

# DIRECTORS' SESSION

## WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD INFORMATION EDUCATION DIVISION?

*By Dan Saults, Chief of I. & E. Bureau of Sports  
Fisheries & Wildlife Washington, D. C.*

No unit of conservation, football or moon-shooting is any better than the personnel that compose it—but I-E teams or football teams perform better under leadership that can bring out the best in the team's individuals. Therefore, the place to start building any team is with the right chief. Choose him well.

But before we start reviewing this selection process, there's a purely personal note to be fed in here. Why an Information *and* Education chief? To combine these functions in a single man, we almost have to assume that the functions of information and education are very similar. Are they? Is a newspaper almost the same as a school textbook? Is a photographer an educator? Is dealing with a duck-hunters association the same process as coping with a high school administrator? Do you make a motion picture for classrooms *and* for an adult outdoor audience—and if you do, doesn't it fall between two stools?

In an earlier manifestation as assistant director of the Missouri Conservation Department, working with Bill Towell as director at a time of change in the department when we could be a bit radical, we asked ourselves these questions and then reorganized by splitting Information and Education completely. The Information Officer became a purely staff functionary, with his own staff; the Education people became a section in our Field division. The Information Office was based entirely at headquarters and worked on the whole State; the Education Section had only a chief and secretary at headquarters and the rest—11 men and women—were regionalized over Missouri making specific contacts.

That almost seemed heresy at the time. But now, more than a decade later, it still seems to be working better than our old system. The educators zero in on the school processes, primarily concentrating on teachers colleges and school administrators; the publicists work with the mass media; the first group has a 20-year goal while the Information people have a daily, weekly or monthly deadline.

I think the separation worked to the advantage of both groups, which were not nearly as split thereafter as some predictions would have indicated. In fact, communications between the writers-photographers-editors and the educators may have improved.

Thus I would recommend you test this technique, even if you have few personnel.

Even if you can split them, we are still faced with the problem of selecting a chief or chiefs. And we must rationalize a decision on how many people it takes to run a program.

If we characterize an Information operation as the delivery of your "facts" to as many people as possible as rapidly and clearly as possible, then the head of this operation—by whatever title—must understand newspapers and television and radio. He must understand editing: extraneous facts or department publicity can get between the reporter and the essential information you want the public to know, although the source of the announcement has to be clearly indicated. He must understand visual values—or, more simply, how good photographs must be had if you are going to seize a reader's interest. He must understand the making *and use* of motion pictures.

He—and it could be she—must have another attribute that is hard to come by: your "chief" must know staff work, know all the significant operations of the agency, know the things that are *not* going to be announced just as well as those items that *are* going to be released. He must be the director's right-hand man on news values and public relations aspects, feeding his analysis into all decisions.

I do not mean that final decisions should be made by your "chief" on broad policy matters. But his view of a decision is just as important to a director's future and an agency's operations as the view promulgated by operational heads, if we accept the idea that wildlife management is primarily people management.

I can cite instances where well-planned public acceptance programs have worked, and where the failure to develop such plans lost public confidence. But you can cite your own failures and successes; let me say only that the technical people can be very right in their programs and terribly wrong in getting them accepted—at least partly because they were right to the point of righteousness, even to the point of intelligibility.

So in picking a chief or chiefs, look for professional experience, the ability to be a generalist, skill, staff qualities and understanding of the public. Then, having found this paramount paragon, comes the job of building an I-E staff—because the "chief" probably can't "do" all the things required—and maybe not most of them. His job is to mix the ingredients into a cake and build the fire that bakes it.

So he will need a photographer, and a good one. Everyone in this room knows how many demands you get for pictures; not just requests from the press or television, but from your own ranks. As a one-time newsman and a former freelance writer, I may deplore the audio-visual medium as our dominating communication method today—meaning that too few people can read at all anymore—but that's the way it is. McLuhan is right: the medium is the message, and all the Ph.D. theses on the incidence of parasitology in *Ictalurus furcatus* during the 1960's have had less impact on the public than you can get in ten seconds on Huntley-Brinkley.

We need to know a great deal more than we do about wildlife, ecology and humanity; we are being paid to learn more. But our goal is not to make all citizens ichthyologists, mammalogists and ornithologists. What we need to do is make citizenry aware of wild things; appreciative of and ready to support the agencies that do wildlife management; even to take (or refrain from taking) certain actions that affect habitat.

