

PR in Lobbying Panel on lobbying -- Thomas Hale Boggs Jr., (Patton, Boggs and Blow), Robert Benjamin Washington Jr. (Danzansky, Dickey Tydings, Quint & Gordon), and Robert Gray (Hill and Knowlton) -- agreed that public relations skills are vital in the blend of necessary lobbying expertise. They also noted law degree is not essential for lobbying.

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

Medical reporting is going popular with joint radio venture by Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center (NYC) and Prudential Insurance (Newark). Medical Journal, 90 sec. daily segment, covers latest developments in medicine & health. (See last week's prr.) Includes interviews with research & medical authorities worldwide. Weekday prime time broadcasts. Debut on 125 major metro stations.

Talking Information Center, closed circuit radio broadcast of WATD-FM (Marshfield, Mass.) programs for print handicapped. Center reads newspapers, magazines, fiction & non. Also carries medical show on handicapped's special health care needs in conjunction with South Shore Hospital. Service reaches oft overlooked audience, offers opportunity for creative, helpful tie-ins.

Tape recording for callers on hold offer medium with captive audience, unexplored potential. Trans World Airlines using tape to say it doesn't fly DC 10s. Society for the Protection of N.H. Forests creates woodland setting with series of birdcalls.

Worker productivity is declining -- and management is to blame, according to Theodore Barry & Assocs, LA mgnt consulting firm. Today's worker produces only 55 - 60 cents worth of work for dollar's pay compared to 80 - 85 cents grandparent gave. Recent Conference Board study shows worker morale generally high. Barry concludes Americans still like to work but, "middle managers by and large just don't know how to plan, direct and manage the working forces." For copy of newspaper article, write prr.

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. Canadian Public Relations Society ofcra for 1979-80: pres, Ronald J. Coulson (Trans-Canada Telephone System, Ottawa); vp, B. David McAsey (Amoco Canada Petroleum, Calgary); treas, Joseph D. Cottreau (Gulf Oil Canada, Montreal); sec'y, H. James Osborne (Univ of Regina, Regina).

Regional vps: B.C., F. C. Walden, (Heal Shaw Walden, Vancouver); Calgary & Edmonton, Cynthia G. Balfour (Aquitaine Co of Canada, Calgary); Saskatchewan & Manitoba, R. Murray Grant (Kramer Tractor, Regina); Toronto, W. A. Wall (TransCanada PipeLines, Toronto); Ottawa, Donald J. LaBelle (Canadian Automobile Assn, Ottawa); Quebec, Serge de La Rochelle (Univ du Quebec, Ste-Foy, Quebec); N.B., N.S., & Nfld, Wesley T. Kelley, Canadian National, Moncton, N.B.).

HONORS. Top CPRS awards presented at annual conference in Toronto are: Lamp of Service - Bryan Vaughan; Award of Attainment - Ruth Hammond (pres of own firm, Toronto); Shield of Public Service - William Kincaid (vp Skyline Cablevision, Ottawa). Presidential Award - Sr. Ella Zink (dpr, YM/YWCA, Ottawa) six yrs as chmn of Accreditation Board and other activities.

After 22 yrs of service to PRSA, Rea Smith steps down as exec vp due to illness. After recuperative leave of absence, she will resume affiliation as consultant or specialist. VP-member srvs F. Bryan Williams becomes acting head of prof'l staff. In unrelated move, Don Bates resigns as vp-prof'l devel to join Planned Parenthood Fed'n of America (NYC) as vp-comms.

Vol.22 No.25
June 25, 1979

CASE STUDY: THREE MILE ISLAND REACTOR MAKER BOLDLY EMPLOYS "NO COMMENT," THEN TALKS 70 DAYS LATER; TACTIC SEEMS TO WORK

When news of TMI broke late in March, Babcock & Wilcox, manufacturer of nuclear reactor there, received its share of bad publicity. Later, newspapers carried stories of possible NRC shutdown of all plants using B&W reactors. Both times company purposely refused to comment. Now it is making news again, this time on the offensive. June 10 WSJ headline read "Babcock & Wilcox Blames Atomic Mishap on the Plant Operators." Situation provides case study of "no comment" strategy.

"We wanted to do everything in a very statesmanlike way," Phil Miracle, dir external comms, told pr reporter. As TMI situation developed, B&W got up to 60 media calls a day. From the start, it adopted a no comment policy. In part, company was responding to request to keep Nuclear Regulatory Commission as single spokesman. "We also didn't have the real facts. We knew there could be a legal situation later on and we could say things we would regret," Miracle stated.

WHAT B&W DID DO Provided general info -- on the company and nuclear power. To assist, Miracle brought in nuclear engineer & marketing specialist. About a week after accident, NRC began publishing reports indicating it was essentially due to human error, not equipment failure. B&W led press to such third party statements, but still refused direct comment.

"I spent 18 hours a day talking to reporters, explaining why we wouldn't comment. We provided lots of information, but no specific comment on the accident." He also put out a release explaining B&W's position. "Anything we said would've tended to blame somebody. In that emotional situation, the public cared only whether the reactor could be cooled down -- not who's responsible."

Previously scheduled press interviews were granted, but comment was confined to impact of accident on B&W's financial situation. Both Forbes and AP business writers interviewed company's CEO.

