

74



# THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

*Papers presented at the  
World Conference of Local Governments*

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JUNE 15-20, 1961

# 64

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES



# THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

*Papers presented at the  
World Conference of Local Governments*

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JUNE 15-20, 1961

1962

MARTINUS NIJHOFF, THE HAGUE, FOR THE  
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS  
OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



First published in 1962  
by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands  
Reprinted in 1964  
by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands

Copyright 1962 by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Netherlands — All rights reserved, including the right to translate or to reproduce this book or parts thereof in any form

---

Printed in the Netherlands

## CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b> . . . . .	5
<b>General aspects</b> . . . . .	7
<i>Public Relations in a democracy</i>	
by Hans Riemer, Alderman, Vienna, Austria . . . . .	7
<i>Public Relations in Local Government</i>	
by Lee K. Jaffe, Director of Public Relations, The Port of New York Authority . . . . .	14
<b>Tasks, Organization and Methods</b> . . . . .	
<i>Public Relations Activities in Munich</i>	
by Dr. Hans-Jochen Vogel, Lord Mayor of Munich, Germany . . . . .	23
<i>Public Relations Objectives and Issues</i>	
by Lee S. Corter, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Pennsylvania State University . . . . .	31
<i>Public Relations Activities and Means</i>	
by Abe S. Rosen, Deputy City Representative, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania . . . . .	34
<b>Discussion</b> . . . . .	38
<b>Summary</b> . . . . .	
by Prof. Jovan Djordjević, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Belgrade; President of the Legal Council of Yugoslavia . . . . .	43

## PREFACE

The World Conference of Local Governments was held June 15-20, 1961 in Washington, D.C. and had as its main theme *Recent Developments in Local Government Structure and Organization*. In addition to plenary sessions on the general topic, seminar meetings were held on Personnel Management, Administrative Mechanization and Automation, Metropolitan Areas and Public Relations and two sessions were held on Town Affiliation.

It is the papers presented at the Public Relations seminar, which was so ably presided over by Lewis W. Cutrer, Mayor of Houston, Texas, that are included in the present volume. The authors have considered the public relations of local governments from several aspects, for example, the necessity in a democracy for a well-developed public relations program and how such a program can be organized, what tasks it should perform and the methods it can use. In addition, this book contains a summary of the general discussion devoted to this topic and the final comments of the seminar's reporter, Dr. Jovan Djordjević, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Belgrade and President of the Legal Council of Yugoslavia.

The proceedings of the other seminars, as well as those of the main conference theme and the sessions on Town Affiliation, have also been published in books similar to the present volume. In addition, the pre-conference reports, all of which were prepared by American experts, have been published under the title of "Local Government in the United States of America" and are no. 57 in the IULA series on various aspects of local government throughout the world. Indeed, one of the purposes of the conference was to compare American experience with that of other countries.

May this present volume be of value both to those who are interested in the theoretical aspects of a good local government public relations program and to those whose primary concern is its practice. The authors have considered both and have included, moreover, a variety of illustrations which indicate the scope and importance of this topic and the necessity for considering it as an integral part of government at the local level.

N. ARKEMA

*Secretary General of the  
International Union of Local Authorities*



*Mr. Hans Riemer gives the opening address of the Public Relations seminar. Seated at the platform, from left to right, are speaker Miss Lee K. Jaffee, Chairman Lewis W. Cutrer, IULA staff member Mr. H. J. C. Molenaar and seminar reporter Dr. J. Djordjević.*

## GENERAL ASPECTS

### PUBLIC RELATIONS IN A DEMOCRACY

by

HANS RIEMER

*Alderman, Vienna, Austria*

\*

The trends and methods of public relations will always be guided primarily by who requested the service — whose interests are to be represented. Individuals or industrial concerns will try to influence public opinion in favor of their business, toward increasing the number of customers, promoting a specific product, or overcoming competition. The objective will always be mainly to enlist public opinion, i.e., the broad mass of the population, for specific private interests.

In public administration it is different. Whether it is the national government, the local government, or municipal works and enterprises, the contrast with public relations in private industry is clear. Public administration will always strive, even in its public relations, to serve the interests of the public.

The aims and methods of these public relations of government administration will, of course, frequently be guided by the political principles of the country in question. Countries and municipalities which are governed by the principles of democracy and liberty will not only pursue different objectives in their public relations than those countries and municipalities which are governed according to totalitarian principles, but they will also assign different functions to their public relations departments and make use of different methods. These differences, reduced to a common denominator, may perhaps be expressed as follows: dictatorships need propaganda; democracies need explanation, information, understanding and cooperation.

The task of public relations in dictatorships is to drill into the inhabitants certain political concepts or slogans, phrases or catchwords. Mussolini and Hitler and the Fascist states of the recent past have offered prime examples of the public relations methods of dictatorships. At the present time we have a similar state of affairs in the Peoples' Democracies. Public relations there have to constantly transmit and inculcate into the inhabitants new slogans and catchwords, but they must also see to it that the catchwords of yesterday and the day before yesterday disappear immediately from the vocabulary of the people and are consigned to oblivion. The external and organizational expression of this type of public relations based upon the needs of the dictatorships is

the hierarchy of propaganda experts headed by the Minister of Propaganda and their work has ramifications down to the smallest group in the state.

It is different in the case of democracies and those local administrations formed and conducted according to democratic principles. Here the outstanding characteristic is the right of freedom of expression, public discussion, public criticism of public services and, unfortunately, very often also the need to take steps against corruption and misuse of public office. But a democracy needs no propaganda ministry, and it can dispense with the centrally directed, tendentious indoctrination of the people. What it needs is faith, knowledge and understanding by the people of the intentions, potentialities and achievements of the local administration. The function, therefore, of public relations in a democracy in general, and especially in the local City Hall, is to stimulate the citizens to think about problems, to participate in joint discussion and to educate for joint responsibility.

Public relations in a democracy are by no means easier and simpler than in authoritarian regimes. Two examples from the most recent past may illustrate this point: Hitler and his propaganda minister, Goebbels, when the war was already lost to Germany tried, by means of a legendary wonder weapon, to keep up the German war effort until the promised final victory. They consciously led the German people astray and thus plunged it into ruin. Winston Churchill, on the other hand, openly addressed the English people in his famous radio broadcast: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat, but, at the end of this struggle, democracy and freedom." And final victory came to the forthright and honorable herald of a great and noble aim which could only be attained in a hard struggle, after great sacrifices, for which he prepared his people without any glossing over.

We in local government hardly ever have such great problems affecting the existence of entire nations; we are generally concerned with everyday problems. The effectiveness, quality and conviction of our public relations are demonstrated by the extent of our success in enlightening our citizens regarding the nature of the problems under debate, in enlisting their support for new measures, or in identifying their own personal interests with the interests of the community or the facilities and establishments conducted or administered by a municipality.

The problems of local authorities in the field of influencing public opinion are twofold in nature: On the one hand, they arise from the positive interest of the localities and their enterprises in informing the people concerning a specific problem, clarifying things for them, or winning them over for special purposes; on the other hand, they are a kind of defence



activity. One often sees in wide circles of the population a certain animosity towards the public authorities and enterprises, a certain distrust of the municipality as a corporation whose members are not recognizable as individuals and thus represent the purest type of anonymity. In this strata of the population, a distrust of all public facilities is generally noticeable, which is often nourished by the same circles which like to attack the so-called omnipotence of the state. Often the most altruistic and best managed installations of public service are maligned and alienated from the understanding of the people by this segment of the population. This negative propaganda may be observed even in the municipal public welfare agencies, in the hospitals, youth and old-age homes, schools and public health agencies. To an even greater degree, it may be found in those monopolistic public utility plants which must sell their services and whose price and rate regulation takes place in the open glare of publicity in public sessions of the town council.

How much, then, the local enterprises and government are dependent upon the understanding of the people. This is undoubtedly the most important task of municipal public relations: to promote understanding among the population for the best possible solution in the interest of all the people of the problem at hand, and perhaps to point out the right direction for the final decision by means of the ballot, as is provided in the Swiss democracy.

