

# CONTACT

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Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations

## Test

LOUIS WILEY, Business Manager of the *New York Times*, talked with clarity on the subject of public relations and publicity at the Fortnightly Forum recently at the Park Lane Hotel:

"Whatever we may think of publicity, we live in an age of it. Publicity is most often associated with newspapers, because news is the most interesting thing in the world and the publicity man's ambition is to have his output appear in the guise of legitimate news. Probably the publicity agent's idea of heaven is to have all of his stories appear on the first page of the celestial *Times*...

"News editors are confronted daily with deciding when news items cease to be mere advertising of private firms and become news. Often readers are puzzled at seeing in the news columns of the best newspapers stories which seem to be unblushing publicity for a company. The credulous minded, whose numbers apparently increase when the mysterious subject of newspapers is discussed, frequently attribute such publicity to secret sinister influences.

"The test applied is solely whether the information in the news story is something which, because of its general public interest, should be spread abroad.

"The problem is not a simple one. A story that a household device such as a specific make of washing machine or electrical refrigerator is having an enormous sale is not found in the general news columns. Yet this may be important, legitimate news on the financial pages where such information will have a bearing on securities of the company.

"The *Times* declines to print automobile publicity, which is considered so necessary to the good will of automobile companies. It does publish regularly on its financial pages the volume of sales by the various companies given out monthly or quarterly by the corporation, and it prints at all times any real news of interest to the owner and driver.

"Good publicity makes complete, accurate news available. Bad publicity is propaganda, half truths or twisted news. It is a perfectly understandable thing in this complex highly organized age that the publicity representatives should perform a useful, legitimate function. A great industrial organization, or a large national social service agency may find it absolutely necessary to have the services of a publicity representative, if only to coordinate the information issued. What such a representative can and should do may be a convenience to his own organization and to the newspaper as well.

"The evils of publicity arise as much out of the suppression of news as out of the manufacture of news. Too many publicity people think that their job is primarily to hush up unfavorable or harmful informa-

tion. The sensible publicity representative will, of course, speak or write in the interests of his company, but he will see to it that accredited newspaper reporters obtain the full truth.

"Some years ago a first-class public relations man—that was his modern title—representing a great Middle Western corporation, attended an investigation of his company by a Federal commission. He learned that there was no provision for an immediate delivery of a full transcript of all the testimony to the newspaper men. He at once said the company would do that at its own expense. The President of the company was amazed. He said, 'But there will be many damaging things in the testimony. We ought not give a full transcript.' The publicity man replied, 'The correspondents will get the damaging testimony with or without the full transcript. That will be the sensational feature of the hearing. I want to make everything available so that part of the testimony favorable to us won't be overlooked.' He won his case with the President. That was sensible publicity work.

"The good publicity man will see to it that legitimate news is made before he puts it out. I know of a man who was called in to handle the news of an association of property owners. Their idea was that he could by magic have what they described as 'write-ups' inserted in the newspapers. He disillusioned them. He was a hard-headed, practical man.

"'You must do something,' he said. 'There is plenty you can do. Take up some of the problems confronting you as an association representing property owners on this important street. Get something done. Produce news by doing something worthwhile. I'll attend to the mechanics of letting the newspapers know what you are doing.' The outcome was entirely successful.

"Many think that only sinister influences are behind foreign news. It is the pet theory of the radicals that we are all deluded daily. If there is any important question, international or national, which has not been presented from all sides, I would like to know what it is. There is propaganda, of course. The newspapers watch constantly to keep it out. The *New York Times* spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to obtain foreign news. Certainly we do not go to this expense to obtain news which the propagandists would be glad to supply at their expense. We get all the news, and to have the news complete is the best insurance against propaganda.

"The substance of the whole subject is merely this—if so-called publicity is legitimate news it should be printed for the readers of the newspaper regardless of whether it benefits private interests or not. If it is not legitimate news then it should not be printed, regardless of who may be pleased to have it appear. To adopt any other policy is to break faith with the reading public."

—We reprint extracts from this speech by special permission.

## Open Covenants Openly Arrived At

FROM the *New York Herald Tribune*, Thursday, November 18th, 1926.

