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Supplement TO CONTACT

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Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations

AN important survey has been made by The Universal Trade Press Syndicate to determine what is the place of propaganda in social and economic life today. To this end, Mr. Myron Blumenthal, the editor of that syndicate, questioned leading editors, publishers and business men. The result of this survey was published by them in a brochure, "The Verdict of Public Opinion on Propaganda," based on an article, "A Public Relations Counsel States His Views," by Edward L. Bernays, which latter article appeared in *Advertising and Selling*.

We are printing, with permission of the Syndicate, a few excerpts from this brochure, which we believe will be especially interesting to the readers of *Contact*.

E. L. B.

THE Universal Trade Press Syndicate was organized in 1922 to provide a technical and business news-gathering organization to supply authoritative news to trade and technical journals. It functions similarly to other news-gathering services, selling its product—news—to the publications. It has for this purpose a staff of trained business writers in two hundred American cities and in Paris, London and Berlin.

"It is not interested in special pleading of any kind; it furnishes an unbiased service to its subscribers.

"In its contacts with leaders in industry, the question of propaganda in relation to broad economic forces and industry has often come up. This brochure is an attempt to get a clear point of view on this subject, and it contains letters in answer to an inquiry to leaders, asking their opinion of an article which Edward L. Bernays, well-known counsel on public relations, contributed to the January 26th issue of *Advertising and Selling*, dealing with these questions.

"The article by Mr. Bernays throws light on the modern public relations counsel or propagandist and shows him to be not merely the old-time press agent who gave stories to the newspapers, but as a man whose work is related to that of every institution which communicates ideas to the public. Therefore, the problem of propaganda must be studied from a new angle. He points out that the modern propagandist is more concerned with what his client is and does than in what he says and, therefore, he sets ideas in motion and makes events which will mould public thought. Next, he differentiates between what is advertising and what is news in its broadest sense. An event is news when it wins recognition in the free and open competition for a

given medium at a given time. The fact that certain news may bring fame or profit to individuals has, after all, nothing to do with news in itself. News, he maintains, is news whether or not it advertises some idea or product. The editorial blue pencil and waste basket are the practical checks to objectionable propaganda.

"This brochure, containing a number of replies expressing different points of view, is offered to the public simply as a contribution to the subject. In order to avoid repetition only a certain number of the letters received have been included.

UNIVERSAL TRADE PRESS SYNDICATE."

LOUIS Wiley, Business Manager of *The New York Times*, says in part:

"News editors are confronted daily with the task of deciding when news items cease to be mere advertising and become news. 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.

"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 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 necessary to have the service 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. "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 who may be pleased to have it appear. To adopt any other policy is to break faith with the reading public. . . ."

HENRY Goddard Leach, Editor of *The Forum* states: "Propaganda has its good and evil in even balance. Today Americans respond far more to the environment of propaganda which surrounds them everywhere, emitted by billboards, broadcastings, bulletins, and what-not than to the inheritance of traditions passed down by parents and preachers. The opportunity for enlightening and leveling-up the masses is tremendous. There can be no doubt that the general dissemination of bathtubs, of artistic ready-made clothing, of tasteful interior decoration, of the thousand-and-one other symbols of a superior fact-and-thing civilization are the happy results of national advertising, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and similar public benefactors.

"The evil side of propaganda, of course, is the menace of misinformation and of the threat of standardized habits of stupid thinking. No government, no private committee can act as a permanent and desirable check against this danger. The proper check is . . . the . . . common-sense of the individual citizen as he learns to discriminate for himself and to pick and choose between helpful and stupid propaganda.

"I agree with Mr. Bernays that news is something to itself, to be culled by the Editor. As an Editor I do not hesitate to publish news that is news just because it may happen to be, at the same time, propaganda."

ERNEST Hamlin Abbott, Editor-in-Chief of *The Outlook*, remarks:

"I have not really had time to answer your letter about propaganda as I had intended. I do not object to propaganda that is plainly and openly such. Indeed, I think that I have learned from propaganda facts which I would otherwise never have been able to dig out for myself. If any one really wishes to be informed, he can always check propaganda against propaganda. What I think is perilous in the sending out of publicity material is the use of propaganda in concealed or unavowed form. As Mr. Don C. Seitz has pointed out in *The Outlook*, there is another danger in so-called publicity. It is that newspapers will lose their initiative and rely upon matter that comes in to them without their effort. The editor ought to wield something else than a blue pencil and rely upon something else than the waste basket."

