

VIRTUES OF SKEPTICISM
TOUTED BY WEDDINGTON & MOSKOWITZ;
BURGER QUESTIONS TECHNOLOGICAL PREDICTIONS

Moskowitz, sr editor, Business & Society Review. "Public relations people must be more than rationalists for positions already taken. They need to be sounders of early-warning bells. They need to be concerned with the effects of technology on people, on how we live. For example, the possible consequences of nuclear energy, especially in the military area, are so horrific one has a perfect right to question this technology."

New York counselor Chet Burger, APR, relating his long experience advising AT&T, cautioned against the hazards of predicting consequences of technological inventions. Who could have predicted that the switch to containerization would have resulted in the abandonment of the westside warehouses in New York City and the growth of Newark as a container port. He believes "we shouldn't link the technical innovator with the social responsibility for his invention."

Rebutting an earlier prr story, Burger said that the psychological intimacy of teleconferences is so remarkable that the cost efficiency of business travel will come under increasing pressure.

Sarah Weddington, now a writer & teacher, urged exercising judgment about budget policies that replace benefits for women and children with benefits for defense contractors. We should look skeptically at taxpayer cost effectiveness of prosecuting individuals who rip off \$100 in the food stamp program but condone a \$100 million cost overrun by defense contractors. In defense we should look skeptically at the choice of billion dollar new hardware rather than spending funds to train and re-train people necessary to use existing weapons systems.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. PRSA officers for 1982 are: pres, Joseph Awad (gen'l dpr, Reynolds Aluminum, Richmond, Va); pres-elect, Judith Bogart (vp-pr, Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati, Ohio); sec'y, Dwayne Summar (vp, Hill & Knowlton, Atlanta); treas, Barbara Hunter (xvp, Dudley-Anderson-Yutzy, NYC). Directors-at-large are Anthony Franco (pres, Anthony Franco Inc, Detroit); Norman Teich (pres, Teich Communications, Dallas);

Dorotha Willix (pa ofcr, Decatur Federal Savings & Loan Ass'n, Ga). Assembly delegates-at-large are Nelson Fellman Jr. (sr vp, Spiro & Assocs, Phila); Charles Newton Jr. (dir/plng & dev'l, Ruder & Finn, NYC); Ronald Rhody (corp vp-pr & pa, Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical, Oakland, Calif). Roy Cottier (vp corp rels, Northern Telecom Ltd, Mississauga, Ont) is delegate-at-large representing Canadian members.

"Why is it that everyone who raises questions for the technocrats is automatically accused of standing in the way of progress?" asked Milton

PRIORITIES FOR WOMEN

Weddington advised: 1) abortion issue and ERA remain critical for women's movement; 2) comperable wage and EEOC issues should be kept in public debate but may require more pragmatic approach at present. May be very difficult for women to overcome career barrier if tagged with "troublemaker" image through EEOC case; 3) focus on state level politics is needed. Women are making great strides in cities and local gov'ts but are not really cracking at the state level. State advancement is a prerequisite for national political office; 4) networking is important for women in the power network. She advised against joining women-only networks or appointing only women to staff.

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ECONOMIC POLICY DEBATE MONOPOLIZES PRSA'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE;
WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF REAGANOMICS,
ITS FALLOUT IS CAUSING CHANGES THAT AFFECT PRACTITIONERS

Current economic debate is "one of the half dozen times of real change per century," believes Cong. Jim Jones. And even his House Budget Committee debating opponent Jack Kemp agrees. Whether or not supply side economics ultimately works, its side effects are creating changes which practitioners must take into account. PRSA's 34th annual conference, held last week in Chicago, was titled "Taking Charge of Change" but changes in economic policy permeated all speeches. A roundup of key points affecting public relations:

1. Reaganomics has gotten the American people to seriously debate economic policy. "For the first time in our memory, the domestic economy became the no. 1 national issue. Not foreign policy, not oil embargoes, not civil rights but the economy," says Otto Silha, chrm, Minneapolis Star & Tribune. Kemp (R-NY) notes that theories are being debated in their own right, without regard to the dollars involved.

2. As a result, the press is serious about covering the subject. "The press is now majoring in economics -- and gov't finances," says Silha. AP is tripling its coverage. Economic indicators, once ignored, are now reported in detail -- such as the monthly statistics on industrial capacity utilization. Serious material on economics generated by public relations dep'ts will be used.

3. But too often media cover the economy as a sporting event, Jones (D-Okla) feels. Reporters ignore substance to ponder who's ahead in the debate on Capitol Hill or elsewhere. Business contributes to this narrow coverage because its lobbyists & spokespersons are "monolithic in public debate," turning it into pro- or con-Reagan rather than carefully considering any point.

THE POWER OF WORDS --
THAT IS, THE RIGHT ONES

Rep. Jack Kemp, once a public relations officer at Marine-Midland Bank (Buffalo), understands perceptions & communication. His bill pushing "Capital Formation" failed, but re-named "Jobs Creation" it passed. He told PRSA an act was in place under Eisenhower to send Americans abroad to help third world nations. Kennedy changed its name to the Peace Corps and it passed -- which Kemp thinks my be JFK's legacy in history. While PRSA was meeting, budget director Dave Stockman was reported to have admitted "supply side" economics is merely a new name for the traditional "trickle down" theory which has hurt republicans in the past because it favors the rich. However, several practitioners in various forums at the Conference said it makes no difference whether the profession is called public relations, public affairs, communications or whatever.