Current individual problems are and must be the subject of local public relations, but not the only subject. In reality, more is at stake. The local community has long been recognized as the best and most effective "primary school" of democracy. It is in the jurisdiction of the local community, where questions which concern the individual citizen personally and his way of life are decided, that the opportunity most frequently and advantageously presents itself to acquaint the people in general with public questions, to inform them of the problems of public administration and how these problems can be met by a publicly administered facility, to explain details and to also point out to the egotistically inclined individual the unreasonableness of his demand and admonish him to reason. Thus, an opportunity often exists in the community to instruct the citizens in the discussion of subjects familiar to everyone, such as the supply of drinking water, gas and electric power, and to educate them to the consideration of interests greater than merely their personal ones. In the degree to which the community's public relations is successful in this task, with respect to individual issues of local administration and local facilities, to that extent is the education of the people for democracy and self-government also achieved. Thus the public relations of the localities perform a great educational function and are important for the state as a whole.

However, it is not only a question of forcing something on the citizens which the "distinguished councillor" in the local conference room deems right. The good city administration will attach just as much importance to probing public opinion. This, too, is a branch of public relations. The best and most successful public opinion research facilitates the decisions of the city fathers and, in the final analysis, the acceptance of their decisions by the people. We know from experience through daily examples that our citizens know much too little about their local administration; that often they are not only unacquainted with public officials, but also that they are superficially informed concerning their activities and field of work and, above all, that they do not realize and understand the fundamental nature of the activities of the government administration.

What does the average citizen really know, for example, about the obligations of the local public utilities, monopolistic in character, about the legal obligation to furnish the people with sanitary drinking water, the legal obligation of the municipally owned electric company to supply all homes and business establishments of the city with electricity, the obligation of the local transportation companies to continue to operate lines incurring a deficit, because they serve a need of the people of less densely inhabited parts of the city? The private entrepreneur simply discontinues transportation lines which do not produce revenue or do not even cover working expenses and the people accept this. But let the municipal transportation company dare merely to increase the distance between stops on such a line and protests and attacks will rain down from all sides.

How can we explain this discrepancy? The public utilities, including local ones, are basically established in such a way that they serve primarily the interests of the public and, since they are not motivated by private profit, really attain a maximum efficiency while still serving the interests of the people. The citizen has long been accustomed to that. The people take this excellent service given by municipal facilities for granted. To be sure, there is criticism and fault finding as soon as even the slightest basis for it seems to exist, because it is a question of service performed by a public company, which every single citizen considers it his prerogative to criticize. All the greater is the interest of these companies and their top management — the local administration — in demonstrating openly and driving home to the people their positive achievements.

The more one succeeds in convincing public opinion of the effectiveness and non-competitiveness of the municipal enterprises and facilities, the more will unpopular measures also meet with the understanding of the people. Therefore, the people must constantly be made aware of the achievements of the city government, of the advantages of the collective management of service operations, of the blessing of a safe water supply, of the importance of a well-functioning sewage system and of a technically

modern and hygienic garbage disposal system, not to speak of the commercial value of publicly supplied power. Since in most communities in democratic states these installations are not only organized on the principle of self-government and are thus directed by bodies with a self-governing set-up, but are also managed according to the principle of cost accounting and renouncing of net profits, continuous enlightenment of the people concerning these social principles is all the more necessary. The ordinary citizen all too easily criticizes unavoidable price and rate increases in public utilities, even when the latter are very minor, and he forgets very quickly the advantages and economies which the same public enterprises have procured for him for many years through their economical management and their rate structure, which just covers expenses. In such a case, he must be shown the savings, for which he must thank the rate policy of the local enterprises.

This objective of having the people informed and sympathetic at the decisive moment cannot be achieved by an advertising or propaganda campaign which only begins when the problem is ready for solution. Here we have a long-range problem of public relations. The more we acquaint the public with the community's installations, institutions and operations, the more thoroughly do we draw attention to the range of problems of these institutions. The oftener we give the people an opportunity to inspect local installations and enterprises or place them in the visible light of publicity by means of lectures, films, newspaper reports, television broadcasts, exhibits and festivals, the more open-minded will the public react to all questions concerning their activities. The great problems in the field of transportation need an equally thorough and long-range preparation through publicity, problems such as the protection of the old city center against automobile traffic whose density threatens to choke the narrow streets which can no longer absorb the traffic and the parked cars. The cardinal principle of all public relations of the municipalities and their institutions must surely be: frankness in the exposition of pertinent problems and complete honesty towards the public.

Although we have to reach the broadest possible public with our public relations, we must not overlook what is near at hand, that is, the narrower circle of co-workers, one's own personnel. There is no doubt that one of the primary tasks of community public relations is to instruct one's own employees regarding the nature and conduct of the local administration, the functioning of the democratically formed executive corporation and its organs, as well as local institutions for the welfare of the citizen body and community industrial operations. This instruction and information should not only include the entire municipal personnel in general but should address itself especially to the staff of the individual departments, installations and establishments and make these staffs thoroughly familiar

with the nature of their own agencies and departments. The streetcar employee who really knows the problems of his department will always be the best and most persuasive advocate towards any outsider. The same is true of the hospital attendant, of the teacher in a children's home or kindergarten, as well as of the administrative official in the local court.

There must be no local employee who is not thoroughly conversant with his agency and his immediate field of work. The well-informed and dedicated official or employee will always have a deep inner relationship to his work and thus to his employer. The well-schooled official or the technically trained mechanic of the electric, gas or water works will also accept with understanding the complaints of the customers of his public utility, will be able to reply with clear explanations and will thus assist in creating that feeling of satisfaction in the public of which the public enterprise is perhaps in greater need than private enterprise, which the public knows to be influenced by competition in its field.

The extent of the public relations of the individual community and the instrumentalities it uses will depend upon the size of the city and the variety of its public tasks. Basically, the local authorities should avail themselves of all suitable devices and potentialities of public relations which will have an impact on the public. Large cities will set up a special office for that purpose and will make it directly responsible to the chief executive of the city for the sake of expediency, and thus keep it, so to speak, at his disposal. The mayor and leading city officials and administrative officers will avail themselves of this agency; they will grant it a more or less monopolistic position for the dissemination of local news releases and, above all, will assign to it the function of liaison between the municipal agencies and the press, the radio and other media of information. With its assistance they will set up press conferences, visits by the press to local establishments, give interviews, and in certain cases even use newspaper advertisements to inform the people concerning plans, purposes and decisions. Depending upon the scope and magnitude of the problems presented, these municipal press offices will employ their own newspaper personnel, maintain a separate photo service with press photographers, make use of weekly news films, interest television in specially planned or prospective events in the municipal field and, last but not least, introduce the city fathers again and again to the people on special occasions, bring them into contact with their fellow citizens and thus popularize them. Contact between City Hall and the citizenry should generally be the special concern of the municipal public relations offices. This is an important task which must be performed with the greatest sense of responsibility, accuracy and integrity, and in the knowledge of all the data regarding the inside operation of the local administration, its establishments and installations.

Since World War II the United States has shown an unparalleled readiness to assist the distressed nations. At first they helped to repair the ravages of war, they sent to the peoples most seriously affected by the war foodstuffs, medicines and consumer goods, and restored the health of the people and their capacity to work, thus enabling them to revitalize their industry by their own efforts. Since then they have turned their humanitarian impulses towards entire under-developed continents where they helped to turn the wheel of progress. Gigantic appropriations for such purposes were necessary in those years and had to be raised by the American taxpayers. To have enlisted the public of the U.S.A. for these sacrifices and awakened their understanding for the necessity of this American aid and to have kept it constantly alive, was and is a great feat of U.S. public relations. May this accomplishment, performed in the world-wide public interest, be an example, a sign post and an impetus to our own work in the smaller field of local administration!

## PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

by

LEE K. JAFFE

*Director of Public Relations, The Port of New York Authority*

\*

To get off to a good start I should like to drop a good name: Abraham Lincoln.

Among his countless pearls of wisdom was a speech fragment bearing the date October 1, 1858. More than a hundred years ago President Lincoln noted: "In this age, and this country, public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed. Whoever molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts laws or pronounces judicial decisions. He makes possible the enforcement of them, else impossible."

Another American President, James Madison, commenting on a practical phase of what we now call public relations, pointed out: "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but the prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both."

Former President Eisenhower at Geneva, not so far back in our history, for it was in 1955, said: "We are here in response to a universal urge..... that the political leaders of our great countries find a path to peace." And at Independence Hall in Philadelphia a few weeks later: "The case of the several leading nations on both sides is on trial before the bar of world opinion..... The system which most effectively musters its strength in support of peace and demonstrates its ability to advance the well-being and happiness of the individual, will win the people's verdict and their loyal friendship..... but let us be clear that in the global scene our responsibility as Americans is to present our case intelligently to the world....."

Now, let us descend from the heights of pronouncements to the valley of realities. Here we find in various forms and under many names, government public relations being practiced from the White House to City Hall.

The United States Government in recent years has developed an increasing appreciation of the use of public relations to accomplish federal programs at home and abroad. There is no doubt that in Washington there is a growing understanding of the government's responsibility for an intensification of the competition for the minds of the people of our own country and the entire world.

As you may know, with a few notable exceptions, both large and small municipalities haven't undertaken in any organized or even in any conscious sense the most basic requirements of this vital function of democratic government. And yet, it is at the local level — in the local community — that government is closest to the people and therefore in the most favorable position to practice the give and take of good public relations.

At the outset I should like to offer my preferred definition of good government public relations. I have never found a better one. It is a paraphrased version of FORTUNE magazine's definition of good business public relations.

Good government public relations is good performance — publicly appreciated. It is a democratic way of life. Government must first do a job that people can think well of and then intelligently and deftly call attention to it.

As this definition indicates, it is necessary for your local government, if it is to earn the confidence, respect and support of the people, to be sound and honest. There is no substitute for this formula if you are to meet the indispensable requirement for good performance. And in a democracy, the municipality must listen to what the people have to say about their government. Then it must comply with the wishes of the people insofar as they are sound and reasonable and possible of fulfillment.

It would seem, then, that if a municipality doesn't enjoy good public relations, it has itself to blame. Perhaps there is something wrong with the administration of the public business, or maybe it doesn't listen to what its citizens are saying, or it isn't letting its citizens know what it is doing. It has been proven time and time again that you can't have good government public relations — no matter what kind of a sales campaign you are putting on — unless you are giving good performance, listening to the voice of the people of your community, and telling your story. In its true sense, good government public relations is the result of the marriage of constructive policy and appropriate communication.

It must be appreciated that an effective and continuing public relations program for a municipality large enough to support it can be developed only through a central public relations department operating under the direction of a competent specialist who is backed by sound and honest administration. This specialist must have an important voice in the formation of policy. Under no circumstances should he be used as a personal or political press agent. And he must never be used as a cover-up man to hide bad performance or otherwise to deceive the people. The

existence of an effective central public relations department prevents conflict in policy and errors in communication. At the same time, it serves the important purpose of providing for communications media a responsible and convenient information source.

A central public relations department that respects the public's right to know and understands the importance of an informed public in the successful operation of democratic government, is greatly appreciated by the public and the press. The people are informed on what is going on and the press is able to get reliable and complete municipal news with minimum effort and cost. Without a central news source, the press too frequently cannot get information from individual municipal departments because the fellows down the line are afraid to say anything they feel the top officials might resent. And the fellows at the top, who may be informed, aren't available and don't always delegate the authority to speak.

The failure of municipalities to provide central public relations departments and to use public relations to further their programs is caused to a great extent by their fear that the public and the press would react unfavorably toward such an effort. Nothing could be further from the truth. For example, the great newspapers and other communications media in the metropolitan New York-New Jersey area have told me that they would welcome other municipal public relations offices that would work under the same principles that guide the Port Authority public relations program, which is conducted through a central public relations department.

Public relations in the Port Authority is respected as a top level responsibility. The director at all times is aware of policy and participates in its formation. Her statements are accepted by communications media as official and informed. As a result, all queries flow through her office, not on a "must" basis, but because the availability of a single, authoritative information source is convenient and reliable. Under no circumstances, however, would anyone be blocked from direct contact with the commissioners or staff. In the seventeen years that I have been with the Port Authority I do not recall a single kickback on a story or on an inquiry. Such reliable information service is invaluable to the public and press, and they are all for it.

In a recent book, *MODERN TRAFFIC CONTROL*, its author, Joseph C. Ingraham of the *NEW YORK TIMES*, said: "The best way to get cooperation is to keep the public informed. In The Port of New York Authority, anything that might possibly interest any community in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region is grist for the agency's mill and is promptly reported to newspapers and other communications media." Mr. Ingraham



was referring particularly to the fact that he found in other agencies no set-up similar to that which serves him in his capacity as a reporter covering the Port Authority.

Port Authority line and staff departments are similar to the various departments of a city government. Our facilities and services are widespread and complex and are used by many millions of people. Our public relations function is not simplified by the fact that the Port District comprises the metropolitan areas of New York and New Jersey and includes some 200 municipalities.

I don't want to take up your time with detail on the various methods which may be used in developing a two-way public relations program for listening to the people and telling the story of municipal government. If you should decide to carry on a full public relations program you will, in any event, hire an expert to attend to the techniques and mechanics of the job. But, in brief, I should like to refer to a few of the tried and true procedures.

You will want to develop to the fullest the free opportunities presented by public addresses on municipal affairs and community meetings and forums, for gaining the support of civic organizations and the loyalty of fellow officials and employees. And another free item — there is no more important personality than Mr. John Q. Citizen when he goes to City Hall. Treat him respectfully, cordially and with sincerity, please.

Local public relations programs should feature the release of news. This, of course, is one of the most important phases of a municipal public relations program, as I have indicated before. And naturally, there are great public relations benefits to be found, provided your budget permits, in the fullest possible use of radio, advertising, movies and exhibits, simply written and illustrated annual reports and other reports, promotional brochures, material for schools and the like.

In the past seventeen years there have been released by the Port Authority more than 3,500 written stories. We use every possible news peg to keep the people informed on our public works and services. When appropriate, they have been accompanied by illustrations, maps, graphs and the like. They have anticipated all questions that might occur to an alert reporter. Press conferences have been held only when stories were related to major announcements and required such handling. During this period more than 76,600 stories have appeared in daily papers and trade journals.

We make available to editorial writers the type of service we provide for reporters. Thus, editors are able to obtain reliable background information quickly for use in determining policy. I might add that the

great newspapers in both states, and I refer to some 45 dailies, almost without exception have supported Port Authority policies. During the past seventeen years we have been supported by about 5,375 editorials, most of them on controversial subjects. Don't forget that the editor of the local paper is just as interested in the welfare of your community as you are. If you are quite sure that what you are doing is in the public interest, and if you tell him your story, he will be eager to help.

And now, you may be interested in a brief rundown of the Port Authority story. As you know, the Port Authority is the self-supporting corporate agency of the States of New Jersey and New York. Operating without burden to the taxpayer, it was created in 1921 by treaty between the two states to deal with the planning and development of terminal and transportation facilities, and to improve and protect the commerce of the Port District.

Port Authority commissioners, six from each state, are appointed by the Governors of New Jersey and New York. They serve without pay for terms of six years. The Executive Director, Austin J. Tobin, heads a staff of about 5,000. Our investment in twenty-two public land, sea and air terminal and transportation facilities at present adds up to more than a billion dollars and in about five years is expected to total some \$ 1.5 billion.

And now, permit me to utilize a case history of a municipal public relations problem and the Port Authority's procedure in handling it. It is a universal problem with which many of you must live. It represents in every respect the carrying out of the terms of my previously stated definition of good government public relations.

On October 4, 1958, the first commercial jet passenger flight took off from New York International Airport and landed at London Airport a little over six hours later. Air travelers and the entire aviation industry had been eagerly awaiting that day, and the revolution in travel that jet transportation was expected to bring. The residents of the communities neighboring New York International and the other major airports throughout the country apprehensively awaited that day, for they were concerned over the noise that they expected jet aircraft would create.

The Port Authority shared the concern of its neighbors in the vicinity of New York International Airport. Consequently, in the public interest, it has devoted considerable time and money to protecting these communities. Its efforts contributed to a major degree toward the development of a noise suppressor by aircraft manufacturers. It also instituted a valuable scientific study of jet noise. The use of suppressors, together with certain flight procedures indicated by the noise tests, enabled the Port Authority to announce on October 4, 1958 that the Comet IV

and the Boeing 707 jets could operate at New York International Airport under specified conditions without subjecting neighboring communities to intolerable noise. These conditions carry out long-standing Port Authority policy that the residents of communities in the vicinity of the airports must be protected.

In 1951, when the present commercial jet aircraft were still being designed, the Port Authority Board of Commissioners adopted a regulation that is still in force which states, "no jet or turbo-prop aircraft may land or take off at an air terminal without permission." A year later the then Chairman of the Port Authority, speaking at the dedication of a control tower, said: "It would be just as useless to design planes that cannot be operated into and out of metropolitan airports because of excessive noise or performance characteristics as it would be to design planes that cannot fly. Aircraft manufacturers have solved the problems related to safety, efficiency and speed of their planes. They must and they will solve these new challenges."

During 1953 and 1954 our Chairman made public statements and our Executive Director and other members of the Port Authority staff made a number of speeches to aviation groups emphasizing the seriousness of the jet noise problem, particularly in the metropolitan New York area. As far back as 1954 and 1955 there were talks on this subject to the Society of Automotive Engineers and Institute of Aeronautical Sciences chapters in Seattle and in Los Angeles. The audiences included many of the designers, engineers and top executives involved in the manufacture of jet aircraft.

The Port Authority's policy regarding the use of its airports by jets attracted world-wide attention when the DeHavilland Aircraft Company requested permission for use of New York International Airport by one of the early unsuppressed models of the Comet aircraft, which was making its first visit to this country. The Port Authority refused such permission because of the exterior noise level of the aircraft. Not long afterwards, Boeing also was refused permission to come into New York International Airport with the unsuppressed prototype of its jet transport, on its first transcontinental trip.

The Port Authority's policy received considerable public attention again in October of 1955 when Pan American announced the first order for commercial jet aircraft. The then Chairman of the Port Authority issued the following statement:

"The Port Authority assumes that Pan American would require from the manufacturers specifications which would assure that these aircraft could operate to and from New York International

Airport without excessive noise characteristics that would be intolerable to the airport's neighbors. If Pan American has such assurances, the Port Authority, of course, is delighted that this airline has been able to effect this forward step in the progress of air transportation."

The Chairman reiterated the stand which the Port Authority had taken in 1951 and in 1952 and said, "The Port Authority's position has not changed."

At the same time, the Port Authority prepared to cope constructively with the jet age noise problem. To this end it retained an outstanding acoustical engineering firm to devise methods of measuring and evaluating aircraft noise so that the Port Authority would have a sound scientific basis for its policy on jet operations.

By this time the Port Authority's stand, and similar stands taken by other airport operators elsewhere in the world, began to have some effect. The airlines moved to require the manufacturers to eliminate some of the noise at the source. Boeing and Douglas launched extensive and costly research programs in this country, and similar programs were undertaken in England to develop jet noise suppressors.

The Port Authority cannot take sole credit for this development, but it is a fact that our unwavering stand helped to bring about the practical interest in this problem which led to the development of noise suppressors. The suppressors on the Boeing 707, for example, represent an investment of well over \$10,000,000 in research, development and testing. Similar investments have been made by Douglas, Convair, Lockheed and DeHavilland. They also represent large expenditures by the airlines.

Our consultants, after determining the comparability of jet and piston engine aircraft noise, developed a series of formulae which would enable them to measure aircraft noises in terms of the way they would be heard by the human ear. They then coined the phrase "Perceived Noise Decibels" to define the relative values of noise as heard by the human ear as compared with the "naked" decibel meter measurement, which is a mechanical measurement of the sound pressure level of noise.

This new concept of noise measurement meant that a jet plane, in order to be rated as equal to a piston engine plane in *Perceived Noise Decibels* (or human rating), would actually have to be a number of decibels *lower* in its actual noise output than the piston engine aircraft.

The 375-page reports on the Comet IV and the Boeing 707 established that these jet aircraft could be operated at the airport under certain conditions and still be tolerable to the communities around the airport.

It then became necessary for our engineers, in conjunction with airline operations people and acoustical experts, to determine conditions for the use of our airports by jets which would keep their noise level as heard in the communities down to a tolerable level. Incidentally, it remained for the Director of Public Relations to reduce these technical reports to a brief, non-technical news release.

Thereafter, Pan American Airways requested permission to operate the Boeing 707 at New York International Airport on a provisional basis. Its request set forth conditions relating to the use at the airport by its jet aircraft intended to minimize the effects of noise. Both the Boeing 707 and the Comet IV performed trial flights to and from New York International Airport under these controlled conditions. Port Authority representatives, including the Director of Public Relations, closely observed the flights. The procedures first suggested by Pan American served as the basis for the conditions under which the Port Authority granted permission for the first regularly scheduled jet operations at New York International Airport.

We believe that the observance of our noise regulations by the airlines operating jet aircraft at New York International permit the accomplishment of the dual objectives of meeting the needs of air commerce in the metropolitan area and the rights of the airport's neighbors to be free of intolerable noise conditions in their homes.

This, of course, brings us back to the basic fact that the full story must be one of good performance if we are to have good public relations. The jet noise problem left to itself would not generate favorable stories for the airport operator. But we started with a basically sound policy that our airport neighbors must be protected from unreasonable noise. We saw that the community leaders and the newspapers were kept informed of our policy and our actions. In an editorial headed "The Port Authority Is on the Ball," the LONG ISLAND STAR-JOURNAL in its discussion of the jet noise problem ends with this paragraph:

"The Port Authority in this matter represents the public in the areas affected and the public is lined up with the Port Authority's side..... solidly and gratefully."



*Dr. H. J. Vogel tells about  
Munich's Public Relations  
program.*

# TASKS, ORGANIZATION AND METHODS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

## PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES IN MUNICH

by

DR. HANS-JOCHEN VOGEL

*Lord-Mayor of Munich, Germany*

I have been asked to make a few brief remarks on the tasks, the organization and the methods of public relations in the field of local government. I think I can do this best by dealing with a concrete case which may serve to illustrate two things: first, what the public relations tasks of a big city in West Germany are, and second, how that city has organized its activities to accomplish these tasks.

My report or description may suggest comparisons with conditions in other cities and may lead to an examination of the degree to which present-day practice of public relations work is in keeping with those ideals which were presented to us so impressively in the previous two papers. I hope you will pardon me for selecting my own town, the City of Munich, as that concrete example. I am all the more confident of your indulgence, because I would undoubtedly offend the principles of present-day public relations if I neglected this opportunity to mention before this international audience the name of my city and to make it clear that Munich is not only a place where beer is drunk and the Oktoberfest is held.

As regards the scope of this work which we are doing in Munich, we have to distinguish between two spheres of influence: outside and inside the administration of our town.

Publicity intended for the sphere outside the framework of our city administration is, of course, aimed in the first place at our own citizens. In that connection we consider it our foremost duty to inform our citizens of all essential facts and problems, of all intentions and measures of the municipality in a fair and objective manner and in as much detail as possible. This constant flow of information enables our citizens to form for themselves an idea of how we discharge our official duties in the interests of the city, and to exert their right of control, a right that is not limited to election day. As far as that responsibility goes, we are only performing a duty which we have in common with all who have been entrusted with a similar mission and which can be questioned only when an administration does not derive its right of existence from free elections.

However, we do not wish merely to inform our citizenry. We also want to bring about certain attitudes and specific reactions. For instance, in our public relations work we try to stimulate and encourage the individual citizen to suggest improvements. We do not consider ourselves omniscient, and we believe that the intelligence and the expert knowledge of our citizens must aid us in finding the best possible solution for a given problem. We also want to secure the understanding approval of the citizenry for measures which have been decided upon. By making it clear to our people why a certain step has been taken we wish to convince them that this step was reasonable and in the public interest. We attach importance to that conviction because in many cases it depends on the attitude of our citizens whether a measure can be carried into effect easily and smoothly or entails considerable waste of strength and administrative efforts. And finally, we deem it necessary, in connection with important questions, to mobilize public opinion in our city in order to overcome more rapidly unjustifiable and selfish interests which may prevent, for example, large-scale planning from being carried into effect.

A fate which I think Munich shares with practically all cities in the world is its constant dependence on aid from the Federal Republic and the state government; this is especially evident in connection with the apportionment of the various taxes, with donations or grants, and with the definition of the spheres of jurisdiction of municipalities in relation to those of the state. What we do in the way of public relations is also intended to influence decisions concerning these matters, either by information furnished those who make them, or by influencing public opinion within Bavaria or the Federal Republic of Germany. As regards the latter, our influence is likely to be successful only if all cities join efforts and if the initiative is taken by their head organizations. We therefore try to take the initiative and to do what we can, as one of the largest cities in our country, to carry it into effect. By way of illustration, may I mention a flying press conference which a few weeks ago enabled 50 journalists to visit in four days eight big cities in West Germany and to acquaint the general public throughout West Germany with the traffic problems of our cities.

