

Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel:  
Principles and Recollections

*By Edward L. Bernays*



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## Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel: Principles and Recollections

¶ Edward L. Bernays was a pioneer in the development of public relations in modern America. For more than half a century he has advised a wide range of institutions, including government, corporations, trade associations, and many private organizations. In this memoir he gives his views of the proper role, methods, and principles of public relations and recalls some of his early experiences with businessmen and other clients.

Public relations, a relatively new profession, and its practitioner, the professional counsel on public relations, serve a constructive function in our complex, free society. This profession deals with a unit's relations with the publics on which it depends. The counsel on public relations analyzes the adjustments or maladjustments between the unit and the publics on which it depends for meeting its objectives. He advises the unit on attitudes and actions necessary to meet objectives. He supplies to the public information about the unit for its consideration and action. The goals of public relations are to reach the highest possible interrelationship between a unit and its publics, based on adjustment, information, and persuasion.

Public relations came about because organized activity, which depends on public support, needed a societal technician to counsel it — the counsel on public relations. Public relations recognizes that the coincidence of private and public interest is basic to viability in a democratic society. New and faster means of communication and transportation furthered the growth of the profession. Social science research increased understanding of human behavior. The greater complexity of the society and the overlapping and interwoven network of communications that hold it together almost made the evolution of the new profession inevitable. All this requires that the counsel on public relations be a student of the social

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pre-war America. Bennett could not get the money to produce the play because it was full of sex. At that time Edward L. Bernays was holding his first journalistic job as editor, copy reader, make-up man, promoter, and office boy of the *Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette* and the *Medical Review of Reviews* at twenty-five dollars a week. The *Review* being strong for frankness about 'the facts of life,' young Editor Bernays wrote Bennett that his journal was behind him with its moral support. Bennett wanted something more substantial and asked Bernays to call. It ended by Bernays's undertaking, under the auspices of the *Review* and without any other compensation than the satisfaction of achievement, to deal with the *Mass Mind* for Bennett.

Bernays was not consciously thinking of the *Mass Mind* any more than Barnum was; nevertheless he went to work as if he were personally acquainted with the *Monster*. He organized the Sociological Fund, membership four dollars, entitling a member to all the privileges of the society. The only visible privilege was a ticket to *Damaged Goods*, when and if produced. Bernays did what Barnum did. He sent invitations to our own New York nobility. Every person of social prominence was invited to subscribe four dollars to endorse a movement for dealing with sex via *Damaged Goods*. Like Barnum's patrons, these notables responded nobly. When tiffy did, the rank and file of humbler folk proceeded, as always, to grow curious, and then to toddle along behind their betters, sending in their four dollars by the hundreds and the thousands.

Bernays had committed an act of public relations without realizing it. He had moulded the mind of the *Monster* without understanding the importance of his performance. Some years were needed to bring this truth home to him.

By no system of honest elimination can Edward L. Bernays be excluded from a list of representative men in America. He has made an extraordinary success. He has been something of a pioneer. He was conditioning the *Mass Mind* for Richard Bennett long before Ivy Lee took over the job of merchandising John D. Rockefeller to the American people. He numbers among his clients powerful millionaires, great corporations, even royal personages and governments. He has made a great deal of money, — a mark of importance that no American will deny, — and, what is more, he has done it in the field of intellectual activity.

For, after all, Bernays is a philosopher, not a mere business man. He is a nephew of that other great philosopher, Dr. Sigmund Freud. Unlike his distinguished uncle, he is not known as a practising psychoanalyst, but he is a psychoanalyst just the same, for he deals with the science of unconscious mental processes. His business is to treat unconscious mental acts by conscious ones. The great Viennese doctor is interested in releasing the pent-up libido of the individual; his American nephew is engaged in releasing (and directing) the suppressed desires of the crowd. He is a social psychologist engaged in carrying out in actual practice and according to newer theories that branch of psychology which Auguste Comte and later Herbert Spencer recognized as having a definite relation to sociology.

He is none the less a philosopher because he does not wear side whiskers and drone in solemn and abstruse dullness, or because he has devised a way of running his philosophy through a meter and sending bills for the service. As a matter of fact, Bernays has both a clear and a very shrewd understanding

sciences in his capacity as a policy adviser and a technician. The public relations counsel meets the problem of bringing about better relations between a principal and his publics in a two-way process. He interprets public to principal and principal to public.

Public relations, effectively used, helps validate an underlying principle of our society — competition in the market place of ideas and things. In a democratic society almost every activity depends on public understanding and support. Many points of view are freely expressed, and they all compete for support. Public acceptance of new ideas in medicine, social service, politics, and business is brought about in the United States by public education, persuasion, and suggestion by effective public relations. This profession makes it possible for minority ideas to be more readily accepted by the majority. In playing its role in the marketplace of ideas, professional public relations depends on reality, not on images.

