

Karen O'Neil -
BERNAYS DOMESTIC SQUABBLE IN COURT. ←

The domestic problems of Edward L. Bernays, 101, sometimes referred to as the "father of PR," have reached the courtroom hearing stage, resulting in major coverage by Boston newspapers.

Joan Vondra, 50, former companion and housekeeper for Bernays, is fighting attempts by relatives to have him declared incompetent.

A recent two-day trip by Bernays and Vondra (9/15 NL) raised the ire of two daughters, Doris Bernays Held, a psychological counselor, and Anne Bernays, novelist.

A Middlesex County judge, after a hearing on Sept. 29, extended an order which restrains Vondra from having any contact with Bernays.

The daughters testified that Vondra mismanaged his money. Also cited was an opinion by a doctor that Bernays is no longer able to handle his own affairs.

Denies Abuse of Bernays

Vondra told the Boston Globe:

"They say I've abused him. I've never heard of anything so ridiculous in my life. What the family did was contrive to have him declared incompetent. He's the one who controls most situations. Isn't it funny that after he was declared incompetent by his doctor in this contrived effort, NBC and CBS interviewed him on the same day for documentaries?"

The Globe story ran under the six-column headline, "A public relations disaster." The story occupied more than a page including a large picture of Bernays.

Vondra, who was paid \$47,000 annually, told the paper her relationship with Bernays was "intimate."

She related that Bernays told an interviewer three years ago he was having sex three times a week with her.

She said she scolded him for bringing up such a subject but he replied that the writer was studying centenarians and Bernays wanted to give them "hope."

Vondra said her lawyer has told her that while the family has gained control over the money and property of Bernays, it doesn't have control over his body and can't prevent him from taking a trip.

Held told the Globe that the recent Vondra/Bernays trip was "a serious abduction." An investigation by the district attorney is continuing and a court officer is to determine the competency of Bernays, who will be 102 Nov. 22.

from Shelly - UNBELIEVABLE
PRSA MEMBERSHIP LEVEL AT 15,156.

Membership of Public Relations Society of America stood at 15,156 as of Sept. 30, a drop of 76 from the Jan. 1 figure of 15,232.

The Society added 1,336 new members, 626 reinstated members and 601 associate members. The full members pay dues of \$175 while the associates pay \$90 or \$120, depending on whether they have one or two years of experience in PR.

Dropped for non-payment of dues were 2,378 members. Another 280 cancelled their memberships and there were 10 deaths.

This was the first time in about 10 years that membership figures were revealed other than at the beginning of the year.

Budget Figures Sent to Assembly

Also for the first time, budget figures for the eight months ended Aug. 31 have been sent to Assembly members and the PR press.

The figures show a projected 8% rise in payroll costs for 1993 to \$2,310,846 for the 44 staff members. Salaries are budgeted at \$1,858,342 and fringe benefits at \$452,500.

Ray Gaulke, COO, said that the actual spending in this category might be slightly less. He noted there was a 4% cap on raises in 1993 and that not every staffer received a raise.

\$65,000 Exam Grading Fees Studied

The board of PRSA has directed the accreditation committee to study the current policy of having an outside service correct some 400 APR exams each year at a cost of \$65,000.

The provider of the service, which under its contract cannot be identified by PRSA, has been doing this for about eight years.

Gaulke, who went over the budget figures with this Newsletter in a session at h.q., said still under study is the recommendation by KPMG Peat Marwick that districts be dropped. He said an effort is being made to see what tasks might be most appropriate to district leaders.

Membership Development Head Hired

Steven Wolfe has been hired as PRSA's first director of membership development.

Formerly in a similar post at the Risk & Insurance Management Society, he will help chapters in recruitment efforts. Later, he will help to build the sections.

Full registrations for the conference in Orlando Nov. 14-17 totaled 323 six weeks from the start of the meeting vs. 182 at the same point for the 1992 meeting.