

Propaganda, & the Public Relations, Not-So-New Dark Age



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“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.”

—Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (1928)

This is certainly one of the most sinisterly frank introductions in the annals of “democratic” social science. The opening passage continues in the same vein:

We are governed, our minds molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized.... Whatever attitude one chooses toward this condition, it remains a fact that in almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons—a trifling fraction of our hundred and twenty million—who understand the mental process and social patterns of the masses.



A Smattering of PR Events of Note

1914 On April 20, 1914, in Ludlow, Colorado, the state militia massacre 53 striking miners and their family members, sparking broad public sympathy for the strike and igniting outrage against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and its owners, the Rockefeller family. In response, the Rockefellers hire a former newspaper reporter, Ivy Lee, to change the public perception of their mining operations. In the process, "Poison" Ivy Lee, whose career declined after his pro-Nazi work became politically unpopular, transforms the Rockefeller persona from that of a heartless, violent dynasty to the philanthropic political family of today.

1917 The Committee on Public Information, the first propaganda ministry in US history, is formed, and brings together many public relations pioneers, including George Creel, Edward Bernays, Ivy Lee, and Carl Byoir. They work to manufacture public support for US intervention in World War I, employing a team of more than 75,000 "Four-Minute Men" to deliver an estimated 7.5 million speeches and presentations in support of the war.

1920s The concept of "corporate social responsibility" emerges alongside the public relations field.

Chosen by *Life* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century, Edward L. Bernays—the nephew of Sigmund Freud—essentially birthed the public relations industry in the United States. He was also pivotal in popularizing Freud's thought in the US, by brokering the English translations of Freud's work by Boni & Liverlight. His clients included General Motors; United Fruit; Thomas Edison; Henry Ford; the US Departments of State, Health, and Commerce; Samuel Goldwyn; Eleanor Roosevelt; the American Tobacco Company; and Procter & Gamble. He directed public relations programs for every US president from Calvin Coolidge, in 1925, to Dwight Eisenhower in the late 1950s. He was, in the estimation of cultural historian Ann Douglas, the man "who orchestrated the commercialization of a culture."

Bernays was born in Vienna in 1891, and the family moved to the US in the following year, settling in New York. Young Edward went to Cornell, where he earned his BS at the College of Agriculture. After working his way up the press agent food chain, Bernays parleyed his experience promoting Broadway productions, the opera singer Caruso, and the ballet impresario Diaghileff into a job with the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in 1917.

Bernays relates the impact of this war propaganda bureau in *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays*.

The U.S. Committee on Public Information had no precedent in this country.... [It] marked

the first organized use of propaganda by our Government, and its work was the forerunner of modern psychological warfare.... Years later, the Nazis and Communists adapted and enlarged upon the Committee's methods.

The earliest use of the term "propaganda" can be traced to the Catholic Church in the year 1622. Alarmed at the spread of Protestantism, Pope Gregory XV established the *Congregatio de propaganda fide*—the Office for the Propagation of the Faith—with the intent of supervising and strengthening missionary endeavors in the New World. The term retained a more or less neutral meaning into the 19th century. This changed with the onset of World War I and the marshalling of propaganda orchestrated to push American public opinion toward intervention. The aforementioned CPI was established for the homeland. It was headed up by the progressive journalist George Creel, who was ably assisted by another then-progressive journalist named Walter Lippmann, along with Bernays. One of Creel's *bon mots* was, "People do not live by bread alone; they live mostly by catch phrases." All three men would accompany President Wilson to the Paris peace talks.

"Making the world safe for democracy," that was the big slogan," said Bernays of his work there. "It was, of course, the astounding success of propaganda during the war that opened the eyes of the intelligent few in all departments of life to the possibilities of regimenting the public mind," writes Bernays in his 1928 manifesto *Propaganda* (now back in print from IG Publishing):

"It was only natural, after the war ended, that intelligent persons should ask themselves whether it was possible to apply a similar technique to the problems of peace."

The Social Psychological Aftermath of War

Stuart Ewen, in his 1996 book *PR! A Social History of Spin*, recounts the role of the emergent technology of visual stimulation just prior to the Great War:

Nowhere was the propagandistic potential of film more evident than in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which had appeared in 1914. With enormous power, the film—which had war as its central theme—incited audiences into a frenzy of identification with racist Southern myths and contributed to the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. The film's ability to rally people to a cause provided a model for World War I propaganda.

Bernays blandly remarked on the amazing rise of the Klan during the early 1920s in *Propaganda*:

When an Imperial Wizard, sensing what is perhaps hunger for an ideal, offers a picture of a nation all Nordic and nationalistic, the common man of the older American stock, feeling himself elbowed out of his rightful position and prosperity by the new immigrant stocks, grasps the picture which fits in so neatly with his prejudices, and makes it his own. He buys the sheet and pillowcase costume, and bands with his fellows by the thousand into a huge group powerful enough to swing state elections and to throw a ponderous monkey wrench into a national convention.

The American government and numerous patriotic agencies developed a technique which, to most persons accustomed to bidding for public acceptance, was new. They not only appealed to the individual by means of every approach—visual, graphic, and auditory—to support the national endeavor, but they also secured the cooperation of the key men in every group—persons whose mere word carried authority to hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousand of followers. They thus automatically gained the support of fraternal, religious, commercial, patriotic, social and local groups whose members took their opinions from the accustomed leaders and spokesmen, or from the periodical publications which they were accustomed to read and believe. At the same time, the manipulators of patriotic opinion made use of the mental clichés and the emotional habits of the public to produce mass reactions against the alleged atrocities, the terror, and the tyranny of the enemy. It was only natural, after the war ended, that intelligent persons should ask themselves whether it was possible to apply a similar technique to the problems of peace.

Here's Adolf Hitler writing, just several years prior to the publication of *Propaganda*, in *Mein Kampf*:

But it was not until [World War I] that it became evident what immense results could be obtained by a correct application of propaganda. Here again, unfortunately, all our studying had to be done on the enemy side.

Bernays surmised that the voting masses were too irrational and hence dangerous to be unsupervised with the expanding right to vote.

Practitioners note that "what is good for public relations is good for business."

1930s In California, two ex-reporters, the husband and wife team of Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter, come together to fight and win a local referendum. They then form Campaigns Inc. and become the first professional campaign consultants—a breed that has dominated every US election campaign since. In Whitaker's own words, they transformed campaign management from "a hit or miss business, directed by broken-down politicians" to "a mature, well-managed business founded on sound public relations principles, and using every technique of modern advertising." —Ian Hargreaves, *History Today* (2003)

"After the Great Depression, the primary challenge for the public relations industry was to persuade a confused public that things were about to change for the better. This focus can be summed up by the campaign slogan of the National Association of Manufacturers and the US Chamber of Commerce, "What helps business helps you." In other words, the needs of business and society were synonymous.—Cynthia E. Clark, *Public Relations Review* (2000)

1940s Public relations practitioners begin using opinion research techniques like the newly established Gallup Poll. The first



Edward Bernays' work for Procter & Gamble in 1923 was masterful. He invented a bogus survey showing a public preference for "unperfumed white soap." Ivory, made by the company, was the only such soap on the market.

Bernays then launched the National Soap Sculpture Competition in White Soap. The competition would last for 25 years. Pictured are prize winners and honorable mentions from Ivory's third annual event.

school of public relations is established at Boston University.

1950s Edward Bernays argues to President Eisenhower that **fear of Communists should be induced and encouraged**, because it will make Americans loyal to the state and to capitalism. In the wake of Soviet atomic tests in 1958, Eisenhower for the first time makes conspicuous consumption (of automobiles, in this case) the first duty of the free: "You Auto Buy," he slogans. A similar exhortation is made by politicians after September 11, 2001. Your democratic duty in the light of global terror is to indulge your Self: Go shopping and save the world. The interests of the free market and the pursuit of personal freedom are made indistinguishable. —Tim Adams, *The Guardian* (2002)

1960s The Public Relations Society of America is founded. Many popular aspects of what comes to be known as "the counterculture" are, in fact, constructed by the marketing and public relations industries.

1970s Corporate social responsibility and public relations fully fuse. Harold Burson, one of the founders of PR agency Burson-Marsteller, begins arguing that the role of a public relations executive is to provide qualitative evaluation of social trends, which will help the practitioner develop policies leading to a formal corporate response. At the 1980 meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism at Boston University, Bernays says simply, "Public relations is the practice of social responsibility."

1980 Former GE pitchman and B-movie actor **Ronald Reagan is cast in the role of US president.**

In Bernays' defense, he did employ his techniques on occasion in the public interest. In 1922, when Bernays married ardent feminist Doris Fleischman, Fleischman retained her maiden name, and sparked news headlines when she was the first married American woman to use it on a passport. Bernays also helped raise the profile of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's first Southern convention, and the courageous group of white Southerners who backed equality for African Americans. So too did Bernays orchestrate the Broadway showing of a racy French play, *Damaged Goods*, which straightforwardly discussed the ravages of syphilis. He set up a panel of leading physicians to endorse the play before its release, thereby neutralizing expected public outrage.

In the conservative ideological landscape of early 1920s America, it would fall to the ex-socialist Walter Lippmann to elucidate to elites the vistas opened by the new social psychology. Lippmann, who would go on to become the mid-20th-century dean of American journalism, introduced the concept of "manufacturing consent" in his highly influential—above all to Edward Bernays—1922 tome *Public Opinion*. While Lippmann provided the high-minded theory behind the new propaganda, Bernays was far more interested in its practical application. "Lippmann," Bernays averred, "treated public opinion on a purely theoretical basis. He never got down to matters of changing it. He talked of it as if he were a sociologist discussing a social caste system." So, in the following year, Bernays wrote the far more accessible *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, as a guide for enterprising business figures interested in winning over the new consumer.

But Bernays concerned himself with more than just selling product. He surmised—thanks to Uncle Sigmund's theories of the unconscious and the id—that the voting masses were too irrational and hence dangerous to be unsupervised with the expanding right to vote. He wrote:

The times have changed. The people actually gained a power which the king lost. For economic power tends to draw after it political power; and the history of the industrial revolution shows how

that power passed from the king and the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie. Universal suffrage and universal schooling reinforced this tendency, and at last even the bourgeoisie stood in fear of the common people. For the masses promised to become king. Today, however, a reaction has set in. The minority has discovered a powerful help in influencing majorities. It has been found possible so to mold the mind of the masses that they will throw their newly gained strength in the desired direction. In the present structure of society, this practice is inevitable.

In short, as Bernays' daughter Anne put it in the epic four-hour BBC documentary *Century of the Self*, in which director Adam Curtis chronicled the rise and contemporary dominance of public relations in American life, "my father believed the people were too stupid to meaningfully participate in democracy. He used that word a lot."

President Hoover, in remarking upon the rise of mass consumption spectacles, dubbed the American people "happiness machines."

"Torches of Freedom" & "Commies" in Guatemala

By 1929, Bernays was already an old hand at influencing public opinion for business, most notably in his "Torches of Freedom" coup for the American Tobacco Company.

At the time, public smoking for women was still taboo, indicative of dicey moral fiber and all the rest of it. So Bernays started by consulting the eminent psychoanalyst A. A. Brill, who related the following (as recorded in in Bernays' memoir):

Some women regard cigarettes as symbols of freedom. Smoking is a sublimation of oral eroticism; holding a cigarette in the mouth excites the oral zone. It is perfectly normal for women to want to smoke cigarettes.... But today the emancipation of women has suppressed many of their feminine desires. More women now do the same work as men do.... Cigarettes, which are equated with men, become torches of freedom.

In turn, Bernays' secretary sent the following communiqué to 30 *Vogue* debutantes. "In the interests of equality of the sexes and to fight another sex taboo I and other young women will light

another torch of freedom by smoking cigarettes while strolling on Fifth Avenue Easter Sunday.” He also recruited Ruth Hale, a leading feminist, to sign advertisements in New York newspapers to this end. Ten responded and marched; it caused a national sensation. As Bernays relates. “Front-page stories in newspapers reported the freedom march in words and pictures. For weeks after the event editorials praised or condemned the young women who had paraded against the smoking taboo.” (The massive press coverage the stunt received didn’t mention that the march was led by Bernays’ secretary.)

Bernays also helped develop slogans like “Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet,” as cigarettes had been found to suppress appetite and hence were marketed as a diet aid. He also helped organized the Tobacco Society for Voice Culture, whose letterhead featured the slogan “So to improve the *cords* of the *throat* through cigarette smoking that the public will be able to express itself in *songs of praise* or more easily to swallow anything.” At the bottom it read: “*Our Ultimate Goal: a smoking teacher for every singer.*”

When it became clear in the mid-1950s, thanks in part to the muckraking of George Seldes, that smoking was harmful to one’s health, Bernays did make a real effort to make amends, as Mark Crispin Miller points out in his extensive introduction to the new edition of *Propaganda*:

Once the toxic side effects of smoking had become impossible to talk away, Bernays not only gave up working for tobacco companies, but became a vocal critic of tobacco, lobbying staunchly (and unsuccessfully) to get the Public Relations Society of America to enjoin its members not to work in any way to spread the habit.

That same year, on the cusp of the Great Depression, President Herbert Hoover declared that the American people were “happiness machines.” Americans’ understanding of themselves as citizens first and consumers second was already in the process of being reversed.

A quarter of a century later, in the early 1950s, Bernays was involved in another infamous bit of public relations, an episode for which he

never expressed any contrition. He was an architect of the United Fruit Company’s publicity campaign against the elected New Deal-style Arbenz government in Guatemala—the original banana republic—after it nationalized some of the American company’s holdings. The subsequent CIA-backed coup that overthrew Arbenz paved the way for a series of military dictators whose murderous wrath killed over 100,000 largely Mayan peasants in the 1980s.

Bernays admirably related this anecdote of Samuel Zemurray, the Chairman of United Fruit’s board, from one of their many conversations: “A man who could concentrate on his conversation while reports were brought to him of three disasters at sea involving loss of lives, cargoes and money, was fitted by temperament to direct an American industrial and agricultural complex in the Middle American jungles.” Zemurray would “glance at each” disastrous report handed him then offhandedly “toss it into the trash.” Now that’s leadership!

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The Universality of “Organizing Chaos” in the “Mass Mind”

Bernays fundamentally believed that truth was determined by what Mark Crispin Miller termed “the preeminent consensus.” In short, truth does not exist in public life per se; instead, truth is to be manipulated and engineered. As Bernays himself recognized, there were perils in this approach.

Some of the phenomena of this process are criticized—the manipulation of news, the inflation of personality, and the general ballyhoo by which politicians and commercial products and social ideas are brought to the consciousness of the masses. The instruments by which public opinion is organized and focused may be misused. But such organization and focusing are necessary to orderly life.

In the end though, the “intelligent minorities” have no recourse but to

make use of propaganda continuously and systematically.... Only through the active energy of the intelligent few can the public at large

1990s PR firm Hill & Knowlton attracts odium for misleading video news releases it produced for the government of Kuwait in 1990. Employed by the Kuwaiti monarchy at a fee of \$ 12 million to promote its interests inside the United States, the firm established a front organization called Citizens for a Free Kuwait. This, in turn, proceeded to manufacture stories about Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, very much along the lines followed by British government propaganda in the World Wars I and II. Nayriah, a sobbing 15-year-old girl, testified to a public hearing of Congress’s Human Rights Caucus, on October 10, 1990, that she had seen Iraqi soldiers taking babies out of hospital incubators and leaving them “to die on the cold floor.” Shortly afterwards, she was unmasked as the Washington-based daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador.
—Ian Hargreaves,
History Today (2003)

1994 In their bid to win back power, the Democrats in the US and New Labour in the UK turn to marketing men. Clinton strategist Dick Morris claims in an interview to have simply applied to politics the same consumer philosophy that business uses—to be responsive to the whims and desires of the consumer. In came the focus groups, where those whims could be ascertained. Philip Gould, New Labour strategist, imported the ideas from the US, celebrating it as “continuous democracy.”
—Madeleine Bunting,
The Guardian (2002)

2000s Sweeping consolidation defines the public relations industry. Publicly traded global communications giants such as Omnicom, the WPP Group, the Interpublic Group, and Publicis Groupe acquire many of the large, formerly independent firms,

such as Ketchum, Fleishman-Hillard, Hill & Knowlton, Weber Shandwick, and Burson-Marsteller, placing them inside holding companies that also operate advertising, strategic consulting and marketing businesses.

