

MEDIA'S DOUBLE STANDARD:  
DON'T POLL US, WE'LL POLL YOU

Media spokesmen constantly complain about drowning in the sea of news releases and backgrounders.

Find out what our real needs are, they urge. Call us up to see whether we're interested. That's the dogma -- but practitioners who recently put it to the test find it ain't necessarily so. Particularly in NYC, the media capital.

Both counseling firms & corporations tell prr they have attempted to survey key media to determine their needs, so information can be focused and costs cut. Most media across the country, including wire services and magazines, have been helpful, say our sources.

But not in the Big Apple. Worst offender is NYTimes. Enquirers are told the paper has a policy against cooperating in any studies. Explaining their objective -- to make material sent to paper more useful -- did not overcome the stricture. In the business news dep't, editor John Lee appears a tyrant. Reporters say they cannot talk to anyone on non-news subjects without clearance.

AP's NY office gave similar response. Wall Street Journal doesn't seem to have a policy but reporters told at least one researcher their job was to get, not give, such information. Will the press soon discover it, too, has public relationships which affect its credibility & reputation? Practitioners know what happens when they refuse to cooperate in a poll conducted by the press.

TRUTH IN LABELING APPLIES TO  
PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS;  
MANY ADOPT MORE SPECIFIC TITLES

Everyone who hangs up a shingle calls the outfit "public relations counsel" or "consultant." Yet very few are paid to offer advice or counsel on policy or operations. Great majority of work

remains production of materials or media relations. Difference between counseling function & service function is thus blurred. And what is offered clients is not spelled out. Two trends are changing this.

Many firms are articulating dep'ts with highly specialized services. Carl Byoir has started what is described as the first gov't afers unit focusing on state capitols. Unit is jointly run with State & Federal Associates. Byoir also has a sports division -- as do several others. Dudley-Anderson-Yutzy offers a maritime division which presently services shipping companies. Herald Kierce & Donovan Neale-May head it up. Hill and Knowlton has announced a labor communications service to help in strikes, organizing drives, plant closings. Jack Hight is director. Also a crisis communications task force led by Jan Van Meter.

Michael Carbine is in charge of William A. Throckmorton's (Chi) new service for professionals -- doctors, attorneys, psychologists, accountants. Communications Workshop (NYC) -- which calls itself "the unfancy publicity people" -- specializes in promotional services to MDs & other health professionals.

More to the point is change in basic descriptions of firms. The Alexander Co. (NYC) subtitles itself "public relations counsel & service." London is home of Andrew Sargent Employee Relations. NYC's A.B. Isacson flatly says it is a "marketing public relations agency." Then there's Jameson Broadcast (Columbus, O.) which "specializes in the concept, production & distribution of nationally syndicated radio features dealing with current trends."

Vol.24 No.7  
February 16, 1981

USING SOCIAL CLASS AS A PLANNING TOOL  
SPLIT AMONG REAGAN FORCES ADDS ANOTHER CASE STUDY

purview (Dec 1980) reported on William Tucker's suggestion that social classes again be recognized as a strategy factor in issue campaigns -- in spite of American distaste for such elitist thinking. Despite all survey findings to the contrary (pr 1/5 & 2/2) he finds environmental protection programs are in trouble by applying this yardstick. Issue has across-the-board import for practitioners since the environment affects all institutions. Manufacturers have pollution controls, hospitals must dispose of radioactive wastes, schools get caught in zoning & growth disputes.

The reason for the decline of environmentalism as "everybody's issue" is the division in its main political base. The affluent upper-middle class is becoming more isolated as its former alliances with labor & the poor weaken. Tucker identifies five classes:

1. Old wealth: shadow aristocracy, "good families."
2. Business elite: "the Establishment," Republicans.
3. Upper-middle class: college educated, white-collar workers.
4. Lower-middle class: high-school educated, blue-collar.
5. Poor: disenfranchised of all groups.

Conventional perceptions of social class may need adjustment. The Junior League is a striking example. Seen as rich debutante group, last year it defied that categorization by publishing a public relations action guide for local chapters to get involved in issues. Chicago Tribune feature, Jan. 11, shows how League "has become relevant;" its support on an issue can be powerful. Evidence: Social Register has dropped the organization.

The most important, overlooked class distinction is between upper & lower middle class. Emergence of politically coherent upper-middle class formed backbone of the environmental movement -- just as sudden activism in lower-middle class gave margin of victory to Ronald Reagan. Environmentalism is in trouble because upper-middle class turned away from alliance with the poor and fashioned an association with old wealth. "Under the aegis of environmentalism, America's upper-middle class has learned to suspect technological change, to look askance at economic growth, to place 'spiritual values' over 'material progress,' and to start looking down on industry and commercial activity as something vulgar and distasteful." Because these values are conservative at heart, Tucker does not consider environmentalism a "liberal" cause.

Similar social class split is increasingly apparent in Reagan administration as Moral Majority fights with Establishment over policies, cabinet appointments. So far it

appears upper-middle class & old wealth that coalesced in environmentalism are anti-Reagan, as are the poor. Disaffection of lower-middle class will remove the President's slim majority, could destroy chance to enact new policies. Wall Street Journal agrees with prr about socio-economic definitions of the New Right. Feb. 3 article described "the populist strain" running through the movement. Deepening schism among Reagan backers is based on such class distinctions, pitting lower-middle class against business elite & establishment.

