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Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations

Physical Warfare vs. Propaganda Warfare

"THE modern extension of the range of public interest and action has made for profound changes in the control of opinion. So long as a person's scope of interests and activity does not stretch beyond the neighborhood or village, he can observe and make some judgments himself regarding matters of common concern. When, to-day, as a citizen of a federal government, or even as the citizen of a commonwealth, he is called upon to make political decisions which touch the world beyond his immediate visual and auditory sensibilities, that is, beyond the world of immediate perception, the whole question of facts and information, the bases upon which he must construct his opinions and form his judgments, becomes altered"

"It was the World War which introduced us on a broad scale to the functions of propaganda. Each of the belligerent nations established bureaus for propagating their own particular points of view"

"Propaganda in the sense of proselyting has been in vogue in the spread of religious dogmas for ages, especially in Christian countries. But modern means of controlling ideas and information has made possible its extension into political, economic, and social fields hitherto undreamed of. Sometimes this propaganda is disguised under the more polite title of 'publicity'. Yet it should not be imagined that the results of propaganda and publicity are necessarily nefarious. Health campaigns, many educational and other reform movements use methods essentially propagandist in nature"

"And Bernays illustrates from the case of Lithuania what can be done to arouse and to influence public opinion on a situation through the clever use of publicity or propaganda"

"Mention may be made in closing of the growing power of the radio as a factor in the spread of propaganda. We are not yet fully aware of the extent to which the radio is being employed by advertisers, special-interest groups and governmental agencies in their efforts to control public opinion. This is a powerful weapon the full measure of which we have not yet secured"

"Paper bullets, according to Mr. Creel, won the war. But they have forever disturbed our peace of mind. The war is long since over, all but saying so; but our consciousness of the immanence of propaganda bids fair to be perma-

nent. It has been discovered by individuals, by associations and by governments that a certain kind of advertising can be used to mold public opinion and control democratic majorities. As long as public opinion rules the destinies of human affairs, there will be no end to an instrument that controls it.

"Propaganda of some kind is doubtless as old as human society. One of its earliest, and until recently one of its most famous varieties was religious propaganda. But there seems to be no essential differences between religious, political and business propaganda, except the ends it serves, and the license under which it operates. The expansion of propaganda to political fields was directly conditioned on the growing power of public opinion in government. As physical warfare is less and less resorted to in settling disputes, propaganda warfare is bound to become of greater relative importance.

"Speaking generally, propaganda is the art of making up the other man's mind for him. It is the art of gaining adherents to principles, of gaining support for an opinion or a course of action. So are some forms of education, so at times is advertising."

—From *Source Book for Social Psychology* by Kimball Young.

Sincerity Vital

WHEN N. W. Ayer & Son laid the cornerstone of their new building in Philadelphia, the senior partner, Wilfred W. Fry, stressed the importance of sincerity in advertising, and said, according to the *New York Herald-Tribune*:

"I commend the attitude of those publishers who have refused great contracts because of insincerity of statement," Mr. Fry said, "and take this occasion to urge upon those who use advertising, those who prescribe advertising and those whose livelihood depends upon advertising to fight against its prostitution. We regard truthful advertising as synonymous with education and a chief contributor to the enlightenment of present and future generations. The greatest peril in the path of advertising is that those who know its power, but who have no regard for the principles upon which that power rests, will abuse advertising by the use of misleading statements, insincere testimonials and exaggerated claims. The very cornerstone of advertising is threatened by those who wilfully debauch it."

Harvard's Public

NOT long ago a certain Harvard professor vaulted into the newspaper headlines. There were several days when one could hardly pick up a paper in any of the larger cities without finding his name bracketed with his achievement.

"The professor, who was back from a trip to Yucatan in the interests of science, had solved the mystery of the Venus calendar of the ancient Mayas. He had discovered the key to the puzzle of how the Mayas kept tabs on the flight of time. Checking the Mayan record of celestial events against the known astronomical facts, he had found a perfect correlation between the time count of these Central American Indians and the true positions of the planet Venus in the sixth century B. C. A civilization which flourished in the Western Hemisphere twenty-five centuries ago was demonstrated to have attained heights hitherto unappreciated by the modern world" . . .

"How the professor's discovery happened to be chronicled in the popular press is, also, in retrospect, a matter of interest" . . .

" . . . If left to his own devices, he might never have appeared in print, except perhaps in some technical publication, and his remarks there would have been no more intelligible to the average man or woman than if they had been inscribed in Mayan hieroglyphics.

"Popularization of this message from antiquity was due to the initiative of a young man named James W. D. Seymour" . . .

"It may surprise and shock some people to be told that the oldest and most dignified seats of learning in America now hire press agents, just as railroad companies, fraternal organizations, moving picture producers and political parties retain them. It is nevertheless a fact." . . .

" . . . there is hardly a college or university in the country which does not, with the approval of the governing body and the faculty, maintain a publicity office, with a director and a staff of assistants, for the purpose of establishing friendly relations with the newspapers, and through the newspapers, with the public." . . .

"This enterprise breaks sharply with tradition. In the older seats of learning it is a recent innovation. It violates the fundamental article in the creed of the old academic societies. Cloistered seclusion used to be considered the first essential of scholarship. The college was anxious to preserve its aloofness from the world." . . .

"The colleges used to resent outside interest in their affairs. They might, somewhat reluctantly and contemptuously, admit reporters to their Commencement Day exercises, but no further would they go." . . .

"To-day, if a newspaper reporter wants to interview a Harvard professor, he has merely to telephone the Secretary

for Information to the University. Officially, Harvard still shies away from the title 'Director of Publicity.' Informally, however, the secretary with the long title is the publicity man. He is an important official to-day at Harvard."

—From *Advertising Higher Education*, by Charles A. Merrill, in *Personality*.

A Big Tin Horn

A breezy sketch of how public opinion is made, is contained in Charles Merz's book *The Great American Band Wagon*. We quote a few paragraphs:

"It is plain that what the situation needs at this point is an expert at ringing bells—nor is this expert lacking. The times have produced him as inevitably as they have produced Prizes for being thoughtful and Weeks for being prompt. He is called a Public Relations Counsel and he is precisely that entrepreneur between each new idea and a badly hustled public which the times demand. He has made a study of opinion. He knows what type of news the public likes to read. He knows what type of news the editors will print. Because it is his business to make news and see that it is published, . . . and he is so well versed in the mechanics of mass emotion that he can give heart appeal and human interest to data on street railway earnings.

"Such a man is too useful not to have his services appreciated, and in the rush to call the public's attention to thousands of ideas the public relations counsel is constantly becoming a more and more important member of society. Public utility companies employ him to explain the folly of too much regulation. Colleges employ him to encourage education. Banks employ him to encourage thrift. Low-tariff associations pay him to work up figures on the dangers of high tariffs. High-tariff associations use his data to denounce free trade. States which are rich in lakes and mountains, like Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, have fallen into line and employ public relations counsels paid from public taxes to point out their merits as a place for summer travel.

"The public is large. To capture its undivided attention for even as much as five minutes is a priceless advantage for anyone with a new idea, a new challenge, or a new bar of soap; and when thousands of organizations are competing for the public's attention simultaneously, it is inevitable that the modern public relations expert should find his way to the payroll of everything from governments themselves to the baking trust, the farm bloc, and the Standard Oil" . . .

"So much is happening all at once in the modern scene that it is not safe to assume that a worthy cause or a good idea will make itself felt of its own momentum. It is impossible to put much trust in Thoreau's quaint notion that if a man living in the woods makes a good enough mouse-

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trap the whole world will beat a path to his door to buy it" . . .

