

coffee-table publishing, expressing the general opinion of the Establishment. This attitude annoys the new entrepreneurs, in much the same way that best-selling authors react to their non-acceptance by literary critics, but it is an annoyance that must be considerably assuaged by contemplation of the annual reports.

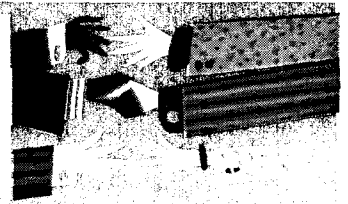
Successful and relatively recent as they are, these two big operations do not constitute the bulk of mail-order publishing by any means. There are, for example, the book clubs, led by the Book-of-the-Month Club, and similar independent mail-order enterprises on a smaller scale. Other book clubs are by-products or divisions of regular trade publishers. Doubleday, particularly, with its astonishing variety of clubs, headed by the Literary Guild, has shown what can be done with merchandising ingenuity to extract the last dollar from original publication. Other publishers, like Harper & Row, have mail-order divisions that sell some of the house's trade books by mail, but that also develop its own list of titles, usually reference, self-help, and similarly specialized books.

There is a remarkable range in mail-order selling among the regular publishers. Prentice-Hall, for example, has a wide selection of book clubs and other reader services, which it operates by mail. McGraw-Hill and Simon and Schuster are among the other leaders in the field.

Mail-order bookselling has become so successful and has grown so rapidly that some of its enthusiasts have been carried away, predicting that the day will come when all books are sold by mail. Most experts in the field, however, say that will never happen, because of built-in limitations. One is the cost of mail-order publication, including the selling itself, which makes it virtually impossible to offer many of the books now in the market at low prices. Time-Life achieves its lower price structure by mass selling of books in series. Then, too, there is a potential saturation point, where too many coupons and too many mailing pieces may result in consumer resistance. Even now there is some consumer irritation. A very small but eloquent portion of returns consists of angry replies that can be freely translated as "stop cluttering up my mailbox," or return envelopes filled with waste matter.

While mail-order books are not likely ever to take over publishing, there is good reason to believe that they are a part of the industry with the brightest of futures. In an age of specialized publishing, in magazines and newspapers as well as books, the vast market of Americans hungry for information and culture in attractively packaged dosages remains relatively untapped. The tapping process may have only begun.

Public Relations



On Being a No Man

THE CORPORATE public relations director has always had two basic jobs: interpreting his company to the public and interpreting public opinion to management. It is in the latter area that public relations men, as a whole, with a few honorable exceptions, have shown their greatest weakness.

The outstanding example of public relations practitioners failing to alert management of important shifts of public attitudes is in the Negro rebellion. The Supreme Court decision on desegregation of the schools came in 1954. Yet only in rare cases did public relations directors warn management that this would affect business. They either failed to grasp the implication of events or they did the ostrich act.

The fault, however, does not lie solely with public relations directors. Far too many chief executives act only when they feel the fire. They consider putting out the fire important, forgetting that preventing fires is not only cheaper in the long run but unquestionably wiser. Too many managers also believe that public relations' purpose is to build a false front so that behind it the corporation can operate as it deems easiest. Some managers even consider the public relations director disloyal if he warns that a certain course of action may bring unfavorable results or may be construed as not being in the public interest.

There is another problem involved here as well. Public relations directors with major corporations are likely to be in their fifties or sixties. They often have stock options that they are afraid to lose. Getting a new job at their age is not easy. They may have children at college and expensive living habits. And above all, they may have chief executives who believe that the only interpreting that should be done by a public relations department is to communicate to the public the greatness of the corporation and the marvelously infallible wisdom of top management.

The result is that in many cases the public relations director begins to parrot the boss's prejudices. He berates critics and devotes himself to special efforts in the choice of colors for a glossy brochure, or to making a new and expensive film no one will look at outside the executive offices. That he is tempted to do these things is understandable. That he should do them, however, is unforgivable if he

has any real respect for his work or for himself.

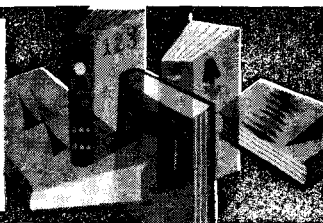
But there are managers who do not want their public relations directors to be yes men. The chairman of the board of the Bank of America, Louis B. Lundborg, is an example of the businessman who is tired of public relations men who do not understand our volatile society and whose answer to all questions is to distribute still another press release extolling the company's merits.