EDGAR Sisson, editor, says in part: "The basic law of news is relativity, which exactly

means that the bigger piece of news pushes the lesser to a more obscure position and to shorter space. On a Monday morning following a dull Sunday the front page of a newspaper carries display headline matter that on a newsy day would be cut to a paragraph and buried far back, or be discarded outright. Everything that goes into a newspaper is weighed in regard to its value in relation to its companion pieces.

"And whether the printing of the particular piece is valuable to someone else besides the reader cannot be considered if the matter, whatever it is, is news to the reader and, by the best standards of newspaper making, not morally baneful to the reader.

"If this were not admitted to be the fact, there would be no news accounts of baseball, of thoroughbred racing, of boxing, of the theaters, of the opera, of any event which the public pays to see, or of transactions involving individual gain. The real estate sections are enlarged phases of older 'write-up' habits. So are the columns of 'Out-of-Town Buyers in Town.' The latest arrival in the list is the radio broadcast program, given indeed to the hearer, but supplied by advertisers who often as not are bringing themselves before the public through the medium of the air rather than that of the newspapers which carry the announcements of the performances. But all these are matters upon which newspaper readers insist that they have the news; and to secure the circulation needed for their directly profitable advertising, newspapers devote large space to the varied information.

"Edward L. Bernays, in his recent article in regard to public relations counsels, showed that he had a clear sense of where he and his fellows stand. If their clients, by their counsel, become news makers, their actions will be recorded in proportions relative to their news reader value at a particular moment."

G. S. Brown, of the Alpha Portland Cement Company, writes in part:

"I believe the public has a right to know of the progress being made on the problems of industry and as President of the Portland Cement Association, I believe that such information should be made available to those who wish it."

THE managing editor of *The Capper Farm Papers*, F. B. Nichols, gives his viewpoint:

"I agree with Mr. Bernays that most of the propaganda which editors encounter is not 'a menace.' It is, indeed, far from any such classification. Most of it is bunk, and a great waste of time and effort. The larger part of it indicates the writers have little knowledge of good newspaper making. There are exceptions, but the proportion is small. The success of such outstanding individuals indicates the need

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"Roosevelt was a past master, and every man throughout the generations who has gained wide public endorsement has accomplished it largely through publicity.

"In fact, it is the moving force guiding public opinion throughout the world, and public opinion moulds the universe."

EDWIN S. Friendly, Business Manager of *The New York Sun*, states:

"Your solicitation of my opinion of propaganda and its relation to news, advertising and the broader aspects of social and economic life today, necessitates the consideration of no small number of things. In the first place I should like to define the commonly accepted meaning of propaganda and news and advertising; and then dwell upon, in a limited way of course, their individual relation to what you have termed the broader aspects of social and economic life today.

"There is a specific difference between propaganda and news. Propaganda is a form of publicity which seeks to influence and direct opinion in a subtle or insidious way with a specific purpose which is not obviously understood or easily perceived. In most instances it has to do with some ambitious and selfish scheme which could not be accomplished in an open and straight forward manner. The propagandist is often enough a shrewd, calculating worker.

"News, as newspaper men interpret it, is current information which is truthful and more or less interesting from the point of view of one who wishes to be informed. It must be written from the point of view of one who desires others to become informed. News has a definite value; a special purpose, which is simply to inform others of something that has recently taken place, which may be new or strange or of general or vital interest to the public.

"Advertising is the art of selling something with printed words and illustrations on paper. The three principal forms of advertising are: (1) newspapers, (2) magazines, and (3) billboards. Newspaper advertising leads the other two.

"There has been such a high volume of propaganda, good and bad, local and foreign, circulated during the World War, that many managing editors are, all too often, unable to detect it from genuine news. Propaganda is usually prepared by experts, in many cases by men familiar with the regular channels through which legitimate news passes before it reaches the printed page. These same channels are too frequently used by propagandists. All propaganda is not, however, detrimental to the best public interest. Some of it has certain news value and is used for that reason.

"But there is in a strict sense, a pronounced difference between propaganda and news. Their relationship is the difference between something sought and desired and something to be had without effort to obtain it. News is sought while propaganda comes in without an effort. News has but one purpose, to inform; while propaganda has two: in

addition to informing it seeks to influence and direct opinion. Propaganda falls, like many other things, into two classes—good and bad. The harmless kind may be called the good. The insidious propaganda and that detrimental to the welfare of the general public may be called the bad. The success of propaganda depends on the type of person reading it. Propaganda today has much less influence in directing opinion than it did during the late war. The average person is more independent in thought today than ever before. And for this reason insidious propaganda is now more or less harmless, and taken with a grain of salt.

