

dressers & nurses to be women. Meanwhile, loss of huge convention income prompted city commission of Miami Beach to pass its own equal rights ordinance Jan. 7. NOW boycott has kept 500 groups from holding meetings there, at an estimated loss of \$150 million over the next decade. Hotel owners & business associations pushed for the action. PRSA is one organization which stayed away.

¶First Amendment activity proliferates, including U.S. District Court differentiation of "ideological speech" from "commercial speech" (pr 1/12).

1. Despite determined opposition from religious groups & nonprofits, FCC voted to deregulate radio. Old rules limiting commercials to 18 minutes per hour and guaranteeing "non-entertainment" programming are out; suit questioning decision is expected.
2. ACLU is suing Providence Police Dep't for detaining one of its staffers who was illegally arrested while picketing a speech by Henry Kissinger. ACLU called it "extremely unfortunate that members of the force are so unfamiliar with something as important as the First Amendment."
3. In decision on the Seabrook nuke plant protesters who struggled with police in a demonstration two years ago, NH Supreme Court upheld protesters' rights: "The criminal statutes of this state must take into account the fact that the people must be afforded an opportunity to engage in peaceful public expression of their views. When peaceful orderly comment is involved, the police have a duty to take reasonable, affirmative steps to ensure the maintenance of the protesters' rights to freedom of speech and expression." In other words, police must help protesters attain their rights rather than hindering them.

¶With South Africa still an important issue in corporate proxy actions, government closing of two black newspapers may be influential on American opinion. Reuters says nation's other newspapers, speaking through Newspaper Press Union, have protested the act, as did pro-government Johannesburg Citizen -- which quoted an inside source to effect it was racially motivated decision. International Press Institute, 3,000 editors who monitor press freedom, said in a cable to the prime minister: "Throughout the free world the actions of your government in regard to the press are causing grave concern to all who regard themselves as friends of your country."

¶Controversial Hucksters in the Classroom has won the George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contributions to Honesty & Clarity in Public Language. Subtitled "A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools," book raised corporate ire but also the awareness of educators when published last year. Award is made by Committee on Public Doublespeak of the National Council of Teachers of English. While critical of many public relations programs aimed at schools, volume is valuable object lesson to practitioners engaged in the activity (pr 4/14/80). (\$10 for individuals from Center for Study of Responsive Law, P.O. Box 19367, Wash, DC 20036; not available in bookstores.)

¶Settlement of Justice Dep't anti-trust suit against AT&T will cause breakup of Ma Bell's huge legal task force on the issue. 950 persons had been working in Orlando (Fla.), down from a top figure of 1,003. Would AT&T mount such a task force for a major public relations problem?

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SIMPLE LANGUAGE: ANOTHER FRONT IN PR'S WAR WITH LAWYERS;
SOME HEADWAY MADE BY LEGISLATION, MORE BY VOLUNTARY ACTIONS;
ST. PAUL INSURANCE SETS UP OWN DEPARTMENT

Eight states, some federal agencies & many private companies have mandated use of simple language in laws or regulations, contracts, public information. But lawyers have fought the move strenuously, continued to insist that ease of handling claims or litigation is more important than public trust & confidence. Many banks & insurance companies think otherwise, have become leaders in language simplification movement.

Recent NJ Supreme Court decision may give renewed vigor to champions of the cause. It ruled manufacturers cannot escape justifiable damage claims because of ambiguous warranties. It further ruled warranties must be understandable to consumers, not just lawyers.

The scoreboard: a) comprehensive plain-English laws are on the books in NY, NJ, Ct, Maine, Hawaii; b) Minn, Wis, Ohio have laws regarding insurance policies; c) Social Security, Census Bureau, IRS & other agencies have rewritten forms or regs; d) modified Flesch Test is included in Ct. law -- sentences cannot exceed 22 wds avg, no single sentence may be longer than 50 wds, words must not average over 1.5 syllables.

Pioneer among corporate believers is St. Paul Insurance. Company began working to simplify forms & policies in '74, Kent Shamblin, vp-pr & com, told pr. Pilot project was a single policy test vehicle. Task force of company specialists started from scratch. Then Siegel & Gale, NYC specialists, were retained. When half of policy forms were simplified, company established in-house dep't, trained by the firm.

Today new policies are all written by the dep't. "Writing becomes easier as the same words are used over & over," Shamblin reports. Examples are used for better understanding -- e.g. what is & isn't covered by a policy. Simple English techniques have spread to financial notes in shareholder reports, with "very favorable" response. Company feels is good customer relations, are "very pleased" with results. The

A SAMPLE LAW

NJ's Plain Language Law, the most recently enacted, states:

"Consumer contracts entered into on or after the effective date of this act shall be written in a simple, clear, understandable and easily readable way. A creditor, seller, insurer or lessor who fails to comply with this act shall be liable to a consumer who is party to the consumer contract for actual damages plus punitive damages up to \$50. This act shall not apply to consumer contracts involving more than \$50,000 but no dollar limitation shall apply to consumer contracts involving real estate or insurance."

better-educated consumers always wanted to read and understand insurance policy and now can do so, Shamblin says.

Lawyers could win the battle and lose the war ... because the public is unlikely to trust organizations that insist on legalese. Consumers know this linguistic trick is loaded against them. Language simplification is a case where public relations -- with its emphasis on understanding human nature, on putting opinions & perceptions before "facts" -- ought to be the overriding counsel.

ACADEMIC JOURNALS: THE FOG IS INTENTIONAL

A researcher at the Wharton School found that academic researchers write in an incomprehensible form because their colleagues prefer it. Mgmt prof Scott Armstrong ranked 10 mgmt journals for prestige, then for reading ease using the Flesch Test. His survey showed journals that were hardest to read were ranked highest in prestige, while the easiest to read rated lowest. Armstrong feels the reason academic research is presented in unintelligible language is that there is no motivation for writers to change. Academic journals, he claims, actually prefer the less readable version.

-- CUPRAP News, Vol. 1, No. 5
(College & Univ Pub Rels Ass'n of Pa.)

¶Ed. note: Which is why prr publishes purview, to translate as well as digest relevant academic literature.

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT COMMUNICATIONS HAS GREATER IMPACT WHEN PRESENTED AS TOTAL COMPENSATION PACKAGE; FOLTZ DISAGREES WITH RECENT STUDY

Employee benefit communications effectively changes attitudes when presenting the total compensation package, says Roy

Foltz, vp & dir, Towers, Perrin, Forster & Crosby (NYC). He disagrees with implication of study (pr 12/22/80) which claims greater outlays for benefit comms is unwarranted. "I think it's a broad sweeping conclusion and it's not justified by our experience."

Surveys show employee interest in benefits rank high. But at the same time many employers feel they are not getting enough credit for the benefits they offer. Problem apparently is communications. Two difficulties preventing employees' awareness are: 1) explanation comes from technical/legal base because of contracts & legal documents that form the benefits -- another language simplification problem -- therefore tendency is to forget; 2) employee may feel certain items don't personally apply (i.e. termination benefits have no value to employee planning to stay till retirement) and therefore loses interest. Foltz emphasizes the need to explain benefits continually to achieve understanding.

"Benefit communications is really part of the whole thing and it's that along with 47½ other things that can impact on people," Foltz told prr. "What counts is what that total package is -- benefits plus regular pay plus bonuses plus other perquisites that have a cash value." When an employee begins looking at other job opportunities, compensation package will be pivotal decision-making factor.

PR PROS WILL BECOME COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, SAYS EDUCATIONAL FUTURIST, AS THEIR INSTITUTIONS ARE TESTED BY CRISIS: LESSONS FOR ALL

Practitioners working in higher education are "in the right jobs at the right time." Some will even become college presi-

dents, predicts futurist George Bonham. "You are the new generalists" on campus, he told CASE conference in Toronto, so must a) understand the outside world, b) "interpret the connections" between that world & education.

Dr. Bonham is exec dir, Council on Learning, & ed-at-large, Change magazine. Quality of pr/pa/development staff at universities has risen greatly, in his opinion. By contrast faculty & administrators have moved "toward entropy." They will lose ground in pay, independence as other claims on public treasury are asserted. Other predictions for a future that "isn't what it used to be":

PRACTITIONERS WILL

COLLEGES WILL

- 1. "Slowly emerge from publicist, fund raising specialty" as campuses become open public service enterprises.
- 2. Become morale builders to "help sustain institutional sense of purpose."
- 3. Become futurists so can "sit at decision-making table."
- 4. Help seek accommodation to keep campuses "places of rationality."
- 5. Remain skeptics about tradition so can be objective about obsolescence.
- 6. Attend fewer meetings & confs as rising transportation costs favor use of telecommunications instead.

- 1. Abandon monopoly on higher education, work with every type of organization including public libraries, clubs, workplaces.
- 2. By 2000: a) replace half present faculty through retirement, b) receive new tide of traditional students, c) marginal institutions will not be around.
- 3. No longer be judged by undergrad programs but by how well serve adult learners, where success is now measured by numbers, not by learning.
- 4. Be ill-advised to expect national education establishment (gov't or academic ass'ns) to provide long-range leadership or planning for the knowledge explosion. Reason "too self-serving."

A provincial American view is being provided by both secondary and higher education today despite an increasingly internationalized world, Bonham reports an unreleased students attitude poll will show. He sees this as the overriding problem for practitioners as well as managers. "A journalistic rather than a historical perspective" is being taught, a daily columnist's view rather than that of a Gibbons or de Tocqueville.

UPDATES ON CRITICAL PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

¶Women's rights issue faces uncertain future with Reagan administration. Carter signed executive order extending the life of the Advisory Committee on Women. But new administration can ignore it, refuse to fund its \$250,000 budget. Just-released committee study by Dan Yankelovich, "Today's American Woman: How The Public Sees Her," finds 2/3 of Americans wouldn't mind working for a woman -- but most want police, doctors, lawyers, dentists & bankers to be men ... sales people, hair