

1. 67% believe they'll cut pr budgets in 1991 (compare pr's Annual Survey where only 11% said their budgets were cut this year);
2. 55% predict staff sizes will remain constant, but 35% see reductions ahead (Annual Survey found 9% lost staff this year);
3. 54% say they'll use more outside counsel;
4. 62% see a trend toward large media conglomerate firms;
5. 57% see pr becoming a function of marketing;
6. Most feel new talent will come from bastions of media & journalism, with 18% predicting it will come from business school.

On a happier note, 64% say over the past 3 years, pr has gained more credibility with management. [Then why such dire predictions, gang?]

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PRACTITIONERS

¶ **Life Magazine Finds PR's Emergence a 20th Century Landmark.** Special issue titled "The 100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century" profiles Ed Bernays as the nephew of Freud who coined the phrase, "counsel on public relations" in 1919. Article recounts Bernays turning down would-be clients like Hitler & Franco ("I wouldn't want it on my superego that I did for money what I wouldn't do without money") -- but primarily notes the impact of pr practice on society. At 98, Bernays still counsels clients, with a rate of \$1,000/hr, Life reports. Reinforcing pr prominence is inclusion of George Gallup on the list, and (for better or worse) mention that the Rockefeller philanthropy may have begun as a "PR gambit" to drown out "nefarious business practices" like the Ludlow massacre.

¶ **A Major Figure in Public Affairs Died Last Week,** with very little notice considering his achievements. Larry O'Brien helped reshape politics as the driving force in Democratic strategy in the second half of this century. He directed the presidential campaigns of JFK, RFK & Hubert Humphrey. Was JFK's manager from early in his career. As LBJ's dir of congressional rels, he got landmark bills enacted, including the Civil Rights Act. Was present at assassinations of both JFK & RFK. Postmaster General for 3 yrs. Twice chairman of Democratic National Committee -- it was his office that was burglarized in Watergate. Soured on politics by the burglary, he became commissioner of the National Basketball Ass'n -- where he revitalized that sport thru such acts as merging the rival league, negotiating an early tv pact & anticipating the drug issue with a tough substance abuse policy. Wrote the first political campaign guide, The O'Brien Manual, which longtime political pr counsel Joe Napolitan calls "an indispensable tool." His autobiography, No Final Victories: A Life In Politics from John F. Kennedy to Watergate, is a source of strategy training.

¶ **Posters Continue To Be Strongest Communication Medium** in a bite-size environment. These are being used by dermatologists: 1) cartoon character Kathy advises, "Before you start on your 'perfect tan', take a good look at a raisin." 2) "See spot, see spot change, see a doctor." Worth a pile of news releases any day in motivating behavior.

WILL HARD-LINER TREND IN POLITICS SPREAD TO OTHER SECTORS AS PUBLIC GETS MADDER, LESS TOLERANT OF SOCIOECONOMIC WOES? QUESTION COMPLICATES DEFINING PR STRATEGY

Radical trends are tearing at the political fabric: a) increasingly, public distrusts government & politicians; b) people are growing more intolerant of societal ills. This, coupled with economic uncertainty, is giving way to a c) "kick ass" mentality, causing public to d) support extremist politicians who express a "my way or no way" credo. Practitioners must perform fancy footwork to keep clients & employers above the fray -- or to make the situation an opportunity.

NO ONE TRUSTS A POLITICIAN The crafty politician has not always been a cliché. According to National Opinion Research Center (Chi), public mistrust of politicians is fairly recent, began escalating in Watergate's wake. NORC data shows trust in the feds has steadily declined since, with only a couple of resurgences -- once right after Carter's inauguration, another at the peak of Reagan's popularity. The "Reagan revolution" did not restore public faith, despite his popularity in polls. At end of his term mistrust has grown:

	GREAT DEAL	ONLY SOME	HARDLY ANY	DON'T KNOW
March, 1973	29%	50%	28%	2%
March, 1982	19%	54%	24%	2%
March, 1988	16%	63%	27%	3%

Answers to question: How much confidence do you have in the executive branch of the federal government?

CANADIAN POLITICIANS ALSO RATE POORLY According to Gallup, only 17% of Canadians say they have a great deal of respect for Ottawa. Compare to airlines, which 61% of Canadians rate high, or banks at 60%. Even auto, steel & oil companies, often suspect in the minds of the public, rate above the federal government. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney is most unpopular leader of the Western World. "Lyin' Brian's" approval rating is a weak 19%, lower than "Tricky Dick's" during Watergate.