#### USE OF AN ENGINEERING APPROACH

In 1923 I laid down the principles and practices of this new profession in *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, the first book on the subject. Some fifteen years later in the light of my experience I refined the approach and called it the engineering of consent. The term engineering was used advisedly. In our society, with its myriads of group interests, interest groups, and media, only an engineering approach to the problems of adjustment, information, and persuasion could bring effective results.

There are several basic steps in the engineering of consent which apply to all public relations problems. The first is to define goals as specifically as possible. Unless we know where we want to go, it is unlikely we will get there. Goals must be defined in time periods as well as in attitudes of publics on which we depend. Time goals are immediate, intermediate, and long-term. What changes in attitude and action are we seeking, in whom and when? In any public relations problem there are many publics, seldom one. In the engineering of consent, determination of goals is subject to change after research about the relevant publics. Only after we know the state of public opinion through research can we be sure that our goals are realistic.

Research is the second step. Recent advances in public opinion research provide proven tools to evaluate the publics. Public opinion research tells us about the publics: demographic characteristics, their attitudes, motivations, how they behave and why, and what

appeals may cause change. Research defines areas of ignorance, apathy and knowledge. The extent and intensity of research depend on the specific situation and on available resources. Any research of public opinion, no matter how minor, helps in the evaluation of the practicability of reaching the goals.

The next step in the engineering of consent is the consideration of a possible reorientation of goals. If research has shown the objective to be unrealistic, the goals must be modified in the light of research data.

The next problem is to design an organized effort to achieve the objective, including the utilization of man power, mind power, mechanics, and money necessary to carry on an effective public relations program. In some cases, the public relations organization can be minimal. Authority at the top guides the actions and attitudes of personnel and makes them consistent with sound public relations. In other cases, such as in a hotel, where good public relations depends on successful employee-customer relations throughout the establishment, public relations may demand more complex organization to ensure that everyone carries out house policies. The standing of a large corporation may depend on its policies and actions related to all elements of the society. This in turn will demand a complex organization to deal with many groups and many communications media. Business organizations often rely on an outside counsel on public relations, comparable to the practice that prevails in legal relations. Often a public relations department within the corporation functions jointly with the outside advisory counsel.

Strategy is the next step in the engineering of consent. To what extent should our activity stress adjusting to the public and to what extent should it attempt to modify public apathy, misunderstanding, or ignorance? In what combination should available resources be used for greatest effectiveness? Is a blitzkrieg indicated? How do we best reach our publics? Our strategy will indicate our activities aimed at intensifying favorable attitudes and reversing or blanketing negative attitudes.

The last step is planning and timing actions to meet short-term, intermediate and long-term goals. Since public relations functions on a two-street, we may change certain of our attitudes and actions to adjust to our publics, and/or we may alter efforts to persuade our publics to support our cause or product. Many different informational techniques are used.

Public relations practiced as a profession is an art applied to a science, in which the public interest and not pecuniary motivation is the primary consideration. The engineering of consent in this sense assumes a constructive social role. Regrettably, public relations, like other professions, can be abused and used for anti-social purposes. I have tried to make the profession socially responsible as well as economically viable.

#### EARLY EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

The events that led to my role in the engineering of consent stem from a background of lifelong interests in communication, in interpersonal and in intergroup relations. Editor of the *Echo*, P.S. 184 school paper in New York in 1905, then of the *Maggie* at the DeWitt Clinton High School in 1907 and 1908, I was also an editor of the *Cornell Countryman* at Cornell University. After graduation I became editor of the *Hygienic and Dietetic Gazette* and a member of the staff of the *Medical Review of Reviews* in 1913. I carried out my first important activity in public relations in support of an actor, Richard Bennett, who wanted to produce *Damaged Goods* by Eugene Brieux, a play about sex education. I followed a principle I often applied later, to make a cause of our project. We organized the Sociological Fund of the *Medical Review of Reviews*. A member paid four dollars and was entitled to a single performance of the play. Without such precautions, Anthony Comstock (a then-famous crusader for "high morals") would otherwise have raided it. Cosmo Hamilton, a leading British journalist, said the play made it strike sex o'clock in America. I became so intrigued by this problem of winning public support that I turned to that activity first in the theater, in music, and the ballet.

Klaw & Erlanger, leading theatrical producers, engaged me as publicist for Henry Miller, Ruth Chatterton, Otis Skinner, and other leading actors and playwrights. The Metropolitan Musical Bureau, which was associated with the Metropolitan Opera Company, made me a partner. I publicized Diaghileff, his Ballet Russe and Nijinsky, and I managed and publicized the great tenor Enrico Caruso and other Metropolitan Opera stars. I found time to become a contributor to the *Broadway Anthology*, a book of poetry in the style of Edgar Lee Masters.

