

"All the players are in place now except for business & industry leadership. Everybody's ready; it's up to business to take the risk. If you do, you'll be heroes for 50 years. If you don't, the people will punish you." (Wis. Governor Lee Dreyfus)

"I urge each chief executive officer to propose to his board that giving be increased to at least the 2% level -- if he isn't at that level now. I can't imagine a board of directors that would turn down such a request." (Robert Krikorian, CEO, Rexnord, Milwaukee)

San Francisco mayor Dianne Feinstein listed several examples of business talent working with her city. The mayor's fiscal advisory committee includes 35 business, labor & county representatives plus professionals. A risk management group and an accounting & reporting functions committee used business talent. To plan a 3-level management training program, Bank of America, Pacific Telephone & Transamerica pitched in. IBM is providing goal-setting sessions. Firemen's Fund & Foremost-McKesson worked to develop a formal management evaluation process. Numerous other companies are involved.

For practitioners, a seminar in Minneapolis, May 18-20, will investigate "Response & Responsibility: The New Corporate Role In Community Affairs." Jointly presented by PRSA and Public Affairs Council -- a first -- seminar will emphasize hands-on workshops led by corporate & community experts discussing actual programs that have worked. Topics include management & technical assistance, corporate philanthropy, volunteerism, the role of communications in community involvement, successful economic development projects. Promotional materials note two facts: 1) 97% of the nation's top public affairs & PR executives say business is receptive to greater participation in community affairs; 2) 2 out of 3 say public opinion will deteriorate if companies don't help solve community problems.

IT'S NO JOKE:
CAN PROFESSION LAUGH AT ITSELF?

"People these days are suffering from humor-deficiency anemia," writes Eugene Stevenson, director in charge, R.J. Reynolds (Winston-Salem).

The profession is included in that dictum, apparently. Of the entries in our First Best Publishable PR Joke Contest, 65% were concentrated on two stories: the famous Moses joke & "How many PR men [sic] does it take to screw in a light bulb?" One creative variation of the latter fills two pages & neatly lampoons much of what practitioners do every day.

Either there aren't many printable PR tales, or the profession takes itself too seriously to admit knowing any. Some well-known pros chided PR for running the contest but ethnic or special-group jokes have proliferated as long as there have been different people. From nationality to religion, hair color to occupation, the ability to laugh at oneself has been hailed as a sign of maturity. Where does that leave us in the practice of public relations? "We do need to laugh at ourselves more and not take this business with such grimness," concludes Donn Rooks, PR rep, Dupont (Wilmington).

Beginning next week we'll share the best entries -- plus stories used by such pros as Carl Hawver, Harold Burson, Ralph Frede & others. They may be useful in speeches or publications, so you can review them with pragmatism.

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REAGAN BARKING UP WRONG TREE TRYING TO REVERT TO OLD WAYS,
SUGGESTS RESEARCH BY CONSERVATIVE MAGAZINE; BUSINESS NOT TRUSTED
ANY MORE THAN GOV'T, BUT WILL FEEL BACKLASH IF FAILS TO ANTE UP

Public Opinion magazine is published by American Enterprise Institute, the prominent conservative think tank. Its Feb/March issue prints data from the Institute's private sector initiative study, done by Roper, on the roles of gov't & private sector in "meeting common needs & objectives." Some of its findings are surprising:

1. Large corporations rank below federal gov't in "responsive[ness] to peoples needs." 34% thinks gov't is, only 32% feels big business is. Balancing the results somewhat, 61% says gov't is not responsive, only 58% feels similarly about big biz. But the message is clear: big biz is felt to be as unresponsive as federal gov't! In contrast, voluntary org's get a 74% positive rating, small business 65%, local gov't 54%. Additionally, big biz (56%) fell below small biz (70%) & voluntary organizations (60%) in being "efficient & well run." Here federal gov't plunged (20%). Since the public is predictably less concerned with efficiency than with responsiveness, this offers little consolation.

How queries are worded remains the pitfall of research. To the statement "It is a good idea to review the Clean Air Act because experience with it may indicate needed change," 95% understandably agreed (Opinion Research Corp for US Chamber of Commerce). In contrast, when asked straight out whether they favor changing the Act, 29% want it made stricter, 51% think it should stay the same, only 17% want it less strict (Harris Poll).

2. People believe gov't should play a major role in many services that the Administration is trying to get gov't out of: a) "Seeing to it that all Americans get good healthcare," 73% major role, 20% minor role, only 5% no role; b) "Protecting the environment," 72% major role, 23% minor role, only 3% no role; c) "Seeing to it there are enough good jobs," 63% major role, 25% minor role, 9% no role. Clearly, the public view is 180° different than the Administration's. On the other hand, only 20% feels gov't should play a major role in "fostering the arts," with 46% saying it has a minor role but 27% seeing no role at all.

3. Non-governmental solutions are highly unpopular. Gov't at some level is by far the preferable provider of most services covered in the survey. Only the following small percentages favor solutions "outside gov't" to these problems: assuring civil rights, 3%; protecting the environment, 2%; caring for the poor, 3%; college education, 10%; mass transit, 6%. But, again, 26% supports non-governmental "fostering the arts."

4. Despite "New Federalism," only slightly over half (55%) believes the present balance of gov't responsibility has "tipped too far toward Washington" & away from state & local gov'ts.

