



BOOKS

BIOGRAPHY OF AN IDEA: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays

Simon and Schuster, New York, 1965, 849 pp., \$12.95

It was to be expected that the first public relations practitioner to publish his memoirs at length would be Edward L. Bernays. One of the prolific writers in the field starting with his landmark *Crystallizing Public Opinion* in 1923, he has written so widely that there even exists a printed bibliography issued in 1950. Mr. Bernays has obviously decided to make this book a crowning achievement and in that he has succeeded.

We have become used to famous lawyers and doctors writing their memoirs, thus establishing themselves in the public mind as interesting people in vital professions. Up until now, the public has had no occasion to really know a public relations man. And such books that have been written by public relations leaders have related primarily to their work, with little suggestion of their personalities.

Edward L. Bernays breaks this barrier. His long career with well known people, his involvement in important social and economic and political issues, gives him the basic material that makes this book much more than a description of public relations techniques. By revealing himself as a warm person, with strong opinions about the issues of his times—by setting down intimate observations about famous persons as widely different as Caruso, Freud and Coolidge—he conveys to the public the nature of public relations. Moreover, he shows public relations at work for the benefit of social causes, the arts, health and welfare, in addition to serving business.

It is a sign of the coming of age of public relations when a publisher thinks a public relations practitioner's life story is worth printing. "Biography of An Idea" is a fascinating social history of the past fifty years, as well as a first rate autobiography.

Bernays himself has often been controversial. A "loner" who never joined a professional public relations group, he has won the dislike if not the enmity of various of his colleagues. He himself once boasted that one public relations luncheon club fined any member who mentioned the name Bernays. It is natural, therefore, that this book has already produced intense feelings as

we have learned in discussing it with other professionals. Some have said that there are gross inaccuracies that cannot be attributed to a normal distortion of memory. (His claim that he developed the soap-sculptor movement for Ivory soap is just one statement that has been disputed.) Others have objected to the revelation of client relationships as being unethical. Regardless, as in the Kennedy books, it certainly makes for good reading. And in public relations particularly, there is far too little in print about what really goes on.

Early History

Certainly this book shows how little is known about the history of public relations. We are still in the stage of dealing with the history makers. And until more is known about Ivy Lee, Arthur Page, Carl Byoir, John Hill, Pendleton Dudley, Paul Garrett, to name just a few, we do not have the documentation that a historian needs to pull the story together. Perhaps a characteristic of public relations men is their lack of interest in the history of their field. Meanwhile, anything that is set down on paper by the pioneers is adding to our heritage.

Unless the reader has some historical perspective he is going to be misled by descriptions of techniques used by Bernays in his early campaigns. Now part of regular practice and hence familiar to practitioners, they were

IN OUR 35TH YEAR, PUBLIC RELATIONS...

FOR OUR CLIENTS AND FOR OUR PEOPLE
CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RELATIONS
MARKETING AND SALES ORIENTED PUBLIC RELATIONS
UNION, LABOR AND INSTITUTION RELATIONS
POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

HARSHE-ROTMAN & DRUCK, INC.

SERVING IN ALL AREAS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

NEW YORK 66 E. 13th Street (212) 661-1400
CHICAGO 300 N. Dearborn Street (312) 661-6868
LOS ANGELES 1111 Wilshire Blvd. (213) 661-1400
PHILADELPHIA 1500 Arch St. (215) 661-1400
We would be pleased to hear from you



largely unknown and untested in the early period in which Bernays practiced. In the life story of one man, then, we can trace the development of much of what we now know as the practice of public relations.

A favorite device of researchers in public relations is to survey the educational backgrounds of practitioners and then present the findings as guidance for educating for the future. Such surveys usually show that the preponderance of practitioners took either journalism or liberal arts courses. Once more, Bernays is unique. He studied agriculture! But there is no desire on his part to advocate such a curriculum. He rushed through his courses, graduated early, and notes that "My three and a half years at Cornell University College of Agriculture gave me little stimulation and less learning . . . it furnished in a negative way a test for aptitudes and adjustments. It proved I was unsuited temperamentally for the rural life and was city minded."

But if Bernays did not then know what he wanted to do, he quickly recognized it when it came along. An early job was with a medical journal. A more prosaic mind might have been content with simply doing the job at hand. But it wasn't long before Bernays had stumbled onto a play "Damaged Goods", which discussed syphilis, an unheard of thing on the stage of 1913, had organized a citizens committee, got the play launched on Broadway, sent it to Washington for a performance before President Wilson and his Cabinet, and obtained international publicity.

CHICAGO • NEW YORK • SAN FRANCISCO

SETTING THE EDITORIAL PACE



DERUS MEDIA SERVICE, INC.