After the United States entered World War I, I joined the United States Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel. I served as a staff member of its Foreign Press Bureau headed

by Ernest Poole, the novelist, in New York and later at the Peace Conference in Paris, publicizing the war aims and ideals of Woodrow Wilson — to make the world safe for democracy and to make World War I the war to end all wars.

The United States Committee on Public Information bolstered the morale of our citizens and of our allies and helped to break down enemy morale. Its propaganda efforts were so effective that one historian was later moved to write that words won the war. I returned to the United States in March, 1919, and recognized that I had learned much in the war that could be applied to peacetime pursuits. Outside of the theatrical and musical fields, I was ignorant of publicity activities in this country. In part this was because the media maintained a conspiracy of silence about the then crude practices of publicity men.

Many years later, I recognized that publicity people's lack of public visibility was possibly due to unwillingness of the media to call attention to certain evil practices maintained by some newspapers. These activities included the practice of publishing what were called free "puffs" (editorial matter to which the newspaper committed itself in return for advertising) and the practice of extending editorial good will to railroads in return for free passes. The newspaper publishers association initiated a movement to stop the practice and to free the press from the influence of advertisers on editorial matter.

My ignorance of publicity work outside music and the theater included a lack of awareness of recent broad developments in the publicity field. In the late nineteenth century the reform movement in which unionists, Populists, Christian Socialists, and muck-rakers had formerly participated, had then been joined by the middle classes. It aimed to eliminate abuses by big business, the "robber barons," and the trusts. Business had responded not by a change of attitudes and actions vis à vis the public but by meeting words with words. Newspaper men were hired by business as apologists. Press bureaus were organized to supply favorable information to the press. First taken up by the railroads, the public utilities, and the streetcar interests, these activities were soon practiced by many large businesses. Ivy L. Lee helped usher in this public-be-informed period in 1906 with a declaration of principles, outlining this new business publicity and information policy.

Those opposed to the practice called what was being done "whitewashing." The press agents and publicity men who carried

on the activity were "space grabbers." *Editor & Publisher* and *Printers' Ink*, leading advertising journals of the period, both conducted vigorous campaigns against these "menaces."

Business had indeed become conscious of the public, which it had not been in the earlier, public-be-damned period. But the methods it used were rudimentary in nature. They were carried on without regard to the basic principles of a profession, an art applied to a science, with the public interest the primary consideration.

Unaware of all this background, I opened in 1919 a firm to deal with broader problems of publicity than before the war. The War Department had already asked me to wage a publicity campaign for the reemployment of ex-servicemen. No G.I. Bill of Rights existed then. The re-absorption of veterans into the domestic economy was left to chance and to our office, augmented by field men from government departments.

In addition to the work for the government, the Lithuanian National Council had also come to us to win public support for its recognition by the United States as a free and independent state. Our offices to serve these clients, and more we felt were assuredly coming, were in a renovated private house at 19 East 48th Street in New York. Our office staff included Doris E. Fleischman, a brilliant young graduate of Barnard College whom I had known from my college days. I lured her from the New York *Tribune*, where she was an assistant editor. She became my wife three years later and has been my professional partner for almost fifty years. For forty-nine years we have lived our twenty-four-hour-a-day private and professional life together. It was the best move I ever made in my life.

Our first office staff consisted of seven co-workers and myself, with a payroll of \$142.82 weekly. Fortunately for the workers, there were no deductions for withholding taxes. I was the contact man with the clients. My future wife was our writer and balance wheel of the operation; my brother-in-law, then a young lawyer returned from the war, also wrote material for us. A complement of stenographers, typists, and an office boy made up the remainder of our personnel.

We called our activity publicity direction, directing the action of clients to secure publicity. But after a year we decided that our activity, to be really effective, needed the two-way street approach in which we interpreted the public to the client as well as vice versa.

fashions of our clients with emerging tastes. Our activity for Sydney Blumenthal, velvet manufacturers, was aimed at swathing American women in velvet; and for the luggage manufacturers we attempted to increase the use of luggage. We popularized gelatine as a dessert and tried to find new uses for it. The Mellon Institute research attested to gelatine's effectiveness in improving the digestibility of milk, and we promoted gelatine as an additive to milk in school luncheon programs.

We introduced public relations practices and policies to book publishing for publisher Horace Liveright. Publishers thought of books as something to be published rather than to be sold. After our activities, book publishers took a cue from Liveright, and books soon occupied a more dynamic place in the society. *Publishers' Weekly* in 1920 published my article on these new methods. Liveright's pioneering was evidenced when he published my *Crystallizing Public Opinion* in 1923.

For *Good Housekeeping* we built public support for one of the first Congressional Bills for prenatal maternal care — the Shepherd-Towner Act. We advised *Cosmopolitan* on many aspects of their public relations.