MOVES BY BOB GRAY, PAT BARIO  
ILLUSTRATE WOODRUM'S DICTUM ABOUT  
RISE IN SMALL, SAVVY D.C. FIRMS

Bob Gray leaves Hill and Knowlton March 1 to go it alone. He will open his own D.C. firm, Robert Gray & Co, specializing in gov't rels & lobbying. He was co-chrm of Reagan's Inaugural Committee but plans to assist administration from the outside. "I want to be involved with the present administration, but I don't want to work for gov't. I had 6½ years and that's long enough. I was sec'y of the Cabinet and appointment sec'y under Eisenhower, so I've had that opportunity. I'm an entrepreneur. I want to stay in business but still be very supportive of the administration. They can always benefit from having men/women on the outside who are anxious to encourage business to understand the administration's priorities, its needs, its programs," Gray told prr.

The trend in Washington is to hire counsel. Bob Woodrum sees evidence the rush to Washington by ass'ns & corps is slackening. Rather, organizations are retaining firms or representatives. Their assignment: "keep an ear to the ground, keep us closely advised, and we'll send in our people when needed." The tradeoff, he finds, is between "the loyalty of career company people" and "the fact there's no substitute for having worked in gov't" (pr 1/19).

"Washington is a different scene from New York...public relations experts from the Big Apple get tripped if they ignore differences in environment," says Bob Hills, long time Washington pr counselor on regulatory scene. He added that big name public relations firms give corporate execs a feeling of security against internal criticism of Washington activities. Most corporations want tangible products as proof of budget -- video tapes, brochures, news releases -- which large service firms can supply. Small counseling groups with specialized abilities, however, may get access to big corporations in Washington by subcontracting to large public relations firms.

Another firm is formed by Washington insiders. Patricia Bario, Carter's deputy press sec'y & Senate staffer for 14 yrs, along with Charles Goodwin, a Carter White House staffer, open Patricia Bario Associates, 1213 Clement Place, Silver Springs, Maryland 20910; 301/589-3033. Letterhead reads "Public Affairs - Public Relations Representation in Washington."

DEALING WITH BUDGET CUTBACKS: "SERVICE CRISIS"  
MAY REPLACE "FISCAL CRISIS," BRING EVEN MORE  
POTENT RESPONSES FROM AFFECTED PUBLICS

NYC's Citizen Budget Commission feels quality of life is more valuable than dollars -- and more valued by the public. The city

has brought its fiscal crisis under control by painfully arriving at a balanced budget using accepted accounting principles. "In traditional monetary terms" this is success. But "in real terms, quality of life terms," a service crisis replaces the fiscal crisis. Note use of word "real."

Unless priorities are changed to deal with this, "a deterioration in public services can develop with consequences perhaps more threatening to the city than bankruptcy

posed in 1975." At first decline in services is gradual. People consent because "relatively painless" adjustments are employed. When they run their course, room to maneuver is limited. For a gov't agency, this means severe cuts in service or a tax hike, both requiring a consensus not now present.

Businesses and most nonprofits, of course, can raise prices -- but not indefinitely, and not without consequences in most cases. What about budget cuts that cause internal services to be curtailed? Practitioners will be called upon to explain them while keeping morale high. Therefore they have a counseling role in deciding when dollar-values are more important to the organization than life-values.

P+R STILL = PR: NYSE HEAD SAYS  
PUBLIC PERCEPTION GUIDES GOV'T REGS,  
LISTS 7 PUBLICS TO BE SATISFIED

Performance plus Recognition equals Public Relationships, say textbooks. Public perceptions & public opinion ultimately will determine the nature & scope of gov't intervention in the affairs of private organizations, adds William Batten, New York Stock Exchange chrm. "The fundamental issue is not how to improve the mechanics of corporate governance -- but how to develop a logical, coherent & practicable philosophy of corporate accountability & responsibility.

"When 42% of the public think 'corporate power' should be curbed, there is indeed a problem," says Batten citing a NYSE poll. But managers & boards of directors aren't paying enough attention. He sees 7 constituencies to whom organizations are accountable:

BUT: 23 MILLION PRODUCTS WERE RECALLED IN '80

1. Gov't...for complying with tax & regulatory laws.
2. Shareholders...for managing efficiently, distributing profits responsibly.
3. Employees...for fair management practices, providing satisfactory working conditions & benefits.
4. Customers...for well-made products & useful services at reasonable prices.
5. Suppliers...for fair treatment & prices.
6. Community...for paying taxes & participating in local activities.

"Many Americans, frustrated by their daily experience in the marketplace, are beginning to say 'something ought to be done about it,'" says Batten. 23 million products were involved in 132 recall actions last year reports U.S. Consumer Product Safety Comm. Dep't of Transportation says 5 million vehicles, 7 million tires were recalled. That down from 9 million vehicles in '79, however.  
  
Jan. 10 feature in Cincinnati Enquirer asked pro-business celebrities key questions on the topic. Of advocate Betty Furness: "Do consumers get more if they pay more?" Response: No, especially for name designer goods. Of retailer Stanley Marcus: "Do you believe that the overall quality of products has declined?" Response: Yes, products and services.

7. General Public..."which expects some benefits to flow from the mere fact of the existence of the corporate form in our society."

Batten believes stock exchanges & professionals -- such as public relations practitioners -- have a responsibility to push organizations toward this accountability. Formal codes of conduct, developed by individual corporations, are one step in this direction. (For copy of Batten's remarks, write prr.)