America's Leading News Feature Distributors

DETROIT • MIAMI • WASHINGTON, D.C.

largely unknown and untested in the early period in which Bernays practiced. In the life story of one man, then, we can trace the development of much of what we now know as the practice of public relations.

A favorite device of researchers in public relations is to survey the educational backgrounds of practitioners and then present the findings as guidance for educating for the future. Such surveys usually show that the preponderance of practitioners took either journalism or liberal arts courses. Once more, Bernays is unique. He studied agriculture! But there is no desire on his part to advocate such a curriculum. He rushed through his courses, graduated early, and notes that "My three and a half years at Cornell University College of Agriculture gave me little stimulation and less learning . . . it furnished in a negative way a test for aptitudes and adjustments. It proved I was unsuited temperamentally for the rural life and was city minded."

But if Bernays did not then know what he wanted to do, he quickly recognized it when it came along. An early job was with a medical journal. A more prosaic mind might have been content with simply doing the job at hand. But it wasn't long before Bernays had stumbled onto a play "Damaged Goods", which discussed syphilis, an unheard of thing on the stage of 1913, had organized a citizens committee, got the play launched on Broadway, sent it to Washington for a performance before President Wilson and his Cabinet, and obtained international publicity.

CHICAGO • NEW YORK • SAN FRANCISCO

SETTING THE EDITORIAL PACE



DERUS MEDIA SERVICE, INC.

America's Leading News Feature Distributors

DETROIT • MIAMI • WASHINGTON, D.C.

The success of this venture led him directly into press representation for other Broadway plays, then into the opera, the ballet and the handling of a tour for Caruso. Unable to qualify for the armed services, Bernays got an assignment with the U.S. Committee on Public Information, popularly known as the Creel Committee, and this in turn led him to the Peace Conference in Paris after the war, in which another pioneer of public relations, Carl Byoir, also participated. And when he returned to New York to re-start his career, he took on a special assignment for Byoir for the Lithuanian National Council of the United States.

With the contacts he had developed in these early years, Bernays launched his own office and within a year had ten employees. The story that then unfolds in abundance tells of his work with clients, a wide range which included big business, social groups like the NAACP, and periodic assignments for the government. He describes how, when suddenly pressed for a statement on what he really did, he coined the phrase "public relations counsel"—how he decided to put down on paper a fuller explanation which resulted in his book "Crystallizing Public Opinion" and how he further, in 1923, started to teach public relations at New York University.

Techniques of Self Promotion

It is clear that Bernays had an instinctive knowledge of the value and the techniques of self promotion. Just as an ambitious young lawyer joins every civic and political movement available, so did Bernays take on all assignments which would call attention to himself. Late in the twenties his house in Greenwich Village became something of a salon for celebrities in all kinds of endeavors, and so his fame spread. Both by his own descriptions and statements from others, Bernays has always displayed the characteristics of utter self-confidence. He was not a behind the scenes technician, but always aimed to be a person in his own right and with strong social and economic and political viewpoints.

This book is much more than one man's story, however. It is an interesting story of life in the United States in the Twentieth Century, with intimate portraits of many of the leaders in all walks of life. The chapters about his uncle, Sigmund Freud, with many hitherto unpublished letters is a well told story which stands on its own. His experiences with the publishing business give an inside view of the development and oddities of this industry. His work with the Waldorf-Astoria, including the famous episode with Oscar of the Waldorf, produces several memorable vignettes.

It is impossible in a review to do more than convey something of the flavor of the book. To begin to list the people and organizations with which he worked until 1961 would be impossible and meaningless. (A list in the back of the book headed "Among Our Clients" contains hundreds of names of

The success of this venture led him directly into press representation for other Broadway plays, then into the opera, the ballet and the handling of a tour for Caruso. Unable to qualify for the armed services, Bernays got an assignment with the U.S. Committee on Public Information, popularly known as the Creel Committee, and this in turn led him to the Peace Conference in Paris after the war, in which another pioneer of public relations, Carl Byoir, also participated. And when he returned to New York to re-start his career, he took on a special assignment for Byoir for the Lithuanian National Council of the United States.

With the contacts he had developed in these early years, Bernays launched his own office and within a year had ten employees. The story that then unfolds in abundance tells of his work with clients, a wide range which included big business, social groups like the NAACP, and periodic assignments for the government. He describes how, when suddenly pressed for a statement on what he really did, he coined the phrase "public relations counsel"—how he decided to put down on paper a fuller explanation which resulted in his book "Crystallizing Public Opinion" and how he further, in 1923, started to teach public relations at New York University.

