

CONTACT

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Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations

Timid Leadership

AN outstanding business publication recognizes the importance of an active policy in public relations:

"The President, Congress, the public as a whole must be persuaded there is sound good sense in the principles upon which business agrees if they are to be adopted in any part. This is a job for salesmanship.

"American business men have sold startling new ideas, revolutionary habits of living, unfamiliar and incredible devices to the nation on a tremendous scale. Among American business men are the greatest salesmen the world has ever seen.

"But no one would ever know it from the way they have gone about handling their relations with this Administration. Business has spoken when silence was the better part. It has said nothing when vigorous expression would have been effective. What it has said has violated every fundamental principle of salesmanship—conspicuously, old Number 1 in the salesman's manual: avoid antagonizing your prospect.

"Business has had just enough political sense to see that lobbyists, trained in the arts of the cloakroom and in the processes of obstruction, could do no good and much harm. Whereupon it has gone to the other extreme, and has ignored every principle of popular leadership.

"This may be explained, we suppose, by observing that many of the leaders of business organizations are from industries that deal with other industries, not with the public direct. It is possible, too, the fact this is essentially a sales job has not been seen.

"Well, it is, and the wisest thing the business leaders of the country can do is to put high up in their council seats the men among them who know what it is to have to win the public's good-will, and who have done it so successfully."

—*Business Week*

Why Minorities Succeed

MINORITY movements attain a success that has no basis in logic. They succeed for two reasons. The first is that they are vociferous. They organize actively and shout their views. They are daring and they are news because of their noise and intrepidity. The second reason is

that the majority does not organize against them; the majority, secure in the knowledge that it is the majority point of view, fails to recognize the fact that any point of view must express itself against opposition. Minorities often win popular support more easily because majorities are unorganized, unwieldy, lethargic and inarticulate.

Majorities are insecure because vast populations have no active beliefs, and others have vacillating opinions. Both can be swayed and often overnight join the ranks of dangerous minority groups. Minorities can become powerful. Leader groups in the majority ought, at the present time, to exert active efforts to present their point of view to the public. The public must not be taken for granted.

For Independent Judgment

THE democratic principle presupposes the desire and ability of the people to judge facts from among the mass of material presented by opposing camps of thought. Educators have recognized the need of accustoming people early in life to examine freely all sides of controversial matters, and to attempt to form reasoned judgment. A meeting at which this topic was discussed was reported in *The Daily Argus* (Mount Vernon, N. Y.) in part as follows:

"Controversial issues in the world today should be taught in the schools, and allowed free discussion in adult groups, but they should be taught right—not propagandized—was the consensus of a group of 60 Legionnaires and educators at a meeting last night of Leonard S. Morange Post, American Legion, in Christ Church parish house.

"Superintendent Willard W. Beatty of the Bronxville Schools emphasized that teaching in no way be an attempt to sway the pupils to the teachers way of thinking, but rather to present facts, and let the pupils decide for themselves.

"Schools make a gross mistake in trying to teach pupils the truth in economics and politics,' he said. 'They should teach the people to desire to find out the truth, and evaluate those subversive theories smacking of untruth . . .'

"Mr. Beatty pointed to fear of some subversive move of the Government to ruthlessly change the rules of the game which would endanger economic safety. Where controversial questions exist, the only solution is to attempt to find out the answer, he said.

"All points of view should be allowed in the schoolroom to prepare the children for outside life, said Forrest Long, professor of education at New York University. But he warned that teachers should not take advantage of the child mind to instill theories subversive to American institutions.

"The gift of gab of the stuffed shirts, such as Huey Long, have all too much effect on the people," offered Arthur Linden, of the curriculum research department of Teachers' College, Columbia University.

"Individuals need help in their thinking on current problems. They can crystallize their ideas by discussion with others in open forums. All have to take a stand and decide what they must do about their problems," he said."

Modern Leadership

THE importance of the use of symbols in influencing public ideas and actions has only recently been recognized. Concrete symbols have been used immemorially. Flags, idols, feathers have been translated into the realms of abstract ideas—men, groups, phrases, significant acts are part of the vast armamentarium of the thoughtful leader who wishes to make his ideas understandable and sympathetic to large masses of people. Charles E. Merriam, writing in his new book *Political Power*, says:

"More modern leadership exhibits strikingly the importance of two factors, the command of symbolism and facility in organization. Neither of these is entirely new in the history of political relations, but both are highly developed in modern times. Primitive symbolism was indeed highly important and broadly proliferated through the early tribal life. It was directed toward smaller groups, however, and was far less mobile in its forms than that of our times. It was in the nature of a social heritage rather than invention adapted to a newly developing situation. The symbolisms of the Soviets, of the Fascists, of the Nazi, are brilliant examples of the newer forms of symbolic interpretation of mass desires or potentialities in varying forms. The modern rivals must struggle with each other in desperate efforts to surpass in the creation of competing types of symbolism which shall most broadly include the currents of contemporary life. By this they may stand or fall in the rough struggles in which they engage.