"Propaganda and news and their relation to advertising is largely the difference between free space and paid space. For this reason there is less propaganda in advertising. Advertising is a commercial proposition and usually can be accepted at its fact value because most advertising is truthful and accurate in statement.

"The average American, though an omnivorous reader, does not believe all he reads. He is wise enough and intelligent enough to form his own opinions. Few things, if any, have had a greater influence upon our social and economic life today than news and advertising in our daily newspapers.

"They have not only increased our knowledge and understanding about ourselves, our neighbors and the world generally, but have done much in a constructive and helpful way to elevate our ideals, our standards of living and have accomplished other important and beneficial things which have brought this nation to its present leadership in the nations of the world.

"We not only publish the best newspapers in the world but spend millions more for advertising than any other nation."

HERE is an extract from the letter of William Morrow, president of William Morrow and Company, Inc.:

"Propaganda material, when consisting of statement of fact submitted to discriminating and fair minded news editors is not open to objection. On the contrary, it may serve useful purposes and be of real value to the public.

"So long as our journalists continue to possess a keen instinct for news and remain loyal to the interests of their readers there is an advantage to the public in the dissemination of facts and opinions through public relations directors or propagandists. Danger there is of creating a harmful mood in the reading public, but that danger always exists. It would be just as great and, in my opinion, might be greater if every commercial or industrial organization in the country should do away at once with all publicity or propaganda work. The public must depend for protection on its editors; there is no more reason why they should fail in their duty and loyalty because of the existence of public relations counsel and others who render similar publicity service than if such officials cease to operate."

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among the folks employed in this field of a larger grasp of what they are trying to do."

JAMES N. Rosenberg, of Rosenberg and Ball, attorneys, says in part:

"We ought to know something about this mainspring of so many modern currents of life.

"As a trained professional propagandist, Mr. Bernays practices the science of moulding public opinion. I use the word science advisedly. The law is a science no less than mathematics, even if not so exact. The law is a science which the lawyer uses in arguing his case and the judge employs in deciding it, and just as the lawyer uses the science of law to guide the opinions of the judge, so the propagandist uses the science of psychology to guide and mould the opinion of the mass of men.

"Let us not then turn away from the work of the propagandist as if it were something to sneer or scoff at. He influences men to reverence or hate, to desire or distaste, to admiration or contempt; he awakens cravings not merely for soap or soup; for motors or macilage; but he moulds men's hearts for issues so great as even peace or war. Have we forgotten the Bryce report on German atrocities? Do we forget the effect of propaganda on the Liberty Loan issues?

"What is the meaning of that word? I turn to the dictionary and learn that propaganda meant originally 'a congregation of Cardinals charged with the management of missions in all parts of the world.' I learn that in 1622 Pope Urban created a College of Propaganda to educate priests for missions. Perhaps there is nothing sinister in the origin of the word, for little as I sympathize with attempts to impose any other theology upon the followers of Confucius and Buddha, I hold no brief against religious missions. Laying aside, however, the earlier connotation of the word, the Great War made us think of propaganda as poisonous, pernicious propaganda of lies or, even worse, of half-truths. Hence the words 'press agent,' 'publicity man,' 'propaganda,' have an evil sound to the man who regards himself as one of the self-esteeming intelligentsia.

"Mr. Bernays, therefore, renders genuinely useful service in drawing the public's attention to the fact that his profession is not that of prestidigitation, but it plays a profound part in moving men and women to action.

"The pen has been mightier than the sword for a long time. The ink slingers have, for generations, shed more blood than the generals. What of today? The development of the printing press, the movie, the radio, the cable, the wireless, has made the business of moulding public opinion the biggest quantity production industry in the world. The moulder of public opinion, call him propagandist, counsel on public relations, or what you will, argues the cases of his clients, not to a jury of twelve men, but to juries of millions.

"Whether we like them or not, the propagandists are here to stay. As there are shysters at the Bar, as there are quacks who call themselves doctors and who have sworn to the oath of Hypocrates, so there are propagandists who prostitute themselves in the support of bad causes and in the fomenting of hatreds. Let us not judge any profession by its malpractitioners. It is more sensible to heed and study this significant business of the propagandist.

"Mr. Bernays deserves thanks for directing the attention of the public to the function of the propagandist, the ever-increasing importance of his unseen hand and brain. The propagandist can do immense good, and perhaps even greater harm. We should appraise him at his true place in modern life. This Mr. Bernays helps us to do."

