THE AGE OF PUBLICITY

By ROY M. WATT

It is significant at this time when it is only a matter of a split second before the happenings of Montreal are known in Vancouver that foresters should give serious thought to their ideas on forest publicity and then not in the spirit of complacency, but with an alert mind ready to turn on these ideas the search light of modern investigation. Modern investigation is concerned in establishing facts. History has left us many valuable records as to the value of facts, but no event in history shines forth with greater radiance than the experience of Cyrus before the gates of Sardis. "Croesus had massed his finest cavalry before the gates of Sardis. On the morrow he would start his demolishing charge into the ranks of the Persians. The camp of Cyrus was in consternation. Around him gathered his advisers. "Let us retreat or surrender," they said, "before we are annihilated." "Fools," said Cyrus, "do you not know that horses fear camels? Remove the packs from their backs and put men upon them. When the Lydian cavalry charges, ride the camels into their midst." The vast mounted army of Croesus was routed in hopeless defeat, as the frightened horses turned and stampeded. Knowledge won for Cyrus before the gates of Sardis. He first established facts, then used them with tremendous effect. In industry, knowledge wins our modern battles, knowledge wrung from endless research and endless experiment.

Research and experiment in publicity are as necessary in promoting the idea of forest conservation and are as essential as any other research which engages the attention of the progressive forester of to-day. Without research how is it possible for the forester to keep abreast of the times or know the trend of modern publicity. If we are to contribute our share towards the creation of a forest-wise nation, it is necessary that the foresters understand and use the basic principles of modern publicity and possesses a psychological understanding of the public with whom he must work. It may be necessary for many of us to re-order and re-adjust our knowledge into current thought. Our methods of presentation may have to be altered to meet new needs of the ever changing habits of the public, and habits of the public are constantly changing.

People live differently to-day. Their habits are different than they were twenty years ago. They have new standards, new pleasures, and new ideas. This new tempo that is marked by speed and swiftness is demonstrating itself in many ways. Even newspapers are changing their form. The Daily News (tabloid) New York, has in six years built up a daily circulation of more than one million in a city of six million. The tabloid newspaper is something new. Pictures and crisp headlines make up the biggest part of the paper. The public is giving these newspapers a

tremendous reception. Why? Because the reading habits of the public have changed. Once upon a time reading was a lengthy and literary activity, but now anything we expect the public to read must be compressed to fit the shrinking hours of the public's leisure and must compete for attention with the movies, radio and motor cars for its slice of time. They want news in a hurry, they want the story told with a picture. Another proof of the development of the picture sense will be found in the movies. The amusement industry now ranks seventh in American industry. The movies, golf, dancing, motor cars all cut down the hours that used to be spent at home. Light, laughter and music attract elsewhere. Concrete highways have given thousands the wanderlust. Outdoor sports have taken a position they never before have possessed.

There is hardly any phase of business which may not be changed practically overnight with a switch of public sentiment. The commercial world meets this challenge of rapidly changing customs and habits of the public through publicity and introduces its new products and what is more sells them. It hardly seems necessary to mention the ease and rapidity with which we have accepted such new products as the rapid drying lacquers, rayon, electric refrigerators, radios, oil burning furnaces, and now the "talkies." Could these rapid changes have taken place without publicity first preparing the minds of the public for the change? That we are living in an age of publicity is evidenced by the enormous sums appropriated by the commercial world for publicity. Mr. J. Willys, President of the Willys Overland Co., says, "Publicity must be counted upon to sell more than one half the cars sold." When the General Motors put electric refrigerators on the market they spent \$20,000,000.00 in factory and equipment and \$5,000,000.00 in specific publicity. The bankers who reorganized the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway into the Chicago, Milwaukee & Pacific spent over a million dollars in telling the public about the new name.

Foresters can use publicity with tremendous effect in creating an awareness of forest values now not fully appreciated by the public, and as this awareness becomes more general the public will demand greater expenditures of the nation's money for the conservation of our forests.