"Symbolism is not a club, but a magnet, which draws men into the central focus of the leader group, and fuses them with the others there. It rests upon an understanding or appreciation or sympathy with the potential responses of masses of men and women, adult and youth, measured in terms of slogans and signs with life and color and appeal. Symbolic content is susceptible of infinite variation, and even inner contradiction is not a weakness but a gain, if

there develops an assemblage of appeals. Self-interest, sacrifice, struggle, ease, may all be intermingled in what may seem from one angle an incongruous and inconsistent pattern, but from another angle indicate a type of solidarity from which victory may arise. . . .

"Organization as well as interpretation is a key to the use of symbolism upon a mass scale. It is not enough to dream or devise a catching symbol, for the techniques of modern mass action, of advertising, of assembly must be invoked, so that the symbol is impressed upon millions. In organized form this is sometimes called propaganda, popular education in special appeals. But the propagandist does not sow the seed to the four winds of heaven. He systematically surveys the field and spreads the seed mechanically in spots where it may most quickly or most deeply take root. The propaganda center of a modern power group is not like the cell of the hermit or the abode of the prophet, but has more likeness to the factory, with its huge plant, its subdivision of labor, its whirl and clatter, its systematic efficiency. Education and advertising, mass production; these are its background. But this mechanical technique, however impressive, is subordinated to the ulterior purpose of affecting human behavior favorably in the direction of a specific goal or program or person or all of these."

Spheres of Identification

PEOPLE are most interested when they can identify themselves with a problem. Even Mars, were it inhabited, might be drawn into an interstellar contest of pulchritude. *The New York Times* is right, the world is too indefinite to excite partisan interest:

"Dr. John F. Condon said on the witness stand at Flemington that he was born in 'the most beautiful borough in the world'—the Bronx. In speaking like that he was presumably guilty of *obiter dictum* or *ultra vires* or *quo warranto*, or whatever is the correct legal phrase for taking in a little too much territory. The world is a big place with many fair cities in it. It would be quibbling to insist that Naples, Italy, and Paris, France, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, are not 'boroughs.'

"But if Dr. Condon had said that the Bronx is the most beautiful borough in New York City he would have been on much safer ground. What is more, he would probably have stirred up a lively debate in the local press. It is not yet too late for an enterprising newspaper to start polling its readers on the relative charms of the city's five boroughs. Sectional pride is sure to declare itself. Nobody gets much stirred up if you call a woman the most beautiful woman in the world. But if you call her the most beautiful woman in lower Park Avenue you have invited a contest."

Freedom of the Press

THE dangers to freedom of the press have come much to the fore of late with dictatorships in Europe and discussions about certain codes in the United States. A recent book, *Mobilizing for Chaos: The Story of the New Propaganda*, by O. W. Riegel, deals with the subject. Reviewing it, *The New York Times* says:

"There is the essential point, so often overlooked in discussions of the menace of propaganda. Your side of the case is propaganda, my side of the case is the simple objective truth. So feels the average man, even if he happens to be a Prime Minister or a dictator. It follows that, believing devoutly in his own side of the case, he furthers it by any means at his command, and modern science, modern economic tendencies have given him such means as men never had at their command before. Nothing can cure such practices but a willingness to admit that just possibly the other side is right and that, accordingly, both sides deserve a hearing—a doctrine which is not popular at present.

"Julian Huxley, in 'If I Were Dictator,' has lately said that he would have two broadcasting systems in his domain, one generally conservative, the other generally radical, to set forth the opposite sides of every important question."

These views are indeed unpopular today. Says *The New York Daily Investment News* about the same book:

"The governments of ten European countries—Italy, Germany, Russia, Portugal, Austria, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Albania and Lithuania, with a total population of about 307,000,000—dictate absolutely what their people shall read. In six other countries, with a population of about 60,000,000, active censorship exists, but has not proceeded as far as in the supercensored countries. In only eleven European countries—Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, the Irish Free State, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, with a population of about 136,000,000—do citizens cling, 'sometimes precariously,' according to Mr. Riegel, to freedom of newspaper expression."

And the *New York Herald Tribune* substantiates this indictment by reporting of Italy that:

"Especially in the provincial papers it had been usual to print long lists of the names and titles of all who attended public functions. Under the new ruling a selected list of holders of high offices may be identified in the paper by title, but names have completely disappeared, with the exception of those of Mussolini, Cabinet ministers, the Secretary of the party and such others as may have to be mentioned to make news accounts intelligible."

In America, we are glad to say, this situation does not yet obtain. American propaganda comes to an editor with its source plainly marked, and it rests on its news value alone. All groups may compete in the creation of news.

No one point of view has yet yoked the American news-world. Witness an article, entitled "Propaganda," issued by World Peaceways, which states:

"It is probably true that the news reports in our daily press are more truthful and free from bias than in any other country in the world. And generally speaking, the interpretation of the news, in editorials and signed articles, is entirely dependent upon the views of the diversified private ownership of the press of the nation.

"Analyze this freedom carefully and you will find in it both a blessing and a danger. Primarily, it serves as the greatest possible leaven of our political life. In its highest form it becomes the voice of the people, and articulates their approval or their disapproval of all national action—political or otherwise. To this extent, at least, it is a check on political extremes, a balance of democratic government. It is gratifying to observe that no group in the country is more alert and aggressive in jealously guarding the independence of the press than the newspaper proprietors themselves. So much, then, for the blessings.