"So important has the new lobbyist become, and so rich are the opportunities for constructive work in Washington, that more than four hundred organizations now maintain active lobbies in the capital and spend an admitted minimum of ten million dollars annually for the mobilization of opinion" . . .

"Congress is waiting for a mandate. The public itself is dim, measureless, and far away. Opinion which is never organized is never heard. And tirelessly, day in, day out, four hundred alert and well-financed lobbies representative of the strongest clerical, social and industrial interests in the nation plug away at the task of creating a synthetic product called opinion" . . .

"Certainly the process of creating what is called political opinion in this country requires an elaborate application of the principles of mass production" . . .

"Yet what ought we expect? The day is gone when most of our problems are local problems and when a Vox Populi can be expected to speak authoritatively because it knows what it ought to say. How can a mass mind be expected to run the gamut of the problems which are now brought to its attention? It is easy enough to have a definite and constructive opinion upon such questions as whether the local city government is rotten and whether a new bridge should be built across the river; but how is any man either to think very wisely or feel very deeply about the whole vast spread of public questions which now constitute his daily news and which take him into complex problems as remote from his own experience as if they belonged in the Balkans?

"Inevitably, as the range of public questions widens and as people who are not titans are called upon to take a firm and intelligent attitude on more and more political questions which they do not understand and in which they lack the slightest interest, it becomes apparent that if there is to be an opinion it must be generated artificially" . . .

"We make a mistake when we look to the mountain-top for the Voice of the People. The Voice of the People does not come from a mountain-top. It comes from a wooden box with a revolving disc on top, a set of cogs inside, and a big tin horn stuck up behind. It is a good machine, but it needs winding."

Full Publicity

THE New York World in an editorial urges adequate information to the public concerning the financial operations of corporations. It is obvious that good-will is to be secured only through full and candid publicity, and that the wise corporation today takes the public into its confidence in all those matters on which the public is entitled to full knowledge:

"Prof. Ripley's cogent plea for more accurate and explicit information in the reports of large corporations to their stockholders gets strong backing in the opinion handed down by the Interstate Commerce Commission authorizing the termination of the St. Paul receivership. The past financial administration of the St. Paul road is severely criticised. The building of the Puget Sound extension, which was the main source of its troubles, cost more than four times the original estimate and was projected by a group of Eastern financiers while 'the stockholders in general had no voice in the momentous decision.' The moneys appear to have been honestly spent, but the accounts were 'grossly distorted, primarily to strengthen the credit of the St. Paul.'

"The commission believes that the bankruptcy of the system was due to a preponderance of strictly financial influence on its governing board. After stressing the need of devising better methods than now exist for supplying stockholders with the information necessary to intelligent judgment and 'with adequate opportunity to act upon such judgment,' the commission offers two suggestions: (1) the managing staff of every road should include an official who can represent it competently in negotiations with bankers, and (2) the stockholders should be furnished yearly with a statement of the business affiliations of every director who comes up for election. The St. Paul is not the only road which has suffered from an excess of banker influence, and the general adoption of these proposals would be a commendable step. The adoption of the second of these might even be made compulsory."

National Public Relations

THE Cornell Daily Sun printed part of a speech made recently in Ithaca by Edward L. Bernays:

"Government Should Appoint Secretary of Public Relations, Says E. L. Bernays, '12, at Luncheon.

"The United States government should appoint a secretary of public relations as a member of the President's cabinet," urged E. L. Bernays '12 of New York, well known expert on public relations at a luncheon tendered to him in Willard Straight Hall Saturday. Mr. Bernays was speaker at Sigma Delta Chi, honorary journalistic society's annual dinner, Friday night.

"Pointing out that America's aims and ideals were misinterpreted throughout the world and that not even the citizens of this country were in touch with governmental activities and the reasons that prompted them, Mr. Bernays urged the appointment of a responsible official who would interpret the people to the government and the government to the people.

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"Mr. Bernays stated that such an official would be neither a propagandist nor a press agent, but a trained technician who would be helpful in analyzing public thought and public trends to keep the government informed on public demands and the people informed on the government.

"'America's relations with South America and Europe would be greatly improved under such circumstances. Good will efforts like the Lindbergh tour should be made part of a definite program.'"

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THE *Paris Times* takes note of *Contact* as shown in the following clipping:

"Edward L. Bernays, who arranged the all-American art show at the Seligmann Galleries last summer by rounding up the artists of the Quarter, issues a monthly bulletin or house-organ called *Contact*, whose aim is to inform his friends and clients of the latest developments in the world of publicity and propaganda. Silas Bent, who was In The Quarter a year or so ago, pays a tribute to Bernays in his new book on newspaper life, *Ballyhoo*, saying in part: 'Bernays is a special pleader before the court of public opinion. He has suggested that the Federal Government create a Cabinet post for a publicity man. If that were done, Bernays says, Europe would not think ill of our policies.' It is Mr. Bernays' intention to organize another American exhibition in Paris next summer."

Not Conclusive

AN interesting test, which is probably not the last word on the subject, is reported in *Time*:

"A psychological query has been: Which can think with greater swiftness and accuracy—a group of men or an individual? Applied to business affairs the query is: Can a board of directors or a president best manage a company? Professor Goodwin Barbour Watson of Columbia University sought a solution by testing smart Columbia students. To each he gave a nine-letter word (as neurotics, education, secondary, universal), and told him to write out as many three-letter words as he could devise from the letters in the long word. After ten minutes Professor Watson called time. The poorest individual record was 18 three-letter words, the best 49, and the average 32. Then the professor offered similar words to groups, telling the members of the groups to shout out the three-letter words as they constructed them. The average group record for ten minutes community-thinking was practically 75 words, more than twice the individual record. Therefore, reasoned Professor Watson, for at least simple problems group thinking is better than individual thinking."

Radio

THE importance of radio as an advertising medium is discussed in an article, *What Future for Radio Advertising* by Edward L. Bernays in *Advertising and Selling*:

"Some men in the radio advertising field maintain that the tendency of the use of radio programs by commercial advertisers is toward an institutionalizing of the time they have on the air rather than a direct sales appeal. They claim that this institutionalizing must be supplemented by newspaper advertising. On the other hand, it does seem obvious that even if this were the case to some extent, the average large firm can spend only a certain percentage of its turnover or its profit for advertising of all kinds, and that if radio advertising takes out any appreciable portion of this there is less left for the other forms of advertising.

"The writer works with both the newspaper and the radio. He finds both in the hands of intelligent, equitably-minded men. He realizes, however, that a free press—one that is absolutely devoid of influence in any direction as to the color of its news columns—must depend upon other legitimate money sources than those that come from circulation under the present system of newspaper making and selling. Under this system, advertising revenue is the only money that can produce complete independence of thought; the only money that can produce a free press. Advertising revenues have made the press powerful and economical, and have made it able to present the news without bias or prejudice. Aside from any other consideration, the press should allow nothing to interfere with the advertising revenue that it gets as a safeguard in protecting its independence. Is not the surest and best way to insure this freedom the linking up with the ever-growing and spreading radio by harnessing it to the press and making it a source of revenue to itself as well as a source of news and advertising to the public?"

"The right of free discussion is therefore to be guarded by the friends of mankind with peculiar jealousy. It is at once the most sacred and most endangered of our rights."

—William Ellery Channing.

"Horse Collar Company Broke

BATH, N. Y., March 1 (A. P.)—The Bath Harness Company, which flourished here nearly thirty years and made a specialty of horse collars, has filed a voluntary petition in bankruptcy." —*The New York World*.

Some businesses insist on selling horse collars to a horseless public. Others are doing things that are less obviously hopeless, but lead nevertheless to failure. The greatest failure in business to-day is the failure to understand the public.