We also played a part in the introduction of new medical techniques. Madame Curie had isolated radium in Europe, and Carnotite ore containing it had been found in Colorado. The United States Radium Corporation retained us in order to gain acceptance of radium in therapy for cancer and for use in luminous gauges. In an unforgettable trip to Buffalo on the Empire State Express, I brought a gram of radium valued at \$70,000; it was intended for cancer therapy at a state hospital. Scientists knew comparatively little about this rare element; fortunately the company knew enough to package the valuable but dangerous cargo in a lead container. Other hospitals followed the example of radium treatment for cancer.

George Washington Hill, a manic, boisterous, authoritarian salesman, president of the American Tobacco Company, was an exciting client for many years. Lucky Strikes were his dominating theme. Cigarettes had not yet been proven carcinogenic. Opera stars endorsed Luckies as "kind to your throat" in huge newspaper advertisements. "Reach for a Lucky, instead of a sweet" and other slogans swept the country. Lucky Strikes became the number one cigarette. Mr. Hill wanted more women to smoke Lucky Strikes; research showed that sales to them were down because the green-packaged

cigarettes clashed with their costumes. "Change the color of the package," I suggested. Mr. Hill was outraged. I then suggested we try to make green the dominant color of women's fashions. "What will it cost?" he asked. For want of a better figure, I said, "\$25,000." He quickly rejoined, "Spend it." For a year we worked with the New York Infirmary for Women and Mrs. Frank A. Vanderlip, its president, to hold a Green Ball, with tableaux of socialites dressed in green based on the paintings of the Malmaison masters in the Luxembourg Museum in Paris. We worked with manufacturers of accessories for dresses and textiles to ensure that gloves, stockings, shoes, and other accessories would also be green. *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* featured green covers of fashions on the date of the Green Ball. Green became fashion's color.

Another experience with fashion involved Maison Worth of the Parisian haute couture, which prided itself on dressing queens and princesses of the remaining European monarchies. They wanted to expand their markets to the United States and engaged us to help them.

Makers of food products familiar to the American palate became our clients. We staged an art show of palette oils and palate oils for Best Foods Company, makers of salad oils, at a well known New York art gallery. Favorite salad recipes of well known people and oil paintings of salads by French masters were presented in juxtaposition. Salad oil received public visibility and good will.

We counseled Beech-Nut Packing, famous for bacon and ginger ale, on many problems ranging from top-level company policy to counteracting false rumors. Sales of Beech-Nut bacon received impetus from a survey of physicians who urged Americans, as a health measure, to eat heavier breakfasts. To many this meant bacon and eggs.

In 1925 we opened the first American public relations office in Europe, in the city of Vienna. Georg Schicht, leading maker of soaps and margarine in Czechoslovakia, cabled me to survey attitudes of the people of central Europe toward margarine and butter, which we did. Schicht explained later that a standing order with a bookseller in London had brought him a copy of *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. Schicht's adoption of public relations brought it to central Europe, for the firm was a leader then. Public relations still thrives there today.

In 1928 William Paley of Columbia Broadcasting, then owner of only one radio station, called on us for advice. Young Paley, tired

of Philadelphia and disenchanted with his father's cigar business, had received as a gift from his father WCBS in New York. The young man asked for counsel on a wide range of problems: programming, personnel, relations with government, listeners, advertisers, and other publics. We wrote policy statements for radio's and television's future. We helped bring leading figures to the air waves. We aided in publicizing an historic event: the broadcasting for the first time of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, marking the attempt to build middle-class and upper-stratum audiences for radio. Radio then gave promise of becoming a great, constructive social force in entertainment, music, education, and public service. But the pressures of mass advertising for low priced consumer articles such as soap and cigarettes soon traded down programming to appeal to mass audiences. Radio has not met its social potential.

Dodge Motors Company of Detroit engaged us to launch a new automobile model, then considered an "epoch-making event." We arranged the first nationwide broadcast for the new Victory Six. Al Jolson, Will Rogers, and Fred and Dorothy Stone appeared on the program, and the president of Dodge spoke. Next morning Dodge showrooms all over America bulged with thousands of potential buyers who had heard the broadcast.

Another businessman for whom we acted as counsel was William B. Ward of the Ward Baking Company. He introduced the mass production of bread by mechanical means. Ingredients were fed into hoppers on the top floor and emerged on the ground floor as wrapped bread on conveyor belts leading directly to delivery trucks. Mr. Ward wanted to establish an efficient, huge bread trust. But his ambition was shattered when the Justice Department threatened an anti-trust suit and scotched the venture. During our incumbency we were his policy advisers on employment matters, on public interest ventures, and on general public policy of the company.

Vacuum Oil Company, separated from the Standard Oil Company by the historic Landis court decision, retained us as advisers. They sought to improve relations with firms in the motor industry, in shipping, in the new aviation industry, and in other oil-using industries. We aided them in encouraging the aviation industry's growth. We were associated with the first transatlantic flights from England to the United States by Kingsford Smith, as well as with ill-fated attempts such as that of René Foch to reach Europe from the United States by air. This was a classic example of the coincidence of the private and the public interest.

