

Of Related Interest: Sen. Wm. Proxmire keeps hitting public relations activities with his Golden Fleece Award. January winners were surveys of gov't employees about working conditions. For press & public entertainment he singled out questions which seem needless -- but in context of surveys may well be essential. An earlier "winner" was a report on improving pa programs commissioned by the Dep't of Commerce from Fraser Assocs (pr 7/28/80). The Senator is an advocate of free information flow, apparently is ignorant of public relations' essential role in it.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST FOR PROFESSIONALS

Corporate Consumer Affairs 1981 Management Guide to Effective Programs & Policies outlines 7 functions performed by corp consumer aftrs reps & suggests objectives for each. Functions discussed are: complaint handling, consumer education, consumer information, consumer protection, external & internal liaison, & issue management. Examples of effective prgms & policies currently being employed by 50 major corps are included. Designed to clarify the objectives of the consumer aftrs function, to enlist top mgmt support of those objectives and to provide a framework for change. Working document comes in 3-ring binder from Fraser/Assocs' Corp Consumer Svc, 1800 K St, N.W., Ste. 1006, Wash. D.C. 20006; \$30.

29th edition of Bacon's Publicity Checker is still field's "Old Faithful." Contains over 35,000 media contacts for the U.S. & Canada in 2 volumes. 6,500 information changes were necessary in updating 1981 edition. Vol. I lists 4,431 business, trade, industrial, farm & consumer mags & newsletters along with identifying data. Vol. II lists 1,715 daily newspapers in U.S. & Canada, 7,429 weekly newspapers, and more than 700 wkly newspaper multiple publishers. Also includes special newspaper lists. \$110 price includes quarterly revisions. Available from Bacon's, 14 E. Jackson Blvd, Chi 60604.

Great American Brands profiles the marketing history of 34 famous American brand names. Brand-building -- a basic function of consumer goods producers -- is analyzed using case-history method. Author David Powers Cleary includes examples of advertising campaigns, innovative merchandising promotions and details growth of each product's public relationship. Available from Fairchild Books, 7 E. 12th St, NYC 10003. 307 pgs; \$17.50.

Magazine Industry Market Place 1981 deals with all aspects of magazine editorial, production & business operations. Lists about 6000 periodicals, agents, distributors, manufacturers, direct mail promotion svcs, paper merchants & mills, freelance editorial svcs, printers, mailing list companies, and more. An easy-to-use, completely indexed reference. 713 pgs; \$35. From R.R. Bowker, 1180 Ave. of the Americas, NYC 10036.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Roy Kohler, mgr corp comty rels projects (Gulf Oil, Pittsburgh); served

in Gulf's pa dep't for 25 yrs; former pres, Pittsburgh Chap. PRSA.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Billboard in front of new press room addition to Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel Star has one cartoon character asking "What kind of foundation does a newspaper need?" Man in construction hat answers, "Concrete, steel and the First Amendment."

Vol.24 No.5
February 2, 1981

ACTIVIST GROUPS TRY NEW PERSONAL MEDIUM, HOUSE MEETINGS, AS WAY TO "CONSIDER THE ISSUES TOGETHER"; TECHNIQUE SEEMS UNIVERSALLY ADAPTABLE

Do you have a complicated subject to explain? Have you created awareness & interest for your position through publicity or publications, and need to meet people face-to-face to stimulate favorable decision-making? Is there a particular neighborhood or territory where interest is weak or opposition strong? Consider the house meeting. Anti-nuclear & pacifist organizations developed it to meet exactly these problems -- which they face in abundance.

Peacework magazine describes the situation: "Attempting to wake people up about an issue is a many-faceted affair. You arrange lectures, do leafletting, have vigils, write letters-to-the-editor and all the rest. But somehow it seems that your own neighbors are the last people you approach on these matters. Perhaps this is because often they are neither quite strangers nor quite acquaintances -- let alone friends! They're just there." Here's how to use house meetings:

1. Identify mature supporters/employees/shareholders/members willing to host meetings in their homes. They must not fear raising their visibility in their own neighborhoods. And should not be embarrassment-prone.
2. Invite a heterogenic audience based on living near one another. Or an organized group. Tell them material presented will be a good background for thinking about the issue.
3. Use a film or slide show as centerpiece. Avoid the cheerleading kind -- "Too much emotion, too little substance." Balance is essential.
4. Experts complement film by answering questions conversationally...but speeches are a turn-off.
5. Simple refreshments keep the talk going, add homey touch to facilitate free & open discussion.

WHAT IT CAN DO

What can a house meeting accomplish? Says a handbook prepared by the PAX Centre (Erie, Pa.): "It can deliver lots of understandable information to non-technical folks. It can make people feel personally involved. And it maximizes your chances to meet bunches of new people. One organizer reached about 350 new people in two months. We have been talking with bowling teams, Bible classes, beer drinkers, landlords, lesbians, Republicans, welfare rights-ers, pro-lifers, boilermakers, electrical workers, retirees, disco addicts, banjo players, and many more kinds of people."

SAVVY TRADE ASS'N, PRACTITIONER
AGREE ENVIRONMENT WILL BE ISSUE;
MAY MOVE TO STATE LEVEL

Don't be too sure the new U.S. administration will be anti-environment (see prr 1/5). Reagan's advisors on the topic include ex-EPA heads Bill Ruckelshaus & Russ Train, Sen. Howard Baker &

Ike Livermore, ex-Sierra Club, ex-Audubon Society. Baker, new majority leader, led in clean air & water legislation on Environment & Public Works Committee. Phoenix Quarterly, published by Inst. of Scrap Iron & Steel, says in an article by Dick Kirschten this stance is smart politics -- because all polls show majority support for environmental positions.