### "COMPLETE PUBLICITY—

A Long Established Policy of

### "STANDARD GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY

"This progressive utility system, which has grown in 16 years to be among the largest and strongest in the country, has always followed a policy of full publicity—not only to investors, but also to the general public.

"Toward keeping informed its 260,000 investors, the following methods are employed:

- exhaustive, certified, annual reports.
- monthly earnings statements.
- weekly news bulletin for the press.
- monthly news bulletin for investors.
- quarterly bulletins to shareholders.
- special, definite reports upon request.

"Many of the securities of the Standard Gas & Electric Company and subsidiaries are listed on the New York, Chicago and other stock exchanges.

"Due largely to its long established policy of complete publicity this System enjoys investment confidence throughout the United States.

H. M. BYLLESBY & CO.

Incorporated

Investment Securities."

Public Utilities as well as other far seeing industries appreciate the importance of complete publicity in building up public confidence.

## The Fifth Estate

RADIO has reached a position of high importance in influencing public opinion—has reached this so quickly that its effect has scarcely been analyzed. Problems arise before the significance of this huge sounding board of authority is adequately understood. H. V. Kaltenborn, Associate Editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, who is described as "the first current events speaker to attain a big audience on the air," discusses the "Mike" for the *New York World*:

"Radio is influencing public opinion by what it excludes even more than by what it gives. Our present tendency is toward uniformity rather than toward diversity in the material that is broadcast. Small stations are giving way to large ones. Super-power is succeeding low power. Multi-station hook-ups are replacing single station programs.

"Only a little while ago the Socialist candidates in any large city who were denied the use of a broadcasting station during a political campaign might have combined and for \$10,000 established a station that would have reached most of the voters. Today the high powered stations would drown them out.

"Radio is making people think in unison. It is doing more than any other agency to develop the lock-step in public opinion. As radio is now controlled, it

objects to that which provokes and stimulates independent thinking as 'too controversial.' A debate between William Jennings Bryan and Prof. Henry Fairfield Osborn on evolution was barred on this account.

"All stations dread adverse publicity. They are seeking to build up good-will and exclude any feature that might offend a part of their audience. An offering must be sufficiently innocuous to appeal to young and old, male and female, to butcher and baker and radio set maker.

"Radio problems will not be solved overnight any more than those which face the press, the school or the church. It has been called the Fifth Estate in recognition of the place it has assumed as a maker of opinion. It has become a giant over night and is still almost unaware of its power.

"Certainly it has not yet begun to use its power with a constructive purpose. There is much to be said in favor of the wise restraint with which its power has been used. But the time has come to ask for a broader, braver policy that will permit radio to tread more freely and firmly on the battlefields of modern thought. Public opinion is the king of America, and radio must assume a more conscious responsibility as democracy's king maker."

## Anti-Propaganda An Anomaly

SIMEON STRUNSKY in the *New York Times Book Review* examines the thesis of an anti-propagandist and finds it wanting. We quote excerpts from his review:

"Let us there observe how completely inconsistent is the new realistic attitude toward the news distributed by life and toward the news circulated by the official bureaus of information. . . . If there is any one definite principle that underlies the modern ethic and mores, it is the theorem that in the conduct of life and the practice of manners Authority is utterly played out. No man's say-so on any subject is good enough for the next man. Bibles and codes have, naturally, no validity. . . . The one standard, the one value, the one objective is precisely Experience. To accept nothing on another man's affirmation and belief, to doubt everything, to search, to test, to taste and enjoy or spew out, to permit only the individual palate to judge between the good and the bad, the true and the false, in the matter of love, duty, patriotism and table manners—that is modern realistic doctrine, and plausible doctrine. . . .

Later Mr. Strunsky says:

"What the anti-propagandist demands is precisely a pre-digested diet. He insists that the Latvian Bureau of Information present him with the 100 per cent. objective truth about the Latvian Navy, so that he may not be put to the trouble of looking up the facts in the Naval Almanac. . . .

