

Director?" 20x8½" plaque can also be ordered to read "Public Relations Person" or "Marketing Director." Cindy Walsh, ass't dir-comty rels, Lakeland Regional Medical Ctr (Fla.) has one hanging in her office and, she told prr, "I've had a couple of offers!" (\$15 from Vanessa Clemons, mktg dir, Lakeland Mall, 1108 East Memorial Blvd, Lakeland, Fla. 33801; 813/688-6691)

¶Videotape of tv version of In Search of Excellence is available. Hour program, aired on PBS, highlights importance of public relationships in managing prospering organizations. Cases cited illustrate why customers' perceptions are what counts, not "the facts" as management sees them; why people need to be respected as individuals; how participative decisionmaking works; how values shape organizations; the essentiality of cheerleading. Merrill Lynch sponsored the show, produced by WETA (Wash DC). (Info from Excellence, P.O. Box 500, S. Easton, Mass. 02375)

¶How's ex-practitioner Brian Mulroney doing as Canada's PM? Learning to deal with what a Globe & Mail bureau chief calls the reporter's discretion, whether to make him look bad by headlining a contradictory remark or look good by headlining the rousing welcome he got from the crowd. At most events, this journalist reminds us, "Mr. Mulroney's audience may be 300. The reporter's audience is hundreds of thousands." After avoiding the media from Sept 4 thru Nov 23, Mulroney's gov't issued "Policy Guidelines for Public Servants: Communicating with the Public." Figuring out what it means or portends is a major sport. Mulroney is apparently emulating Ronald Reagan's highly successful policies for dealing with the media.

If a sign of maturity is being able to laugh at your mistakes, prr must be maturing. For some of ours in '84 were pretty funny. In a story discussing Phyllis Shaffley's newest venture, we called it "the Ego Forum." Correct name, of course, is Eagle Forum. Strictly Freudian. In an article on getting conference attendees to go to sessions instead of chatting in the anterooms, we explained techniques for "shoeing 'em in." Shoo!

#### WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

HONORS. Gerald Wollan (vice chrm, Padilla and Speer, Mpls) receives PRSA Minn Chap's Minnesota Public Relations Recognition Award for outstanding contributions to the profession.

PRSA's Hawaii Chap presents its first Maika'i Loa Award to William "Doc" Stryker (chrm, Stryker-Weiner Assocs, Honolulu) for his major contributions to the profession.

ELECTED. Foundation For Public Relations Research & Education's new trustees, serving 3-yr terms: Douglas Ann Newsom (chrm, dept of journalism, Texas Christian U, Fort

Worth); Peter Osgood (pres, Carl Byoir & Assocs, NYC); Ronald Rhody (sr vp, corp comms, Bank of America, San Francisco); Dorothea Willix (pa ofcr, Decatur Federal Savings & Loan Ass'n, Ga.).

Public Affairs Council's 1985 ofcrs: chrm, James Bowling (consultant to Philip Morris, NYC); chrm-elect, Malcolm MacKillop (sr vp, corp rels, Pacific Gas & Electric, San Francisco); vice chrpeople, Linda Hawley Asay (dir, corp afrs, CPC International, Englewood Cliffs, NJ), W.D. Conley (vp-pa, Honeywell, Mpls), A. Sherburne Hart (vp-pa, Union Carbide, Danbury, Ct.) & Walter Morris (vp, corp afrs, Chevron, San Francisco); treas, Wilson Wyatt Jr (vp, pub policy, Batus, DC).

# pr reporter

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## WESTMORELAND-CBS TRIAL SHOWCASES COMPLEXITY & Pervasiveness OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TODAY'S DEMOCRACY, WHERE COURT OF LAW IS SECONDARY TO COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

The trial is about one aspect of public relations, media reliability. Are media accurate? Do they, as often asserted, slant the news? Further, it is investigative reporting -- that bugbear of the past two decades -- which is really on trial, in the person of its most renowned tv practitioner, Mike Wallace.

Second, the decision in the court of law, as usual, will likely affect mainly the litigants. But the decision of a higher court -- public opinion -- could have lasting affects not only on defendant CBS, but on all broadcast & even print journalism. If the credibility of media is seriously eroded (or eroded further, since studies show little trust now placed in media); and if Westmoreland wins & substantial damages are awarded, editors & news directors could be far less willing to counter official news sources. Many would describe that as having a chilling effect on the First Amendment.

Third, public discussion of the contrast between the courts of law & public opinion helps push public relations to the forefront by gaining awareness of its importance in a democratic society.

Fourth, to prove the point, CBS is using a "pr team" to woo reporters while its law team handles the trial. The team itself has been the subject of major media coverage. One side-effect is that journalists are learning about the role of public relations. Reporter Mark McCain wrote last week, "CBS public relations man Jim Noonan's job is to defend CBS in what it calls 'the court of public opinion.'"

Jack Anderson, who ought to know, says in his 1/23 column that libel suits are shutting off investigative reporting:

"In editorial offices across the 50 states, investigative stories are being discarded or ignored....In Ohio, an investigative reporter obtained affidavits and tapes from witnesses who confessed they had bribed a local judge. His newspaper wasn't interested. In Illinois, a newspaper was told about misconduct in a sheriff's office. The editor refused to investigate.

"The clear intent of many multi-million-dollar libel actions is to intimidate the press and discourage critical inquiry. The tragedy for America is that the strategy is succeeding."

¶Is this good news for practitioners because now investigative reporters may leave us alone? Or is there a larger principle here than the inconvenience of adversary journalism?



