

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF I. AND E. IN THE OVERALL CONSERVATION PICTURE

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For ten years as an editor and Information Section chief, and for nearly six years in an administrative capacity, I've listened to pious utterances and tribal chants on this subject. I've heard again and again the pious incantation that follows deathless oratory on conservation problems—the incantation that solves so many crises with: "What we need is to educate our public." I've heard the administrators—confound it! I *am* one—in the best executive fashion declaim that *we must inform our public!*

I have participated in the ritual dance that is intended to bring a gentle rainfall of mass compassion and comprehension, the tribal shuffle that consists of creating a pattern of magic symbols called words, carefully arranged into symbolic platitudes that invoke the angels and offend only distant demons. All this necromancy is then exposed to the ultimate in sorcery; a mimeograph machine.

I have watched the guardians of youthful morality wallowing in the muck of pedagogical phraseology—in fact I've wallowed with them—to avoid the gadflies of fact. I've seen the sins of administration and wildlife management loaded upon the horns of the I. and E. scapegoat before it was driven into the wilderness to perish that public relations might be saved.

In less mystic metaphors, we people in the wildlife field have behaved like people in other fields. For instance, the Kansas City Athletics fired their manager *and* their publicity man two years ago after finishing last in the American League; the next year this magic worked and the A's finished ninth—with the added magic of expanding to a ten-team league.

This self-critique which involves you is, of course, my admission that we who call ourselves administrators have not fully resolved the precise role of Information-Education divisions in the conservation field. You who are top administrators may be firm in your own convictions; if you are, be warned that I shall try to plant heretical weeds in the garden of your assurance.

Let us begin by letting me tell you things that I think are *not* the responsibility of I. and E. divisions:

1. I don't think Information and Education are the same thing, or that they combine well into a division. Too much depends upon interpretation of jobs. We became so convinced of disparate functions in Missouri that five years ago we split our I. and E. Division. Information became a special staff function of the Director's Office; Education became a field function in our Field Activities Division, along with conservation agents (game wardens) and field service agents (agricultural liaison). This appears to be working well—or, at least, better than our previous conventional form, and we didn't think this was bad.

2. I don't think public relations is the responsibility of the I-E people, though certainly they should supply an acceptable definition and offer guidance of P. R. As has been said—and forgotten—ten thousand times, public relations is the job of everyone in the department. But training people of the department in public relations is a specialized job, and one that might well be turned over to your I-E group *at the top level.*

3. I don't think policy making is the responsibility of I. and E.—but advising administrators before policy is made certainly is important.

4. I don't think I. and E.'s function is to clean up messes, except their own, although any good information man will be full of advice on slop-mopping.

5. Finally, your I-E people should not be expected to invent news.

These points are mostly negative, perhaps to the point of heresy. Now to the permissive end. I'm going to use the term I. & E. here to mean about what most of you mean by it: a sort of section or division within your department charged with a more or less specific function.

I've said that I-E should not be expected to invent news—but it most certainly should be expected to *interpret* news. There is a great difference, the difference between "communication" and "publicity," in its worst meaning.

(May I become parenthetical long enough to explain that up to this point I have been cowering under a semantical shield by not defining my terms. Now I've just run into the inevitable barrier that bloodies the brains of all those who

try to communicate: the meaning of words, the interpretation each of us puts upon our syllabled grunts. Do I, as an honest newspaperman—in quotes—some twenty years ago, mean the same thing by “publicity” that you do? When I say “communicate” do I mean to talk or, much more importantly, to be understood. I could, indeed, define the rest of my speech quite simply by saying that the responsibility of I. E. primarily is to create *propaganda* for conservation. But that good, honest word “propaganda” has been debauched, besmirched and defiled; it has become obscene and I refuse to let you off the hook of listening to me, anyway.)

Back to “interpret” as against “invent”. You need a good I-E man who knows what news is, and who knows how to present it so that the press, radio or television slaves understand it *and* can further interpret it to the public at large. The mere fact that a director, assistant director or division chief may say *something* doesn’t mean he has said something worth repeating. And even if he has achieved this goal, it probably is necessary to make sure that the mass media understand it. Not even the *New York Times* is going to give its readers *all* the facts, much less the fancies. Getting the boss’ *name* in the paper is “publicity”; getting the boss’ *views* in the paper is interpretation.

I. and E. has a great responsibility, and a less appreciated one as advisory group. Many a well-laid administrative plan has gang aley because it was badly phrased, badly timed or leaked out—or, perhaps, not leaked out. We once explored the “leak” technique by floating speculative stories about a \$2 trout permit we *might* establish; a year later we did establish it, with relatively minor opposition, because trout fishermen had gotten used to the idea. On the advice of counsel, we announced 18 months ago a politically—unpopular move that will not take effect until next January 1, and it looks like we’re home free. That’s enough examples.

