



Perspective

Cooperation and Public Relations

C. C. PETTET, *President and General Manager, Canadian Paint, Varnish, and Lacquer Association, Inc.*

INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES have done grand jobs in developing and selling merchandise. This has resulted in their greatness. With such power and size has come criticism and in some cases organized propaganda against these concerns. Recall the individual who boasts of the luxury and efficiency of a particular device or service which he has recently purchased and in the next breath talks of monopolies and exploitation and regimentation of the poor people employed by the very company whose products he has just praised. What is wrong with this situation and this individual?

The explanation is a simple one. In the first instance, the company has done a highly successful selling job for its product. It has, however, neglected to sell itself as a corporate personality. In our present political and economic atmosphere this is perhaps its most important obligation. It must now realize that it must make known its integrity, the important part it plays in the progress of the nation, the security it offers to the community, and its foremost place in providing the goods which contribute to our high standard of living and the benefits and comforts of modern life. It must tell how it provides everyday protection for the individual and his family, how it is the means of livelihood for its workers, and how in many cases its research programs and products are vital contributions to a defense program upon which may depend our entire existence.

It is certainly obvious that the individual company, the industry, and the industrial and service trade associations have a function to perform which is much broader and more far-reaching than the mere sale of goods and services to our population.

In a comparatively few years we have observed radical changes in our political and economic systems; in fact, our very mode of life has no semblance to that which existed 15 years ago.

We are familiar with collective this, cooperative that, joint representation, mass buying, and many other expressions that stand for collective action or group cooperation in one form or another. Whereas we cannot

agree with all of these collective efforts, some are both essential and of significant benefit.

These have increased our efficiency and have provided benefits in every respect. I refer to the research foundations, the councils for the study of international affairs, and the host of similar organizations that represent every faction of government, education, science, and industry. We must face the fact that many of our daily activities are on a cooperative basis.

Part of a trade association's program should therefore be to sell the individual company executive on the necessity of supporting it. It is immediately recognizable that the industrial trade association forms part of the group playing an increasingly important part in the handling of affairs essential to the well-being and progress of an industry—affairs which could not be handled by an individual company.

This is equally true in the field of advertising and public relations, for the well-schooled public will begin to look upon the association as an independent and impartial organization that is capable of conveying facts that will be read and believed and regarded as authoritative.

In this regard it must be mentioned that the most potent aspects to be considered in devising a public relations program are: that the information must be truthful and unembellished, that it must be brief in fact, and that it must be, for broad acceptance, couched in simple but strictly understandable language. This is the basis of an honest and sincere public relations activity. Today, a successful program reaching a large cross section of the population depends upon well-written and properly prepared factual material, backed up by suitable illustrations, statistical data, and other supporting materials. If such a program is well designed and operated with the complete cooperation and working support of all factions of the industry, good will, support, and assistance will be forthcoming from a large percentage of the country and the community in which the industry conducts its business.