

CONTACT

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Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations

Mighty Engine

THE almost relentless power of publicity is analyzed by Ernest Elmo Calkins in an article in the January issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. No medium that reaches the public can fail to take cognizance of and transmit the report of events or ideas that the counsel on public relations has objectified so that they are of real significance to the millions who read, listen or only see. Mr. Calkins traces the development of publicity from the old comic-strip press agent to his present state of adviser to governments. We have made a few excerpts from his article:

"Out of this situation—that is, the need of the corporations for an efficient spokesman, and the complacency of the newspapers in regard to matter which was really more or less advertising—has grown a new profession, that of the public relations counsel, generally spoken of as the publicity man. The publicity man is the old press agent with a high hat. The press agent grew out of the old advance agent of the circus or traveling theatrical company. It was his business to get free notices about his play or his star, and the childishly simple devices used in those days, such as the escape of a wild animal or the stealing of an actress's jewels, have become clichés. It was his job to find a story good enough to print which in some way brought in the show or actors that it was his business to exploit. Most newspapers ran a theatrical or dramatic column in which such stuff could be run and was run until the supply greatly exceeded the space of the many columns, but it was the ambition of the press agent to get his story on the front page, and often he did so; and some were clever enough to make their stories real news. Many of the press agents were trained newspaper men with a sense of news value who knew how to write a story. They had the entry of the newspaper offices. They frequently sold their stories at space rates and collected at both ends. Not only actors, but steamships, hotels, summer resorts, public men, and philanthropic causes employed press agents, and still do; some of them are good and some are not, but they all flourish on the principle of getting something for nothing out of the newspapers.

"But the public relations counsel operates on a much higher plane. . . . It is his business to advise his clients to such courses of action as will produce live news, and then of course see to it that no newspaper misses the news.

"The technique of this kind of work was greatly improved by the war. It became a public duty to spread propaganda, and an immense amount of talent was available for the purpose. This experience and

this talent have since found a profitable field in working for corporations instead of nations, with many new and tried devices at their disposal. Every drive that has run its course in the few years since the war, to raise money for various philanthropies, to build cathedrals, to endow colleges, to furnish funds to Y. M. and Y. W. C. A.'s, or the Salvation Army, or the Red Cross, has been planned and engineered by a publicity expert. Every line that has appeared in print, except a comparatively small amount of paid advertising, has appeared because of the newspaper's dilemma between its duty not to run advertising as news at the urgent appeal of a publicity expert and its uncertainty as to how much of this matter is real news or for the good of the public. At any rate it is safe to say that to all of these great funds that have been raised for various good purposes in the last few years the newspaper has been the largest actual contributor. Its name does not appear in the list of donors, but anyone who is used to buying newspaper space and paying for it can easily figure out the millions that have been donated to each one of these funds by the press of the United States.

" . . . Given enough advertising, the public can be interested in anything—especially the American public, already so standardized, so herd-minded, that it is timid about doing or wearing or liking anything that is not endorsed by the crowd. How many of the 60,000 at the World's Series, or the 150,000 at Tex Rickard's show, or the hordes that are packing the colosseums, care that much for baseball, or prize fights, or football, and how many go only because they are told from the newspapers that they are supposed or expected to care? It is a hundred years since Edmund Burke christened the newspapers the 'Fourth Estate,' and Napoleon said that four hostile newspapers were more to be dreaded than an army. The power of the press was puny then compared with the mighty engine of publicity we have to-day, an engine which is apparently getting out of control. Like the fisherman in the Arab tale, the newspapers have opened the bottle; they are appalled by the djinni that has come out, the djinni of publicity, with vast powers for good or evil; they do not know how to control it, what to do with it, or even how to coax it back into the bottle."

THERE are still people who believe that emotional propagandizing is all right, but that propaganda based on intelligent analysis and carried on openly and intelligently, is all wrong. Such people frequently write articles in which they carry on emotional propaganda against propaganda.

