PUBLIC RELATIONS

IN THE

FIELD OF FORESTRY

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by

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In order to continue to supply the people of the United States with forest products, public agencies, private enterprizes, the public as individuals and groups, forest employees, suppliers of wood products industries, stockholders, and the people of forest communities must cooperate harmoniously to assure successful forest management and wood utilization. In order to obtain this cooperation the relations of people, most of whom will never meet, must be the best possible. This end is sought through public relations.

A public relations program is only as good as the men behind it. To achieve the maximum success a public relations program must be run by men with the necessary native and acquired characteristics.

The Division of Public Relations in the Society of American Foresters is assigned the task of spreading the best public relations methods among the professional foresters. Also the Society itself must have the best public relations possible.

Public relations is an integral part of the working program of many present-day wood-producing organizations. They
attempt to establish good relations among employees, customers,
stockholders, their suppliers, and the people of near-by communities.

It has been proven that with good public relations business is better, operations run more smoothly, and everyone is happier. Many properly informed individuals yield a helpful public.

#### CHOICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PERSONNEL

No matter how well organized and thought out a public relations program or how enlightening the facts to be presented may be, if the administrative personnel are ineffective due to improper appearance, background, mental capabilities, or personality any program will fall far short of its potential possibilities. Before exploring the actual subject of public relations, it seems proper if not essential to mention in brief, characteristics desirable in an effective public relations man from the top executive to the very important grass-roots contact man.

Appearance: Intelligent, regular and pleasing features, good posture carriage and physique, apparent health, energetic and alert, straight steady eyes, no evidence of nervousness, pleasant distinct voice and good hearing, and clean in appearance.

Background: Experience, know local territory and general forestry, reputation among local people, and apparent understanding of common courtesies.

Mental: Native intelligence, interest in work, personal attitude toward forestry, answers questions intelligently, and makes clear statements.

Personality: Pleasing, mixer and listener as well as talker.

Certain qualities that must be striven for by the public relations men are not as native in character as the majority of those listed above. Constant effort to exhibit the following traits must be maintained in public relations work: Those of highest importance are sincerity, enthusiasm, courtesy-tact, cooperativeness, poise-self reliance, initiative, punctuality, judgement, loyality, and diplomacy.

With men possessing the majority of the desirable native characteristics and practicing the traits of character most desirable, any public relations program is initiated with the best chances of success.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS

In order to better understand the thinking of presentday professional foresters who have undertaken the study of public relations, we shall now consider briefly the recommended place of the Public Relations Division in the Society of American Foresters.

First, two definitions of public relations shall be considered. From Fortune magazine comes one definition, "good performance---publicly appreciated"; from an article in the January 1950 issue of the Journal of Forestry, by Albert Arnst, comes a second definition, "bringing about a harmony of understanding between a group and the public which it serves and upon whose good will it is dependent."

The Division of Public Relations in the Society was formed for four broad purposes: (1) To permit the interchange of ideas and methods of forestry public relations between specialists and workers, (2) to help plan coordinated public relations programs, (3) to avoid duplication and speed up work, and (4) to stimulate greater effort by bringing the best methods and techniques into light.

It is felt that the best implementation of these desired purposes might be achieved (1) through the use of texts and schools to disseminate the basic methods of public relations to the members of the Society, (2) by preparing a working program for unified public relations, (3) by exchange of ideas at meetings and in news letters, and (4) by helping to avoid duplicated effort.

The Society is striving for good public relations by being recognized as a professional and impartial group. The need of a training school for men in the field of public relations is slowly being realized. Probably the chief concerns of the Society in relation to public relations are the government, community, trade opinion surveys, publicity, and sematics. Working tools used are the press, radio, films, printed material, public speaking, and professional writings.

As in many forestry public relations programs, the Society has to sell by logic an intangible item---material resources and their wise use. As previously indicated, the Society is attempting to have itself regarded as an authentic, impartial source of facts on the nation's national resources of forest and forest range. To do this an attempt is being made to reach agreement on the demonstratable facts regarding our national resources and their wise use. It is believed these facts should then be disseminated by the profession instead of by individual groups or governments, who are often accused of political motivations. The Society also wishes to be used as a clearing house for standards in forest practices.

Public relations could be greatly furthered if all noteworthy news events were featured in news items. Events like new membership in the Society or any important event in the life of an S.A.F. member should be featured. One of the main problems confronted is that foresters themselves do not realize the news-worthyness of an event as it occurs.

Another great step forward would be the use of correct and simple forest terminology. For example the term "selective cutting" has come to mean something entirely different to different groups of people, depending on the way a persons predetermined viewpoints have influenced his thinking.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS AS PRACTICED IN FORESTRY

Writing for a major pulp-and-paper corporation in the Pacific Northwest, an assistant chief forester puts his company's public relations program this way, "Our program consists mainly of participation by our supervisors in the life of the communities in which they live. We try to full requests for talks on our company's program when such talks do not interfere with our regular work and in our talks we try to explain what our company is doing in conservation and resource utilization. We also use the...and other Association materials to fill requests..."

The place of public relations in modern forestry and the reasons for its use may best be viewed by a careful study of pamphlets issued by various private and governmental organizations for public consumption. The next few paragraphs will attempt to show what ideas are being presented the public and how and why they are important.

The general themes of many of the public relations programs are quite similar. The main purpose of most private programs is to get the people near and far to feel part of a united effort, fostered by the company, to employ the best means and the greatest efforts to achieve the best results for the most people in the long run. A feeling of comradship and responsibility is fostered.

The company does not speak of itself as "the company", but rather the foresters, laborers and technicians---the family men of local communities---are shown to be the body of the organization. All the time a feeling of closeness, simplicity, and comradeship is stressed among employees, customers, stockholders, the forces of government, and the people of the communities where operations take place.

Extracts taken from a pamphlet put out by a leading forestry corporation will serve to illustrate the points already presented. At the conclusion of the pamphlet certain questions were set forth. The answers to these questions are not exact quotes, only the ideas expressed are indicated here.

"What is the prime purpose of developing tree farms?"

In the answer it was stated that, "in this way stockholders can
better see that management is looking far into the future for a
secure and profitable operation. Customers will be certain of
sustained pulp and paper products. Employees will have permanent
jobs, and communities will be stabilized." In this one answer
stockholders, customers, employees, and citizens of a community
were all assured that the company's practices were taking them
into consideration. Therefore from all angles the company hopes
to have itself taken into the best possible consideration——as
a return token of good will.

Other questions and answers were presented: "What do tree farms mean in terms of people?" Suggested were, "those who work for suppliers of wood-producing industries and yield from their labors lime rock, sulphur, machinery, transportation, longshore work, clay, petrolium products, wool, or a host of other products."

"What other products come from tree farms?" "Cascara bark, greenery, sword ferns, huckleberry bushes, and other greens all provide income for a considerable number of marginal families."

"Is(our company) interested in private woodlot forestry?"

"Definitely, yes. Small woodlot owners can augument their other incomes by properly managing their woodlots on a sustained-yield basis.

Our company is spending considerable money to revamp the wood units of its pulp and paper mills in order to facilitate the handling and and processing of wood in any form and get the fullest use from it.

We give away annually 250,000 seedling trees to employees and woodlot owners adjacent to our properaties. The small woodlot owner can be assured that his wood products will be marketed on a competative basis."

For those who oppose the cutting of trees from a conservationists viewpoint: "Why harvest mature timber?" "Many older trees which look perfectly healthy and sturdy when one glances only at the bark frequently prove to be thoroughly rotten at the core or shriveling at the top. These older trees may also be retarding the growth of sturdy younger trees which are coming up beneath the older forest cover."

"What happens to top-quality timber?" "When our logs are considered more useful for other purposes than pulp or paper, they are exchanged for logs of pulp species from some other company. Thus, today some logs from our tree farms may be going into building of homes, a church, or some fine piece of furniture."

Throughout the pamphlet certain key points are brought out such as the construction of roads for sustained harvest and fire protection, extensive fire protection organization, the reasons for thinning, methods of cutting for natural regeneration, the leaving of strips of forest alongside roads for scenic purposes (and why some strips were not left due to windthrow or fire hazard), and the leaving of water sheds which provide a pure and abundant source of community water in streams where trout fishing provides both sport and recreation for the angler.

Right now, a wide variety of forestry pamphlets is made available to the public through the efforts of men in all the various phases of forestry. A pamphlet entitled "West Coast Tree Farms" is put out by an association of lumbermen. "Keep Oregon Green" was compiled by the forest products men. For the kids, a small cartoon pamphlet entitled "A Visit to the Forest with Woody" ("Woody" being a log in animated form) stresses fire prevention and the basic purpose and operation of a tree farm. Many other publications may be obtained from the various private and governmental forestry organ emizations on request.

#### CONCLUSION

Public relations must pay off if it is to be practicable. If a logging company takes over a large tract of timber on which a community is financially dependent, without first informing the people of the company's cutting and hiring practices, and a large number of fires are set in the timber by the townspeople in as effort to feel out the company's policies, the executives of the organization have concrete evidence on which to base the expenditure of money for informing the people as to the company's policies. If then the fires stop it is proof that good public relations have paid off.

Wouldn't it be better, however, if the executives of a company would make a study of public relations and alot money for that purpose, where it was needed, before any "fires were set" by the uninformed public?

Bad or no public relations is a threat to any person or any organization dealing with bodies of people. Good public relations can only help; they never hinder.

As we can now conclude, in forestry good public relations aids an organization in a variety of ways. Employees are stimulated to better and harder work, because they see where they fit in, and they feel that they are working for themselves and their friends rather than for the "big Boss", whom they resent.

Customers, who feel part of a company's efforts and admire the work being done by a company, will take their business to that organization in preference to another "strange" company. Suppliers are more cooperative and will donate time and effort to a company in order to further a cause that they feel worthy. Stockholders will feel freer to give the "go-ahead" sign to company officials if these stockholders think the company's policies are well thought out and are of the highest quality. Governmental officials will be more cooperative with a company whose policies they understand and feel of good quality.

In summarization we might conclude: Good public relations today helps bring prosperity tomorrow.

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