IT is the opinion of Bernard Lichtenberg, Director of University Service of the Alexander Hamilton Institute, that:

"If it is true that increased public knowledge benefits civilization, then propaganda, when it is news, is a good thing. News then, is fine for the public and fine for the editors. If the public relations counsel can, by means of news propaganda, bring the public a clearer understanding of our industrial world, it is a good thing. If news benefits certain individuals that does not lessen its value as news."

A most interesting letter comes from the pen of the principal of The Girls' High School, William L. Felter, who writes:

"I would simply state that every great forward movement in modern history has come as a result of propaganda. If there had been no so-called propaganda against slavery that baneful institution would still be in existence today. Had not the conscience and intelligence of the American people been aroused by the drink evil the national prohibition laws would never be on the statute books. If we are to register more than 50 per cent. of the voters of the country at the ballot boxes, the result can be accomplished only by propaganda—that is, proper instruction and arousal. So he who decries propaganda and limits it only to the selling of merchandise has but a narrow vision. So far as the value of propaganda in selling goods is concerned, every business man whose opinion is worth a cent knows that it is not simply sufficient to have a good article, but he must depend upon proper advertising to convince the public of the merits of his goods."

LEWIS B. Esmond, Manager of the Essex Gelatine Company, writes:

"The value to the public of a public relations advisor can't be fully appreciated or understood by the man on the street unless he be brought in close contact with or has set

himself the task of thoroughly understanding the work. For the past two years I have personally had contact with such work and have seen something of its effect.

"No amount of individual advertising could have brought about the correction of an erroneous idea of the value of Edible Gelatine that has been accomplished in the minds of scientists, dietitians, food authorities, and the public at large, that the work of our public relations representative has accomplished through the press in what can be correctly defined as instructive and constructive news. The success has unquestionably been due to the proper handling of this news propaganda fortified by authentic reliable research and investigation.

"Prior to the advent of this news work prominent writers, consciously or unconsciously, were denying the value of our product and were brought to a proper understanding or correction of their erroneous ideas through the printing of stories as news in the newspapers. To my mind it unquestionably has a place in the scheme of life where the great majority of people would be properly informed. . . ."

A RTHUR E. Morgan, President of Antioch College, says in part:

"First, those who carry on propaganda must do so openly. If only special interest undertakes to further a point of view or increase an interest, the public receiving the propaganda should be definitely informed of its origin and inspiration. If statistics are broadcast as news either by the Anti-Saloon League or the association for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, such dispatches should not be anonymous, and no distributors of news should receive them as such.

"The second principle is that it shall be rigorously truthful. Because propaganda is plainly labeled as advertising does not justify the printing of unsubstantiated statements. A bakers' association recently displayed large billboard ads with the statement 'Bread is the most easily digested food.' If this statement is a roughly accurate conclusion from responsible and adequate research, it is justified. If it is simply an unsubstantiated statement to persuade the public, it is immoral.

"The third principle is fundamental. The public at best is very often largely helpless in the hands of the propagandist or public relations counsel. Given plenty of time and money the public can be taught that after all, and in reality, black is white. Some of the war-time propaganda was successful in doing so.

"In the ultimate, the propagandist must be governed by the moral sense of himself and his kind. He is in honor bound not to use propaganda for any issue unless he honestly and dispassionately believes that if his object is achieved the public will be benefitted by his efforts, and he is in honor bound to take the necessary pains to inform himself.

If any propagandist fails in that respect the opinion of his fellow propagandists should unite against him.

"With modern methods of communication, the propagandist has such power as no man ever wielded before. It is power which peculiarly lends itself to abuse, and for centuries and milleniums it has been abused. Unless the propagandist insists on limiting his effort to issues he honestly believes in, and maintains integrity with himself as well as with the public, he is utterly damned, regardless of how successful he may be, or of how long the evil standards have been entrenched in human custom.

"When we have reached a stage where the difficulties of applying these standards are mainly difficulties of knowledge and judgment, and not lack of open mindedness and a sense of responsibility to the public, the propaganda of America will be in good hands."

W L. Chandler, Secretary of the *National Association of Purchasing Agents, Inc.*, says in part:

"The words and acts of certain individuals frequently constitute news, certain events and acts of others are sometimes news. Those words, events or acts may be inspired by desire to influence public opinion either for or against the public interest.

"It is quite probable that a good portion of our National prosperity is due to the intelligent guidance of mass thinking on problems of Government and business. Public relations counsels have a transcendent responsibility."

H B. Sweatt, Secretary of the *Edible Gelatin Manufacturers' Research Society of America*, gives his endorsement:

"I believe Mr. Bernays' interpretation of the functions served by a public relations counsel is 100 per cent. correct and I particularly endorse the distinction he sets forth between the 'propagandist' or press agent, and the public relations counsel."