"The critic of propaganda contemplates with extreme concern an American people exposed to



M. Poincaré's propaganda against the war debts, to the La Follette propaganda for the war debts, to Farm Bloc propaganda, to Wall Street propaganda, to Soviet propaganda, to Minute Men propaganda, to Fundamentalist propaganda, to Modernist propaganda, to Ku Klux, Catholic, Jewish, pacifist, militarist, eugenicist, Nordic, Mediterranean, Mother's Day, Clean-Up Week, sex and Puritan propaganda. What he apparently desires and hopes for is an American people living in a state of total insulation against any impact or stimulus from the outside and producing its own policies and ideals by 100 per cent. spontaneous generation. A point usually slurred over is how much of the American people would remain after you had subtracted war debt advocates, anti-war debt partisans, Farm Blockers, Wall Street men, radicals, Minute Men, Fundamentalists, Modernists, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, pacifists, militarists, eugenicists, Nordics, Mediterraneans, Mother's Day celebrants, Clean-Up Weekers, sex experimentalists and Puritan propagandists.

"The error of the realist is multiple, and, I am afraid, not altogether innocent. He asserts in the first place that propaganda is an evil thing, though he knows at heart that he would not give a snap of his fingers for the man who hesitated to employ propaganda in behalf of anything he believes in. He insists, in the second place, on invoking propaganda to explain the obviously normal. . . . He insists, in the third place, that propaganda can be eliminated; and there, of course, the realist ceases to be a realist. Otherwise he would know that if you drive the devil of propaganda dressed as a Bureau of Information out of the door, he will come in by the window disguised as a Bureau of Research. . . ."

### The Life of Trade

PRESIDENT COOLIDGE discusses the place of advertising in modern business. He quotes a paragraph ascribed to Lincoln—one which we called to the attention of the public not so long ago. Mr. Coolidge said:

"Somewhere I have seen ascribed to Abraham Lincoln the statement that 'In this and like communities public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed; consequently he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes or decisions possible or impossible to be executed.'

"Advertising creates and changes this foundation of all popular action, public sentiment or public opinion. It is the most potent influence in adopting and changing the habits and modes of life, affecting what we eat, what we wear and the work and play of the whole nation. Formerly it was an axiom that competition was the life of trade. Under the methods of the present day it would seem to be more appropriate to say that advertising is the life of trade."

### The Carrying Power of Names

IT IS the public that invests successful people with authority. If a well-known man becomes the director of a not-so-well-known bank, the stamp of his approving authority has been placed on that financial institution; and it becomes more important to the investor, whether or not there is a substantial change in its financial statement. An opera house or a museum of art adds well-known names to its board of directors. So does a philanthropic group. Business has recently adopted the same methods.

Rodney C. Sutton says of this, in *Dougherty's Magazine*:

"The reading public has come to judge undertakings by the names of the men who are on the sponsoring committee. It has little time to inquire for itself the real needs of the appeal which may be made, but it gives these men credit for knowing what they are doing and for sincerity in their sponsorship of the project."

### A Bulwark of Conservatism

RED yesterday may be called white today. Labels are changed with the public taste in politics and industry. Few changes in popular notions are as ironic as that shown in the following two paragraphs from the *New York American*. A few years ago the unions were called dangerous radical organisms. Today they are called bulwarks of conservatism. It all depends on who calls whom, what.

"The important thing, according to Stalin, Russian boss, is for Russia to get control of 'reactionary labor unions.' He means especially the American Federation of Labor.

"American capitalists should realize that the American Federation of Labor is indeed a great bulwark of conservatism, and not try to push it in the direction of Bolshevism by any gloating over the fact that organized labor power is not what it once was."

Equal evidence of change is the following statement from the *New York Times*:

"The modern trend toward conservatism was deplored today in an address by William Allen White to the students of the College of Emporia at the college's observance of Theodore Roosevelt's birthday.

"If Theodore Roosevelt could be let down from the battlements of Heaven in a parachute," Mr. White declared, "and began without warning to say the things he said twenty years ago, he would shock, astound and paralyze the American people.

"What if, suddenly, from the White House today the phrase 'malefactors of great wealth' came crashing out? Remember that President Roosevelt attacked decisions of the Supreme Court. Remember that he stood for the initiative and referendum, the primary, the eight-hour-day law, child labor laws, workmen's compensation, and had no word to say against the closed shop.

"Why, if Theodore Roosevelt should appear suddenly in America today, saying and doing what he did from

1904 to 1912, the various defense societies, security leagues, minute men of the republic, and 100 per cent. Americans would start a whispering campaign that his real name was Feodor Rooseviski, and that he was sent here as an agent of the Bolsheviks.