"The danger lies in the ownership and, consequently, in the editing of the press. Every newspaper in the country (and the same is true of all periodical publications) is merely an extenuation of the ideals, the honesty and the integrity of its owner and his interests. It is bound to reflect his thinking on national and international affairs; it inevitably reflects his personality in its treatment and presentation of the news—conservative or outspoken, cautious or reckless. The amount of biased or 'interested' news that creeps into his paper from national and international sources increases, or decreases and disappears, according to the degree of his own weakness or strength. . . .

"Into the editorial offices of the modern newspaper a steady stream of 'news' pours every day from foreign and national sources. And in the modern scheme of things, 'news' in its raw state is not always pure.

"Despite the greatest precaution on the part of the American correspondents abroad, foreign news is frequently 'propaganda-poisoned' at the source. This is particularly true in those nationalistic countries where all press information is under strict government control. The editor in the United States, therefore, has to approach his cable news with the greatest caution. Far from the scene of the news, he is frequently at a loss to know whether he is publishing unadulterated facts or merely serving as an unwilling American mouthpiece for some foreign office propagandist."

Public Opinion and the Law

ONE of the significant things that has emerged from the developing class-consciousness of the American bar is interest in what is conveniently called 'public rela-

tions.' The term apparently had never been used by lawyers until about two years ago, but already there is a literature on the subject which makes it difficult to describe this growing movement in any brief essay. Almost simultaneously in several states there arose individual lawyers who demanded that the bar assert itself amidst the welter of propaganda that competes for public interest. In Massachusetts, Louisiana, Minnesota, Oregon and California, to mention the more conspicuous states, the matter of informing the public concerning the essential public function of the lawyer became one of the foremost of the objects of collective bar effort." —*Journal of the American Judicature Society*

Government Shows the Way

MARSHALL E. Dimock of the University of Chicago, writing for the *National Municipal Review* tells of the progress made by British government enterprises in furthering public interest and good-will:

"The most neglected aspect of public administration is salesmanship—what is usually called, in the broader sense, public relations. In recent times, however, governing officials have begun to learn that efficiency and good service alone will not suffice—the public must be made to appreciate what it is getting. This consideration is particularly true in the case of economic services operated either directly by the government or by a quasi-governmental agency such as the British Broadcasting Corporation or the Tennessee Valley Authority. The new emphasis on public relations in government generally is attributable, in large part, to what has been learned from the administration of government-operated commercial services. When there is competition between various forms of enterprise, when the customer can 'take it or leave it,' when the demand is elastic, and when price is an important element in the volume of business, the managing officials soon learn to give special attention to the desires and the attitudes of the customers.

"Improvement of public relations methods is quite clearly the greatest existing challenge to public commercial enterprises. In the past government-operated or controlled services either have not been permitted to spend funds in an effort to influence public attitudes or else they have not sufficiently recognized the necessity of public relations activities. . . .

"One of the most important and permanent methods of solving the problem of public relations with citizen-consumers is by giving more attention than has been done in the past to the special training of public employees in dealing with customers. This is one of the foremost tasks of public administration. It is an oft repeated statement that the average citizen forms his opinion of governmental administration by the competence and courtesy of the window

clerks and officials with whom he comes into contact at the post office or at the city hall. This being the case, it should appear in theory, and it has been proved in practice, that these employees should be given a special training in meeting the public, just as the sales people in the largest and most successful commercial establishments almost invariably are. Three or four years ago, the British Post Office employed a firm of public relations consultants, who, among other things, gave counter clerks and other employees who deal with the public special training in public relations methods. This instruction involved such rudimentary things as voice training, politeness, and how to deal with nervous and unreasonable people. This investment has already begun to bear rich fruits in the form of a better attitude and greater appreciation on the part of the public as a whole. It is a well-known fact that department stores and other large establishments teach young clerks an improved method of saying 'thank you,' and public commercial undertakings can afford to do no less."

Cabinet Post

CHICAGO, Dec. 27 (UP).—Proposal to create a Cabinet office of Secretary of Public Relations, responsible only to the President, was placed before the nation's leading social and economic scientists today by Edward L. Bernays, of New York.

"Bernays, Public Relations Counsellor, spoke before the American Political Science Association, one of twelve national societies holding a joint conference.

"He said the government public relations chief should be independent of the various Federal departments and should advise the President on matters of public policy.

"His function also would be one of co-ordinating the efforts of the various departments to the end that the public would receive a constant, integrated picture of governmental activities," Bernays said."

—*New York Herald Tribune*

Freedom through Propaganda

CHICAGO, Dec. 28 (AP).—Edward L. Bernays, New York public relations counsellor, told the American Political Science Association today that American institutions will remain free as long as freedom of speech, press and propaganda remain.

"The habit of propaganda among the American people, together with the firmly established principle of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, provides safeguards against political extremism of any sort, be it Fascist, Communist or Socialist," Mr. Bernays said in his address on 'Propaganda Methods of Dictatorship.'"

—*The Sun* (New York)