

THE VALUE OF A SOUND INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

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It is a pleasure to be able to stand before such an assembly of public speakers and other communicators as we have here today. I sincerely appreciate the invitation your program chairman extended me to discuss for a few hours the value of a sound information and education program.

Since you are a bunch of experts at what I am attempting to do, I'll ask you politely to refrain from taking notes during my talk, for if you do I'll probably think you're grading my presentation and I might get nervous. At least, don't let me see you *passing* any notes!

Really, I enjoy public speaking, which might make me a typical American in some people's eyes.

It is said that former White House Press Secretary James Hagerty discovered a bartender in Paris who could determine the nationality of any customer after two double martinis, or the equivalent thereof. The barkeep would explain: "A Frenchman will want to make love; a Spaniard will dance; a German will boast; an Italian will sing; an Irishman will start a fight, and an American will make a speech!"

Now you know how I spent the last hour of my preparation.

But we didn't come here today to discuss international drinking habits, although, if you think about it, a cocktail party at the United Nations would probably be one hell of a lot of fun! What we want to talk about is I & E's function and value in wildlife resource conservation work, as revealed by good or bad public relations.

At the outset let me say I am well aware—and I am assuming each of you knows—that I & E and public relations functions differ, both by definition and in execution. However, for the sake of convenience I hope you'll allow me to use the terms together in my talk. For the most part I will be referring to I & E and PR work in the broad context; to the informing and influencing of the *General Public* on conservation matters through the application of communicative knowledge and skills.

I emphasize *General Public* because we must be concerned with *everyone* in modern I & E and PR work, not just those who hunt and fish. True, we will utilize different approaches and various tools to get our message to a specific "public" within our state. But if we are to realize the full value of today's methods of influencing public opinion, we must for the most part think in terms of the broadside approach.

Somebody has said that for a successful manufacturer to try to do business without advertising or product promotion is like a man winking at a girl in the dark. The man knows what he's doing but it won't gain him anything.

That is a very similar situation to ours as natural resource managers. If we don't succeed in letting people know, in simple terms, what we have been doing, the ways they are affected, and what we have to offer, the effect will be that we will soon be out of business. A man can decide to *go* into a business, you know, but it is the public, the customer, who decides whether or not he *stays* in it. In the case of a game and fish agency, we might not have to nail up our doors for lack of public support but our efforts can be a lot more effective and our ulcers fewer if the people are behind us. And besides, there's always that haunting thought that we can be replaced.

I & E and PR people are, of course, basically concerned with and responsible for consumer education. You are the ones who help to mold public opinion, and public opinion is the thing that will mold our future, the quality of our environment, and the kind of hunting and fishing we can expect to maintain.

I have no doubts whatever what public relations is. The mayor of an Eskimo village has public relations. What we must be concerned with is the task of making them *good*; of truthfully and accurately communicating to people the urgency of our task; the nature of our organizations; the achievements we have made; and the aims we have for the future.

We are fortunate that today in this country there is a running tide of public interest and concern in conservation matters. The giant has been slumbering, sure—for too long—but he is stirring now. And he is looking for enlightened leadership.

You helped set the stage. Now you must direct the play.

He is a literate giant. This is important. He wants to *read*. He wants to *hear*. He wants to *see*. He wants to *know*. And he wants to *experience*. From every source I have comes the word that the news media are crying for more and more outdoors material. Well-prepared printed matter is in demand, long and short feature material; straight news and fillers. The products of photography are in extremely high demand. Both motion picture and still shots are being used and reused. Color is now the thing in both newspaper and magazine illustration, although black and white photography continues to dominate for these purposes.

Television and radio are using more and more conservation stuff, but it is going to be up to us to take better advantage of the possibilities in these comparatively new fields. With receiving equipment in cars—even video in some—and a transistor on every school boy's bicycle, not to mention the jillions of T. V. sets in American homes and the radios that go to the beach or lake, we will be foolish not to concentrate on getting more air time for our message, and in better and better time slots.

This is a highly competitive phase of American industry, however, and not many I & E budgets can stand the strain. But we don't really have to buck the beer and detergent ads and the other big money Madson Avenue Press Agency. What we have to do is improve our skills so that our material will be worthy of time allotted by every station for running public service stuff. From there, with a thorough understanding of each station's broadcast format, we can work into more exposure and play to larger audiences.

But these things you know better than I. Let's move now into something you might not know, or might not have thought about, unless you attended the communications short course held at the University of Florida in May for I & E section personnel. It concerns a book. If it's not in your library, it should be.

Dr. Douglas L. Gilbert, Chairman of the Department of Biology at Colorado State University, and an old hand at I & E work before that, lectured at the short course. His book, *Public Relations in Natural Resource Management*, was published in 1964 by Burgess Publishing Company of Minneapolis.

In his introduction, Dr. Gilbert neatly and accurately divides the history of natural resource management in America, from discovery to the present, into four periods.

The first, called "The Era of Abundance," lasted until about 1850. It was the time when there was no worry about the supply of natural resources. The land was barely touched and still unmapped.

