

5. TACTICS, EVEN INFO USED TO FIGHT PAC SPENDING CLOUDS OPPONENTS' CREDIBILITY

Bill setting spending limits for political action committees (PACs) is a "treacherous step back towards the days when unions dominated the political scene," shouted USChamber of Commerce. Incumbents and Democrats will benefit, challengers and Republicans will suffer. Unions will still be unrestricted on get-out-the-vote drives, precinct work, phone campaigns etc. Nat'l Right to Work Committee said bill will "enhance the union bosses' use of forced labor dues for politics by further restricting contributions from individual citizens."

In fact, Congressional Quarterly and others note that 1.) bill applies exact same limits on all PAC contributions, whether business, labor, ass'n or other type. 2.) By reducing impact of PAC contributions, it increases importance of gifts from individuals. 3.) In '78 PAC dollars generally aided incumbents (3 to 1) and Dems (56% to 44% for GOP). Many business PACs give only to incumbents, Robert Thompson, dpr, Springs Mills (Fort Mill, S.C.) told prr. 4.) Anyone can run voter registration drives etc. -- and corporations are among the biggest boosters of such activities. Newly won corporate free speech rights give equal clout with labor in all arenas.

The problem, says Edie Fraser (Fraser/Assocs., D.C.) is treating PACs as "single-minded tools of an arbitrarily conceived corporate interest" rather than what they are: "groups of human beings with diverse viewpoints, just like other groups in our society." As proof, she notes American Trucking Ass'n PAC gives exclusively to incumbents, Coca Cola & Grumman favor Dem incumbents, Ford & GM tend to give to both Dem incumbents & GOP challengers, while Amoco & Corning Glass favor Republicans (see last week's purview on PACs).

WHAT'S HAPPENING THAT PROFESSIONALS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

¶Tax revolt has been "decently buried," except possibly in Calif., nation's U.S. biz & financial editors told Hill & Knowlton's 7th annual survey. "It has already peaked," said one. Another felt it "is petering out...it's a fad." Principal attitude of respondents is pessimism about nation's economy. In '77, 33% forecast slower economic growth. This jumped to 53% last year. This year 75% feel slowdown imminent. Whether they're right or wrong, editors will respond to stories sent them from this perspective -- so publicists take note.

¶FCC joins other federal branches changing pr terminology. Public information div. is now press & news media div. Consumer assistance div. is renamed consumer assistance and information div. Apparently former will handle outflow of information, latter will take inquiries. Both still report to office of public affrs...which interestingly also encompasses FCC's industry equal employment opportunity program & its minority enterprise program.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Joseph Roos, pres., Community Relations Consultants (Beverly Hills, Calif.) received Distinguished Achievement in Public Information Award from Univ. of So. Calif., School of Journalism and Alumni Ass'n. First time to pr professional in 20 yrs.

ELECTED. 1980 officers, Found. for Public Relations Research & Education:

Dr. Dorothy Gregg, re-elected pres (Celanese, NYC)...William W. Marsh, vp & treas (Rockey, Marsh Public Relations, Portland, Ore.). New trustees: Scott M. Cutlip (Univ. of Ga., Athens), Marcelle W. Farrington (Sun Life Assurance of Canada, Wellesley Hills, Mass.), Kerryn King (Texaco, White Plains, N.Y.) and Dwayne Summar (So. Company Services, Atlanta). Milton Fairman, after 19 yrs service as bd mbr, named trustee emeritus.

A CASE STUDY TO EPITOMIZE THE 70s:  
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AS PRACTICED IN ONE  
OF THE MOST COMPLEX SETTINGS, THE U.S. ARMY

The primary audience is huge: 767,000 soldiers, plus 500,000 reservists, plus dependents. It spreads out around the globe. In the face of a stampede toward participative decision-making, a basic core of power-&-authority management must be maintained. On the other hand, service is voluntary -- so motivation & perceived benefits must compute with civilian jobs. That's the employee communications challenge -- U.S. Army style.