Beyond this point, plus in-depth interpretation *with* (not *for*) outdoor writers, the Information people can hardly go. Few of them go this far, or at least this broadly, for they are competing for time and space with multi-million-dollar ad agencies, carefully planned television shows which cost more per half-hour than your total I-E budget, and a war in Viet Nam or riots in the streets. These make it hard to focus on the ecological problems of *Odocoilius virginianus*.

So you need your own magazine devoted to wildlife and its problems, a magazine that needs to be well done. So you must have a good editor. And *he* needs help, to handle circulation and layout and makeup. This may be only one person, at first, but the need will grow if your magazine is successful. But it will be telling *your* story, without interruptions for commercials, or intrusions by a managing editor who doesn't want snakes mentioned in his paper. Your magazine is a valuable tool; it's your voice and your key leaders in the public want to hear it.

Now we have a chief, a photographer, an editor and his circulation gal, plus maybe a layout man. Next you need a writer . . . not a Hemingway, perhaps, but a guy who can get a message down in words on paper. He is your news man, your feature story writer, the backup guy on the magazine. And maybe he's just a little man in a corner hunched over this typewriter, or maybe a real swinger on his way up. But you got to have him.

Now let's have a secretary for the chief and at least one typist. There you have the nucleus of an Information section which will even have a little time to help teach all the personnel sound, simple methods for dealing with the public. Some of them will get very good at it, too.

Beyond this point, you can expand indefinitely: a television man, dealing solely with this material-swallowing ogre; a radio man, utilizing this useful medium by tape or getting field personnel on local stations; a motion picture team (minimum of two people); someone who specializes in working with women's clubs.

I would recommend that no wildlife agency get too ambitious in doing things unless it has enough personnel with the background and talent to do it. Don't buy a

camera and think it will take pictures without a skilled photographer; don't assume every Journalism School student is a Ted Trueblood; and don't believe that you can't find people who not only write clearly but have at least enough knowledge of wildlife to deal authoritatively with the subject—if they have the backing of the biologists. Maybe the first thing to look for is Information people who can get along with the technicians—which may include talking back to them.

Your Education people can waste their time visiting schools and showing movies to the kiddies. They can also waste their time attending conferences entitled "Whither Education?" Or they can drive hard to widen their sphere of wildlife influence by imaginative feed-in to the teachers. Your "educators" may have *been* teachers, but now they must be influencers, who magnify their own voice not by instructing 40 youngsters but by inspiring 40 teachers who will work with 40 youngsters each all year long. My personal feeling is that your educators should be working with college students who are about to become teachers, with present teachers at workshops, with administrators who plan the curriculum, with Parent-Teacher groups, with any *adults* who determine what youngsters ought to learn.

How many should there be? That's hard to answer; the size and population of your state, the number of colleges turning out teachers, even the intensity of your problems are determining factors.

What type should they be? A degree in Education is most useful, but avoid those who are pedantic and pedagogical to an extreme; seek an educator who has bright ideas and fresh viewpoints, who can suggest an experimental pond in the schoolyard or class experiments on the Back Forty.

No I-E program, whether separated or combined under a single head, can be better than the people who run it. But remember that the people who run it can be better than the program they are allowed to carry out.

Our world, and our method of communicating within it, has changed. The median age in this country is 27 years; most of us are old men by this standard. Our tried-and-true principles are becoming tried-and-blue principles. So my final plunge at advice is to seek younger men and give them more chances to try some things that may horrify you at first. *Our* generation—for most of us here are near 50, both ways near it—is in the minority. In our youth we won the battle to focus public attention on conservation, so much so that it has become overly respectable, perhaps. We can only consolidate our gains by relating them to those who grew up on television, "space" satellites and macadam.

*But the public interest is there!* People still care about wild things; humans want to know that outside the stone canyons, beyond the superhighways, birds and animals still move mysteriously in dangerous freedom.

We have a key subject; we have the public attention, even if it is not manifested in the way we used to show our own interest. Choose your I-E people carefully, because college records and master's theses don't give you an idea of their talents. But build your program well here, and it will give you a chance to build all your other programs well.

## THE ROLE OF I. & E. IN FORMING AND CARRYING OUT DEPARTMENT POLICIES

By William E. Towell, Executive Vice President  
*The American Forestry Association*

It is great pleasure for me to appear on a panel with two old friends like Dan Sauls and Wendell Bever, but you are not likely to get much disagreement. We all think pretty much alike, particularly as to the importance of I. & E. activities in a state game and fish department. Dan and I worked as a team in Missouri for many