E. L. B.

Causes

STANLEY Walker, in *The American Mercury*, scrutinizes the new professions of publicity and public relations counsel. He lists the following propositions which have their ardent advocates:

- "America and England must love each other.
- America and France must love each other.
- The United States must eat more reindeer meat.
- The school teachers must have more money.
- Frank E. Campbell is the best undertaker in New York.
- The East Side is a swell part of town.
- The reputation of Eighth avenue must be protected and people must stop saying Hell's Kitchen.
- Coney Island is a wonderful playground.
- Fifth Avenue must be kept on its present high-toned level.
- The restaurant-keepers of New York are doing their best to please their customers.
- The people would love the Telephone Company if they understood its real motives.
- New York landlords are facing starvation.
- People must stop littering the parks.
- The sanctity of marriage must be upheld.
- The Demon Rum must be put down forever.
- We must have beer and light wines.
- Bishop Manning is a profound thinker and God is back of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.
- Theodore Roosevelt was a great statesman.
- Woodrow Wilson's ideals must be preserved.
- Warren G. Harding must not be forgotten."

He Lives in the Stage-Coach Era

"THOUGH Rudyard Kipling is only 61, he occasionally gives the impression of a man born at the beginning of the nineteenth century whose mind closed shortly after the Civil War. Thus, before starting out on a visit to Brazil the other day, Mr. Kipling declined to receive newspaper men or discuss the purpose of his trip.

"If the author of 'Kim' were a normal literary man as of the year 1927, he would have behaved otherwise. Some time back in 1925 he might have managed to get it hinted in the papers that he contemplated a voyage to Brazil. A fortnight later there would have been published a more or less inspired denial of the contemplated trip. The original statement would have been cabled to Rio Janeiro. When the rumor was denied the Rio correspondents in England would have flocked down to the Kipling home in Surrey. To them Mr. Kipling would have stated that if the thought of visiting Brazil had ever entered his mind he would have immediately dismissed it. He would be sure to stifle in a Brazilian atmosphere entirely permeated with coffee and rubber profiteering.

"The immediate result would, of course, have been tons of publicity in the Brazilian press, chiefly in the nature of indignant criticism, but with an audible pro-Kipling minority. As the controversy gave signs of dying down, there would have appeared other items.

Mr. Kipling rejected the offer of a million pounds from a Brazilian movie concern for the film rights to all his works. He was planning to depart for Rio in order to give personal supervision to the filming of the *Jungle Books*. He declined an offer of a quarter of a million pounds from a Brazilian lecture bureau. All this would have happened if Mr. Kipling had not insisted on living in the past."

—Editorial from *The New York Times*.

Judgments

D. R. Sando Ferenczi, the famous Hungarian psychoanalyst, discusses certain basic principles of group activity. His ideas are important to every man who takes a directive part in public or commercial life today.

These excerpts are from a newly translated volume. *Further Contributions to the Theory and Technique of Psychoanalysis*:

"... The aim of sociology is to instruct us in the laws that control the vital relationships of people combined into large groups; and the law moulds into the form of exact rules the principles to which man must adapt himself if he is to remain a member of society.

"... the renunciation of individuality, 'the state,' should not be an end in itself but only a means to the welfare of the individual.

"... Novel scientific conceptions are wont to be received with a measure of mistrust and disbelief that quite oversteps the limits of objectivity and betrays marked hostility. Many people entirely avoid any scrutiny of facts that contradict too abruptly the established order—especially from the methodological aspect—by declaring them to be *a priori* improbable; other people visibly endeavour to emphasize the unavoidable weaknesses and incompletenesses of a new point of view in order to drop the whole thing on this account, instead of weighing impartially its advantages and deficiencies, or even, indeed, of welcoming the novelty with a certain kindness and letting criticism have its fling only subsequently.

"Sharply opposed to this 'blind disbelief' is the blind belief with which other communications—perhaps much less probable in themselves—are accepted as soon as the personality of their sponsor or his method enjoys a considerable respect and authority with the scientific public.

"These are emotional factors that are capable, too, of confusing scientific judgment."

"THE sudden political revolutions which strike the historian most forcibly are often the least important. The great revolutions are those of manners and thought. The true revolutions, those which transform the destinies of people, are most frequently accomplished so slowly that the historians can hardly point to their beginnings. Scientific revolutions are by far the most important."—Le Bon in *The Psychology of Revolutions*.