5. Big business is expected to produce bucks to deal with social problems. The President has sold that message. In fact, 38% believes "the best way of getting resources" to tackle problems is from "efforts of large corporations." Only 25% favors taxes, 21% "projects of private voluntary organizations." In addition, 40% "would like to see more corporate philanthropy," another 28% wants "as much as now." Only 18% favors less corporate giving. Apparently the predicted backlash against business if it fails to meet the President's stated expectations is real.

Strong Support For Clean Air, Environment

Other studies reported by the magazine bode ill for a Reagan/business goal, reducing air pollution standards. Roper finds 50% opposed to tampering with environmental regulations, another 20% with mixed feelings or unsure. Only 30% favors cutbacks in regulations. Furthermore, the least trusted source for recommendations to alter the Clean Air Act is business (trusted by 39%). EPA rates tops (77%) followed by environmental groups (74%) & university professors (72%). The President (59%) & Congress (55%) do rank higher than news media (47%). There is "no backing away from commitment" to environmental laws, summarizes Public Opinion (see front page box).

INTERNATIONALISM NOT ONLY CRUCIAL BUT WE MUST LOBBY UN, OECD, EUROPARLIAMENT

International Seminar. UN, Org'n for Economic Cooperation & Development, the European community are all formulating codes of conduct. Legislation approved by UN generally becomes a model for individual nations so is especially important, says William Parker, corp dpr, CPC Int'l (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.), conference chair.

Areas of possible regulation include 1) economic & social guidelines, e.g. int'l investment, environment, bribery; 2) marketing codes, e.g. direct selling, advertising, market research; 3) gov't intervention, e.g. protectionism, economic nationalism, competition policy.

Paxton Dunn of US Council for Int'l Business believes "professional regulations of a voluntary nature" benefit everyone, may stave off mandatory rules -- such as UN Code of Conduct for Transnational Corporations. Under discussion for 5 yrs, it remains controversial. However, it would regulate gov'ts as well as corporations.

How fast can things move? A ban on animal hormones in Italy was adopted in France 10 days later, led to a Common Market proposal in a month. The "community" practitioners must relate to is now the world.

It's time to start lobbying -- and more -- overseas, advises counsel Jan Daumann, InterMatrix Group (London & Westport, Ct.). "The major implication for international public affairs is that we really have to move and move fast from the task of issue monitoring to the task of effective issue management." This must be done country by country because there is no United States of Europe or anywhere else. But policy must remain consistent. European-US relationships are deteriorating rapidly, thus European MNCs are lobbying in Washington.

"OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM" DISCOUNTED BY MARY ANN DOLAN, EDITOR, LOS ANGELES HERALD EXAMINER

be the most untruthful, most pernicious kind of newspapering possible. It's the

"We've been through fads -- gonzo journalism, me journalism, new journalism. But basically we're still wallowing in the timid 'just the facts, lady' style of journalism which may

approach that uses the First Amendment Right to mean our right to know without any responsibility to comprehend.

"The newspapers of the future must take their moral responsibility seriously. We have failed in our calling to make sense of the news, to help readers understand modern life.

"Our duty is to give our readers an artistic guide that makes the world human again." Supporting formal research on the topic Dolan expressed the opinion that tv is our eyes and ears and public meeting place but print continues to be our memory. Dolan noted how battle over past 4 yrs with public relations people determined to exclude Herald-Examiner from stories. Now that paper has established place as an alternative voice to the LA Times, how will those practitioners fare in her newsroom?

In this age of consumerism, people demand product quality & reliability. We all should then expect the same dedication to quality & reliability from the products of our publishers and networks. When a below-standard story engenders an unjust attitude or disruptive emotion in the readers or listeners, those guilty or responsible should be held accountable as are the producers of an inefficient automobile transmission. The only problem is: how does one recall for repair a hundred thousand attitudes?

-- Alexander Giacco, CEO Hercules Inc. (Wilmington, Del.)

Only woman editor of major US daily expressed these & other heretical opinions to PRSA's Los Angeles Chapter. (For copy of speech, write pr.)

TV NEWS IS ENTERTAINMENT AGREE EXPERTS AT BIZ JOURNALISM FORUM; DO YOU REALLY WANT YOUR NEWS ON THE TUBE?

Nearly everyone watches tv news, but its lack of standards & inability to put things in perspective make it a dangerous medium -- especially for business & economic reporting. Seeking coverage on tv may not be a wise move for practitioners representing business or attempting to explain financial issues of nonprofits or gov't agencies.

"Television news too often has the facts wrong, emphasis misplaced, little in way of balance." Their excuses: pressure of the medium, show biz colorization, absence of standards and tradition of print journalism. (Alexander Giacco, CEO, Hercules Inc., Wilmington, Del.)

"Tv passes from reporting to evaluation without any sense of relationship between events. In tv there is probably no way to separate reporting from editorializing." (William Niskansen, President's Council of Economic Advisors)

"If I were a business executive and Mike Wallace wanted to interview me, I'd leave the country for a while. He's engaged in a form of entertainment -- television journalism." (Irving Kristol, editor, Public Interest Magazine, NYC)

COMMUNITY RELATIONS VITAL, SAY MAYORS TO BUSINESS; TALENT MORE USEFUL THAN \$\$\$

Motivated by fear gov't control will return with a rush, as a backlash to business' inability or unwillingness to play a greater role in social problems, seminars on the subject abound. For instance, Arco & US Conference of Mayors held a "Partnerships Conference" on "Private Initiatives for Public Response," which turned up these views: