

# Metro Region

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## PR's founder also its conscience

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GLOBE STAFF

**C**AMBRIDGE — Edward L. Bernays created the field of public relations nearly 70 years ago and the world hasn't been the same since.

High-tech marketing techniques and the electronic media have turned Bernays' theory of mass psychology and the power of suggestion into a multimillion-dollar industry, transforming politics, business and the American psyche.

This fall, Bernays is included in Life magazine's profiles of the 100 most influential Americans in the 20th century. Next month, public relations experts from around the world will meet in

Spain to toast Bernays and celebrate his 99th birthday.

Even so, being the father of public relations, like fathering children, has its ups and downs, concedes Bernays, who worries about the future of P.R.

Back in 1919, Bernays and Doris Fleischman, his future wife, opened an office in New York, a model for the modern-day public relations firm. It was Bernays' notion that public opinion about just about anything — from soap and cigarettes to spaghetti and sex — could be molded with the help of social sciences and the press.

Still, he had hoped that public relations counsels, as he and Fleischman called them, would develop higher professional standards and a code of ethics

as rigorous as the medical profession's Hippocratic oath.

"But today," said Bernays, clearly disgusted by the thought, "any nitwit, any crook can call himself a public relations adviser."

Bernays believes there should be legal sanctions that would bar disreputable people from working in the field and, he said this week, stricter licensing, registration and academic requirements should be developed.

"Everybody is an expert," Bernays said, shaking his head. "They don't realize that communications is the very least of it. Sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics and history are all basic to public relations."

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# Trends in PR worry founder

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Bernays, whose clients once included Edison, Freud, Caruso, Nijinsky and Presidents Coolidge, Wilson, Hoover and Eisenhower, still gives advice — at a cost of \$1,000 per hour.

The walls in his home near Brattle Street are lined with black-and-white photographs, honorary degrees, awards and citations. There are pictures of Bernays and his famous uncle, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud; Bernays with Edison, Eleanor Roosevelt and other leading figures of the 20th century.

At 98, Bernays is a short and somewhat craggy figure who still keeps a hectic schedule. His assistant, a woman 40 years his junior, laid down the law recently and demanded that he trim his engagements. "I just couldn't keep up," she said Monday.

In recent years, Bernays has campaigned for a nuclear freeze and worked with the American Association of Retired Persons, the Gray Panthers and other groups to ensure fair treatment of the elderly. Their work was responsible for lifting age restrictions that kept the elderly from working past 65.



GLOBE FILE PHOTO

Edward L. Bernays, right, discusses a manuscript by his uncle, Sigmund Freud, during a July 1971 conversation with rare book collector George Gloss, who had uncovered the document.