We try to keep our Information Officer posted on everything; he sits at all staff conferences, he has free access to Director Towell’s office and my own, he confers at any and all times with division chiefs. *He* takes the rap for editorial mistakes—and all publications, radio shows, films, news stories and exhibits are in his custody *and* his budget. He speaks, as it were, with the director’s voice on these things, as a staff officer with a specialty—and is, of course, subject to being struck by the same lightning that has menaced staff officers ever since Hannibal cut off his adjutant’s head.

The advisory capacity demands further responsibilities of I. & E. for no man and no group of men can properly advise by intuition. The good operator of an information program cannot be a specialist, though a surprising number of them try to achieve such status in this age of knowing more and more about less and less. I-E people need a broad education; more than any other group in a wild-life department they must know the world in which we live. They must understand other view points and social patterns; they must seek what we glibly call the “Broad view,” and they must somehow represent this view in trying to shape policy before it is finally molded.

This will call for an acceptance of unpopularity. No man is so hated as the questioner, the man who seeks to dig beneath the smooth surface of a well-planned memo or disturb the calm serenity of a smoky conference room. But many a paper tiger has been nibbled into tatters by the mice of social “fact,” and a major I-E function is to deal with the folklore of society.

This chore includes getting administration, biologists, enforcement people and everyone else to face the sordid situation of public apathy toward our earthshaking pronouncements regarding insecticides, quail or the incidence of parasitic formations in *Ictalurus giganticus infrequentii*. It’s a chore because specialists tend to be intolerant of other opinions, and to mistake their own whims for immutable truths.

On the other hand, I. and E. people also tend to be intolerant. This is a virtue they can ill afford, since they do not have the excuse that they are being scientific rather than hardheaded, nor do they have the mystic appeal to “the spirit of the law and the sanctity of statutes.” They can, of course, assert that their own views represent the equally misty realm of “good” public relations, but they would be better advised to adopt an attitude of genteel doubt rather than dogmatic assurance. This may only bring the Socratic cup of hemlock, naturally.

I-E personnel have a major responsibility for creativity, and no sarcasm is intended here by an appeal to the creative instinct. I mean the same thing by

the term that an artist does: the actual creation of a meaningful concept, whether in paint, photograph, or words, whether as educators or publicists. Biology does not need to be dreary and game management isn't necessarily dull. We are not engaged in cloudy issues but we too frequently project those issues upon a screen of fog. Our "communicators" need to create clear and comprehensible views of the department's programs and problems.

May I swing off target a little to add that a responsibility of the administrator is to avoid stifling creativity in his I-E section, while still retaining enough objectivity to recognize the difference between cuteness and aesthetics.

Let's see: I seem to have said that I-E sections should have the responsibility for:

1. Leadership in public relations training for everyone in the department;
2. Interpreting the department's programs, views and dreams to all the public that can possibly be brought into the discussion;
3. Advising administration on public thinking and reactions, and keeping administration posted on sociology;
4. Providing a well-rounded background against which the director may view proposed programs to see if they really fit;
5. Forcing other members of the departmental hierarchy to ask themselves and their associates the really searching questions; and
6. Creating an understandable picture for the public out of the shifting patterns of research, enforcement, desires and dreams that the other professionals have devised in their specialized fields.

After all this, there seems to be little need for adding that I. and E. ought to put out a readable magazine, usable news releases, interesting motion pictures, viewable exhibits, entertaining radio news, meaningful messages in pamphlets, and stimulating aids to conservation education.

There may be an unanswered question in your minds—along with the other thousand—about where you can view a conservation agency whose I. and E. people both accept and are given these responsibilities. The answer is, quite *right at home*, except for one massive failure: coordination. Few I-E departments possibly, *right at home*, except for one massive failure: coordination. Few I-E departments properly carry out their responsibilities—but still fewer have ever been told these *are* their responsibilities.

Good I. and E. demands adequate personnel, living wages, sound budgeting and, above all else, close liaison. These will not solve all conservation problems; an I-E unit is only one of the administrative tools. But it is a sharp spade that too many—perhaps even most—states are letting rust.

WHERE ORGANIZED SPORTSMEN FIT INTO THE OVER-ALL CONSERVATION PICTURE

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Organized sportsmen have played a leading role in the American conservation movement ever since there was such a movement. In fact, organizations of sportsmen were working to protect wildlife and other natural resources long before Gifford Pinchot dreamed up the word "conservation" and, with the help of Theodore Roosevelt, added it to our vocabulary.

For example, the New York Association for the Protection of Game was organized in 1844, the Massachusetts Game Protective Association came into being in 1873, and the well-known and still active Boone and Crockett Club began its effective game preservation and restoration efforts in 1887. The term "conservation"—said to have been derived by Pinchot from the British Civil Service colonial office's position title of "conservator"—wasn't applied to natural resources until 1907.

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