Techniques of Self Promotion

It is clear that Bernays had an instinctive knowledge of the value and the techniques of self promotion. Just as an ambitious young lawyer joins every civic and political movement available, so did Bernays take on all assignments which would call attention to himself. Late in the twenties his house in Greenwich Village became something of a salon for celebrities in all kinds of endeavors, and so his fame spread. Both by his own descriptions and statements from others, Bernays has always displayed the characteristics of utter self-confidence. He was not a behind the scenes technician, but always aimed to be a person in his own right and with strong social and economic and political viewpoints.

This book is much more than one man's story, however. It is an interesting story of life in the United States in the Twentieth Century, with intimate portraits of many of the leaders in all walks of life. The chapters about his uncle, Sigmund Freud, with many hitherto unpublished letters is a well told story which stands on its own. His experiences with the publishing business give an inside view of the development and oddities of this industry. His work with the Waldorf-Astoria, including the famous episode with Oscar of the Waldorf, produces several memorable vignettes.

It is impossible in a review to do more than convey something of the flavor of the book. To begin to list the people and organizations with which he worked until 1961 would be impossible and meaningless. (A list in the back of the book headed "Among Our Clients" contains hundreds of names of

organizations and individuals.) And lest we have given the impression that Bernays is always the hero of the book, let us say that he has a disarming way of confessing to numerous mistakes of opinion and judgment which lends creditability. He admits, for example, to turning down ground floor opportunities with Time because he didn't think a news magazine would be successful. His experience with NBC was a frustrating one which he describes with candor, as was his special assignment on behalf of India from which he finally withdrew.

Bernays has a sharp eye for description and knows how to tell a story. His work for Cartier tells about a fascinating merchant with far-ranging influence. He has some good material about the incredible George Washington Hill of Lucky Strike and, in addition, this episode is a good case on how public relations works for a client in supporting his advertising. The Edison Golden Jubilee story is not only a case history on anniversary celebrations, but revealing of the character of Henry Ford. He was in proxy fights, too—the struggle for the control of the American Aviation Corporation—and years before Medicare he was in the battle for improved medical service. He makes his twenty years with United Fruit a first rate business history. And he has a wry chapter about the public relations of the 1939 World's Fair which he claims were completely unsatisfactory and that the recent Fair simply duplicated the mistakes.

Counselors will appreciate his discussion of fees, his staff and his client relationships. He confesses of one long time client "I do not remember why our Cheney relationship ended . . . Professional relationships, I had learned, are not enduring in an impermanent world . . . A new policy-maker in the firm, a change in the economic climate, a wave of cutting expenses — any of these can end what appears to be a permanent and fruitful relationship." We can perhaps take comfort in learning that upon many occasions the articulate Bernays confesses to a complete inability to convey public relations to a client and is frustrated thereby. We can sense other frustrations when he writes, "Experts are effective in evaluating the past, but I would rather have poets evaluate the future." We can sympathize with him when he acquires CBS as an account, and puts one of his staff members on the payroll only to have him cancel the Bernays organization at contract renewal time.

It is clear throughout that Bernays has always approached public relations counseling as the product of an individual, rather than a large impersonally named organization. Thus he used every technique possible for personal promotion, including a periodical publication and involving himself in every kind of movement where he would get additional exposure.

And since his is the cult of the individual, there is bound to be no reference to PRSA or other professional organizations. Neither does he mention many contemporary practitioners. We learn nothing of what he thought

organizations and individuals.) And lest we have given the impression that Bernays is always the hero of the book, let us say that he has a disarming way of confessing to numerous mistakes of opinion and judgment which lends creditability. He admits, for example, to turning down ground floor opportunities with Time because he didn't think a news magazine would be successful. His experience with NBC was a frustrating one which he describes with candor, as was his special assignment on behalf of India from which he finally withdrew.

Bernays has a sharp eye for description and knows how to tell a story. His work for Cartier tells about a fascinating merchant with far-ranging influence. He has some good material about the incredible George Washington Hill of Lucky Strike and, in addition, this episode is a good case on how public relations works for a client in supporting his advertising. The Edison Golden Jubilee story is not only a case history on anniversary celebrations, but revealing of the character of Henry Ford. He was in proxy fights, too—the struggle for the control of the American Aviation Corporation—and years before medicare he was in the battle for improved medical service. He makes his twenty years with United Fruit a first rate business history. And he has a wry chapter about the public relations of the 1939 World's Fair which he claims were completely unsatisfactory and that the recent Fair simply duplicated the mistakes.

Counselors will appreciate his discussion of fees, his staff and his client relationships. He confesses of one long time client "I do not remember why our Cheney relationship ended . . . Professional relationships, I had learned, are not enduring in an impermanent world . . . A new policy-maker in the firm, a change in the economic climate, a wave of cutting expenses — any of these can end what appears to be a permanent and fruitful relationship." We can perhaps take comfort in learning that upon many occasions the articulate Bernays confesses to a complete inability to convey public relations to a client and is frustrated thereby. We can sense other frustrations when he writes, "Experts are effective in evaluating the past, but I would rather have poets evaluate the future." We can sympathize with him when he acquires CBS as an account, and puts one of his staff members on the payroll only to have him cancel the Bernays organization at contract renewal time.

