

USEFUL ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

A Truly Movable Feast was celebrated by L.C. Williams & Assoc (Chicago). The firm "regaled in the holiday spirit" by riding the rails of Chicagoland. Since prr was unable to attend (the invitation included a train token), we called to find out what we missed. "It was a great time. We rented 4 el cars & had lots of food, drink, a jazz band," Lou Williams told prr. "The conductor took us wherever we wanted to go -- we tried to stay above ground -- & let us take over the PA system." One built-in amenity (which consisted of about 100 staff people,

friends, clients & vendors) was that guests could be picked up & dropped off all around the city, close to their homes. Among the partiers was a reporter who later wrote about the festivities for the Chicago Tribune. "All this work to gain some professional recognition, and when I do get publicity, it's for being a party animal!" Williams says he's considering the Chicago Aquarium for Christmas, 1989.

Good PR Begins At Home With An In-House Publication, says N -- A Newsletter for Newsletters (that's its name, not a typo). Proposed is a 3-point strategy. 1) "The goal is credibility. A company must convince employees that it not only wants to communicate with them, but that it wishes to do so in a truthful, frank & direct manner. Employees can't be conned because they live with the organization every day." 2) "Updating employees on policies, plans, problems will allow them to see themselves as participants of change, not victims of it." 3) Newsletters should provide a sounding board for employees, a forum in which they can relay grievances with impunity.

Most Major Employers Now Have AIDS Policies, finds the Council Of Communication Management. In a nationwide survey 2/3rds of major companies report cases of AIDS -- mostly in Calif & NYC but in all other regions as well. More than 40% say they have AIDS workplace policies; 19% are planning such programs; the remainder say existing health policies adequately cover the AIDS dilemma. (See prr 3/28/88 for review of AIDS policies.)

Technology Will Create Pioneering Jobs, says futurist Ed Cornish. "Producing more luxuries & specialized services creates all kinds of businesses & jobs." Professions of the future: robot supervisor; artificial intelligence technician; hibernation specialist (space travel); sub-ocean hotel managers; specialized healthcare professionals who will replace MDs. Also, look for new occupations resulting from social trends -- divorce mediators, child advocates, dance/plant/-sports therapists, & ethicists -- a secular society's answer to the influential clergymen of yesteryear. For copy of Careers Tomorrow, send \$7.95 to World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland 20814.

Employees Will Demand Flexibility in coming years, says Roper's Public Pulse. Newsletter puts time control at the top of a list of key trends shaping the business environment of the 90s. "More & more employees will demand flexibility -- the organization of their responsibilities around tasks to be completed rather than hours spent in the office." Credit (or blame) goes to: a) technology, which makes time control more attainable; b) boom of 2-income households which limits leisure, increases need for time management. Organizations with flextime & similar self-management systems have been practicing this ideal for a decade or more.

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RISING ISSUE CATEGORY: UNWINNABLE BECAUSE THEY'RE MORAL PROBLEMS-- LIKE ABORTION, WHERE PLANNED PARENTHOOD PRODS A LAZY PUBLIC, RIGHT-TO-LIFE SAYS TIDE OF PUBLIC OPINION IS CHANGING IN ITS FAVOR

Over the past decade a host of issues has been emerging which, at base, are moral or religious issues. In some quarters, like education, all the issues seem to fall in this class -- textbooks, curriculum, sex education, home study, teenage pregnancy. The religious right in particular has announced an agenda of making its views into law. Alarmists say the situation threatens the fabric of democracy. Others say religion has always been part of politics. Undoubtedly the case study for practitioners is the so-called pro-choice vs. pro-life struggle:

Pro-Choice Digs In Anticipating tough times, Planned Parenthood Federation of America (NYC) is gearing up for heavy opposition from anti-abortion groups. "Only 10% of the public is anti-choice," Douglas Gould,

vp comn told prr, "but it's a loud 10%. Pro-choice people are not mobilized because abortion is legal. The people fighting for change are more vocal." Pres Faye Wattleton links it to another pr principle: "They're counting on the complacency of the majority concerning their own reproductive rights."

PPFA fears new administration will bring a battery of challenges, as did the Reagan team. In a plea for funds, PPFA says opposition is on a roll, having already:

1. Challenged Roe v. Wade. "They waited to file this brief until after the election because they knew it would cost Bush millions of votes from outraged women," says Wattleton.
2. Elected Bush. "His stand for criminalizing abortion must not be dismissed as campaign rhetoric, especially since the elections also produced highly organized, massively-funded defeats of pro-choice initiatives." Wattleton notes that Bush's team plans policy decisions & executive appointments that will favor anti-choice forces -- tho their Health & Human Services nominee was attacked as being soft on the issue.

When issues are linked to spiritual beliefs, it is impossible for reasonable people to disagree reasonably. Each issue is viewed as a crisis -- which by definition means a turning point, after which things will not again be the same. Yet a democratic society depends on 1) objective debate (no matter how spirited) & 2) respect for the religious feelings of others. The ghastly history of the 16th-18th centuries, where it was treason punishable by death to disagree with official religion, prompted the First Amendment in order to avoid the problem in the U.S. The trouble is that, once caught in such issues, there's no winning in the pr sense of rebuilding bridges.



