose and have many affairs with English novelists over here on lecture tours) and popular political theories (that socialism and anarchy are the same thing and that *The Nation* has advocated both). And though doubtless most persons could make a good many additions to the imposing list which Mr. Nathan has drawn up, most would also immediately recognize nineteen out of twenty of his items as perfectly familiar.

"Nine-tenths of all we hear and read and say is perfectly stereotyped. The intellectual atmosphere which we breathe is 99 per cent commonplace, and the exchange which goes on between mind and mind is most of the time a mere exchange of well worn counters. The best of us succeed in detaching ourselves very rarely, indeed, from the rubbish heap of useless knowledge, battered ideas and second-hand sentiments amid which we live, and the great majority of us pass whole years without making a remark not entirely familiar to our auditors, without having an idea not common to every person we know and without experiencing an emotion not borrowed from cheap literature. Men regulate their affairs by misinformation, order their lives according to sentimental principles absorbed at the 'movies' and govern the state upon a basis of prejudiced misconceptions. What, then, could be more important for the understanding of a people (American or European) than a collection of intellectual and emotional counters, what more revealing than the vast commonplace book of its ideas? There surely (if we will permit ourselves to be realistic) rather than in its poets or its prophets are to be found the keys to its conduct since there, among other equally important things, will be found whatever has seeped down and been accepted from these same poets and prophets. Let me make the platitudes of a people and I care not who writes their philosophies or composes their symphonies."

### Familiar Facts

"DOES advertising really do informative work with the public? And does the public consciousness accept and act on advertising suggestion? These are queries often pondered by reluctant or still 'unsold' advertisers.

"The day that the news of Mr. Ford's accident broke in front page 'stuff' Mr. Ford was asked why he had been so unwilling to let the papers get the story. He said that he wanted to avoid putting such ideas into anyone's mind. There might be something in the reading of the story that

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ould suggest to some one the idea of doing that very thing from which he had had such a narrow escape.

"There you are. That particular instance illustrates a number of advertising considerations.

"One is the fallacy of thinking that ideas given to the public are not started on a career that nobody can possibly foretell.

"Another is the Ford story as one which shows that the more a subject is advertised the more the volume of its audience grows, not merely from the facts of the story told, but because — and here is the highlight — because a person or a product or an idea already familiarized to the public as a part of its every-day thought or attention, is woven into life.

"Ideas, particularly those of a service or product, flow as naturally into public consideration as if the subject were of individual concern."

Women's Wear.

### Trade Propaganda

WHAT Mr. Thornton advocates for the confectioners is applicable to every farsighted industry:

"During the World War the word, propaganda, was brought into great prominence because of its constant use in referring to the activities of the enemy, and we were impressed that this word meant something frightful, and we became alarmed over any article of news which gave reference to the propaganda of the enemy. To off-set this, the people had to be enlightened and warned against the many snares and pitfalls prepared by the enemy. The need of a bureau of information was immediately seen and organized to combat this evil so that the people could be made to realize the true meaning of the enemy's actions.

"In the spreading of opinions and principles, propaganda can be applied two ways, good and bad, and I want to convey to members of S. W. C. A. the urgent need of our spreading the right kind of propaganda so that our members will feel more kindly towards one another, and the non-members, as well as the masses, will be convinced of our sincerity of purpose.

"There is a need in our association for more publicity of facts, so that our members, as well as others, can be enlightened, and information furnished them that will perhaps change their principles, if in reading the data compiled the dealer can be brought to a realization that some of his ideas are unsound."

M. B. Thornton,

(President of the Southern Wholesale Confectioners' Association)  
in *The Northwestern Confectioner*.

### Hard Times

A fascinating subject for industrial philosophers is the number of businesses which have disappeared when the habits of the public have changed.

Where are the blacksmiths of twenty years ago?

What do the manufacturers of gas mantles do for a living?

It is some years since ostrich feathers have been in fashion. Are farmers of these birds growing their pets principally for fancy wallets and the like, or are they all waiting for the tide to turn?

Shoe manufacturers complain that men are doing so little walking that their shoes never wear out, and the sale of men's shoes is very low. Are the manufacturers contemplating going into another type of leather business, or are they going to make shoes of lighter quality to conform to the new habits of the public, or are they waiting for automobiles to go out of fashion? Many business men wait and hope for the public to come their way. More resourceful business men study the habits of the public so closely that they are aware of coming changes, and shape their own policies accordingly to take advantage of the change.

The best example of this is the tendency of railroads to divert part of their efforts to satisfy the growing demand for motor travel. They are the owners of many autobus companies, because they work with the public's habits and not against them. A pitiful and ironic note is this one, culled from an *Associated Press* dispatch to the *New York American*:

"Hard times have arrived for Washington baggage men.

"Milk's traveling garments have become so abbreviated that trunks are no longer a necessity, and motor tourists simply put their luggage into their vehicles.

"Claiming a steady decline in business the Union Transfer Company, concessionaire here, has asked the District of Columbia Public Utilities Commission to sanction an increase in rates."

### What Is News?

"IF a man bites a dog, it has been decided that it is news. It is also news when your favorite frog is stolen and you can identify him when found, by the tone of his croak.

"The *Associated Press* correspondent credits Mr. Viosca of New Orleans, with the ability to recognize and recover two of his amphibious pets by their baritone notes. Two sticks about it, and if that isn't news, then in the words of Paddy O'Hearn, 'There is not no news never no more.'"

*The Fourth Estate.*

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### Air Editors Needed

WHAT is news on the radio? Or, rather, is the radio a news organ?

Has the radio formulated a policy towards the selection of events?

In two respects the radio functions as the press does. It sells time-space for advertising at so much per time unit. And it reports events without cost beyond the possession of a radio, to its listeners.

As a vehicle for advertising, the radio exercises varying degrees of supervision over the air-copy in the ads. If an ice-cream manufacturer chooses to run a male quartet as part of its copy, he is following the same principle that a cigarette manufacturer does who bill-boards a beautiful girl smelling roses, by way of nicotine appeal.

As an editorial force, the radio has not yet fully organized its aims or its functions. That may in part be due to the great difference between the reportorial possibilities of the radio and the press. In the first place, the newspaper can cover a dozen or more events that take place simultaneously. The radio can report only one at a time. The press can publish as first class news, events which have taken place the day before. The radio must report an event at exactly the moment it is taking place. The newspaper has many ways of indicating news importance—headlines, length of article, place in the paper, and other preferential devices. The radio has only exclusivity to indicate preference.

The radio must choose between a presidential message, and a prize fight, between the Beethoven Ninth Symphony, and the honeyed words of a new thought healer.

On what basis does the radio make its choice?

This is not always apparent, even when one bears in mind the indeterminate character of the audience.

The radio is assuming a great importance as a moulder of public opinion.

Managing editors of radio stations of broad and constructive imagination are needed.

The *New York Evening Post* printed a fine editorial, which we quote in full:

"The methods by which the radio and the press handled the Butler-Borah prohibition debate at Boston Friday evening showed the rapidly growing divergence which is defining their respective fields.

"The newspapers regarded this first open political discussion of prohibition from the standpoint of its news importance and gave it the fullest possible coverage. The radio had no sense of the event from this angle and gave it no report whatever in this great metropolitan district or the

country at large. Only two small New England stations broadcast the debate, and both of those were inaudible here.

"Various private individuals here who made efforts for arrangements by which the West might 'listen in' on Boston were faced with a charge of thousands of dollars asked for the service. In New York it was found at the last moment that the debate hours on the air had been sold to various clients for advertising purposes and that a purely news service had to be barred.

"Here lies the reason, we believe, that the radio cannot take the place of the newspaper. We have never believed that it could. We have been told in turn that the telegraph, telephone, movie and radio would supplant the press. None has. Each has its field just as the newspaper has.

"The New York newspapers, filling their field, thus gave a verbatim report of the debate. Cost of space, expense of coverage and transmission of news simply did not count. It was a public service, in the view of the press, it was something that readers wanted and should have; therefore, it must be given, no matter what the bill was. In the same way several of the great journals of America, North and South, printed in full the text of the Dawes plan, although cable tolls alone ran into many thousands of dollars.

"Nor do the newspapers, as did the radio, face with a demand for payment those members of their public who suggest the publication of matters of public interest. No news columns in New York could be bought for publishing an account of any event, however important. The radio, through the nature of its business, apparently has to take a different view.

"Nevertheless, we are disappointed over the radio's failure to carry so significant a national event as the Butler-Borah debate. Its 'space' is not entirely commercialized, as its transmission of Presidential addresses, big athletic events, banquets, etc., proves, but its main attention must evidently be elsewhere than on its possibilities for popular service in the way of news and information. Perhaps, in its struggle to make itself self-sustaining, the radio has forgotten the need of giving itself editors. At any rate, it is undeniably growing less and less like a newspaper. It is becoming more of a private business and growing further from the ideal of the common carrier or public utility."

### An Outline of Careers

"AN Outline of Careers," a practical guide to achievement, edited and compiled by Edward L. Bernays, with chapters contributed by thirty-eight leaders in American life, was published by the George H. Doran Company this week.