We advised the famous Seligman galleries on how to gain public acceptance for Gothic art and modern art, for painters such as Modigliani, Seurat, and others. Years later we carried on comparable activities for the house of Wildenstein, art dealers. We helped fight hatlessness for the millinery industry.

Working with the unhappy Boston retailing millionaire E. A. Filene, who combined idealism with egotism, we helped promote his ideas for the extension of mass credit to workers, mass travel for the middle class, and better mass distribution for the American consumer. Many of these ideas became integral parts of the American system of labor-management relations, a tribute to Filene's pioneer thinking.

A hairnet manufacturer, Venida, asked us to increase the wearing of hairnets, then hampered by the short hair fashion introduced by dancer Irene Castle. We explored the uses of hairnets as a safety measure for women working with machinery, and as a result of public visibility of the idea, several states passed laws making it obligatory for women to wear hairnets under certain working conditions. The segmental approach was developed by stressing the sanitary aspect of hairnets for cooks and waitresses.

The diversity of organizations which engaged us appeared limitless in the booming 1929 stock market. Public relations was thriving too. During that year, General Electric and Westinghouse decided to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the invention of the electric light by Thomas Alva Edison. They came to us to explore ways of demonstrating the contribution electric light made to society and to guide them in commemorating Light's Golden Jubilee on October 21, 1929. Many Americans revered the memory of Edison. Henry Ford had built at Dearborn, Michigan the Edison Institute of Technology (a replica of Independence Hall) in honor of his great inspiration, Edison. For months the anniversary was celebrated throughout the world. President Herbert Hoover, as well as dignitaries from business, finance, industry, and science (including Madame Curie) attended the culminating banquet at the Edison Institute. Walter Winchell started a rumor that I had induced the Post Office to issue a two-cent postage stamp with a picture of an electric light bulb on it. Actually the Post Office acted on its own initiative as a result of the high public visibility the Jubilee had achieved.

Leonard W. Doob described Light's Golden Jubilee as "one of the

most lavish pieces of propaganda ever engineered in this country during peace time."<sup>1</sup> John T. Flynn wrote:<sup>2</sup>

On October 21, 1929, there occurred the climax of a celebration ostensibly designed to commemorate Edison's invention of the incandescent lamp. Edison re-enacted this procedure before a distinguished audience in Detroit which included Henry Ford and the President of the United States. Before and after this event, the praises of Edison were sung all over the world; the United States Government even issued a special postage stamp with the picture of an electric light upon it. Henry Ford reconstructed the village in which Edison was born, and the original laboratory where the convention had been conceived was reproduced as faithfully as possible. On the surface a truly great man was being honored by a famous industrialist. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bernays was the man who managed and directed the series of dramatic episodes. He was working "not for Edison or for Henry Ford, but for very important interests which saw in this historic anniversary an opportunity to exploit and publicize the uses of the electric light."

There never had been any question as to who had sponsored the Jubilee.

In its otherwise favorable coverage of Light's Golden Jubilee, *The New Yorker* on November 9, 1929, was unwilling to accept the term "counsel on public relations." It coined a new term, "specialist in making news events."

Despite some non-acceptance of our terminology of public relations, concern with public opinion had proliferated greatly in business and other circles. Two well informed observers in 1929 estimated the number of publicity agents in New York, unattached or associated with advertising corporations. Marlen Pew of *Editor & Publisher* put the figure at 5,000. Stanley Walker, city editor of the *New York Tribune*, estimated that 5,000 covered New York and Washington.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, the importance of attempts to influence public opinion was very considerable at end of our first decade in business.

#### ACTIVITIES IN THE 1930's

The next period, 1930-1941, saw depression and recovery. With the stock market crash in the fall of 1929, business dropped from the apex of the pyramid of power to the bottom. It lost much of its authority and charisma in American society. A bloodless revolution

<sup>1</sup> Leonard W. Doob, *Propaganda* (New York, 1935), 195.

<sup>2</sup> John T. Flynn, "Edward L. Bernays," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 149 (1932), 564.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Walker, "Playing the Deep Bassoons," *Harper's*, Vol. 164, 370.

was effected by the New Deal. To meet the new conditions, business retained counsel on public relations more extensively than ever before.

As the Depression continued, clients came to us in increasing numbers. President Herbert Hoover appointed me a member of his Emergency Committee for Employment, headed by my old friend Colonel Arthur Woods. Hoover, not temperamentally fitted to deal with the contemporary social disaster, tried to exorcise the Depression. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal then swept in with new concepts and programs geared to the crisis.

