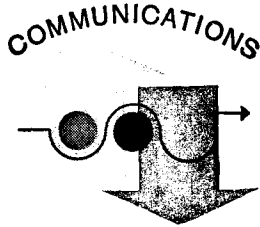


# COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Editor: RICHARD L. TOBIN



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## *Policing the Advertiser*

THE United States Department of Commerce has just published a 105-page report on self-regulation in American advertising based on material compiled by the Advertising Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Commerce, a gathering of seventeen heads of leading advertising and media groups. While the report is not an official view, Secretary Luther H. Hodges finds it a "helpful compendium of the experience in self-regulating in advertising." Since most Americans not associated with the advertising business have little or no knowledge of the extent or nature of self-regulation in advertising, it is all to the good that a public education program be given the widest possible publicity to help remedy the public's unawareness, to report what has been done so far, and to suggest what needs to be done to make self-regulation even more vigorous.

The screening and checking of advertising by the media in which it appears is the most vigorous as well as the oldest form of self-regulation. In its October 1880 issue, the *Farm Journal* published this resounding notice: "Fair Play—We believe, through careful inquiry, that all advertisements in this paper are signed by trustworthy persons, and to prove our faith by works we will make good to subscribers any loss sustained by trusting advertisers who prove to be deliberate swindlers. Rogues shall not ply their trade at the expense of our readers, who are our friends through the medium of these columns. Let this be understood by everybody now and henceforth."

The *Farm Journal's* determination to keep out of its columns rogues and swindlers and to repay reader-victims was unique in its day, when a vast majority of America's press exercised little or no restraint over advertising content. If you feel that some of the patent-medicine gibberish you hear and see nowadays on TV is emetic or, indeed, downright dangerous to the consuming public, you should fish out a nineteenth-century newspaper and look through the patent-medicine claims, which practically guaranteed a complete cure for every disease from gout to flat feet. Were any radio or TV broadcaster to put such garbage on the air today he would be hooted off by a more sophisticated audience than apparently read the Victorian press.

Self-regulatory activity has speeded up of late. The Scripps-Howard newspapers have a single Standards Department that passes on the truth and taste of all advertisements, especially medical claims, for the entire chain. In Chicago, the *Tribune* operates a comprehensive system of advertising review, supervised by a three-man board of censors, while the *Chicago Daily News* and *Sun-Times* operate through an Advertising Acceptance Committee. The *New York Times* will not accept such an advertised claim as "the finest coat we have ever seen," but permits such a statement as "the finest coat we have ever sold." An advertiser is allowed to say that here is "an outstanding value in men's footwear" but not "the outstanding value in men's footwear." Chicago newspapers recently refused to publish an ad for "free" health lectures because investigation

revealed that the "free" lectures were simply an introduction to a \$25 course on diet and food preparation, while in other markets these lectures were advertised primarily to sell a set of cookware at \$200 or more. Another ad that caused difficulty was: "Men, Women, Wanted to Grow Mushrooms." Investigation revealed that the proprietor of this company had been found guilty of mail fraud in 1940, had resumed activity in 1946, had been re-arrested in 1947, and in 1956 had been found guilty of violating the Pure Food and Drug Act, as a result of which he served eighteen months in prison.

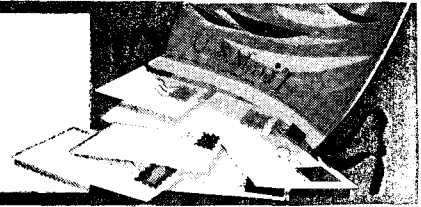
**S**TANDARDS for advertising submitted to the Detroit *News* describe the following types of material as unacceptable: "advertising in bad taste or offensive to any group on moral, religious, or discriminatory grounds"; advertising in which "copy, headline or illustration . . . states or implies conduct which by normal standards is considered morally or socially unacceptable"; advertisements proposing marriage or seeking introductions to members of the opposite sex; medical advertisements of products containing dangerous or habit-forming drugs, or using offensive or unpleasant language; mail order medical advertising; advertisements that offer homework for pay; advertisements for fortune tellers and similar practitioners; help-wanted advertisements that make extravagant or misleading offers of salary or reward. In addition, the *News* reminds advertising staff members: "It is illegal for an advertiser offering employment to advertise his own race, color, creed, or nationality, or to indicate any such preference in his prospective employee. Employer requests for job applicants to send photographs are a violation of the Michigan Fair Employment Practice Commission's regulations."

The American Newspaper Publishers Association reports that every one of its more than 870 member papers has by now set up its own standards of advertising ethics and acceptability. Since ANPA members account for 90 per cent of all newspaper advertising in the United States (as well as 90 per cent of daily circulation), the value of these standards is crystal-clear.

