

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
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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

years, and our good neighbors in Oklahoma, where Wendell is Director, had a program very similar to Missouri's. In this time of strife and discord, however, perhaps it won't bother anyone too much if this panel turns into a love feast.

My portion of the panel discussion has to do with the role of I. & E. in formulating and carrying out department policies. Since I am no longer in state fish and game administration, you will understand that I speak only from past experience, but I can assure you that anyone who has been a state director for ten years has had *plenty* of experience of *all* kinds.

Perhaps we had better define what is meant by I. & E. because our interpretation in Missouri was somewhat different from most states. We separated Information from Education and assigned responsibilities to different administrative divisions. Conservation education was directed toward teachers and school children as a long range program of imparting an understanding of natural resources management. The eventual audience largely was young people, and the results could be measured only in terms of long-range benefits. The importance of this activity cannot be over-stressed, but it is not what I understand this panel is expected to discuss.

I. & E. as commonly understood in most states, is that work which we did through an Information Officer. Primarily the activity was designed to inform and to persuade the adult public. True, this is a part of conservation education, but we considered the difference enough to justify an administrative separation. I interpret the I. & E. role we are discussing here today as being largely what we call public relations.

Now that I have oversimplified the assignment it becomes easier to speak with some assurance. This sounds a little like something a political candidate would do, but maybe I have been listening to too many politicians dodging too many issues.

I can oversimplify my answer to the subject, too, by saying that if I. & E. are not in on both the forming and carrying out of department policy, the department won't last long, or at least the administration will soon change. I believe that most states have long recognized that expert public relations help is needed in carrying out department policy, but many have failed to involve these same experts in forming that policy. One is about as important as the other, but I can say from experience that policy decisions which do not take into consideration how they will be received by the public often are doomed for failure.

Let me cite you a couple of examples that were classic in Missouri. I will give you the good one first before we air our dirty linens. Back in the '40's we were just beginning to get our deer restocking programs into full swing. A few concentrations in state forests and wildlife refuges formed the source from which trapping and transplanting were done. New herds were being established all over the state and the people were pretty enthusiastic about their deer. We were afraid they would become over-protective. So, long before open seasons were even considered in most counties, we began to tell the public how important it was to keep deer populations in check; how they could destroy their own food supply; why it was important to kill does along with the bucks. When the time came, and it was much sooner than even our own biologists believed it could, the public was ready for any deer season. We had practically no opposition to killing does and fawns, except from some of our own employees. Our I. & E. boys had been in on a policy matter from the beginning, and they had it sold.

But, now let's look at a horrible example of poor public relations. This concerns gigging, a time honored Ozark method of taking rough fish and an occasional bass or channel cat when no one is looking. There has always been a strong sentiment against gigging by some purists. Back about the time our deer stocking was going on the Commission, suddenly and unexpectedly, almost secretly, closed the state to all gigging. To counter the shock all personnel of the department were ordered to go out and sell the people on the idea that gigging was bad, that it was destroying game fish and ruining their hook and line fishing. We didn't do too bad with little or no advance notice and at the end of a year thought we were about over the hump, but there was a growing noise from a loud organized group. It put fear into the hearts of the commissioners and again, without warning, they acted. Gigging was restored to its

former legal status. The employees were then told to go out and sell the people, this time on the idea that gigning was good fisheries management and necessary for keeping rough fish populations in balance. This minority group was appeased, and the public was confused. It's been confusion ever since. We have only ourselves to blame, which in my observation, is the cause of most state fish and game problems.

We can do about anything we want in state fish and game administration if we are honest and if we adequately inform the public. I stress honesty because people don't forget and they are quick to find out if we are not being truthful. They also respect professional leadership if those leaders have played fair in the past.

It is essential that our communication link between the policy makers and the public be kept open. That is why I. & E. people must be in on policy decisions, not only to be prepared to inform the public, but to relate to the policy makers what public reactions are likely to be. In our department the Information Officer sat in on all commission meetings until he became Assistant Director, and then he filled a dual role. He was and is an important member of the Regulations Committee that makes all recommendations to the commission on rule changes, seasons, and bag limits. He is briefed on the agenda that is to be considered by the commission before the meeting, and he participates in a full staff review of all commission meetings the day following. Most often if not attending the actual meeting itself, he will be called into a briefing conference by the Director or an Assistant as soon as the meeting adjourns so that he can direct publicity releases.

One of the most important roles that a good I. & E. man can fill is evaluating policy actions before final decisions are made. He most often knows the temper of the people and how a change will be received. If there is any doubt as to public reactions or acceptance, he should say so emphatically, then if the administration wants to avoid trouble, it will heed his advice. Given time I believe that a good I. & E. program can sell any idea if it is sound and honestly conceived. I cannot overstress being honest in what we say. People will forgive us for mistakes if they are honest mistakes, but they won't stand for being hoodwinked.

Little needs to be said about carrying out of department policies because this is a traditional role of I. & E. programs. I do, however, want to stress the importance of communicating with the people. It's worth a big share of the department's budget just to avoid troubles. How it is best accomplished is a point that you I. & E. people yourselves will argue, but the important thing is that the job be recognized for its true importance. Often you will find commissioners or other department personnel proposing that some of this publicity money be used to buy more land, or pay higher salaries, or hire more wardens. Periodically people in my old department wanted to do away with the *Missouri Conservationist* or put a price on its subscription which would have been tantamount to cutting circulation to 25% or less. I feel very strongly that nothing in Information work is as important as the printed word. It is the continuing, lasting link of communication so vital to public understanding. In The American Forestry Association that I now represent, one of the oldest conservation organizations in America, we know that our success is due in large part to our magazine, *American Forests*, that has not missed a monthly issue in over 75 years.

It has been nearly two years now since I left your ranks as a state conservation administrator. I can look at your problems a little bit more objectively and dispassionately. If you will permit me just one more observation, I think I can clinch my argument for a strong I. & E. program in state fish and game administration. From where I sit it is evident that those states with the best all round conservation programs also have the strongest and best financed information and public relations programs. I will not make the mistake of naming states, but just look around. No matter what we do, it is for people, and anytime we neglect the job of keeping people informed, all else is wasted.