4. Despite public perception, the new economics did not begin with Reagan, Jones points out. It started as a bipartisan move in Congress in '77, reacting to public opinion on gov't spending & inflation. This reinforces the value to practitioners of charting emerging trends early.

5. However, economic policy cannot be divorced from its human effects. "Budgets are philosophical & social documents as well as economic documents because they reflect priorities," counters Julian Bond, Georgia state senator. He terms Reagan's budget "at attempt to redistribute wealth from the bottom to the top." William Rusher, conservative journalist, says economic revitalization "cannot be painless, cannot be done without some unemployment."

6. Public opinion on economics can shift quickly. Jones points to the free-spending attitudes that elected Carter in '76 ... which were modified in the '78 tax bill ... then turned around completely in the '80 elections. But "present social trends in general are not particularly conservative, only a nudge to the right while staying within the center," believes Richard Scammon, ex-census bureau director & network tv analyst. He feels America is "governed by massive ambivalence" and quotes Irving Kristol's prediction "we really want a 'conservative welfare state.'"

7. Whatever the result, business will not pick up the slack. "Anathema" was the word applied by Koppers CEO Fletcher Byrom. While strongly supporting the Reagan program in general -- he calls it our last chance "to live in a society with some degree of freedom" -- the idea corporations should be held responsible for funding social programs is "a lot of hogwash." Individuals, not companies, will have to pick up the burden. Bond & Sarah Weddington, counselor to Pres. Carter, agree corporations won't fund social needs. Russia feels they shouldn't. Kemp, an attractive but polemical speaker, told prr his Kemp-Roth approach intends to give tax relief to individuals, not corporations, so is not relevant here.

¶Even PRSA's governing body, the Assembly, got in to economic policy. After considering several means of keeping up with inflation, it voted an \$8 dues increase (to \$128 for 1982). Favored policy seemed to be some form of indexing whereby dues would rise with inflation -- rather than large increases every 3 or 4 years.

MOVE TO SMALL CITIES WILL CHARACTERIZE 80s, POVERTY LEVEL IS DOWN, U.S. NOW HAS BOURGEOISIE & HIGHER EDUCATION DID IT, SAYS SCAMMON

Migration of people & business to small cities is a probable major trend, according to the consultant to NBC news. Only political in-

fusions of economic aid to inner cities will offset it. Natural economic activity favors small towns which now have 1) air & road links to metropolitan areas; 2) hospitals, colleges, local media; 3) capability of tie-ins via cable tv, WATS lines & computers with organizational headquarters; 4) far lower crime rates. "Work can be carried on anywhere in today's world." But management will stay in the city. Other observations:

1. The true middle class is now the classic bourgeoisie, which means working people.

2. Wide access to higher education created this class and most of our progress. Not the Ivy League but the community college.

3. The poverty level has gone down in 20 years from 35% to 15% of US population -- not counting non-cash benefits like food stamps. Thus the old economic theory was working -- and voters may not tolerate changes at the expense of raising the level again.

4. There will be no change in the "tolerance & liberalism in America's view of our social circumstance." Freedom in language, homosexuality, abortion, sexual mores, non-pejorativity of welfare will continue.

5. Reagan should not be viewed as moving backward but may save the Great Society by eliminating its excesses, just as Eisenhower saved the New Deal by not repealing it & Teddy Roosevelt saved big business with anti-trust laws.

6. "There is no political development in modern America so over-blown as the Moral Majority." Primary beneficiary is the left, which uses it as a "hob-goblin" to raise funds. Media trumpeting of power is not power.

7. "After 30 years of observing the American public, I have so much more confidence in the average citizen than in the collection of intellectuals, journalists & academics -- because the average people know & follow their self-interest." They are "a far better guardian of public policy than all the Ph.D.'s in existence."

TAKE CHARGE OF CHANGE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS, URGES NEW PRSA PRESIDENT JOE AWAD

The Profession. "On the one hand we have those who hold that we are first & foremost communicators. On the other extreme are those who hold that we must rise above the level of mere communicators, mere technicians. We must be social scientists, public policy experts, manage issues.

"Then we have the specialties which have developed within public relations, such as public affairs, investor relations, media relations, employee communications, consumer affairs, issues management, urban affairs & others.

"It would be a grave error to confuse any one of these with the whole of public relations. In large organizations they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing instruments of public relations management. And the ultimate practitioner is one who orchestrates them all."

The Challenge. "In an age that has produced Joseph Goebbels & B.F. Skinner, in an age that has given us brainwashing, subliminal suggestion & disinformation, an age that has seen Water-gate & the collapse of credibility in all of our institutions, we need to root public relations practice in a dedication to truth and human rights. This is why it's so important to get everyone who is practicing public relations into PRSA & subscribing to our code.

"Rapidly changing values & technology will bring many of us face-to-face with hard ethical and moral choices in the years ahead. The whole field of communications is fraught with such questions. We must be on guard to insure that public relations, and the causes & organizations it serves respect -- indeed reverence -- the freedom and dignity of the individual human person."

The Direction. "Public relations at last is on the offensive and moving so fast that our only real problem is maintaining our own internal lines of communications. So let's banish pr paranoia for all time.

"Let us not engage in the unseemly & unprofessional business of measuring the progress of our profession by the number of public relations people to become CEOs. Let's not get apoplectic or apocalyptic when people from other disciplines move into top pr positions. If we do what we need to do, this practice will soon die a natural death. And don't fall victim to the old "we aren't appreciated by management" syndrome. We are management."

-- from Joe Awad's inaugural speech at the PRSA conference. Copies from prr.