We realize and appreciate the excellent publicity material that has been produced by foresters and the many trying handicaps that have had to be overcome before it were possible to produce this material. Our progress along this line is something of which we should be justly proud, but in our exaltations over past achievements we should not becloud the vision of a still better and greater publicity for the future. Neither should we lose sight of the fact that we are living in an age of speed and rapid changes which demands that our publicity work be speeded up to

keep pace with the times. There is such wealth of high class commercial publicity, such beauty and originality of design, such exquisite masterpieces in color, that unless our publicity is kept modernized we shall be outclassed. If we are to focus the public's attention on forest problems, our publicity must be given that indefinable but essential quality of appropriate attractiveness. All our publicity, no matter how varied the expression, whether scientific, aesthetic, serious or humorous should possess the essential ingredient of quality. In other words all forestry publicity should be built up to a standard of quality, rather than down to a standard of price. Meager or stilted publicity is not in keeping with the important place that the forests of Canada occupy in our economic life.

The business world has demonstrated that there is no one best method of publicity. You would laugh at an argument that tried to prove that the motor bus is best for all travel or that the aeroplane has obsoleted steamships or standard sleepers. Your choice of the one depends upon where you want to go. The selection of our method of presentation must depend upon where we want our message to go, and we will select that medium which will present the message with maximum clarity, interest and speed. This pressure of time is acutely appreciated by the commercial world and in competing for attention, it has boldly cut away all non-essentials and with scientific procession is arriving at a more perfect publicity through the application of the established laws of psychology. One has only to read the better class advertisements to realize how skilfully and subtly the master motives of the brain are utilized in the appeal for the sale of a particular product.

Let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of a copy writer for a commercial firm assigned to write copy on forest conservation. First of all he recognizes that the public is made up of all kinds of people, with varied interests, ideas and wants. He also realizes that the crowd is credulous, it destroys, it dreams but it never builds. He realizes that the crowd is a company of individuals and in a democratic country that unless you get the crowd with you, you cannot do much. In the second place he knows that there are certain urges or inner drives that motivate men to action that are as fixed as any laws of the universe. With this knowledge in mind he goes about systematically to use these laws to create an interest in forest conservation. He would assume that the public want forest conservation—but not very badly, that they have a vague notion that it is a good thing—but no hurry. This faint desire must be fanned into a vivid flame. If there is a spark he can fan it up. He might start as we are doing and give the boys and girls in our public schools ideas, sparks on forest conservation and his fanning process in a few years would decrease in proportion to the strength of the spark. The business world

devotes about one quarter of its copy or at least one fifth to the fanning of desire.

Having fanned a desire for forest conservation, the next step is to tell the public something further of the forest story, something they will think worth having. In doing this, he will not forget, that the public does not possess the knowledge that he does on the subject.

He will create a clear image on his reader's mind as to what the forest will do for him or his family, in the way of financial returns, health or recreation, and in doing this the pull will always be towards the reader. Otherwise he cannot hope to hold his attention. For the writer of forest copy is a teacher and uses the tools of a teacher. He must first gain attention if he would arouse an interest and a real interest would grow into a real desire for forest conservation and from a desire for forest conservation will come a demand for larger appropriations to carry on the work. In doing this he will use such mastermotives as Curiosity, Sentiment, Emotion, Pride of Ownership, Imitation, Ambition and Security and they will be used not in a hit or miss fashion, but with a knowledge of predetermined results.

CURIOSITY:

Let us consider the master motive of curiosity. We must secure the people's interest, by easy steps. They will not take long steps at once, but they may be led by curiosity. Curiosity for thousands of years has been the main-spring of progress. That is why successful advertisers change their copy, use fresh headlines, new and attractive designs to give fresh appearance to their copy. They argue, that if millions glance—something must catch the eye if thousands are to buy. Stale advertising has little or no value. It does not excite curiosity. It is too well known. It is the same old thing and consequently the brain, which eternally craves novelty, pays no attention to it. People walk by a store window. They are in a trance. But what a change when the window is well dressed. At once the trance is broken. The dead come to life. The blind see. They are full of lifegiving curiosity. Cold hard-boiled facts are not enough to interest the public in forest conservation. We must give them something to excite their curiosity, so they will stop, look and read our message. We must treat the people according to their nature, and it is their nature to want things that interest them.

Why do we find so much publicity material in waste baskets, and in cases with the wrappers unbroken? Because their presentation is wrong. The covers or jackets do not provoke curiosity. They may be cheap, drab, out-of-date or coldly intellectual. The trouble may be with the contents within the cover. Perhaps in the cases of a scientific writer, he has been so interested in his subject himself that he forgets the public who is to read

his publication and he writes with the same scientific background as he would in preparing an article for his associates in the profession and in his scientific presentation he neglects human interest.

Readers by the million, that is, in the mass, prefer to put their minds on something they can understand. They like a story. Popular interest in the performance of the big zeppelin centered finally in a stowaway who suddenly became a public character, whose story was in urgent request by newspapers and who was wanted for appearance in the movies. They could understand about this stowaway on the zeppelin. The boy's exploit was unimportant, but the public grabbed at it. However, there is no doubt that many facts about the zeppelin's trip were taught and implanted in the minds of the public that could not have been put there had not this human interest been created around the boy's exploit. This exploit excited their curiosity and in dealing with the public, we should realize that human interest awakens most quickly human interest.

SENTIMENT AND EMOTION.

Psychologists tell us that the average life is about 90% emotional and 10% intellectual and financial. If this is correct should not our publicity be prepared on this ratio? Sentiment is as elemental as hunger—it is hunger. For thousands of generations the human race has been swayed more by feelings than by statistics. The heroes in every tribe and nation since human life began have been people who dared and suffered—the people whose whole life was an emotion. This is a fact to be remembered when we undertake to deal with human nature.

Why do hundreds of thousands of people read the books of Dickens and O'Henry? Is there any statistical information in their writings? Did Dickens and O. Henry write any "reason why" copy? Not a line. Did they convince people by graphic charts? Not a chart. No, they dealt solely with the feelings of ordinary people. That is why their books will never die. The same is true of the drama. We have intellectual playwrights who try to teach us philosophy and eugenics, and whenever one of their plays is on, most of us go elsewhere. These intellectual plays come and go. They always go soon after they come. But "East Lynne" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Charlie's Aunt" go on forever.

Our work presents wonderful opportunities to introduce in our appeals for forest conservation sentiment and emotion, not only in our exhibits, but in our forest literature, stories of hunting and camping, fishing and forest fires.

In my work, I have met hundreds of people whose interest in forest conservation has been aroused by the Canadian Forestry Association. Their travelling exhibits have done much, but in my opinion their magazine "Forest and Outdoors" has done more. Why? Because the stories in this

magazine have a strong human appeal. These stories tell of a big fish someone caught or a bear someone shot, or how someone escaped from a forest fire. The reader instinctively puts himself in the place of the hero of the story and lives through his experience. They visualize what they would have done under such circumstances. At the same time they unconsciously absorb the ever present forest background. In writing just as in display work, the quality of background determines one's emotional reaction to anything that happens in front of it.

I realize that *Forest and Outdoors* does not appeal strongly to the average forester, it is too elemental. Very good; it is not primarily intended to reach the forester. But it does reach the people to whom it is intended to reach and is a strong factor in arousing a public interest in forests.

Many people are drawn to our Forest Service displays at the summer fairs through sentiment and emotion. What memories are aroused in the minds of these wind swept prairie people at the sight of a cool woodland vista? I know for a fact that some of these people have been transported back twenty-five or thirty years to their old home in the East by that irresistible woodsy smell of spruce and the magic in the touch of real white birch. Why is it that the Calgary Stampede draws like a magnet people from all over the continent? It is certainly not the agricultural displays, nor the industrial displays. It is simply the romantic atmosphere that centers in the Stampede. Is not this purely sentiment and emotion and love of adventure? Does it pay? Write the management of the Fair Board at Calgary.

The news of the day—what does it consist of? Is it not mainly a record of the joys and sorrows—the accidents and adventures—the emotional ups and downs of the people of the world? How can we expect our posters, booklets, and publicity materials to attract the attention of the public, unless we too make use at times of the appeals of sentiment and emotion?