It is clear throughout that Bernays has always approached public relations counseling as the product of an individual, rather than a large impersonally named organization. Thus he used every technique possible for personal promotion, including a periodical publication and involving himself in every kind of movement where he would get additional exposure.

And since his is the cult of the individual, there is bound to be no reference to PRSA or other professional organizations. Neither does he mention many contemporary practitioners. We learn nothing of what he thought

of Carl Byoir or Ivy Lee, two counselors he does mention, only that he evidently knew them. And friends of certain other practitioners he mentions will be bound to be upset by his unfriendly characterizations.

Yet, from the overall good of the public relations field, this book does a service in telling the public that the history of this country since World War I is not complete without mentioning the role of public relations, and its beneficial service in the public interest.

No review would be complete without mention of Doris Fleishman Bernays, his wife and associate in his firm. While she chose the role of working primarily behind the scenes, she exerted her own personality as an individual many times, and her efforts to establish her right to use her own name after marriage broke through the existing laws and mores. Her resulting interest in the rights of women sparked action and she has managed a successful career of wife, mother and vocation.

Biography of an Idea should be required reading for every practitioner and student of public relations, and it ought to be highly informative and entertaining for those inside and outside the field who are interested in the life and people of the twentieth century. To those among us who still might have their doubts, we simply suggest that they read first and then, if they choose, tell us how they would amend the record.

BACON'S PUBLICITY CHECKER

R.H. Bacon Company, Chicago, 1966, Fourteenth Edition, 444 pp., \$30.00

The publicist's perennial friend, *Bacon's Publicity Checker*, has now added telephone numbers for every magazine, newspaper and syndicate listing, as well as a new and enlarged news service and feature syndicate section.

This year's edition contains more than 3700 magazine, 650 newspaper and 40 syndicate listings. Indicative of the perils of maintaining one's own press lists are these statistics: of the more than 4200 changes made by the editors this year there were 206 name changes; 638 editor changes; 516 address changes; 168 publishing company changes; 54 publication mergers; 88 suspended publications; 148 new publications.

The 3,706 business, trade, farm and consumer magazines listed are grouped according to 99 fields of interest. Each listing gives the full title, editor, address, zip code, telephone number frequency, issue date, circulation, and indicates the types of news material used—new products, financial, coming events, letters, etc. Both U.S. and Canadian publications are listed.

COMMON SENSE IN ADVERTISING

By CHARLES F. ADAMS

McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1965, 200 pp., \$5.95

of Carl Byoir or Ivy Lee, two counselors he does mention, only that he evidently knew them. And friends of certain other practitioners he mentions will be bound to be upset by his unfriendly characterizations.

Yet, from the overall good of the public relations field, this book does a service in telling the public that the history of this country since World War I is not complete without mentioning the role of public relations, and its beneficial service in the public interest.

No review would be complete without mention of Doris Fleishman Bernays, his wife and associate in his firm. While she chose the role of working primarily behind the scenes, she exerted her own personality as an individual many times, and her efforts to establish her right to use her own name after marriage broke through the existing laws and mores. Her resulting interest in the rights of women sparked action and she has managed a successful career of wife, mother and vocation.

Biography of an Idea should be required reading for every practitioner and student of public relations, and it ought to be highly informative and entertaining for those inside and outside the field who are interested in the life and people of the twentieth century. To those among us who still might have their doubts, we simply suggest that they read first and then, if they choose, tell us how they would amend the record.

BACON'S PUBLICITY CHECKER

R.H. Bacon Company, Chicago, 1966, Fourteenth Edition, 444 pp., \$30.00

The publicist's perennial friend, *Bacon's Publicity Checker*, has now added telephone numbers for every magazine, newspaper and syndicate listing, as well as a new and enlarged news service and feature syndicate section.

This year's edition contains more than 3700 magazine, 650 newspaper and 40 syndicate listings. Indicative of the perils of maintaining one's own press lists are these statistics: of the more than 4200 changes made by the editors this year there were 206 name changes; 638 editor changes; 516 address changes; 168 publishing company changes; 54 publication mergers; 88 suspended publications; 148 new publications.

The 3,706 business, trade, farm and consumer magazines listed are grouped according to 99 fields of interest. Each listing gives the full title, editor, address, zip code, telephone number frequency, issue date, circulation, and indicates the types of news material used—new products, financial, coming events, letters, etc. Both U.S. and Canadian publications are listed.

COMMON SENSE IN ADVERTISING

By CHARLES F. ADAMS

McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1965, 200 pp., \$5.95