Says Mr. Lundborg: "It's possible that the average public relations practitioner of today might be headed straight toward the junk heap of obsolescence unless he develops some new and creative ideas about his place in our society." In a speech to the Public Relations Society of America in Denver a short time ago, Mr. Lundborg handed out some more bitter medicine directed to those who think all is well with the public relations world. Management, he told more than 1,000 public relations men, expects that they be "tough-minded," have a "healthy cynicism," have "guts," "speak out persuasively, honestly, critically," be "profit-oriented," and "recognize and predict social change." Finally, to cap it all, Mr. Lundborg told the assembly that "no public relations man is worth his salt if he isn't willing to put his job on the line every day of his life."

Mr. Lundborg's concern is germane to the problems of the public relations business today. But there is an implied assumption that all other chairmen of boards of corporations want the truth from their public relations directors as they see it. They are not all as perceptive or as understanding of the overwhelming importance of public opinion as Mr. Lundborg is.

The simple fact is that management generally has the kind of public relations it wants and deserves. There is a solution to the difficulties of getting public relations directors who are both competent and frank. It lies in management's hands. If it wants, as it should, the kind of men and advice that will help it adjust more quickly to changing conditions, it will fire the weaklings, the yes men, the sycophants. And then it will seek those who understand the social struggle within which American business is functioning and help it make the accommodation it must. —L. L. L. GOLDEN

Books in Communications



The New Journalism

ONE day in January 1963, readers of the *Christian Science Monitor* who turned to a piece by Erwin D. Canham saw these words: "Surely one of the great moral challenges of these times, perhaps the greatest, is to add spiritual dimension to our material achievements. Such dimension is not totally lacking today. It is not even lacking in the field of international relations. A sense of mutuality—awareness of the importance of the good of all—keeps cropping up. It helped motivate American policy in its aid programs. It begins to move among other nations."

A few years earlier these would have been thought strange words indeed, and strange ideas, for a daily journalist, and the occasion that called them forth—the conclusion of a series on the state of American morality—even stranger. Such weighty inquiries were the province of books, perhaps of a few magazines, certainly not of newspapers. But times had changed, and by 1963 it was a rare reader indeed who did not ask more of his daily paper than just the facts. Readers wanted interpretation, expert opinion, informed prediction, argument. And they wanted, too, to know about subjects that were new or newly important. The result was the invention of some versatile new forms of journalism, forms flexible enough and perceptive enough to mirror the meaning of events that in many cases were moving almost too fast to be seen, let alone explained.

The topography of the new journalism is deftly surveyed in John Hohenberg's *The New Front Page* (Columbia, \$7.95), an insider's story of what newspapermen are up to these days. Hohenberg, a professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and secretary of the Pulitzer Prize advisory board, has chosen nine facets of contemporary newswriting, written a brief analysis of each, and illustrated them with examples. Under such titles as "The Civil Rights Struggle," "This Is Public Service," "The Foreign Correspondents," "Specialists in the Space Age," "The Interpreters," and "The Personal Touch," he offers enough samples to show exactly what he means when he says, "There is more than enough evidence that people *do* want to know something more than the bare events of the day; otherwise, they would be

satisfied with five minutes of sketchy radio news rattled off by a singsong announcer in a bored voice."

Here, for example, is Reiman Morin's masterful Associated Press story on the nine-year-old Negro girl, Linda Brown, whose efforts to enroll in an all-white school resulted finally in the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*; Miriam Ottenberg's revelation in the *Washington Star* of an underworld organization called Cosa Nostra and one Joseph Valachi who told all about it; Dale Wright's first-person piece for the *New York World-Telegram and Sun* about the life of a migrant tomato-picker; A. M. Rosenthal's brilliant *New York Times* piece under the title "There Is No News from Auschwitz"; and a whole bookful of models fit for any journalist's emulation. Hohenberg has even had the

good sense to include some of that wonderful trivia without which even the best of newspapers would be all but unreadable. Consider, as a case in point, Art Buchwald's "Political Poll—1766," a nicely turned parody of the opinion-poll game. After a series of questions, accompanied by the percentages of respondents answering in various ways, Buchwald concludes: "On the basis of the results of the poll, the militant colonials decided they did not have enough popular support to foment a revolution and gave up the idea of creating a United States of America."

One could quarrel, I think, with the somewhat arbitrary and artificial division of *The New Front Page* into its neatly rigid categories, on the ground that journalists themselves seldom think that way. One could also quarrel with the implication that journalists always know exactly what species of journalism they are practicing. And one could certainly quarrel—and should—with a dust jacket so dully unimaginative as to be perfectly dreadful. But as a guide to the fresh directions being taken by the best of newspapers today, *The New Front Page* is an eye-opening adventure. Any journalist could do far worse than to study it in search of clues to the changing shape of his craft.

—JAMES F. FIXX.

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