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Silent Banks

THE following quotation from *Printer's Ink*, taking exception to a statement made in the last issue of *Contact*, advocates panics as a therapeutic measure for mismanaged banks.

"POLLYANNA PRESS AGENCY

"'Public relations counsels' can do anything. They are great men. They are the intellectual descendants of Buddha, Plato, Darwin and Benjamin Franklin. They say so themselves. They can even stop a run on a bank.

"A certain 'public relations counsel' who, like certain of his brethren, gets out a printed bulletin for the purpose of drumming up business and for pointing out the great difference between vulgar press agency tweedledum and high-minded public relations counsel tweedledee, strongly intimates in his bulletin that he could have prevented a run on a New York bank.

"The run on the bank in question occurred because three of its officials were accused of stealing \$480,000. They have been arrested, charged with defalcation and held without bail. Our 'public relations counsel' refers to the run that followed the disclosure of this information as a 'preventable disaster.' A public relations counsel, he says, would have prevented such a catastrophe.

"We heartily disagree with this suggestion. In cases where officials of banks are arrested for absconding with bank funds it is very much in order for the public to take steps to protect itself. If a run on a bank will result in change in management thus penalizing the old management for its lack of ability, the public must not be denied the right to cause a run.

"A bank exists on the basis of public confidence. The penalty for mismanagement or any indication of mismanagement is the loss of public confidence. A press agent or public relations counsel in the pay of a bank which the public feels does not merit its confidence has no right to tamper with that confidence. Newspapers and the public are entitled to direct access to news of a bank. A 'public relations counsel' oversteps himself in such a case, as is the usual habit of that high-titled calling.

"What the bank in question apparently needed was better management and not a 'public relations counsel.'"

* * *

Yes, the run on the bank was a "preventable disaster" if the bank was solvent. The public relations counsel could have dramatized the financial integrity of the institution in many ways, and the legal judgments would later have focused where they rightly belonged.

There cannot be continued public confidence in a mismanaged institution. In the present case, however, if the bank's assets were adequate, that definite fact

should promptly have been made manifest. And, in the flurry of the discovered defalcation, public announcement of the protective measures of the bank should have been made simultaneously with the discovery of the theft. It does not require a panic, with consequent loss of time and money, to effect better management.

State Public Relations

Special to The New York Times

"ALBANY, Feb. 2—A bill providing for a press agent for the State was introduced in the Legislature today by Assemblyman Albert Grossman, New York City Democrat. The title of the proposed new State official would be counsel on public relations and he would be appointed by the Governor.

"Under the bill, the State press agent could create a permanent speakers' bureau.

"This is not a progaganda press agent scheme for any political party," said a statement by Mr. Grossman. "It is a social, constructive measure, undertaken in the people's interest to make valuable information available for them in a form which will be understandable and through which they will benefit."

"The publicity official also would be empowered to advertise the State's natural resources. A similar bill has been introduced by Mrs. Rhoda Fox Graves of St. Lawrence, the only woman member of the Legislature."

"Front Page Stuff"

"LIFE being what it is in these hurried times, when all men run and few read more than the headlines, press agents have become as necessary to the public as white-tiled bathrooms. Both Presidents of the nation and presidents of corporations employ them. The society pusher, arranging the first matrimonial voyage of her lovely daughter, finds them indispensable. They sing the praises, or mute the infamies, of baseball players, visiting Queens, gamblers, bishops, publicist and litterateurs. Jumbo the Elephant, if he were alive today, would have a public relations counsel."

By HENRY F. PRINGLE
—In *The American Mercury*.

"... the activities of men must be directed by knowledge."

—FREDERICK J. TEGGART.

"WE (advertisers) and we alone have the ear of the world. We can dictate what shall be known and what shall not be known, what shall exist and what shall not. We can educate the people or degrade the people, exalt right things and humble base things. We can be the guide, philosopher and friend of the common man. Why should we not rise to the full height of our possibilities?"

—From *The World of William Glissold*
by H. G. Wells.