Few weeks ago firm finally "decided it was time to lay out the complete story." Press briefing was held June 5 in Lynchburg, Va. because it's "neutral area" and has

B&W's TMI MEDIA STRATEGY
AS IT EVOLVED

1. No comment for as long as necessary while assess situation, try to get facts.
2. Assiduously explain to press why no comment, offer ample background data & specialists' interpretations -- of general nature.
3. Direct press attention to favorable third party statements.
4. Testify to Congressional investigators, urge press to cover.
5. Hold press conference when issue cools, explain what happened after facts are known -- using mock-ups & recognized experts.

control room simulator. B&W pres & vp of nuclear power div participated. Session included displays on radiation, physical mockup of bubble which developed at TMI, explanation of how it was dissolved. Over 50 attended. Following day, company repeated session for 100 security analysts.

"Clips are looking pretty good." Stock also responded well. Videotape was made & edited to carry story to 60,000 employees nationwide. "We really couldn't talk to employees in the beginning. We didn't have all the facts and we were wrapped up in the cooling down."

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS 1. Can "never say no comment" rule be ignored and credibility retained? Perhaps -- since press & analysts were interested when B&W finally agreed to talk. Providing background data during TMI crisis undoubtedly helped. "I don't believe in no comment as a way of life," states Miracle. "But I personally and the company seem to have come thru this with integrity."

2. In spotlight of crisis, can company make statements to financial press while stonewalling general public?

3. Can employees be left to own devices for weeks in such circumstances?

4. After long no-comment period, would it be wiser to wait until Presidential Commission & Congressional investigators issue reports? They could contradict B&W statements.

5. Should possible "legal situation" be of greater concern than interest of public? (Miracle says both these risks were considered.)

You-think-you've-got-problems Dep't: Miracle's initials are P.R. Press frequently refers to him in print as P.R. Miracle. TMI occurred during his first week in present job.

COUNSELORS IN 80's WILL HAVE NEW CLIENT LISTS, WORK MORE ON PROJECT BASIS

John Francis heads a firm in "the Saudi Arabia of America" -- Alberta. Even in boom economy, fields in which Francis, Williams & Johnson finds new clients are instructive:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| -- energy | -- tourism & hospitality |
| -- charity | -- activists |
| -- hospitals | -- producer groups, |
| -- land developers & housing in some places | e.g., milk coop |

Jim Fox, NYC counselor, added another source of new clients at joint CPRS Consultants/PRSA Counselors session in Toronto. "Gov'ts are now passing bills which obligate organizations to communicate" and form relationships, e.g. public participation sections in U.S. laws. Formerly, he noted, gov'ts passed laws that gave jobs to lawyers & accountants.

But gov't itself is not hiring counsel. "Forget it; the work has gone in-house," Francis finds. Financial relations, once a growing sector, has "plateaued out."

Another trend: rise of project jobs, rather than retainers. "PR firm of 80's will be a dep't store," Francis predicts, offering advertising, research, a-v, design, traditional pr and more. "We'll do anything."

TWO IMPORTANT NOTICES TO OUR READERS

- I. With this issue appears pr reporter's Annual Survey of the Profession. It gives up-to-date accurate profiles of public relations practitioners in U.S. and Canada and is the only statistical study of its kind used yearly by researchers, newsmedia and fellow practitioners. Since 1965 we've asked our readers to complete this professional survey. To help us tabulate results quickly, please return by July 27. pr reporter will publish a special edition.
- II. Following our tradition, pr reporter will not be published next week -- to celebrate July 4th and Dominion Day. Officially our office will be closed from Friday, June 29, thru Monday, July 9 -- but you may well find someone there for inquiries, reader service & other business.

CN PREXY TELLS CPRS "GREYING OF AMERICA" WILL BRING POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

One-third of adults in Canada are over 50, more than half will be by 1989. Decline of birth rate, modern medicine create middle-aged society. Robert Bandeen, CEO of Canadian Nat'l RR, told CPRS conference he foresees these benefits:

1. Decrease in crime, attendant reduction in police & penal costs. "Crime is largely an occupation for the young." 2. Desire of over-65s to work, filling "real need for business & industry" as youth corps shrinks. 3. Part-time approach to employment. Post-65 workers will prefer project or consultant basis. Young will start working earlier, then return for education at intervals. 4. Distrust of technology merely because of novelty. Middle-aged population won't accept Harrisburg, DC-10, Skylab or similar uncontrolled technology.

5. End of flight to suburbs, which will save our cities. Downtowns, compact urban areas are more convenient for older population. 6. Work from home, with telecommunications allowing access to files, data processing, communication without bother of commuting. 7. End of spendthrift habits. Smaller cars, energy efficient houses appeal to dollar-conscious middle-aged. 8. Rise of participatory problem-solving, since more mature society "less likely to mount the barricades and seek simplistic solutions."

MOOD OF NATION BIGGER CONCERN THAN ENERGY OR INFLATION

A kind of public malaise, not inflation or the energy crisis per se, is nation's biggest problem, NBC's Irving Levine told PRSA's annual gov't conference. Citing apathy as major problem, Jay Schmeideskamp of Gallup Economic Service, focused on economic knowledge. "Forty percent of the people don't know that we consume more energy than we produce in the United States."

One reason for ignorance given by Washington commentator George Will is that American people are "filtering out public affairs" because of failure of Great Society, Viet Nam and Watergate. Era of "allocating scarcity" in 80's may wake people up, he suggested. But another lack of national confidence is perception American era has passed and Soviet Union is world affairs leader, said Hodding Carter, III, of Dep't of State. Like many current moods, this one is not backed by facts.