"So greatly have times changed. So far has the mind of America turned around the corner from the liberalism of the first decade of this century to the conservatism of today.

"Roosevelt will live in our history, not as a great President, but as a great agitator, like Isaiah and Elijah. He stood in the courts of democracy and thundered the truth about its corruption of King Demos into its teeth."

### A Good Press Agent

"SOME of our press agent friends say *Editor & Publisher* is unjust in its attitude toward their business. We should announce that there are good and bad press agents and, to be constructive, should publish a definition of legitimate publicity work.

"By all means, let criticism be constructive! Here, in our opinion, is what constitutes a good press agent: Through experience as a newspaper publisher or employee he understands newspaper methods and has liberal appreciation of newspaper ethics. He believes that a journalist who uses his power for selfish or unworthy purpose betrays his trust. Promotion of any private interest contrary to general welfare is dishonest journalism. News columns cannot be used to sell any article or service, or promote any private interest without violation of a fundamental principle. The reader looks to the news columns for truthful, sincere and wholly unprejudiced information, the product of writers who are responsible to the editor and no other person.

"A good press agent will make available to reporters all the information they may seek, both favorable and unfavorable. He will hand out 'news' which is authorized by his employer, subject to publication within 'quotes' and with credit to a named official. Never will he stand as a shield between his employer and the inquiring reporter. When the good press agent's employer instructs him to induce a newspaper to publish an item which he, as a newspaper man, could not conscientiously hand to his city editor, or to get a news fact suppressed, he will point out that such an act would be subversive of impartial and independent news practice, and resign from the job if the employer insists.

"Is this definition extreme? Is *Editor & Publisher* 'prejudiced' against the publicity craft? If so, the American Society of Newspaper Editors is extreme and prejudiced, for these rules of conduct are based upon the well-known 'Canons of Journalism' of that responsible body."

From *Editor & Publisher*.

We are in accord with *Editor and Publisher* as to the correct ethics of the professions of journalism and public relations counsel.

### Exploring Minds

ANYONE who wishes to convince the public of the verity of an idea must know what the causes of the public's beliefs are, and what are the standards for its judgments. J. H. Randall, in *The Making of the Modern Mind*, says:

"The history of human civilization is just such a story of labors and edifices, continually modified and enlarged and adapted to the new streams of life . . . If the persistence of the past into the present is not everywhere so palpable as in the city of the Popes, it is none the less true that the ideas and beliefs, the aims and ideals of the California fruit grower or the Pennsylvania coal miner, the sheep rancher of Queensland or the cultured clubman of Buenos Aires, are just such a mosaic of bits and pieces gathered from here and there along the journey through the ages, set into new patterns, to serve the needs and the taste of America or Australia. A ramble through the mind of the modern man would reveal the same juxtaposition of beliefs that have endured unchanged for centuries, with ideas gleaned from the morning paper, all put together in a structure with a shaky enough foundation and with many a makeshift to fill the gaps, yet somehow strong enough to answer the demands made on it and to give shelter until it can be improved . . . It is fascinating to explore the mind of the present generation, to unravel the many threads that enter into its tangled fabric and trace them back to their first appearance in the loom of history, far more fascinating even than a walk through Rome. But it is more; it is of the utmost importance, for one who wishes to understand the life about him, to comprehend its intellectual forces, to discern the probable drift of the current, and perchance to take his place at the oar."

### Edward L. Bernays Talks to Art Directors

THE Art Directors Club was addressed on November 12th at the Art Center by Edward L. Bernays. Declaring that the art director is potentially a powerful force for art in industry in America, Mr. Bernays stated that the problem of the art director was twofold: to convince large industrial organizations of the function of art direction in industry, and to educate the public to a greater appreciation of beauty in utilitarian objects.

"The art directors," he said, "must learn how to sell themselves as a group to the country. They must make themselves an established body of authority. This can be done in many ways. The formation of a society that will bear all the dignity of an academy is the first method. They must pass official judgment on important occasions. They may offer prizes for excellent works of industrial art. They may hold exhibitions and in all other ways make themselves felt as an integral group in the industrial body. They should be not only the link between the artist and the manufacturer. They should be also the inspiration of the manufacturer and the educating force for the public."