As regards the scope of our activities within the framework of our city administration, we are anxious to enable all departments of our city to acquaint the general public with their work as effectively as possible. To attain that end, we gather information and prepare that information for release and presentation to the public. We also advise all departments and offices of our city administration constantly on suitable methods of publicity. We believe that a measure to be taken by the city has to be preceded by certain considerations as to when, how, and by whom this measure should be brought to the attention of the public. Furthermore, the



drafts of resolutions to be passed by the city council in connection with such measures should be formulated in a manner which can be understood not only by a limited number of experts, but also by the average citizen. An additional task to be dealt with sooner or later in our city will be opinion polling. The results of these polls will be most helpful for our city administration in properly evaluating what, in the opinion of our citizens, are the relatively greatest hardships for them and the remedial measures which they, therefore, consider especially urgent.

As regards the organizational aspects of our public relations work in Munich, we have concentrated this work in a Press and Information Office. This office is under the direct jurisdiction of me, as Oberbürgermeister, or Lord Mayor, a fact which ensures both close contacts with all other departments of the city administration and the necessary attention to its suggestions and wishes. The city council, to which our Municipal Constitution reserves the right of decision in matters of major importance, exerts its influence in a twofold way; by appropriating funds once a year and by deciding on all personnel problems of the information office. Prior to major decisions, a sub-committee of the city council, composed of members of the political parties represented in our council, is consulted.

The staff of this office, including typists and auxiliary personnel, consists of 10 employees. Both the head of this office and his deputy are civil servants, career men who previously worked in several other departments of our city administration; meanwhile they have acquired a reasonable amount of expert knowledge in their present positions. The funds appropriated to this office for 1961 total 525,000 DM (roughly \$ 100,000 American currency), which is 0.65 % of the total budget of the City of Munich, or 0.47 DM (\$ 0.12) per capita of the Munich population. Of that total, 133,000 DM are personnel costs and 392,000 DM are accounted for by other costs.

Professional public relations experts are called in when needed, for example, to prepare brochures, write texts and give expert opinion. In addition, we have recently secured, on the basis of a contract and in an advisory capacity, the services of a public relations specialist.

I know only too well that the work we are doing in Munich in the field of public relations could be considerably improved, but I hope that the statements I have made, and which I wish to supplement with an itemized summary of the most important measures taken last year, will have conveyed to you the impression that we are fully aware of the extraordinary importance of public relations. We believe that two issues are at stake: the cause of cities and of their self-government and the

cause of democracy. Aldous Huxley was right in stating that, "The continued existence of democracy depends on the ability of many men to take sufficiently informed, realistic decisions". Democracy in our country is not very old as yet and is in need of constant consolidation. It is precisely for this reason that we of the younger generation take that Huxley statement, and public relations in general, extremely seriously.

SUMMARY of the most important measures in the way of public relations taken by the City of Munich, Germany, in 1960/61.

## I. Measures with personal contacts between citizens and city officials

### 1. *"Open House"*

Every year the city affords its citizens an opportunity of visiting on a certain day the facilities of a wide variety of municipal institutions, utilities and services. City officials of the respective departments serve as guides and furnish explanations. To add variety, special events, little exhibitions, concerts by bands formed from personnel of the city's streetcar service or police force, and matinees featuring documentaries are included in the programs of such "Open Days".

In 1960 the total number of visitors amounted to more than 100,000.

### 2. *Town Meetings*

On the basis of a provision of the Municipal Constitution a town meeting is held every year in each one of the 39 districts of Munich. In these meetings problems, both limited to the respective districts and concerning the city as a whole, are discussed and films are shown. As from 1960, every meeting of this nature has been and will be presided over by the Lord Mayor or one of Munich's two Deputy Mayors.

Attendance at these meetings varies from 200 to 800 citizens.

### 3. *Better Orientation of the city's 30,000 employees*

A constant flow of information to the city's personnel (including 30,000 civil servants, employees and workers) is intended to create "good will" among wide sections of the local population whose work necessitates especially close association with the city government.

### 4. *Lectures in Unions and Clubs*

e.g. intended for trade union representatives, for the staffs of big plants, or at the local Press Club.

These appeal to and reach wide sections of the citizenry.

## II. Measures without personal contacts

### A. Measures taken by the city alone

#### 1. Exhibitions

A permanent exposition "München baut" (Building Activities in Munich) will acquaint its visitors, by models and plans, with the city's intentions in the field of above ground and underground structures. Arrangements are being made for another exhibition to deal with social welfare activities sponsored by the city ("Die soziale Tätigkeit der Stadt").

#### 2. Brochures and other publications

##### a. A folder dealing with the city's budget

is distributed every year to all households within Munich (365,000 copies). This brochure contains a summary of the city's budget and an account of accomplishments in the past fiscal year.

##### b. A series of folders "München im Blickpunkt"

focuses attention on special problems or activities, such as schools: "Vom ABC zum Abitur" (From the Primer to the Leaving Examination), or youth work: "Jugend in der Groszstadt" (Youth in a Big City).

##### c. Publications of a general nature

e.g. the "Handbuch des Münchner Stadtrats" (Manual of the Munich City Council) containing information about the political composition of the city council and including biographies of the mayors and all council members.

##### d. Memoranda

e.g. on Munich's traffic problem.

##### e. Folders and handbills

Printed on special occasions or when needed, and distributed only among persons interested or concerned, e.g. folders in foreign languages containing tourist information about Munich in general or the Oktoberfest in particular; hints for drivers; information on the registration of school children.

f. *Posters*

These mostly form part of major drives and are put at places frequented or passed by many persons and inside streetcars.

g. *Advertisements in dailies and special periodicals*

e.g. in traffic safety drives, or to explain the necessity of higher fees and fares.

An obituary notice filling half a page was inserted in Munich dailies after the Munich air crash of December 1960.

h. *Publication of a municipal gazette*

containing statutes, municipal regulations or announcements by the city, either of an official nature or important in any other sense.

3. *Motion pictures*

A series of short films, presented as trailers by many cinemas, reach a great percentage of the Munich population. Films of this nature deal with the construction of schools, with the hospitals run by the city and with city-sponsored youth work. Another picture dealing with the city's public libraries is being prepared.

Furthermore, documentaries have been produced which deal with subjects such as the city's firefighting service, the wholesale market for fruit and vegetables, the street cleaning service, the waterworks, and with traffic safety. These documentaries are being shown in schools, on days of "Open House", at public matinees, as parts of normal cinema programs, and to audiences otherwise interested in the respective subjects.

B. *Measures aided by news media*

1. *Press*

a. *Constant information to the press*

Information is furnished and material provided on the activities of the city, on meetings of the city council and of its sub-committees. Releases and announcements are handed out and subjects for reports and articles (for which a special archive is available at the city's press office) are suggested.

The "Münchner Rathaus-Umschau", a bulletin with press releases on subjects of topical importance, is published at

regular intervals. Particularly important or complex problems are dealt with in special issues.

"Treffpunkt München" (Rendez-vous in Munich), a supplement to the "Münchener Rathaus-Umschau", is intended to attract tourists to Munich.

Letters received from readers and concerning municipal problems or interests are answered as promptly as possible.

b. *Occasional events*

Press conferences are held only in connection with important questions. Guided tours and visits are given to enable the press to acquaint themselves in detail with municipal installations. On-the-spot inspections of projects and demonstrations of performance are contributing towards better understanding and evaluation of the city's problems and necessary decisions.

c. *Close contacts with press media*

The "Münchener Stadtanzeiger", a weekly supplement to a local daily, reports in detail on all municipal problems. It contains, in particular, verbatim extracts from debates in meetings of the city council or of its sub-committees. Cooperation with this weekly is especially close and follows rules and patterns mutually agreed upon.

"Münchener Leben", a magazine published monthly and dealing mainly with cultural problems, is subsidized by the city. In every issue several pages are reserved to the city for illustrated articles in which city officials comment on problems of special importance or urgency.

2. *Newsreel, Radio and Television*

are kept posted in the same manner as the press. In particular, their attention is drawn to events sponsored by or concerning the city which these news media may find especially worthwhile to record and broadcast.

# PUBLIC RELATIONS OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES

by

LEE S. CORTER

*Assistant Professor of Political Science, Pennsylvania State University*

\*

It has been said that good government is a product of three factors: good tools, good men in public office and public support and guidance. As for the good tools, we must consider whether the governmental machinery is set up in the best way to do the job that is required. We must ask ourselves, too, if the organization is streamlined to the point where action can result without too much confusion, where people can get to see those in power and where the people in power can carry out their jobs without endless delays. The second factor, good men, has two aspects, the first of which is persuading qualified people to seek election to public offices. And hand in hand with this goes the education of the voting public to select those candidates who are qualified and with whom the voters will be satisfied during the candidates' terms of office. The final factor, public support and guidance, is the element which enables government to reach its highest potential, from the adoption of a good charter, to the acceptance of needed laws, to the provision of necessary services.

Thus, in local government, the objective of our public relations is to get sympathetic support from the public for our programs so that the things we know are well conceived and well organized will be accepted, rather than hindered or opposed by the people who have failed to understand either our goals or our methods. The question, of course, is how do we get this sympathetic support? A colleague of mine has stated that "good government is the best public relations." This may be true, but sometimes even good government has its troubles. I like better to think of public relations as "doing a good job and getting credit for it." In light of this definition and with the habit in this country of alphabetizing government agencies and tools, with the result that public relations is commonly known as P.R., we can also take these two letters to mean Performance and Recognition, or as I have just stated, doing a good job and getting credit for it.

The question then is: how can we make certain that in our everyday actions our good job in government is recognized and appreciated? I think we must get down to the basic element, which is people, for to me public relations are human relations and human relations always begin with oneself. Thus, I think that a municipal official's public relations consist of every contact he or she makes with anybody, anywhere at

any time. And every contact that he makes arouses some opinion, some positive or negative view, some reaction not only to himself but to the institution he represents.

The most obvious implication of public relations, therefore, is communication. And the other side of the coin is interpretation. You must tell your municipal story over and over and in as many intriguing ways as you can. You must get the public interested in what the local government is doing for them and for the betterment of the community as a whole. You cannot arouse any lasting interest in people unless they know what it is you are doing and what you are trying to accomplish. There is an expression common among the Pennsylvania German people which states that "People are frequently down on what they are not up on." Translated into the field of local government this means that people, when in doubt, almost always vote "no." Therefore, the municipal government must continually communicate and continually interpret in order to accomplish its stated goals.

Although public relations — which is the conscious, official use of practical methods expertly applied to produce a fully informed, understanding, active citizen interest in what local government is trying to do — is now called a science, it is anything but new. Rather are we today giving it a new emphasis because of the changing relationship between the citizens and their government. With today's mass communication and mass education, the relationship between the public and its government can no longer be on a casual basis. Furthermore, the cost of public services have risen to new heights and if people are to pay the new costs demanded of them they want to have a full understanding of the use to which this money will be put. And finally, today people want to know what their government is doing and they want to participate. They insist on being heard and they call their government to account for its actions. So despite the fact that in our urbanized world of today relationships are becoming increasingly impersonal and indirect, the government that wants to see its policies put into effect makes a great effort to keep open the channels of communication and contact with the public so that they know what their government is thinking and the government is aware of its public's interests and needs.

Briefly listed, some of the problems and issues which face public relations in government today are: How should it be organized? Is public relations a managerial function? Should it be institutionalized to the extent that there is a large department of specialists doing the job exclusively? Or should it be specialized and decentralized in the various departments? There is always the danger that if this function is overspecialized and



becomes too bureaucratic it runs the risk of being considered a means of propaganda and people become suspicious that the government is trying to put something over on them.

Another problem is: How do we make those municipal employees who have extensive contacts with the public more conscious of the importance of public relations? A third area of concern is the establishment of proper relationships with the press.

I should like to close by saying that the cause which we serve, "grass roots democracy", or keeping the power of decision close to the people, is one that is very worthwhile, but one which also requires a great amount of effort. Perhaps more important is that it requires much enthusiasm, enthusiasm which is death to doubt, dumb to discouragement, blind to impossibility, enthusiasm which cannot be bought or taught but, if sought, can be caught.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES AND MEANS

by

ABE S. ROSEN

*Deputy City Representative, Philadelphia*

A sound public relations philosophy flows from an attitude and spirit of decency and forthright qualities of character. Public relations is more than just saying things that people like. It is doing things that people know are right. Public relations is not only a philosophy, but it is also a technique of communications through which the public learns the aims and accomplishments of an organization. Public relations should occupy a key position in your efforts to mould sound public opinion. Justification for municipal public relations rests on two premises: a democratic government is obligated to report to its people, and effective administration requires citizen participation and support.

There are six generally agreed upon objectives of municipal public relations:

1. to provide reliable information for the public seeking to make an intelligent decision;
2. to keep Mr. Citizen informed of services and functions provided so that he may participate and get full benefit from these services;
3. to give the public useable devices for relaying news and opinions to the administrator without employing intermediaries;
4. to interpret public opinion to agencies in order that regulations be realistic and acceptable;
5. to crystallize public sentiment and convince the citizenry of the need for administrative rules and assist them in understanding these rules;
6. to build a reservoir of support which may be tapped when needed.

A city is never any better than citizens think it is. What the people think of their town determines what they are willing to do for it, and the strength of any community rests with an informed and active public. In the past, a few city officials have operated on the assumption that governmental efficiency and economy are self-evident virtues which ultimately will be recognized and rewarded by a grateful public. There is another ingredient, however, which must be added to this criteria before progress in the city can be obtained. The people must know what their city is doing and what it plans to do. In short, public support is as essential

to good government as efficiency and economy. Creating public understanding for city policies and actions is one of the city's newest recognized functions. City officials are becoming aware that they must sell good government if an active citizenry is to be created.

It is easy in talking about public relations, and municipal public relations particularly, to start and stop with press relations and publicity in the newspapers. However, we all know that public relations encompasses much, much more, particularly as it applies to municipal government. It is not only getting news into the paper, the statements on the plans and progress and problems of the city government, but it is also the day-to-day behavior of every single person in the city government. It is the reliability of the garbage collection, the frequency of it, the action of the policemen. It is the way the secretaries and clerks answer the telephone and how they treat the people when they come to the counter. And it is even being good neighbors with the people who live near City Hall.

While actions and the service and the behavior of city officials and the city government as an entity are very important, the telling of that story seems to be the concept that most people have of what is public relations. While most cities do a tremendously good job for their people, I think that one of the major weaknesses of municipal government in the United States is the failure of those cities to tell their story adequately to the public. That story should be told in many, many ways. Small cities, boroughs or townships cannot be expected to undertake as ambitious a program as that which we have in Philadelphia, or which so many other cities may have. But there are a great number of things that a well-trained administrative system or city manager could do within the limits of the budget.

It is extremely important for government officials, first of all, to adopt a positive attitude towards the public's right to know. Many states in our country today are governed by such a law; but it is not something that should be regulated by legislation, it should be administered through the proper attitude. We in Philadelphia call it a "goldfish bowl operation." You can see in and you can see out. Most people prefer the term "open door policy." Regardless of the terminology used, being frank and honest are two traits every public official should have. Naturally, timing sometimes plays an important role in program development, but if the public official realizes his responsibilities to the public he will rarely have difficulty with the communications media. It is sound business practice, we find, to spend up to 1 % of your total budget for informational or public relations services.

While it is perhaps the most consistent of all media, nevertheless newspapers have their limitations. A typical reader spends 20 minutes reading

$\frac{1}{5}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the editorial comment of his newspaper. Thus it is a mistake to assume publicity in the press is publicly received by all readers. As important and basic as newspapers are to publicity programs, they cannot carry the information task alone. The press must be used in close coordination with other channels of communications. There are scores of techniques, other than the daily or weekly newspapers and the radio-t.v. media, through which your story may be told. Among those are the annual report, a monthly newsletter, the employees' bulletin board, mail flyers with bills, movies, slides and many other very effective methods of reaching the public.

Of these, perhaps the most universal effort here in the U.S. is the annual report. But merely putting out the financial report for the sake of meeting legal requirements is not enough. A report should be graphic, interesting and above all available to the public. It should be simple and understandable. It need not be expensive, but it should tell a full, honest story. Many communities have found that publishing such a report in the local newspaper has solved distribution problems and at the same time cut the cost of a fancy but hard to circulate presentation. Many communities take advantage of having large industrial plants in the area. Industry today, trying to be a good neighbor, is anxious to participate in community activities. The industrial plants, staffed with professional public relations people, help in the production of these reports by assisting in writing them as well as applying professional techniques for presentation and production. The result is a professional report and no extra cost to the taxpayer. In some instances, these industries defray the complete costs of the report through institutional advertising.

Some communities have gone one step beyond the written report. They are now presenting the report by audio-visual means. To slides or one of the cheapest methods of photography they add a synchronized tape or recorded message, and audiences large or small can see progress in the making. One of our southern cities puts out a simple publication bi-monthly. In a concise, easy to read fashion this newsletter digests governmental action, past, present and future. It goes to every household and keeps them informed.

There are many effective ways of expanding programs to all the citizens of the community, be it the young ones such as newspaper boys, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and school children, or the older folks connected with such organizations as Rotary, Kiwanis or the Chamber of Commerce. There are hundreds of people at your disposal ready to work for you. Nor can administration be successful without volunteer citizen support and help; citizens should know they are a part of the government.

It is just as important for government to provide the impetus for many activities in the city as it is for government to provide such basic services

as water, police and fire protection, recreation facilities, health and welfare. Government officials should be in the forefront of community drives and should support and help programs, city-to-city exchanges and all kinds of extra events, such as festivals and the like. It should support fire prevention programs, traffic safety projects, clean city events and all those that go towards making a city progressive and beautiful. Most of all, it is a governmental responsibility to give its citizens a community with an image, one which they will support and appreciate. None of these can be achieved without a preconceived, thoughtful public relations program.

The other day one of our colleagues here said that public relations is bunk. He did not like a handout. If public relations is the science of informing the public in order to create public reaction, it is as necessary to government as are engineering, law, accounting etc. But it requires more than just a theoretical approach. It must be handled with deftness, common sense and with craftsmanship. Its practice is more than just fancy phrases. The handout of press releases should not be the means to an end; it should be a fully developed piece of information. It is something that no public official should hide behind, but concerning which he should be ready to answer any questions. A press release is most important when highly technical facts are being released.

Our colleague also noted that newspapers are interested primarily in the sensational. That is quite true. Therefore, a greater need for a well-rounded public relations program should either offset or balance out results of these headlines. In my estimation, it is important to a public relations director to be on a policy-making level, not be one who is merely asked to implement a program. Many tactical errors can be corrected before they are made if the public relations person is in on planning. Today public relations plays a major and dominant role in industry. Can government, particularly grass roots government, afford to be far behind?

## DISCUSSION.

\*

Participants in the question and answer and discussion period following the presentation of the speeches were O. Cunha, Brazil; M. Hedges, Great Britain; Prof. A. Kleijn, Netherlands; Mrs. M. Block, Philippine Islands; W. Dacey, Great Britain; M. Fernandez, Brazil; Sir Peter Hutchinson, Great Britain; Dr. Eva Aronfreed, U.S.A.; Mrs. N. Combellack, U.S.A.; W. Street, Canada; Dr. Vu-Quoc-Thong, Vietnam; Ngadjijo Prodjo, Indonesia; Representative of Municipality of Lomos de Zamorra, Argentina; H. Donnenberg, Austria; S. Temple, U.S.A.; P. Lewis, Union of South Africa; Representative from Guatemala; A. Schauder, Union of South Africa; R. B. Stucke, Great Britain.

Although it was emphasized by the speakers that public relations should not be equated with press relations, it is nevertheless true that one of the main channels of communication used by local governments to publicize their goals and activities is the press. In view of this fact, there is much concern among local government officials with this relationship, and vice-versa, a concern which was clearly discernible in the discussion period. From the standpoint of the local government, the desire was that the press temper its freedom with responsibility; from the side of the press the wish was expressed that the news handout not be used to conceal government activities and that local officials be accessible to representatives of the major news media.

**Prof. Corter** stated that it was his opinion that difficulties arise because government officials and representatives of the press know too little about the problems confronting one another. Confidence can be developed if officials are frank and demonstrate that the press has much to gain if it handles public information in a trustworthy way. He suggested that occasional briefings for reporters and newscasters and the giving of background information, illustrations to describe activities and enough details to clarify unfamiliar points of information, might go a long way toward improving relations between the government and the press.

On the other hand, pointed out **Mr. Dacey**, the press has the responsibility of sending to council and committee meetings not just the junior reporters, but reporters who are competent to interpret the discussions to which they listen. Too often the accounts of meetings are scarcely recognizable by those who participated. Added to this is the situation that the press is largely monopolistic and largely inclined to present the sensational rather than efficient performance and the positive aspects of a government program. A final criticism that can be levied against the press is that even an accurate and responsible story may be printed under a misleading and even harmful headline. However, despite these criticisms, **Mr. Dacey** emphasized, it is still

important that the press have access to government officials and to governmental information.

The freedom of the press was heartily concurred in by **Mr. Fernandez** and **Dr. Vogel**. The latter, in answer to a question as to whether local government informs the press or whether the press influences and directs the government, emphasized that the relationship must be two-sided. Sometimes, he pointed out, you learn things more quickly from a newspaper than you do within the administration itself. The important factor is that this inter-exchange exist.

One of the best ways for the local government to tell its story is to go directly to the people. **Mr. Stucke** explained that in Great Britain this necessary task is performed by the municipal councillors. Due to the large councils in his country the individual members have a close contact with their constituents, whom they meet individually and collectively in all sorts of meetings. Through these contacts the councillors can explain what the local government is doing and why and they can also explain the costs involved. In addition, exhibitions and posters help communicate the local government's intentions and report on its achievements.

**Mr. Rosen** pointed out that the same technique of going to the people can also be used in large cities with small councils. In Philadelphia, for example, at a time when confidence in the administration was shaken to the point where progressive city plans were in jeopardy, the city officials used the media of radio and television, spoke at all kinds of neighborhood and community-wide meetings and even used the technique of going out on the street corners to tell their story to the public.

A way of effectively reaching areas of the city that tended to be isolated and extremely critical of the local administration was mentioned by the representative of Lomas de Zamorra in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Here the Bureau of Culture of the municipality first reached hostile groups through music, art and the theatre, to which the response was very favorable. At the same time schools were built, roads were improved and there was a betterment of living conditions in general. As a result of all this the relationship between the city administration and these areas has become so improved that face-to-face meetings are being held and the two-way communication so necessary to local government is now a reality.

Whereas municipal public relations programs in more developed countries can use a variety of media to tell their story, the situation is different in less developed countries, and particularly where a large portion of the population is illiterate. **Mr. Prodjo** asked the speakers how they would conduct a public relations program under these

conditions and **Mr. Rosen** first answered that he thought the only way to do so would be by talking directly to the people. By ascertaining their needs and by seeing that at least the basic ones are provided, a start can be made on improving living conditions in general and in helping the people have some realization of the role government can and does play in a local community.

A specific technique for reaching illiterates was cited by a delegate from Guatemala. In that country the problem of illiteracy is further complicated by the fact that the population also includes several groups of Indians, among whom are spoken 20 different native dialects. Under these circumstances certain local administrations have focused on one important aspect of their work which vitally affects every citizen—public health. A central information office was established and teams have been sent into the field to disseminate information to the people in their own language on basic health principles, such as how to provide safe drinking water and elementary sewage systems, etc. Other local administrations have carried out public works with the cooperation and voluntary and enthusiastic personal labor of the citizens. Not only have the people actively become interested in their local government, but necessary services have thus been provided at notable savings.

By extending the system of information teams, who know the idiosyncracies of a community and can talk with the citizens at their own level, to other services a fruitful two-way relationship between the government and the people can be established, with important results.

In the less developed countries which use a system of information and working teams, the image of local government held by the citizens will depend to a large extent on the impression made by the members of the teams, individually and as a group. In the more developed countries where, instead of information teams, there is a variety of government employees with whom the public comes into contact, the principle is still the same: the institution of local government will be judged by the people by whom it is officially represented. No public relations program, therefore, can be considered well-rounded that does not help those employees who come into contact with the public realize the importance of their actions.

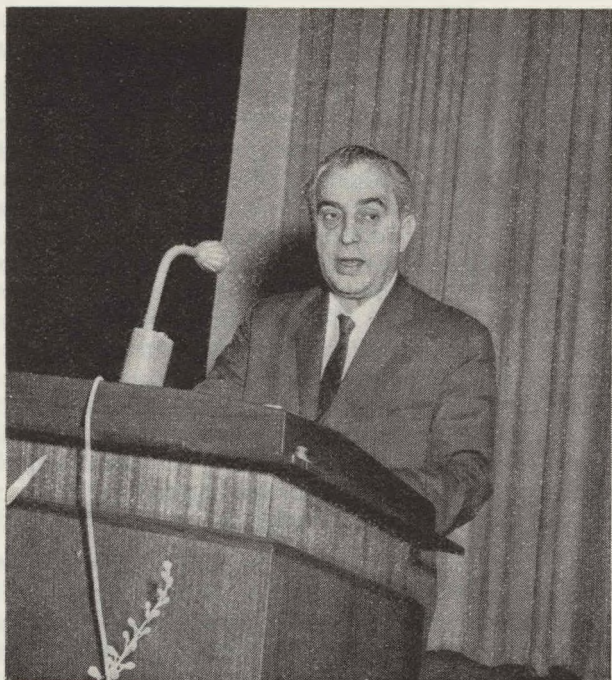
**Dr. Vogel** indicated that in Munich this is a deep concern and that steps are being taken to train and inform the municipal personnel, not only in their immediate tasks, but in local government in general. Various techniques that can be used in such "in-service training in public relations" are employee publications, workshops, seminars, periodical conferences, etc. **Mr. Rosen** added that in his city there has been established a Mayor's Information and Complaint Office to deal with the public, and the people working in this office are especially trained



in carrying out their responsibilities. Moreover, the city departments are instructed that requests from this office should be acted upon as quickly as possible. In addition there are special information desks in those departments that have a direct service contact with the public. Because the city officials consider contact with the public so important, they maintain a constant check and where they find an unsatisfactory situation, immediate action is taken.

On the whole, the discussion on public relations tended to refer to the large city where a special department with trained people has been established and a certain budget is allowed for operations. For the smaller local authority, such a set-up is impossible from a financial point of view and is often not considered necessary, because government here is much closer to the people. Of course the public must still be informed of governmental activities and plans. Sir Peter Hutchinson, pointing out that he represented rural and poor local authorities in England, mentioned that his community disseminates information in several ways. For one, reports of all acting committees are made to the local authorities every three years, at which time they are also printed in the press. Thus, information is supplied to newly elected councillors, while at the same time the public-at-large is being informed. Another method used is a demonstration tent at the annual agricultural show where each year a different department is responsible for an informative display.

Whether large or small, however, the local authority with the best public relations is the one that makes use of all its resources, from the councilmen to the local government officials and employees, to the pupils who learn about their local government in school, to the local media of mass communication. As important as these, moreover, is that councilmen and city officials have the courage to act against criticism and to act because they know that what they are doing is correct and is in the interests of their community. Sometimes these actions are proved correct only through time, but with a proper attitude, the goals of local government can and will be met.



*Dr. J. Djordjević, seminar reporter,  
gives the summary speech on  
Public Relations.*

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

by

*Prof. JOVAN DJORDJEVIC.*

*Dean of the Faculty of Law, Belgrade, and President of the Legal Council of Yugoslavia*

In the field of comparative government — and particularly in the field of comparative local government — it is rather dangerous to generalize and it is misleading to recommend patterns that might fit all circumstances. The reasons for this are quite obvious. If any generalization in this field can be made, however, it is that throughout history, down to the present time, there has been a great diversity of local government, not only in different parts of the world, but in different countries of a single continent and even within the framework of the same social structure and political system. This diversity not only affects the structure, scope and political status of the local government, but also its political importance, its functioning and its real meaning and possibilities.

Just as the law of diversity applies to local government, so also does it describe the concepts and forms of that government's public relations. Despite this fact, however, and despite the difficulties we encounter in all comparative studies of this kind, the Seminar on Public Relations has reached a general agreement concerning the meaning and importance of public relations for and in local government and has drawn a few conclusions of practical significance.

The concept of public relations is broad and rich in its substance and meaning, but it implies at least a two-way relationship between the government and the community or the citizens. This relationship is inherent in the very essence of local self-government which, in its origin and in its political substance, is a popular government. All great political thinkers, statesmen and students of politics and government have already emphasized many times and in many ways that "a popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but the prologue to a farce or to a tragedy, or perhaps to both". We may say today that it is the prologue to bureaucracy and to public apathy.

"Public sentiment is everything," said Lincoln, "with it nothing can fail, against it nothing can succeed." Not only past but present-day society as well, teaches that without popular understanding and support neither democratic nor efficient local government can be achieved. The isolated and bureaucratic government can exist, but it can never last long nor can such a government ever be a popular government.

These challenging ideas as a philosophical basis of local government and of its public relations have been a point of general agreement in this seminar. And starting from this basis many speakers have developed more precise and concrete aspects of the conditions, implications and the role of good public relations.

High quality performance, publicly supported and appreciated, might be considered as the best public relations. The local government must exercise its duties in such a way that the people know they are well performed and then local government should intelligently and modestly call attention to its activities. If it is to earn the confidence, respect and support of the people local government must be honest, sound and objective in its relationship with its citizens.

Good public relations must be informative, cooperative, stimulating and highly sensitive to public opinion. For democratic public relations is something quite different from vulgar commercial advertising, the selling of other people's ideas, the manipulation of public opinion by means of propaganda, or the mere technique of enforcing decisions made outside and against the will and the interest of the majority. But that is not all; the real role of public relations is to be a democratic method of exercising the functions of government and a new form of participation of the people in the decision-making process. It can be a powerful tool in preventing local government from sinking down in bureaucracy and in abusing power, while at the same time helping to avoid political passivity on the part of the citizens — all dangers which are facing local government in many lands.

All these considerations demonstrate that public relations is not exclusively and even not essentially a problem of the organization and techniques of publicity. On the other hand, one also cannot underestimate those organizational and technical aspects of public relations which are basic political functions and obligations of the local government.

The organizational pattern may vary and there is no perfect pattern which would be well suited to all governmental systems and every sociological and political background. With this in mind, one can foresee that in a municipality large enough to support it the need might be felt for an effective public relations program through a central public relations department headed by a competent and independent expert who is public-minded and responsible. Such an official must have an important voice in the formulation and implementation of municipal policies; under no circumstances, however, should he be used as a mere propagandist, or as a political or personal agent, or what is still worse, as a cover-up man to hide bad performance or to otherwise deceive the people.

Although this organizational pattern is still rare even in larger municipalities, the concept is sound and can give rise to different forms

of organization. And whereas it is true that the existence of an effective central public relations department may prevent conflicts in policy and errors in communications, as well as provide a responsible and convenient source of information for all kinds of communication media, it can also be used as a tool for selling out municipal policies and for manipulating the public, instead of serving it. On the other hand, however, even the most competent public relations department cannot cover up an undemocratic, irresponsible, ineffective or corrupt local government.

The techniques of public relations, which were different in historical times, are now, with the full application of modern means of communication and publicity, growing in importance and efficiency. There are all kinds of these "means and tools" — from the publications and printed reports of local government to such effective media of mass communication as the press, radio, television, motion pictures, newsreels, lectures, public appearances of local officials, etc.

Many large and rich cities in the most developed and open societies use more or less all of these and other methods of public relations. But these tools and means of communication are still out of the realm of possibility for the vast majority of municipalities throughout the world. However, both in theory and in practice, we can agree that there is no democratic and sound local government without a certain minimum of public relations. At the very least, these should include: the town hall must be a community building to which an "open door" policy is applied. Moreover, all important meetings and material of local government activities must be at the disposal of the public, including, of course, the press and other media of mass communication; all elected officials must be in continuing contact with the citizens through town meetings, press conferences, etc.; civil servants must be cooperative and serve the citizens, not control them; public interest and opinion must be considered not only as the support of, but also as one of the sources of, decision making.

All these ideas are well known and generally accepted, but they have not been respected and implemented in all municipalities and by all the officials responsible for public relations. Therefore, they must be stressed over and over again.

Finally, public relations should not be considered a one-way relationship. Without active, informed and interested citizens there can be no real and effective public relations. Public relations require also that the local government be really effective and resourceful, deciding all important matters of common interest to a community. It also requires that there be a common consensus in the community on all important issues, if not on the part of everyone, at least on that of the majority. It follows, of course, that the best public relations is a democratic local self-government as well as a democratic society at large.

**Collection Number: A1132**

**Collection Name: Patrick LEWIS Papers, 1949-1987**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

*Location:* Johannesburg

©2016

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

This collection forms part of a collection, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.