"From approximately 1850 to 1900 the 'era of exploitation' occurred," he wrote. "This was the time of depletion, destruction, and restriction.

Policies were to cut out and get out, farm out and move on, or kill off or fish out and look elsewhere."

Next was the "Era of Preservation and Production," which lasted from around 1900 to 1935. This time span saw the emergence of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service from the Bureau of Biological Survey, The Migratory Bird Treaty Act between the United States, Canada and Mexico, the creation of the U. S. Forest Service, the passage of the Wildlife Refuge Enabling Act, the origin of the "Duck Stamp," and the organization of the first professional wildlife societies in the new world.

From 1935 to the present Dr. Gilbert calls the "Era of Harvest and Habitat." This is the era of wildlife management on the basis of biological findings. Wise use has characterized our time, whereas protection was the guiding light and chief discipline of the previous period. Federal aid to State Game and Fish Agencies is a new thing. Basic biological studies have only recently revealed the wisdom of harvesting both sexes of deer in certain parts of the country, and of lifting useless closed seasons on game fish in many areas, while raising creel limits.

But here is the real pitch: Dr. Gilbert points out that we have now entered into a new era, "The Era of Human Management." This is the time when the emphasis has very definitely begun to shift from managing the *resource*, which must continue, to managing the *Resource user*, which is only begun!

This is your baby. It is the reason for your being here. The idea is, of course, to keep the public informed of the big picture and thereby to win its support for your programs. That, to me, is I & E, pure and not-so-simple.

How shall this be accomplished? Well, you're the ones to tell the rest of us. You're the people administrators must turn to more and more in order to find ways of managing people, of selling ideas and progress reports to consumers, the users of the resources. We know this is a job for everybody, though, not just I & E and PR professionals. All resource managers will deal with their publics and will be attempting to influence their attitudes to the extent of manipulating public thought and motivating people into taking action that will assure broad support at the grass roots level. The degree of success we achieve in this endeavor will largely determine the quality of the environment we preserve for all life.

The value of a sound selling program in wildlife management, then, is incalculable—in much the same sense that the value of a fishing lake or a beautiful view is incalculable. It is our hope that in your respective states and organizations the *value of having* a good I & E program is no longer controversial, if it ever was, but that instead it is the *quality and implementation* of your programs that are most often discussed in the councils.

The conservation profession really has no choice but to pursue this approach. We've got to sell our product and we've got to compete with other industries for public attention, even as we ride the crest of a wave of public interest and see steadily increasing biopolitical involvement, involvement which needs to be encouraged but which also needs to be carefully guided into the paths of resource-use *rightness*.

The value of I & E and PR work, and the competition for the services of real professionals in this field, is gaining. Your stock is going up. I will predict that in that 21st century Walter Cronkite is always talking about (which begins only thirty years and seventy-one days from today) the demand for the services of *people* management people will surpass the demand for the services of *Game and Fish* management people. Why? Because I think the campaign to preserve habitat, and thus save our nation's wildlife resources, will be won or lost in the minds of men and women; not in the laboratory; not in the boat or blind; and not in the judge's office!

Now the value of and necessity for wildlife law enforcement, biological research, and good resource management are in no way belittled here. I believe in them with all my heart. The American people at large and also the sportsmen who finance most of the work owe a great debt of gratitude to professional wildlife scientists, managers and enforcement people. The distinction we make is simply that it is up to public communicators, I & E and Public Relations people, with a good press, to see that the debt is paid—in vocal, moral, and political support for good laws, good management, and good administration. And in continued financial provision.

I wouldn't want this to get out but I rather agree with what O. B. Winters said on the subject of salesmanship and advertising. I quote: "Not one person in a thousand knows a good thing when he sees it, and without salesmanship and advertising we would still be a nation of bicycle riders."

I would remind you, however, that our business is constantly undergoing change so don't make the mistake of selling an idea or concept you can't unsell. What is good conservation one season, or in one county, may very well be bad in the next! What some mistake for an eternal working principle in one decade winds up being altered, or even scrapped, in the next. I'm reasonably sure you can think of lots of examples on your own.

In conclusion, I want to leave with you an observation by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, then with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, quoted by North Carolina's Ross O. Stevens in his book, *Talk About Wildlife*, published during World War II:

"The basis of all our present and future wealth has arisen or will arise from our natural resources, soil, minerals, forests, wildlife. If these natural resources and true democratic government are not consistently protected to the utmost of our ability, there will come a time when this country will not be worth defending and when that time comes our soldiers would put forth about as much effort as did the millions of French soldiers in the face of 150,000 Germans." (In 1936 when Hitler's token force occupied the Rhineland unresisted.)

I think you will agree, if you've been reading the news and watching television, that we have our work cut out for us if we are to hold our place of world leadership and continue to enjoy our high standard of living. The worth of the country's remaining natural resources, renewable and otherwise, must be realized and then we might have a chance to assure that Ira Gabrielson's timely observation will not become prophecy fulfilled.

Remember, gentlemen, the era of human management is only beginning. The *real* value of a sound I & E program in the natural resource and public relations professions is only about to be realized.

Thank you.