

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

Near-term future is topic of new magazine, called NEXT. Goal is to provide "commentary on our rapidly changing world," according to articles ed. William H. Ryan. Now in newsstand test marketing, bi-monthly will begin regular publication in March. A. J. Voglis ed., formerly with Medical Economics. He told prr NEXT is interested in material on "the future we'll live to see, that will affect our lives -- next 5 to 20 years." (After Nov. 1, address will be 708 Third Ave., NYC 10017.)

Utility bill stuffers will get go/no go from U.S. Supreme Court during its current sitting. Justices agreed last week to hear Consolidated Edison (NYC) appeal New York Public Utility Commission ruling that inserts were unfair expression of company's views on public issues -- in this case, nuclear power.

Who's-oldest-debate continues. Bill Husted, Florida PR Assn. vp, says organization was founded in 1939, then called Florida Publicity & PR Assn. and consisting primarily of tourist attraction publicists. Name change took place in '64. Group will hold 41st annual convention Nov. 1-3 in Sarasota. Husted says Publicity Club of NY also claims to be oldest -- but FPRA beats them. prr is looking into that one. Religious PR Council still looks like the winner -- formed in 1929.

College marketing craze draws blast from NYTimes education ed. Ed Fiske. Attempt to "sell" students, sometimes with promotional brochures that "look like cigarette ads," is big business: \$500 million spent annually on college admissions. In October Atlantic, Fiske worries whether colleges will have discipline to flunk students they've spent so much to recruit. But, he notes subject is not new. Harvard published tract in 1643 entitled "New England's First Fruit" to attract degree-seekers. "Some colleges should fold," he concludes. Article assumes 18 yr. olds are only educational market, makes no mention of mammoth continuing education opportunities.

More undesirable nicknames show repetition of ideas. For TWA, Norm Teich (Teich Communications, Dallas) reports Try Waiting Awhile. Pacific Western Airlines, notes A. E. Turner (Credit Union Central, Regina, Sask.) is known widely as Please Wait Awhile. Does anyone have any from organizations not engaged in transportation?

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

DIED. Herbert W. Foster, vp press rels with Nat'l Coal Assn (D.C.).

ELECTED. 1979-80 ofc's, Women in Communications, Inc., pres, Barbara D. Haas (Quaker Valley School District, Pittsburgh); pres-elect, Kathleen Larey Lewton (Flower Hospital-Crestview Ctr, Toledo); vp-programs, Rita Rooney (Balboa Is., Calif.); vp-mbrship, Kay Lockridge (NYC); vp-student affrs, Brenda Myers (Indiana Univ.).

PEOPLE. Charles R. Barnette named dir pub affrs & coms, Blount, Inc. (Montgomery, Ala.)...Amy M. Harvey joins Vought Corp (Dallas) as mgr comty & state affrs.

ACCOUNT SUPERVISORS. Mary Murray, Daniel J. Edelman (Chi.)...Denise Watson, Public Communications (Chi.)...James T. Keating, Image Management (Milwaukee)...Gary Goodfriend, Harshe-Rotman & Druck (Chi.)...Nancy R. Meyerson, Retail Merchandising Assocs (Chi.).

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES. Gail Farrell, The Nigberg Corp. (Framingham, Mass.)...Jeanne Chumbler, Kristin Gabriel & Janice Johnson, The Rowland Co., (NYC)...John O'Hare, Duffy & Shanley (Providence)...G. C. Skipper, Aitkin-Kynnett PR Div. (Phil.)...Nancy L. Klann, Image Management (Milwaukee)...Carol Solberg, The Public Relations Board (Chi.).

pr reporter

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INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER SAYS CANDOR & IMMEDIATE ANSWERS NOT ALWAYS NECESSARY, EVEN IN CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Traditional rules for working with media stress candor and prompt response. Should these rules sometimes be broken? "Handle every case on its own merits," advises Les Whitten, senior investigative reporter on Jack Anderson's staff. "There are times when you don't need to tell the whole truth. It will never come out."

Whitten gave practitioners at PRSA Northeast District Conference on "Crisis Communications" this example. A construction company is involved in a disaster. It also had a couple of bad accidents a few years back. When reporter calls, don't mention previous problems -- "if you feel you can conceal them." Leave it up to the press to dig out your history in a case like this, says Whitten. Other unorthodox tips:

1. When reporter calls, listen before you talk. Don't assume purpose of call and unwittingly reveal story media may be unaware of.
2. Don't talk before you're ready. There are times when you should stall. Or tell the reporter you don't have all the facts yet & don't want to go out "halfbaked."
3. Find out whether reporter can document charges. Then decide what to say.
4. Get him to your office to see his documentation. Is he rifling thru notes, perhaps bluffing? Or is there a piece of corporate stationery?
5. Know libel law & your rights. If you invite reporter and he plunges ahead without your side, you're protected. Media Law Reporter newsletter helpful here (1231 25th St. NW, Wash., D.C. 20037).
6. Never lie.
7. Always assume you're being taped. Be careful about denying earlier remarks.

IT MAY BE WISE, BUT IS IT ETHICAL?

In court, you take an oath to tell "the whole truth." Is what you don't say a breach of public relations ethics? PRSA Code offers little help. It says practitioners shall "adhere to truth and accuracy" (Sect. 3). And "shall not intentionally communicate false or misleading information" (Sect. 7). No interpretation of either section has been promulgated. However, when weighing advice from reporters (like Les Whitten), remember that journalists have not instituted a recognized code of ethics for themselves.

8. Get home phone nos. of chief operating officers of all media you deal with. Crises don't always break during working hours.
9. Make sure initial statements are centralized thru public relations dep't. Media loves to get statement from Chmn. of Board & Exec. V.P. and "catch you in crossfire."
10. Sometimes it's better to let truth come out piecemeal.



ANOTHER VOTE IN FAVOR OF "NO COMMENT"

Univ. of Dominica is one of several offshore medical schools. They've been target of campaign by Amer. Medical Assn. & others. But Dominica says it has 100% U.S. faculty, recruited from top stateside schools, is certified by World Health Organization. Claims it is fully qualified -- and therefore unfairly lumped with other schools which happen to be outside U.S. Dir. of devel. Wayne Breda, M.D., told pr reporter he tried to tell this to several inquiring reporters, found himself misquoted or worse.

So he adopted a different tactic. "No comment," he now says -- then quickly adds "but come see me and I'll show you everything you want to know." See-for-yourself approach is reasonable substitute for avoidance.

Babcock & Wilcox successfully combined no comment tactic with intentional 10-week stalling of media while it gathered full facts on its Three Mile Island involvement (pr 6/25).

CEO ADVISES ENGINEERS TO WORK WITH PR PROFESSIONALS

Engineers should develop rapport with their company's public relations dep't or outside counsel, says William Boeschstein, CEO of Owens-Corning Fiberglas. He told 8,000-member Engineering Society of Detroit this is essential if engineering profession is to communicate with the public.

"Engineering success is not only expected, but taken for granted." As a result, engineers make headlines only "when there has been some spectacular accident," like Three Mile Island or a stadium collapse. PR profession can aid engineering profession in educating public about "vital role technical development plays in advancing society." Also, practitioners can assist engineers in improving personal communication skills, counsels CEO.

pr's 15th Annual Survey of the Profession (last week's issue) found only half of practitioners meet with engineering dep't on any regular basis -- and that infrequently. Engineers rated lowest of all dep'ts in contacts with pr.

TEACHERS' INCREASING POLITICAL CLOUT: EDUCATION GETS CABINET LEVEL RANK, CARTER GETS NEA SUPPORT NEXT DAY

U.S. Congress has passed bill consolidating 170 federal agencies into new Dep't of Education with Cabinet-level Secretary. Pres. Carter supports plan, is expected to sign bill promptly. Less bureaucracy, eliminating duplication, savings of \$100 million annually are benefits, says enthusiastic news release from Nat'l Education Assn. dated Sept. 27.