A Public Relations Counsel States His Views

"THERE is at least one subject on which as great misinformation and misconception are rife as on the Russian situation—and that is the question of propaganda. Many discuss it at length and with conviction; even though they know nothing about it. There is more propaganda for and against propaganda—and more of it false—than about most of the causes in which propaganda is utilized as a weapon. . . .

"What are the misconceptions about the propagandist profession and its relation to the general social and economic life of today?

"First of all, the propagandist in his modern state is most often confounded with the old-time press agent. That is, of course, a false conception. No one disputes the power of the press. Fortunes are made by its advertisers, as well as by its owners. But the press as an informer and then as a moulder of public opinion has rivals. The radio is a regimenter of millions today. The movies and the pulpits, even '*Stories of Philosophy*'—in editions of 100,000—are forces that influence the public. Magazines of 2,700,000 circulation compete for power with *Nations* of 50,000. There are all sorts of printed word media. The spoken word reaches the ears of the public from the stage, the lecture platform and the schoolroom. And besides this the myriad group cleavages of society are in themselves channels for the rapid transmission of thoughts and ideas. Members of groups follow their leaders in their habits of eating, thinking and dressing, praying and everything else. . . .

"Another misconception is that the counsel on public relations is simply a mechanical distributor to the press of news material which contains his client's point of view, for free publication. That view is equally false. The old-time press agent simply called for his carbon paper and sent his copy to the press. The modern public relations counsel studies the affairs of his client in relationship to the public; he studies his client in relationship to the product or idea he is bringing to that public; he studies his avenues of approach to that public. And then he guides his client's actions so that they will produce the result he desires. . . .

"Very often in this work, he is the forerunner or the complement of an advertising campaign, which by itself is only one weapon. . . .

"Now we come to a third misconception: the relationship of this new force to the press, as a special pleader, as a carrier of information, and as a creator of opinion. What is the relationship of news to advertising? What are the relations of this new profession to the press of the country? . . .

"Most men who have discussed this whole question have treated only of the press. In a sense the same relationship is true of all methods of reaching the public. . . .

"By the press we mean the free press of America,

not the subsidized press, of this or any other country. The press selects its news on the basis of the mental calibre of its readers. Any material which this press prints may broadly be defined as news, competing as it does with all other ideas that seek publication at the given time. . . .

"The acid test applied to it is its value to the reader of the particular journal as understood by the editor, who knows the policy, the aim, the ideals of his particular journal. On this test only must it ride or fall. . . .

"The conscientious editor realizes that his obligation to the public is news. He is not governed in the use of news by a consideration as to whether it was created by a counsel on public relations or by John Doe. The fact of its accomplishment makes it news. . . .

"The function of the press is to inform and reflect. to hold the mirror up to life. If important things of life today consist of transatlantic radiophone talks arranged by commercial telephone companies; if they consist of inventions that will be commercially advantageous to the men who market them; if they consist of Henry Fords with epochmaking cars and epochmaking ideas, then all this is news; protesting and competing advertising agents to the contrary notwithstanding. . . .

"There is one thing, however, which should be observed: that is not to print material that has no mark of origin. But after all, there is little danger of a conscientious editor printing such unidentified information. . . .

"Why quarrel with the fame of a Valentino, or Al Smith or Ederle or baseball or radio? And point out that these have not paid for the public attention they get, when others must pay? Newspaper space, just like the thought space in your mind, is not and cannot be bought on a per line basis. The newspaper does sell advertising, but news is a commodity that cannot and should not be bought. Nor can its space allotments be judged by advertising standards. Industry cannot with any actual justice blame the editor for honest evaluations." . . .

By EDWARD L. BERNAYS

—From an article in *Advertising and Selling*.

Artists—Not Historians

"PROFESSOR Teggart finds the greatest obstacle in the way of a truly scientific study of man in the fact that historians have always been essentially historiographers, or writers of history! They may talk of 'scientific history,' and may use with painstaking care all the rigidly exact methods of natural science in their collecting, verification, and analysis of 'documents,'—but when they turn to write out the results of their researches they cease to be scientists in any sense of the word and become simply *artists*."

—CLARENCE MARSH CASE, in *The Journal of Applied Sociology*.