Public relations firms and public relations departments in corporations proliferated in the early 1930's. For example, Carl Byoir opened his public relations office in 1930, Hill and Knowlton in 1933, and Earl Newsom in 1935. More and more large corporations set up their own public relations departments, reflecting the awareness by business of the growing importance of public relations to success in the modern economy. Sears Roebuck in 1927, Bethlehem Steel in 1930, General Motors in 1931, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1934, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in 1936, International Harvester in 1937, and the New York Central Railroad in 1939 were examples of the trend.

Other institutions also needed professional counsel on public relations. The Committee on the Cost of Medical Care, sponsored by leading foundations and headed by Ray Lyman Wilbur, retained us to help achieve its goal. On a voluntary basis we cooperated with leading economists, including Carl Snyder of the Federal Reserve System, Lionel D. Edie, Warren M. Persons, and others, to win public support for credit expansion. They believed it would return prosperity to the country. Finally Eugene Meyer, head of the Federal Reserve Bank, helped expand the nation's credit by the purchase of United States bonds by the United States government. Snyder had made studies of America's economic history which showed that when credit expanded 4 per cent annually, prosperity was maintained.

After Prohibition's repeal in the early part of the decade, the United Brewers Industrial Foundation asked us to assist them in their reintegration into American society. We worked out a public policy platform for them. The Foundation, in enlightened self-interest, accepted our recommendation that they support the authorities in their effort to ensure that the pre-Prohibition saloon era did not return. The lasting effect of this action is still evident.

Another way in which we tried to influence public tastes was to help the book publishers to encourage the reading of books. We urged contractors and architects to build bookshelves in houses and apartments. Empty bookshelves induced book purchases.

We participated in proxy battles for control of large corporations, notably the American Aviation Company. Companies such as the Great Northern Railroad (on the initiative of the First National Bank of New York) and the City Stores Company came to us for help on their financial public relations problems brought on by the depression. Then a new field, financial public relations is now a highly specialized branch of public relations practice.

We helped other businessmen, including importers of oriental pearls. Beset by the new competition of the cultured Japanese pearl, these merchants called on us for an effort to try to reinstate the oriental pearl in public favor. A Sheik from the Isle of Pearls, Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf, came to the United States to dramatize and validate our cause.

We also continued to aid worthy social causes. The Woods School of Langhorne, Pennsylvania, at our recommendation, organized a Child Research Clinic, which pioneered in exploring facts about retarded children and bringing them to the attention of relevant publics, with far-reaching effects in this area of child care. The Clinic gave impetus to better care of mentally deficient children in our country.

We launched for the Fred French Co. the first slum clearance development of the New Deal, financed in part by the United States — Knickerbocker Village on New York's lower east side. Al Smith, a former resident of the neighborhood, keyed the occasion.

With the help of economists, we launched for the *Ladies' Home Journal* during the depression a nationwide It's Up to the Women movement to stimulate consumer purchasing and help the recovery effort. The movement dramatized the part women played in our economy, a hitherto neglected fact. *The Country Gentleman*, a sister publication of the *Journal*, then retained us to build public recognition for them.

At a newsworthy cornerstone-laying we dedicated the luxurious apartment hotel, Hampshire House in New York, which we had also named. The cornerstone's engraving stressed yesterday's charm and tomorrow's convenience, pointing to new modes of urban living. Due to financial stringency, however, the structure stood unfinished

for seven years. After its completion Hampshire House accelerated the trend toward apartment hotel living.

*Fortune*, setting precedents in business journalism, retained us to establish closer relations with its readers, its potential readers, and the general public. We sent proofs of "Arms and the Man" by Eric Hodgins, a *Fortune* article that discussed the arms traffic and the promoters of war, to Senator William Borah of Idaho who initiated an arms investigation on the basis of it. It almost stopped the private arms industry. It demonstrated the power of the printed word.

Often we were able to pursue socially laudable goals and aid our business clients simultaneously. We helped to kill the communal drinking cup when we were retained by the Dixie Cup makers. This ushered in the era of paper cups and improved health conditions. This was a constructive example of the coincidence of public and private interest at work.

We counselled other business clients, including Allied Chemical and Dye and the Nash-Kelvinator Co. This decade saw the beginning of our long relationship with the largest chemical company in the world, Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation. We advised them on as varied problems as stock exchange relationships and sales problems. We developed programs for the greater use of American manufactured nitrates by the American farmer and fought a reigning superstition among southern farmers that only bird-made nitrates from Chile were effective. Nash-Kelvinator, a new company, asked us to help adjust their various corporate actions to their many publics. The icebox on wheels was the subject of weary jokes; at the time it was considered strange for a refrigerator manufacturer and an automobile manufacturer to merge. Few if any saw in this incongruous merger the progenitor of the later business form, the conglomerate.

Another businessman who appointed us counsel on public relations during the depression was Alfred P. Sloan, president of General Motors Corporation. Even such huge consumers' goods companies had little awareness of their dependence on public desires. Engineers, not consumers dominated automobile design. A brilliant innovator in the firm, Henry Weaver, asked us to intercede with Mr. Sloan to convince him to pay more attention to studies of consumer preferences made by Weaver. This initiated GM's consumer research, which served as a pattern in American industry.

I sat in on executive committee meetings which determined basic company policies and programs. In the General Motors 1932

annual report, Mr. Sloan used a paragraph I wrote stressing the importance of good relations with the public, an innovation in the industry.

Other companies followed the lead of General Motors. During these years, we were concerned with a wide variety of policies and programs ranging from employee and dealer relations to new model launchings, the Chicago Fair of 1933, government relations, and annual reports. The adoption by General Motors of public relations as a major activity influenced the growing acceptance of its broad principles and practices throughout American industry.

Expansion of radio's use in this decade presented another opportunity to attempt to make it an important cultural force. For Philco Radio and Television Corporation we attempted to raise the status of radio instruments by developing radios specially designed by Norman Bel Geddes. We organized the Radio Institute of the Audible Arts, whose director was the distinguished music critic Pitts Sanborn. Its objectives were to develop significant programs in music, entertainment, and education. Broadcasting's commercialism finally overwhelmed the effort.

Social scientists helped us define the function of greeting cards in American society. Such cards gratified our need for gregariousness and served as morale boosters for men and women who needed psychological support. They became socially more acceptable when the manufacturers accepted our recommendations to use more sophisticated art and sentiment. Similarly, we tried to improve the public relations of producers of sporting goods. To A. G. Spalding and Company we gave the advice that in their approach to the public they should stress the fact that sport strengthens character and physical fitness.

Two important clients of the thirties were the largest bank in America, the Bank of America, and the nationally known manufacturers and servicers of pullman cars, the Pullman Company. We worked closely with the banking giant, A. P. Giannini, the Italian immigrant boy who started with a peddler's wagon and became a dominant figure in American banking. We laid out plans for acceptance by the American public of branch banking, then unpopular. We worked on programs to improve relations between the bank personnel and the people of California. After some four decades we found our program still being used. It also served other banks as a model. For the Pullman Co. we made a huge study of its public

relations problems, in connection with an anti-trust suit brought by the government.

Another important client was David Sarnoff, president of RCA. He asked us to advise his new president of NBC, Lenox Loehr. My most unforgettable experience of that relationship, which covered advice on the whole range of network broadcasting, was Mr. Sarnoff's response to my request for a chart of his organization. He responded, "We have no organization chart. This is a company of men, not of charts." My experience with the company convinced me of the necessity of defining responsibilities of individuals in a large organization.

In addition to my work for businesses, I was concerned with broader social problems. Nazism and Fascism were accelerating their nefarious propaganda in the United States in the latter part of the decade. Survival of the democratic way of life became a matter of grave concern. Viking Press published my *Speak Up for Democracy* in 1939 in a large paperback edition, a manual of public relations strategy and techniques for all Americans to oppose the then prevalent Communist and Fascist propaganda before Pearl Harbor.

Harvey Gibson, chairman of the World's Fair in New York in 1939, asked us to head its public relations. This task I did on a volunteer basis. We developed the theme that it was a living symbol of democracy. My wife coined the word "Democracy" for the central attractions, the Trylon and Perisphere.

As the decade passed, it was clear that public relations work was becoming an ever more highly visible part of American life. Authors, journalists, social critics, psychologists, sociologists, and other commentators evidenced a new interest in public relations in the 1930-1941 period. All those dependent on public understanding and support became similarly concerned. As a result of the depression and the New Deal, the public now assumed greater importance in the minds of leaders. The media gave publicity to public relations, as they had not done before.

Reference to our work appeared in the daily press, general magazines, professional and trade journals, books of fiction and non-fiction, encyclopedias, bibliographies, and on the radio. Influential periodicals such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *American Mercury* carried full-length profiles of me. More and more businessmen also wanted to learn how to adjust to the world on which they were

dependent for their continued existence.<sup>4</sup> I gave many talks on public relations before business groups. A typical one occurred at the International Association of Milk Dealers. I analyzed the industry's problems and recommended a course of action. I formulated objectives, a scientific analysis of the public, suggested changes in policies, products, or services based on research. I also outlined how projection and interpretation of the industry were to be made through the channels of communication.

Financial associations asked me to explain public relations to them. For instance, at the twentieth annual convention of the Financial Advertisers Association in September 1935, I explained the need for molding public opinion. I recommended a three-point public relations program for financial institutions: (1) public education on the need for banks, (2) public education on the function of banks in words the public understands, and (3) community leadership undertaken by banks and bankers to re-establish them in the public mind through their deeds.<sup>5</sup> The following year the Massachusetts Bankers Association asked for a comparable program to restore favorable public opinion for banks, a program which they distributed widely.