What might come to pass is a shift toward state regulation, rather than federal. This is irrational, since pollution knows no boundaries as topics like acid rain illustrate. Midwest smokestacks send up particulates that fall on Northeast states & provinces. But, reasons Kirschten, this strategy would save the president headaches. Ecology lobby would merely regroup at state level -- where it started. ISIS is objective source on topic of environment. Recycling & collecting unsightly scrap are its business; yet junkyards have aesthetic & runoff problems.

Sec'y of Interior Jim Watt may pull a Wally Hinkle. "A lot of people are going to be surprised that he turns out to not be the extremist he is painted," cautions John Ulrich, veteran of the environmental wars at Bonneville Power & now Corps of Engineers (Portland, Ore.). Alaska Gov. Hinkle took the job over cries of opposition, turned out to be admired protector of environment & public lands. "The environment is with us, late & soon. I'm not so sure, tho, that the costs of environmental protection have become known to most people. The ultimate consumers haven't all bitten into the worm yet, and I still fear a backlash," Ulrich wrote prr.

MEDIA ADVICE

. . . from a major tv station news director: send color photos of your CEO, other bigwigs & personalities with news releases or for photo files. Most send b&w's still, he told prr. But today tv uses color, and wants it. Asked whether stations with notoriously small news staffs can use file pix, he said most have some system for retaining mug shots of locally important personalities -- those apt to pop up in the news.

GOV'T PRACTITIONERS IMPROVING FAST
BUT ARE UNDERPAID; "MUST BE
MORE THAN EX-REPORTERS"

High visibility of gov't public relations units (read "public affairs" or "public information," the current euphemisms) gives them a big role in shaping public perception of

the field. Whether or not they are at all representative of current practice. Whether practitioners like it or not. 3 "retiring" ass't sec'ys for pa say U.S. units have become more professional -- less journalistic, more pr-oriented. But they're fearful of setbacks by new administration.

"We're something like a full service public relations firm," explains Robert Holland, Dep't of Transportation. His office has a) speech writers, b) pio's who answer media queries or ghost write articles, c) booklet & pamphlet mailing svc, d) film div that does psa's, employee training, oversees other a-v, d) a print shop, e) FOI office. His job is to be "kind of the personal press sec'y to the cabinet officer, plus running a large public affairs bureaucracy" -- 300 nationwide in DOT including Coast Guard, Fed'l Aviation Adm.

Benefits & Hazards Of
Coming Into The Open

Holland's attitude toward info flow is "when in doubt give it out." Bill Wise of Health & Human Svcs, opposes the gov't tradition of concealing activities out of fear poli-

ticians will "cut the pr people." In previous post as ass't sec'y of Housing & Urban Development he found "surreptitious, unauthorized communications and public affairs activities spotted around in various program areas." Though significant money was spent, activities were uncoordinated & uncontrolled. There could be no evaluation of effectiveness, no prioritization of needs. Personnel were "beaten down people who didn't value themselves or their work."

Wise is proud of instituting a management control system at HUD that allows dep't to show how much it's spending, what for, & what's being accomplished. At HHS he 1) established centralized message testing & media monitoring; 2) created task forces to regiment improvements in distribution practices, evaluate comms programs (18 of which were implemented by the dep't); 3) established the first graphic standards, which should result in significant savings in printing; 4) issued a pa management manual setting forth policy, standards & procedures for comms activities.

Holland set up a vdt network which allows offices to talk with one another, handle editing & messages with greater speed.

Concern For
The Future

"Things will be tight" believes Wise. But he hopes the system of comms planning he instituted will be continued by his successor. As for his staff, many are now wondering whether they have been too honest by coming out of hiding. Maybe they've told too much and will find the information used to the detriment of pa activities under the new administration. "New public relations people who may be hired should be more than ex-reporters." They must understand "the dynamics of power in this town" and the process of interaction among Congress, the White House, interest groups, the press & the agencies.

He feels the greatest weakness of pa lies in its substantive analytical capacity. "Usually they are not able to participate on an equal footing with, say, the Office of Legislative Affairs, the General Counsel or the Office of Policy & Evaluation in a policy debate. By improving our capacity to do that, I can think of a number of incidents in which our position prevailed."

Another concern is that jobs are underpaid. Ass't sec'ys receive \$52,750/yr. But Wise has functional management of 600 people, budget of \$70 million. "You can find the dir of pa in almost any corporation would make twice that."

NOT ALL ROSES

Wise & Holland told prr their posts carry significant counselling input -- "providing executive leadership, policy direction & management strategy" in Wise's phrase. But Hodding Carter III of State Dep't tells in a February Playboy article of being "the last to know." Heading for a speaking engagement, he was assured there were no developments in the hostage crisis. "Just be careful" cautioned the Sec'y. He told his audience this. On the plane back a stewardess awakened him saying she was sorry about the raid:

"'What raid?' said the premier spokesman for American foreign policy. 'Oh, God, I think you had better talk to the captain,' she answered. And so it was I found out what (Sec'y Cyrus) Vance had obliquely warned me about..."

"These jobs are very exciting. It may not sound it when you say Dep't of Transportation. But we've had things like airbags, Firestone tires exploding, kicking the Russians out of our fishing water & drug busts. The Dep't covers so many things and I would not have missed the experience."

-- Robert Holland