MEANWHILE, PUBLIC GRAVITATES TO EXTREMIST CANDIDATES

Is it a mood, just a thinning of patience? Has it solidified into an accepted attitude? Are people sobering up post-Reagan, seeing problems have actually worsened. Many want change now, are pushing for it via hard line candidates who openly espouse a "get tough" approach. Mad at the status quo, people are taking their anger to the ballot box. There's a critical strategy lesson here:

1. **David Duke**, La. state rep (pr 9/4/89), former KKK Grand Dragon who opposes busing, affirmative action, quota programs. Could be a US senator. Incumbent Bennett Johnston is emphasizing Duke's stands -- which are not only inspiring sympathy votes for Duke but attracting many voters to him because of his positions. (U Michigan study finds over half of Americans are against racial quota programs). Christian Science Monitor says Duke is finally voicing thoughts that other politicians would only confide in private.
2. **Jesse Helms**, NC senator. Democratic National Committee says he's a friend to Apartheid, an enemy to people with AIDS, and is ready to kick pregnant women "into alleys." Will this defeat him in the current climate -- or elect him?
3. **John Silbur**. Tho one seat of nation's progressive thought is Mass., this gubernatorial nominee seems anything but. His gaffes gained him criticism as insensitive to blacks, the elderly, many others. Regarding healthcare for seniors, he said in essence when it's time to die, die. Yet he won the nomination despite no "official" party support (probably because of this, in part).
4. **Clayton Williams**, running for Texas governor, joked about rape during an interview with Connie Chung -- the "might as well enjoy it" slur. Will this hurt -- or bring macho types out to vote for him?

Consider the Ontario election, where ruling party was thrown out unexpectedly (pr 9/17). California has the get-tough Green Initiative (pr 8/27). Basic First Amendment rights are under bitter attack. And why did the House turn down the budget compromise?

Implications For Practitioners. What until now have been the accepted social positions may be changing -- and despite predictions trend would be toward more caring & sharing, these instances suggest the opposite. This may be a good time to lay low. Any public posturing may be risky. Whatever you say will be seen as wrong by some group. Yet PR remains the "conscience of the organization" -- & so will be severely tested.

Of Related Interest:

HOLLYWOOD THINKS IT CAN BE ALTER-GOVERNMENT

For a while now, Hollywood heavies like Madonna & Meryl Streep have had their hands in the environmental movement (pr 9/11/89),

AIDS, other issues. Many celebs banded together to help world hunger & farmers. Newsweek says celebrity activism is not just whimsy, but rather a serious attempt to take the political steering wheel away from deadwood politicians.

Ted Danson, Richard Dreyfuss, Barbara Streisand, Norman Lear, Bea Arthur & Robert Redford are among the many who have formed nonprofit associations to aid causes like civil liberties, ocean ecology, peace, rain-forests, etc.

WILL SUCH ACTIVISM BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION?

"Yes," says Lear, who takes a chunk of credit for the defeat of Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. And "yes" would say Sonny Bono, Clint Eastwood, & Ronald Reagan, who actually achieved political office.

Hollywood activists believe people in Washington are so compromised they can no longer lead. Newsweek: "A growing number of entertainers, fed up with supporting ineffective politicians, are deciding there's a better way. They're forming nonprofits and hiring experienced political operatives. Their goal is to use their wealth, fame, access to the press and even their tv shows to shape public opinion directly."

MILLIONS SAW NEWS OF DOLPHIN-SAFE STARKIST BUT DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS CANNED ADVERTISING

Over 26.6 million people watched the news about StarKist going "dolphin-safe" (pr 5/14). What most don't know is that they were watching a video news release created by Edelman. "It was one of the great vnrs of all time," Nick Peters, vp Media Link told pr. "It was a wonderful combination of a hard news story with environmental & consumer angles, and it had the advantage of requiring product identification."

As most practitioners know, vnrs are long, official-sounding advertisements. They appear during newscasts when stations need filler. To the untrained eye, they look like news items -- and obviously must be newsworthy to gain airtime. Other memorable "newsmakers" in '90: 1) Nutrasweet introduces dessert made with a new fat substitute; 2) McDonalds opens a restaurant in the Soviet Union; 3) Odor-Eaters have a "rotten sneaker" contest; 4) Jim Henson's memorial service includes muppets' singing tribute; 5) Disneyland celebrates its 35th birthday.

Questions To Ponder: Do vnrs come under the domain of pr or advertising? Does pr's increasing involvement with vnr creation signal a dangerous trend, enhancing our uncomfortable reputation as "newsmaker"? What does media's usage of vnrs say about its editorial standards? Are we duping the public into swallowing even more clutter by disguising ads as news and slipping them into hard news coverage? Or are we free to use them as we please since it's the news editor's job to shape newscasts? Have all these issues been resolved long ago in publicists' dealings with print media?

ARTHUR PAGE SOCIETY SURVEY TURNS UP BLEAK PREDICTIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

Annual meeting of the Arthur Page Society offered predictions for the immediate future of pr. Using a computerized audience response system & a sample size of 63 senior corporate practitioners, survey found: