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: CASE STUDY No. 1222 :

ANNOUNCING NEW EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS TO THE MEDIA

Management changes are inevitable in any organization; announcement of them presents potential public relations problems and/or opportunities.

The PR executives of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) were well aware of this when replacements of the chairman and president were due to be made late this past August. Although the 87-year-old corporation seldom holds press conferences, it was decided that the importance of the changes would justify asking newsmen to take time to attend one. It would be informal but businesslike, and with no festivities or refreshments.

Two days in advance of the directors' meeting at which the elections were to take place, C. A. Lamb, Jersey's Press Services Manager, sent a memo to the editors of major media and services. It invited them to meet the new officers in the company's board room at headquarters in NYC and asked that answers be telephoned.

The site chosen was traditional for such announcements. It is commodious, providing plenty of working room for photographers, and houses a portrait and the big desk of John D. Rockefeller, who had built Jersey into the world's largest oil company.

The time was set for 2:30 p.m. So that picture-taking would not interfere with the media representatives' questions, arrangements were made for the Jersey executives involved to be on hand 20 minutes before the official announcement was to be made. This gave the still and TV cameramen who attended (there were five) ample opportunity to pose their subjects in a variety of ways (e.g., against the Rockefeller portrait or a series of maps, on sliding panels, which show Jersey's worldwide operations).

No press kits were prepared. Instead, on the Rockefeller desk were photos and bios of the new executives (prepared from records Jersey's PR department keeps updated). Also available were copies of the annual report and other material detailing Jersey's history and position in the oil industry. One booklet, for example, "This Is Standard Oil (New Jersey)," tells that the company "recognizes that its freedom to do business in a community or a country depends, ultimately, on public sanction." Then follows a nine-point statement of the company's PR policies. Included are these: "initiative in helping solve community problems.... acceptance of its responsibilities affecting the rights, dignity, health, safety, and opportunities of employees fostering better communication — and better understanding — among people locally, nationally, and internationally." The booklet concludes with this statement: "Jersey seeks to exemplify both at home and abroad the creative social awareness expected of a modern corporation in fulfilling its multiple responsibilities to shareholders, customers, employes, government, and the general public."

Present were: M. L. Haider, the retiring Chairman and Chief Executive Officer; J. Kenneth Jamieson, President, who was to assume Haider's post on Oc-

tober 1; and Executive Vice President Milo M. Brisco, who was succeeding Jamieson as President. From the PR department were PR Manager Henry Wilson,* Lamb, and Assistant Press Services Manager J. F. Murphy.

Twenty-five representatives from the wire services, general press, trade papers, and business publications, in addition to the photographers and TV men, were on hand.

Lamb opened the conference with a brief introduction of Haider; the latter introduced Jamieson and Brisco.

Questions were then invited. These covered a wide range of subjects, including such sensitive ones as the recent Peruvian expropriation of property belonging to a Jersey subsidiary. (Because both of the new executives had had wide experience in Latin America and were fully abreast of developments there, no special material on that subject had been prepared in advance by the Jersey PR staff.)

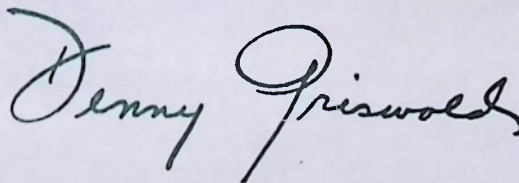
The conference was adjourned when questioning dried up (at about 3:20).

To reach publications not represented at the conference, a release announcing the new appointments was transmitted via PR Newswire and the same material distributed at the conference, plus photographs, was sent to selected publications in the New York area (by messenger) and to 50 TV stations.

Later, because of the brevity of the conference and because Jersey wished to pursue certain matters not covered at it, arrangements were made for reporters from several leading publications to hold special interviews with the new executives. These resulted in profiles and features in such publications as The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Time, Fortune, Business Week, and Newsweek, most using pictures. Many papers outside New York used stories filed by AP or UPI reporters who attended the conference. Nearly all made prominent mention of the new officers' participation in community, education, and business association affairs. Other newsworthy information was also stressed (e.g., Jamieson's revelations that Jersey was "pretty well down the road" on considering construction of 250,000-ton submarine supertankers to transport Alaskan oil, under the polar ice, to markets in the eastern United States and in Europe and that the company's "most pressing problems are our relationships with governments around the world....")

Color film taken during the pre-conference picture session later was shown on several TV business programs.

Wilson comments that the wide and generous coverage of the appointments and reporting of other news about the company demonstrate that mediamen welcome no-nonsense meetings where they can talk with top executives and get worthwhile information from them.



Editor

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