Any reader wishing a fuller report on the subject of self-regulation in advertising can get it by writing the U.S. Government Printing Office in Washington. The 105-page report costs 60 cents and is well worth one's time, particularly if one feels, as we do, that the public is entitled to the fullest possible protection from dangerous and improper marketing in a country where more than \$13,000,000,000 is spent each year on advertising alone.

—R.L.T.

## Letters to the Communications Editor



### Days of the "Extra!"

IN THE EDITORIAL on the Ayer Cup competition, "Trends in Typography" [SR, June 13], you commendably deplore the "jarring tendency toward flamboyance, perhaps for street sale reasons, [that] appears to be damaging many fine metropolitan front pages." Prior to the advent of radio, television, and "instant news," that sort of thing was noticeable chiefly in the "extra" editions peddled by vendors whose jargon and manner of vocal delivery usually succeeded—as intended—in mystifying rather than enlightening the man in the street. In our own day, the battle for added circulation shows little evidence that it is slackening. Nevertheless, certain publications, notably the Washington *Evening Star*, the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, and the *New York Times*, are managing to hold their own in the competition for readers in spite of (or perhaps because of) their adherence to what I'd call the time-honored rules of makeup decorum. . . .

Much is heard about America's growing sophistication—a natural by-product of educational opportunities available to the many, rather than, as formerly, to the few. Is it not somewhat paradoxical that a more subtle approach currently remains the exception rather than the rule when it comes to devising the over-all effect of front pages? Surely it's about time these "windows on the world" ceased to be fashioned solely with the thought that "he who reads may run." Harried and surrounded by personal and business problems we may well be. Even so, we can't subsist and be well informed if dependence is placed upon the often oversimplified generalities imparted by headlines. The bare bones of any news development having already been divulged by means of radio and television, editors

### The Cigarette Warning

The Federal Trade Commission has announced that cigarette manufacturers will be required to carry a warning on their package labels, beginning January 1, to the effect that cigarette smoking is dangerous to health and "may cause death from cancer and other diseases." This would be self-regulation of advertising at its finest—but also, in the opinion of most Madison Avenueurs, a hopeless and unenforceable procedure. A government agency can warn people that a product is dangerous to health, but it is unlikely that any government agency will ever be able to force a manufacturer to spend good money on his packaging or in his advertising to condemn the very thing he has to sell. Most agencies on Madison Avenue believe the FTC cannot make the regulation stick, splendid as its motives may be, and that other means will have to be found to warn smokers of their peril. —R.L.T.

would do both themselves and us a service were they to concentrate on fleshing out those ethereal skeletons.

THOMAS G. MORGANSEN.

Jackson Heights, N.Y.

### Funds for Friends

THE ARTICLE "The High Cost of Writing," by James F. Fixx [SR, June 13], is of special interest to us here at the *Friends Journal*. We always seem to be faced with the need for articles, but with no way to pay for having them written. Some of our problems might be eased if we could develop a "Friends Fund" to be used in the manner of the Beinecke and Stern funds. Could I have permission to reproduce fifty copies of this article to send to our Board of Managers and members of Friends Publishing Corporation?

BUSH CLINTON,  
Business Manager,  
*Friends Journal*.

Philadelphia, Pa.

EDITOR'S NOTE: All requests for permission to reprint articles or parts of articles from SR should be addressed to the magazine, attention Mrs. Ivy Dodd.

### Addresses for Advertisers?

IN THE SPIRIT OF American industry, why should your advertisers keep their addresses a secret? It is a disservice to their customers and to themselves. How can a customer respond to an ad to tell the company his opinions, his criticisms, his desires and/or needs regarding the advertised products? It seems to me that by barring this communication, American manufacturers are not permitting their funds spent on both advertising and product development for market acceptance to approach maximum acceptance. And I feel your editorial policy should be to campaign to get advertisers to give the company address in their ads.

RICHARD M. DAY.

Los Angeles, Calif.

### Bright Spot

WE NOTED IN THE Letters to the Communications Editor [SR, June 13] a letter from a Los Angeles lady lauding Vin Scully as a radio broadcaster for making one see so well with one's ears. We have in our locality two announcers over WGN, Chicago, who broadcast the Cubs games—Jack Quinlan and Lou Boudreau. When a home run sails out of Wrigley Field, Jack Quinlan makes us hear the plop in Lake Michigan or the crack in a windshield of a car in the parking lot. It is always gay listening, win or lose. Long may they hold their position so we can have a little fun along the way. Incidentally, your magazine is a very bright spot in our mailbox. When we finish with it, it is sent to another, even though you lose a subscription thereby!

MRS. ARTHUR N. DENSEM.

Grand Rapids, Mich.