Next day NEA released another statement...announcing support for Carter's reelection bid. This means its PACs and teacher volunteers can be used in nation's 35 presidential primaries. 1.8-million-member NEA will also assist teachers to run as Carter delegates. In '76 265 NEA members were delegates or alternates to Democratic Nat'l Convention -- largest bloc from any organization, according to release. (For copy of position statement and NEA-PAC rules for primaries, write Karen Klass, NEA, 1201 16th St. NW, Wash., D.C. 20036.)

New dep't will include HEW's education division, voc rehab, Nat'l Science Foundation, migrant education, overseas military dependents' schools, law enforcement education programs, Howard University, Callaudet College, among others. Budget is \$14 billion, larger than Commerce, Interior, Justice, Energy or State dept's.

AIR FORCE SWITCHES TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS DESIGNATION; CONFUSION OR CLARIFICATION?

Standardized military use of term public affairs to describe information function begins this week, when Air Force falls into line with Dep't of Defense, other services. Brig. Gen. Harry Dalton, Air Force PA chief, told pr switch was made not just to correlate with others, but because term information led to inquiries "about where do you catch the bus or for telephone numbers." He surveyed major commands 15 months ago, got 50/50 response to suggested change. Many feared change to pa would signal downplay of internal communications. Because of its size, this is vital armed services function. Second survey 3 months ago found nearly unanimous support.

Old information officer designation is still used, however, by other gov't agencies. Even military hasn't dropped it entirely. Col. Steve Dukkony, pao, Military Dist. of Washington, told pr public affairs was adopted by Army 2 yrs. ago because of its broader implications. Old pio title now applies to only one of three subdivisions of pa: 1) community rels ofcr, 2) command info ofcr (internal communications), 3) pio (external comms). But, he cautions, 3rd segment could also carry general title of pao. Formerly those engaged in all three specialties were labeled pio's.

New terminology will add to confusion, some feel. Ray Bergstrom (dpr, ITT Gilfillan, Van Nuys, Calif.) points to fact industry increasingly uses pa to mean political affairs & gov't relations, while counselors apply it to general area of public issues debate. In non-profit world it often connotes community relations.

PRSA May Try to Change Title Proliferation

Meanwhile, PRSA plans investigation & possible counter-proposal to ancient Congressional sanction against use of term public relations. Washington practitioners Carl Hawver & Jim Morrissey will head up effort. Sept. 18 PRSA leaders conducted White House briefing for 100 gov't "pr" execs. Evidence of need for increased professionalism & assertiveness by gov't practitioners -- in the public interest as well as their own -- is Wall Street Journal front-pager of 10/3 asserting that manipulative, combative Zbig Brzezinski has undue influence because of "the reluctance of (Sec'y of Defense) Brown and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to indulge in public relations."

Because it connotes "advise & counsel, preventive & policy work" as well as outreach, Gen. Dalton would be happy to use pr designation. "If we had our way," he told pr, "the majority of us would prefer pr. I would personally, as an accredited member of PRSA." Latest PRSA Register lists 27 Air Force members, 13 accredited. Army has 24 members, Navy 8.

TELECONFERENCING IS ANOTHER ELECTRONIC TECHNIQUE USEFUL TO PRACTITIONERS

Permits people in up to 60 far-flung locations to meet together by telephone. Or, 12 meetings can go on simultaneously with 5 participating locations each. Participants can call in or hang up during meetings without disrupting it. Others can be called and asked to join in if they have needed info. Roomful of people can take part at each location using portable teleconferencing units. Microphone-equipped, they amplify sound so that hundreds in one place can hear & speak. Sound is reportedly as clear as person-to-person call because voice-activated system allows only one speaker at a time. This feature leads U. of Wis. Tele-Training Institute to say message can be superior to conventional meetings where everyone talks at once. One southern univ. uses technique for football coach's weekly press conference. Saves cost of travel, accommodations. "If you can get to the phone, you can get to the meeting" notes The Darome Connection, Telephone Conferencing Service. (Data from 8 West St., Danbury, Conn. 06810.)