Army is basically a young audience, says Col. Erik Johnson, executive officer, Chief of Public Affairs. Average age is 23, drops to 20 in three lowest ranks. Overall 44% are married, 24% in 3 lowest ranks. Many have teenage wives. Breakdown by racial origin is (using Army's terminology) 1.4% Asian, 3.2% Hispanic, 28.9% Black, 66.5% Caucasian.

Increasing professionalism of internal communications programs is reflected in printed and audio-visual material. Content is based on careful audience segmentation, identifies with interests of different subgroups.

Armory of materials includes posters, single issue pamphlets, slide & script shows, radio beepers, speech reprints (liked by retirees giving speeches on army matters) radio & tv programs.

"Army tv is our Cadillac item," says Johnson. Young soldiers are tv generation. Army produces two magazine-type shows: "Soldiers" for younger age groups; "Green Scene" for older servicemen. Has own stations, production facilities here & abroad.

Army has 256 newspapers. 46 are civilian enterprises carrying advertising, rest are in-house productions. To train young editors, runs five seminars a year.

"Commanders Call" is bimonthly 8 x 10 b&w magazine for unit commanders, key officers & non-commissioned officers in Army, Nat'l Guard, Reserves. Typical supervisory aids are featured. "Soldiers," official glossy magazine, mixes color, b&w to hold cost to 40¢ per copy. "Fridaygram" goes weekly to pa personnel.

Key gatekeeper is station commander with decision on how, when to use materials. Quality of public relationships carries weight in performance evaluation -- something many private sector organizations have yet to achieve. Primary goal of employee communication program: motivate the soldier to be a responsible citizen...because better citizens are better soldiers.

— THE PROBLEM IS FEEDBACK —

Johnson said Army is now working on formal feedback system, "still in embryonic stage." Present methods include limited scientific surveys, special attention to letters to editor & call-ins to radio & tv shows as indicators of sensitive areas. One or two calls or letters on a subject means it merits attention, because of natural military inhibition to speaking out.

UPDATES ON 5 KEY ISSUES AS THE DECADE ENDS:

1. STIMULUS EFFECT VS. PRESS FREEDOM:  
TRIAL FOCUSES RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF MEDIA IN COVERING PROTESTS

"If reporters accompanied a bank robber to cover the burglary, they would be arrested. If they insist on marching with protesters, it's fair to expect the same result," feels Dick Risk. As mgr. nuclear info, Public Service Co. of Okla., he had responsibility for media at June protest in which some reporters were arrested (pr 12/3). He is now a witness in court proceedings brought by newsmen. Their case is based on 1st Amendment rights, under which they should not be denied covering events; and 14th Amendment claims to equal protection under the law, i.e. arrest all reporters at the scene or none -- regardless of their location. State action (police) and federal funding for the Black Fox nuke make anything that occurs there public, they argue.

Risk advises practitioners to have fallback plans for everything. For instance, his plan to have press cover the event from safe ground went awry when marchers took a different route from the one planned in advance. But most dangerous, he believes, is the stimulus effect of media. Cameras & mikes incite actions which might not otherwise take place. This cause-&-effect relationship deserves recognition, in Risk's opinion -- in pr planning and also under the law. It's the flip side of press freedom. Another stimulus is swelling the crowd. In this case, press reported 500 marchers. In fact, were 350 protesters plus 150 reporters!

2. ANOTHER VOICE FOR NOT ALWAYS  
TELLING THE PRESS: DISCLOSURE  
DILEMMA IS "RIGHTS VS. REPUTATION"

"Corporate executives and directors have as much right to editorial judgment as the editors & writers themselves," says atty. Clayton Sweeney, sr vp, Allegheny Ludlum Industries. Execs have "fiduciary responsibility," press only wants "another story." Sweeney told joint Pittsburgh PRSA-Allegheny County Bar Ass'n-Sigma Delta Chi seminar press & public do not lack information on major companies & institutions, thru mandated corporate reporting, right-to-know laws & charitable regulations. "The real dilemma arises when the legal rights of the corporation or individuals can be seriously jeopardized by a disclosure while at the same time either the corporation's or individual's reputation is being destroyed in the media by misinformation."

Practitioners should understand lawyer's views on the subject as well as media's. Lives and careers can be ruined, shareholder interests affected -- which demands "editorial judgment" about whether to disclose and when. Sweeney told of personal experience with company which discovered its industry was inadvertently price-fixing. Voluntary disclosure to gov't officials was made, with understanding no public release would occur until companies negotiated with customers to rectify resulting overcharges. Someone leaked story -- and no one benefited, since industry was already compensating for its error, public had not been harmed (basic raw material was involved so little effect on retail prices), gov't officials already knew. Only media gained, by having a sensational story to help sell their wares. They'd have had the same story later anyway, once all customers had been satisfied.

3. QWL CATCHING ON IN  
TREND-SETTING ORGANIZATIONS:  
FLEXTIME, GROUP DECISION-MAKING

As attitudes of internal publics become increasingly important, techniques to improve quality of working life (QWL) are finding favor. Floundering U.S. productivity rate is another stimulus. NYStock Exchange Pres. William Batten recently endorsed QWL as a means to benefit

workers and the economy, thru productivity growth made possible by employee participation in workplace decisions. "Management, particularly, must be genuinely willing to consult with employees, to consider their ideas and opinions, and to communicate frankly before implementing decisions."

QWL assumes there is a basis for mutual trust and respect among workers, supervisors & managers. One of its tenets is that decisions should be made as close to the place they occur as possible. Thus workers are empowered to make decisions which now may be bumped up needlessly to foremen or execs -- who frequently have far less knowledge on which to base a decision than the workers involved.

Batten's remarks carry additional impact by the fact they were delivered as a Dean's Lecture at The Wharton School. He listed the following as utilizing QWL programs: GM, UAW, Lockheed, Hughes Aircraft, Northrop, Martin-Marietta, Sperry-Vickers, Guardian Life. In Canada, Social & Labor Bulletin reports Federal & Ontario gov'ts, Prudential Life (Toronto), Canadian Inds. Ltd. & Shell Canada applying QWL concepts.

Flexitime, one of the first QWL concepts, has been found to improve productivity -- thru lower absenteeism & improved morale. Georgetown Univ. study states 13% of U.S. companies have some form of flexitime, 48% report productivity gains averaging 12%. No one reported that flexitime slowed down production. (For 3-part 1977 t&t on flexitime, write prr.)

Gelco (Eden Prairie, Minn.) is attempting to stop the "dehumanizing" trend brought to the workplace by technology. (For instance, last summer, Communications Workers of America staged a nationwide protest against "dehumanizing job pressures" including "computer scheduling so exacting it turns people into machines.") Gelco chmn Bud Grossman told Time magazine that technology retards production by robbing people of creativity. To restore humanity, Gelco employees are comprehensively interviewed after 90 days on the job. They are asked what they like/dislike about their work, how jobs might be made better. "We are involving our employees in a lot more decision making. If we can push decision making down to the lowest level, we will do better."

4. TELEPHONE OPERATORS NOW USE  
OWN NAMES TO PERSONALIZE SERVICE,  
SEEK SPIRIT OF "HAVE A GOOD DAY"

"Hi, this is Mary. May I help you?" Operators in 14 Bell System companies now answer this way. Adding this personal touch aims to "improve customer satisfaction with operator services." Mountain Bell began trend last year in Colorado and Wyoming.

AT&T media rels supvr Dick Gray told prr use of "have a good day" also was intended "to make our service and the people who provide it more personalized." G. D. Lewis, dir. of adv., Ludlow Corp. (Needham Heights, Mass.) feels it achieves that. Responding to prr's criticism (11/22) he writes: "Surely, 'have a good day' cannot be assumed to be inane, insincere or grating. It is an in-vogue way to sign off in speech. I accept what I believe is the spirit of the expression with unruffled calm. I may respond, 'Have one yourself' or 'You, too' or even 'Good-bye.'"

Following our custom, pr reporter will not be published next week. This is the last issue in 1979 -- which prompts a reminder to order your binder now. Only \$5, big enough to hold a year's issues including our three supplements.