Graphic charts and curves have their place as specialized material for special occasions. "Reasons Why" copy has its place also. But nevertheless, the publicity material that is intended for the public en masse must be prepared within the range of the public's mental grasp.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not suggest that we indulge in undue sentiment. But there are times when a judicious use of sentiment and emotion in certain publicity is essential to our success. It is sound psychology, and good business.

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, IMITATION, AMBITION.

Ownership is elemental. We know that property is the basis of self respect. We all want to own things. Our wants vary, but the desire to own things is the same. A Thing is what it does, and so we must tell

the public what forests do and thus build up a strong national desire to own forests. We must tell the public how the forests maintain our strong financial standing, how they influence the tourist traffic, water powers, etc. We must tell the public what forest fires do. Not by the quoting of statistics alone, which can be understood only by a few, but by showing how forest fires wrest their forests from them, and that reforestation is a long and costly business—but it pays. The public mind must be prepared for the greater expenditures that will come in the future.

It is interesting to note, how pride of ownership, imitation and ambition have been used to advantage in increasing tree planting on the prairies. How? The press, forest service literature, "Forest and Outdoors" have featured articles showing how properties have been improved by tree planting. Or when the proud owner of a home that is well protected with trees tells his story to a neighbor or visitor, it at once creates a desire for other people to own trees. He immediately becomes a disseminating point of forest publicity and arouses a more or less competitive spirit among people in the treeless zones.

The fact that trees increase the value of property, shelter crops, stock, gardens and reduce fuel bills and in every way add to the family's comfort are strong facts of human interest and create a strong desire for the ownership of trees. These facts told in an easy conversational manner, properly illustrated with good photographs are of much greater value than statistics showing the number of trees distributed each year or the total number of trees distributed over a period of twenty-five years or even a hundred years. Tree planting on the plains has been a great achievement. Indian Head and Sutherland Forest Nurseries are shrines of beauty, which have inspired the people of Western Canada not only to make their homes habitable, but their surroundings beautiful. These achievements mark an epoch of national progress and should serve as an inspiration to young Canada to extend this important work. Indian Head and Sutherland have fanned and will continue to fan the flame of ambition.

Time does not permit me to even mention many fields of publicity that I would have enjoyed discussing. My idea has rather been to bring to your attention the fundamental and scientific basis upon which sound publicity rests and how the rapidly changing conditions of the present day must naturally influence our contacts with the public.

In the preparation of this paper recourse has been had to the following authorities: John N. Willy, Charles Austin Bates, Ernest Elmo Calkins, Herbert N. Casson, Everett Dean Martin, S. D. Warren & Co., and many others. Acknowledgment is due these writers for many ideas gained from a study of their writings.

In my own experience, I have constantly watched these motives being successfully used in the commercial world. The sweep of our publi-

city must be through many media, specialized for specific needs. Businessmen, farmers, schools, clubs, and women's organizations all need different approach and each particular medium has its accepted current style. The radio medium accepted in its early stages a rather shoddy style of address. To-day the accepted style is cultured, finished and usually supported by especially selected music.

In the Automobile advertising a few years ago, detailed mechanical description formed the basis of the advertisement. To-day cars are sold on an impressionistic basis. The mechanism is taken for granted. And now automobile companies are selling the joys of motoring, and what the car will do for the individual.

Yesterday, black and white was considered ample for the picturization of commercial products. To-day's style demands color, atmosphere and background.

A few years back newspaper cuts were done in sketchy French curves. Today they are done in futurists' angles. In fact so important has style become that in modern parlance anything that dates back only a few years is classed as the vintage of the "Gay Nineties" in contrast to the "Teeming Twenties". So we are confronted with making our publicity conform to current style. To be out of style is to be dead as far as popular appeal is concerned. Realizing this, constant alertness and application of fact in the field of publicity must be counted upon to capture and hold this elusive factor called public interest.

Publicity in itself pays no dividends, but is only a means of forest dividends. There is no magic in it, and it is a sheer waste of good money unless it is well done. It is the skill with which it is done that is magical.

Why cling to a perfunctory style of presentation, when perhaps with a bit more effort, and perhaps some slight additional expense, we could induce a more thorough reading of our publicity and gain even greater circulation?

Such a group as the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers can do much to break down the barriers of precedent, which no longer holds sway in these days of ultra modernism.