Government also used public relations increasingly. The Bureau of the Budget, the Navy, and the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Agriculture, and the Interior all had offices of public affairs, public relations or public information. At highest policy levels, research on public attitudes as a basis for public policy and planned approaches was general. By World War II public relations was firmly established. The war emphasized the importance of public relations and furthered its acceptance by society generally and by business.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS SINCE WORLD WAR II

After war's end, many additional corporations established public relations departments. Among them were Ford Motor Company in 1946, Allis-Chalmers in 1946, the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1948, Socony-Vacuum in 1949, Gulf Oil in 1949, Chrysler Corporation in 1950, Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1951, American Oil Company in 1952, and the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1953.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Boston College Conference on Retail Distribution Proceedings, 1936, "Business Turns to Counsel on Public Relations," 39-41.  
<sup>5</sup> Financial Advertisers Association "Proceedings . . . Twentieth Annual Convention," Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 9-11, 1935, 56-65.  
<sup>6</sup> Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, *Effective Public Relations* (New York, 1952), 44.

Nugent Wedding of the University of Illinois showed in his timely 1950 study, *Public Relations in Business: The Study of Activities in Large Corporations*, that public relations had penetrated much of American business. Of the firms considered, 35.3 per cent accepted public relations as a two-way activity including proper policy formulation and interpretation to the public; 29.4 per cent accepted the concept of good will; 10.6 per cent agreed that public relations was one aspect of the selling job, the same percentage believed it was solely a publicity activity, and 8.2 per cent held it interpreted business to the public and public to business.<sup>7</sup>

Business had come a long way in three decades since 1923. But there was still room for improvement. In the last twenty years, public relations has become an integral part of our system. The number of practitioners has increased. The New York Classified Directory listed ten public relations counselors in 1935 and 394 in 1950, a fortyfold increase in fifteen years. They occupied one column in the 1940 Directory and nine columns in 1971.

In 1960 *Business Week*<sup>8</sup> reported that the number of public relations practitioners increased from 1,000 in 1950 to 100,000 in 1960. In 1970 the *Public Relations Reporter* claimed that a more realistic figure would be 60,000, including everybody from practitioner to mail clerk.<sup>9</sup> Most of them are engaged in advising business. Some 1,350 counseling organizations function, with fifty new ones added each year. Expenditures for public relations are estimated at \$2,000,000,000 a year.<sup>10</sup>

Public relations has improved its professional education. In 1923 I gave the first course in public relations at an institution of higher learning, New York University. Today at least eighty-nine colleges give concentrated work in public relations, and more than 300 colleges have at least one course dealing with the profession. Seven colleges offer a bachelor's degree in the field, and a like number offer a master's degree.<sup>11</sup>

The first book on public relations, my *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, was published in 1923. Today there is an extensive literature. Specialized treatment has kept pace with specialization in the practice of public relations. The field has its own weekly newsletters,

<sup>7</sup> Nugent Wedding, *Public Relations in Business: The Study of Activities in Large Corporations* (Urbana, Ill., 1950).

<sup>8</sup> "Public Relations Today," *Business Week* (July 2, 1950), 40-62.

<sup>9</sup> *PR Reporter*, XIII, No. 27 (July 6, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> "Public Relations Today," 40.

<sup>11</sup> See Ray E. Hiebert's monograph, *Trends in Public Relations Education, 1964-1970*, published in 1971 by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education in New York.

among them the *Public Relations Reporter* published and edited by Robert Barbour, and the *Public Relations News* founded in 1944 by Denny and Glenn Griswold. There is a monthly, the *Public Relations Journal*, published by the Public Relations Society of America, and the *Public Relations Quarterly*.

The Public Relations Society of America with 7,000 members has tried to set standards for performance and ethics. Internationally, public relations has an International Public Relations Association with public relations associations in many countries.

In business today, public relations is a top corporate function. Social action by business is no longer a luxury. Business will change or change will be forced on it. Robert Barbour of the *Public Relations Reporter* put it succinctly. He said corporate public relations men must help management to determine priorities, plan action programs and devise and execute internal and external communications systems. They will have added responsibility, greater and more critical than previously.

Public relations should continue to grow as long as the democratic society flourishes. In a mobile, fluid society competition of ideas and things in the market place will continue. Validation and licensing of public relations practitioners by the state would ensure that the counsel's capability and character serve the public interest and profession alike. The public relations counsel of the future will be both a generalist and a specialist, oriented to an understanding of the society as a whole, rather than to only one segment of it. Educational training will emphasize the policy-making and informational functions of the profession.<sup>12</sup>

The ethical obligations of the practitioner are founded on the public interest. The public relations counsel should evaluate the past and present and, with the aid of social science research, project possible future trends. The public relations counsel interprets the public to his client to enable him to anticipate the future in his attitudes and actions. If he does his job properly, he serves both the private and the public interest.

<sup>12</sup> Edward L. Bernays, "The Outlook for Public Relations," *Public Relations Quarterly*, X, Nos. 3 and 4 (Winter 1966), 34-38.