"Since abortion was legalized in '73, there has been a backlash, originally by Catholics, now by Protestant sects," says Gould -- illustrating how these issues are not winnable. "We have to get people back into the trenches. This will call for ad campaigns, briefings for reporters, & events that will mobilize people. We have to reposition ourselves & assume we'll confront a series of attacks."

Pro-Life Thinks
Its Day Is Here

Dan Donehey, dpr Right-To-Life (DC) doubts 90% of the public is pro-choice. "I would like to see the surveys, how the questions were worded," he told prr -- raising the specter

that haunts issue campaigns, of whether the data are trustworthy. Donehey says political sentiment against abortion indicates people are wising up." Poverty, incest, family abuse were once touted as necessitators of abortion. Now we have abortion, but we still have social ills. The public realizes abortion is no solution." Changing public opinion is further evidenced by fundamentalist groups supplanting Catholics as primary abortion opponents. "Who's going to be next? Episcopalians, Jews, or Moslems? As more groups join the list, it will become obvious that public opinion is not in favor of abortion."

Tho Donehey won't divulge pr strategies, he outlines challenges:

1. Negative image of RTL, created & perpetuated by media. "In his book Newswatch: How TV Decides The News, ABC vp Av Westin details how the media knowingly portrays anti-abortion people in a particular way -- as zanies, kooks, zealots with whom no one wants to identify."
2. Attitudes about pregnancy. "We must show women alternatives, other answers, encourage families to offer love & support, erase social stigmas." Also, about life. "At the heart of the whole issue is that every abortion destroys a human being."

The French Govt's Role:
Public Pressure Or "PR Ploy"?

Other sectors get caught in the crossfire. French drug maker Rousell Uclaf was selling an abortion pill, RU486, which seemed a possible

solution. Then the company abruptly pulled it off the market last fall. The next day it reversed the decision after the gov't demanded that it do so.

Planned Parenthood says it raised a public outcry reversing the decision. Gould: "We were concerned that the French gov't would be bamboozled by anti-abortion activists. So we helped to coordinate a letter-writing campaign from physicians, researchers, scientists -- experts in reproductive health -- to the French ambassador. This effort, which countered letters from anti-abortionist groups, will reduce deaths from illegal abortions."

Right to Life argues reversal had nothing to do with PFFA, but was in fact a "pr game" orchestrated by the French gov't, owner of 40% of Rousell Uclaf. "In response to public furor, the company, which didn't want to be known as 'producer of the death pill,' announced it would pull it," Donehey told prr. "This conveniently coincided with an int'l OB-GYN convention in Rio de Janeiro, & triggered mass response from physicians who were abortion advocates. The next day the Minister of Health told the company to go ahead with the pill. The moral wrestling they must have done within 24 hours! It was a pr ploy designed to take the blame off the company, & now all these Planned Parenthood people are trying to take credit for it. The whole thing is hilarious."

EX-STAFFER SAYS REAGAN WHITE HOUSE
WAS A GIANT FLACK FIRM:
PR VICTORY...OR DISGRACE?

The Reagan Adm'n was a "pr outfit that became president and took over the country," according to former White House dep press sec'y Leslie Janka, who resigned

when the press was excluded from the Grenada invasion. In an interview with Washington Journalism Review, he adds "to the degree then to which the Constitution forced them to do things like make a budget, run foreign policy & all that, they sort of did. But their first, last, and overarching activity was public relations."

WJR charges Reagan regime with making media its mouthpiece by applying 2-pronged strategy:

1. Control message by keeping reporters away from president;
2. Posture choreographed, visually-attractive photo opportunities which reinforce "line of the day" -- a catch phrase which appeals to the public's fears & prejudices.

Also, plan ahead, stay on the offensive & control flow of info. (Sounds like a good piece of work so far.)

Unlike Nixon's people, who provided media with bits & pieces of info, the Reagan crowd so inundated reporters that they stopped investigating, creating, doing their jobs. The Reagan-Bush men "perceived the importance of providing a steady stream of fresh stories in order to distract journalists from pursuing yesterday's scandal."

"We can't comment on something like this," a White House rep told prr. "But the article sounds very negative." (It also proves again what savvy practitioners have known: Reagan succeeded because of spectacular public relations strategy.)

Can Bush Maintain The PR Presidency?

WJR entreats journalists not to "roll over & play dead" for Bush the way they did for Reagan. Noting how Bush's public image has gone from "preppie wimp" & "whining loser" to "caring presidential leader," WJR warns that he's being packaged & sold with the same pr strategy utilized in Reagan's White House. But WJR questions George Bush's ability to uphold his predecessor's "pr apparatus." And while the Washington Post applauds Bush's appointments to date, it notes that he has yet to build a pr team. And then there's the personality factor. As Michael Deaver puts it, "90% of Reagan's pr charm was because of the man himself."

Or Will Reagan Take It With Him?

Reagan will continue playing to the public, says Business Week. Flooded with requests for personal appearances, movies, books & broadcasts, Reagan can command the highest fees for speaking engagements -- "\$35,000 to \$50,000 a pop." Plus major corporations, e.g. MCA Inc. & GE, are hot for him. Having a president as a consultant or on a board "provides flair for the public, shareholders, & employees," says Hans Mueller, pres of Nova Pharmaceutical -- where Gerald Ford serves as director.