To practitioners, it may seem odd anyone would need to explain this concept in the 1980s. So McCain may be telling us something about the knowledge & understanding of both press & public.

One other consideration. The coverup CBS's reportage accused the general of ordering was itself done for public relations purposes. Ex-CIA officer Geo. W. Allen testified: "I felt the CIA sacrificed its integrity on the altar of public relations & political expedience...to keep numbers (regarding enemy strength) at a level that would not excite public interest or produce an adverse press reaction."

How Is CBS's "PR Team" Viewed? Westmoreland's lawyer, Dan Burt, is reported as "seething with anger over the network's public relations campaign: 'Of course it ends up slanting the news coverage. Why do you think CBS has Scanlon and those other creeps around?'"

Charles Feldman of Cable News Network writes: "They certainly get an A-plus for effort -- running up to you in the hall when they think CBS has scored a point in court. But, if anything, there's a counter effect, because the more they try to push something in front of your nose, the more you are apt to be skeptical."

Westmoreland uses an old friend, David Henderson, called "a Washington public relations consultant" in news reports. Henderson is reportedly doing the job pro bono.

The CBS team is Daniel J. Edelman's NYC office. John Scanlon, sr exec vp, and Noonan, acct supvr, are personally working the courthouse halls along with aide Sarah Vass.

Was The General Well Advised? Henderson says he urged the Vietnam commander in chief to counterattack. Since the filing of the suit, Atty Burt has made media a major priority -- despite his belittling remarks about CBS doing the same. But -- the 90-min special, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception" drew the smallest audience of all primetime shows the week it aired in Jan. '82. In Greenville, SC, where Westmoreland filed his suit, it was preempted for a basketball game. Within a short period, the subject would have been over & forgotten -- even among the small proportion of the public which saw the show. Now, the charges against the general are repeated nightly on network news & read about in major print coverage. Of course, so is the general's defense of himself. In the case of an individual, facing the judgment of history, the decision may have been wise. What about an organization or individual which requires current working relationships & ongoing viability?

COMPARING PUBLIC OPINION OVER TIME  
CAN BE PERSUASIVE DEMONSTRATION THAT SUPPORT  
IS RISING, FALLING OR UNCHANGING

thoughts and beliefs on the subject at hand," says the foreword to National Education Assn's report, "Money for Public Schools -- Over Three Decades of Public Opinion Polling." By analyzing the past, implications for the future may be seen.

Eight state initiatives to reduce public school funding were rejected recently. That's not surprising when one knows that as far back as 1949 the public saw the need for increased school funding and expressed willingness to pay higher taxes to aid schools. NEA projects that this opinion will continue thru the year 2000.

"It is important for leaders -- as background to their decision-making roles -- to become thoroughly familiar with citizens'

When asked whether taxpayers would be willing "to vote more favorably on bond issues and give more financial support to the schools" by the year 2000, 45% said "yes," 36% said "no," and 29% "didn't know."

NEA's report compares polls from 1949-1984. It sees "a mood of optimism in the nation about the future of education and the continuing commitment of Americans to their schools." (Copies from NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, Ct. 06516; \$11.95.)

Polls can deflate the perceived strength of issues. For example, a recent NYTimes/CBS News poll shows only 13% of the public in favor of banning abortions. ABC poll finds the number to be 11% -- contrasted with 10% a decade ago. ABC poll shows 54% of Roman Catholics in favor of abortion on demand -- in opposition to their church's stance. Among Protestants, 50% are pro-choice. Considering all the hoopla made by anti-abortionists, the numbers come as a surprise ...and raise questions: With all their public events & media attention, why are the numbers so against pro-lifers? Do difficult moral/ethical questions demand a more sophisticated strategy? Or have the people already made their decision?

Bombing of abortion clinics hasn't helped the anti-abortion cause. ABC's poll shows 80% call them "outright criminal acts" rather than acts of civil disobedience. Times/CBS poll finds 76% call the bombings "acts of terrorism." Denunciation comes from anti-abortionists themselves: 67% say "there's absolutely no excuse for these bombings; they're the same thing as terrorism."

USEFUL ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Determine if an issue is "real" before beginning an issue advertising campaign, advises Shirley Kaiden, exec vp, Ruder Finn & Rotman. Based on her own experience, she suggests: 1) "If you cannot honestly present a case for the public interest in the issue, you might as well save your advertising dollars." 2) "Does pending action -- or lack of it -- have meaningful consequences beyond a short-term inconvenience or expense for a small group of people?" 3) "The rules that apply to effective product advertising can be broken for issues advertising, in order to accomplish the larger goal." 4) "The amount of money spent is not necessarily consequential -- too much is as bad as too little. The important thing is the indication that you care enough about the issue to put money behind it." (Copy of Kaiden's remarks given at a seminar sponsored by Washington Journalism Review from them at 2233 Wisconsin Ave NW, Wash DC 20007; 202/333-6800.)

Feeling unappreciated? Need a hug? Florida Public Relations Ass'n is selling mounted & framed wall plaques that read: "Have You Hugged Your Public Relations

Survey	Favor raising taxes	Opposed to raising taxes	Don't know
1984	41%	47%	12%
1983	39	52	9
1981	30	60	10
1972	36	56	8
1971	40	52	8
1970	37	56	7
1969	45	49	6

"Given the ravages of inflation, the trend toward fiscal conservatism, the anti-tax movement, and the decline in the proportion of public school parents in the total population, the fact that this level of support for higher taxes has been maintained is a clear indication of the general bedrock commitment to public education."