T HE president of the Jordan Motor Car Company, Edward S. Jordan, makes this valuable contribution:

"Sometimes I think that there might have been greater men who lived and served in past ages than those we have come to know by the names of Aristotle, Plato, Caesar and others, but their publicity was excellent and the world measures a man or an institution by the public opinion created by the printed word.

"No one understood the power of dignified publicity better than Alexander Hamilton, who was a great aid to Washington.

"No one understood better than Abraham Lincoln the power of the short, pungent, epigrammatic paragraph or story to carry his opinions from mouth to mouth throughout the land.

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THE opinion of George W. Ochs Oakes, Editor of *Current History Magazine*, is:

"The acid test of what a newspaper or periodical should print is not its origin; that is immaterial, but consists of its news value, if it is intended for a newspaper, its trustworthiness, its accuracy, its informative character and qualities. The consideration whether or not it may benefit some interest or some individual should be disregarded."

SENATOR Arthur Capper writes:

"To the editor, the press agent—by whatever name he be called—is both a blessing and a curse. I believe most editors consider him a curse because he is a time-killer if an editor conscientiously tries to winnow the wheat from the chaff. Such a volume of publicity is received daily, and it assays so little usable material, that many editors have found it unprofitable to read through the mass. This condition, it seems to me, is mainly the result of the tactics of the 'space grafting' press agent, and the very poor selection of lists by many others. By poor lists I mean that most papers receive a great volume of material, which by the very nature of the publication is not usable. Papers which do not carry extensive radio pages, motion picture pages, motor pages, etc., which are found in many metropolitan newspapers, nevertheless receive all of this 'fan' material.

"The bright side of the press agent problem is the broad-gauged man acting for big enterprises. He is trained in newspaper work, is keen to sense news stories and knows how to weigh their values and where they can be used. If he be honest in his efforts and presents his material without too much coloring in favor of the enterprise he represents, he is of real value, both to that enterprise and to the publishers and the public. He sees many things of real news interest, which the average business executive overlooks, and presents them in the light of public interest. Thus he not only serves the newspapers, but helps to establish better understanding between industry and the public."

J. C. Royle, Editor-in-Chief, Business News Service, *Consolidated Press Association*, writes:

"There is nothing any newspaper writer whose product appears under his own name is so anxious to avoid as the dissemination of propaganda or a charge that propaganda is being disseminated through his writings. To such an one a public relations counsel is a very present help and not a danger. The public relations counsel is in the same position as the legal attorney for a corporation. To all intents and purposes he is an officer of the corporation, authorized to represent it and speak for it.

"As the legal attorney presents his client's case in the most favorable light, so does the public relations counsel. But the publisher and the writer to whom his efforts are submitted are in the position of judge and jury. If they cannot weigh evidence and separate news from propaganda, they are unfit. So long as the relations counsel presents facts which are accurate and may be checked, the editor or writer is at liberty to present those facts as, if and how he sees fit. If propaganda or advertising slips past his guard he has only himself to blame.

"The public be damned' attitude has wrecked more than one business. The public won't be damned. It is entitled to facts and none the less entitled to them because the facts are placed at the disposal of those who reach the public by a relations counsel.

"In the opinion of this writer, no more effective curse may be placed on a story than 'It's advertising.' The place for advertising is in the advertising columns and the way to get it is to pay for it. But to fail to record a change in the trend of a great basic industry affecting millions of people because it involves mention of the name of one manufacturer is as illogical as to refuse to print a message to congress from President Coolidge because it might possibly enhance the chances of the latter if he should again become a presidential candidate. In this age of automobiles, horse sense is a factor which should not be discarded. Horse sense is all that is needed to clear relationships between writer, publisher and the spokesman paid to present the affairs of his client in the best light, of any danger of propaganda or free advertising."

MRS. Henry Moskowitz remarks:

"Big business men today are certainly taking cognizance of the place that 'propaganda' has taken in bringing the public to a better understanding and closer cooperation with the producer. It is my belief that no large organization can successfully be conducted under modern conditions without proper attention to its public relations."

THIS paragraph is taken from the letter of E. M. Statler, president of the Hotel Statler Company:

"Publicity in its wider sense—that of making an institution favorably known—is important to every hotel. No matter how old or firmly established a hotel may be, it is necessary that a constant stream of publicity—whether through paid advertising or legitimate news mention—emanate from it, in order that old patrons may be kept and the growing generation learn of it."