In 2002, the country's top 10 public relations firms billed clients about \$2.5 billion, compared with top-10 billings of just \$192 million in 1968, according to inflation-adjusted data compiled by the Council of Public Relations Firms, an industry trade group. Because communications conglomerates have stopped breaking out public relations billings, 2002 was the last year for which reliable industry-wide data is available.

Ketchum and three other public relations agencies owned by Omnicom appear to have delivered the bulk of the White House's messages from 2001 through 2004. According to a study prepared by Congressional Democrats, those four agencies snared about \$223 million of the \$250 million that the federal government spent on public relations contracts during that period. The report also noted a sharp increase in public relations contracts awarded by the government on a noncompetitive basis.

—Timothy L. O'Brien, *New York Times* (2005)

2001 Charlotte Beers, former chairwoman of J. Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather—two of the world's largest advertising agencies—is sworn in as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy on October 2, 2001,

Federal law actually prohibits covert government publicity or propaganda campaigns.

become aware of and act upon new ideas.... Universal literacy was supposed to educate the common man to control his environment. Once he could read and write he would have a mind fit to rule. So ran the democratic doctrine. But instead of a mind, universal literacy has given him rubber stamps, rubber stamps inked with advertising slogans, with editorials, with published scientific data, with the trivialities of the tabloids and the platitudes of history, but quite innocent of original thought.

This is another point on which Hitler, writing in *Mein Kampf*, agreed heartily:

The second really decisive question was this: to whom should propaganda be addressed? To the scientifically trained intelligentsia or to the less educated masses? It must be addressed always and exclusively to the masses.... All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to. Consequently, the greater the mass it is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be...and too much caution cannot be exerted in this direction.

Apart from the philosophical parallels, Bernays pioneered media manipulation techniques that would be adopted by many heads of state. At the advice of Bernays, the president of the new state of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Masaryk, delayed the announcement of his country's post-World War I breakaway from the defunct Austro-Hungarian empire until a Sunday in order maximize public attention.

Subsequently, Hitler made sure to announce violations of the Versailles treaty on Friday afternoons, so that his military buildup would be met with as little media attention as possible. Under Johnson and Nixon, deceptive briefings on the state of the war in Vietnam were cynically referred to by reporters as the "Friday afternoon follies." Every US president since that time has released bad news on Friday afternoons.

Propaganda does indicate, however, that Bernays himself was at least somewhat uncomfortable with the elitist implications of his work. In this passage he attempts to imply that propaganda is a consensual matter:

It might be better to have, instead of propaganda and special pleading, committees of wise men

who would choose our rulers, dictate our conduct, private and public, and decide upon the best types of clothes for us to wear and the best kinds of food for us to eat. But we have *chosen* the opposite method, that of open competition. We must find a way to make free competition function with reasonable smoothness. To achieve this society has *consented* to permit free competition to be organized by leadership and propaganda. [Emphases added.]

In a far-reaching 2000 paper exploring the commercializing of US schools and culture in general, education professor Alex Molnar describes Bernays' view of democratic civic life as

a marketplace every bit as much as economic life. He took it as axiomatic that competing political interests would seek to put their views before the public just as competing economic interests would seek to promote their products and services. Bernays did not consider this an evil process nor did he regard propaganda as a dirty word.... Propaganda was, as he saw it, essential to keep the wheels of politics and commerce turning while preserving social stability.... Bernays would have us believe that public relations and advertising are progressive tools of democratic governance and the market economy. The conflation of market choice and the democratic political process is, however, problematic. Although the advertising industry is very good at promoting the consumption of goods and services, at its heart it is profoundly anti-democratic.... A powerful, privately controlled institution that systematically sets out to undermine the ability of people to make rational judgements is inherently anti-democratic because it subverts the intellectual qualities and debases the civic relationships that make democratic life imaginable. What is, therefore, promoted to the detriment of genuine democratic civic culture is mass consumerism in commerce and politics. As Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen argue in *Channels of Desire*, which was published during the military build-up of the Reagan administration's early years, "The goal of the advertising industry is to link the isolated experience of the spectator with the collectivized impulses and priorities of the corporation.... If economic consumerism tends to organize disconnected individuals into coherent and predictable markets, it is political consumerism that defines the current state of western democracy seeking to create a vast patriotic unity...a unity without solidarity." In other words, a unity defined by consumption rather than creation and participation.

A key objective for rulers everywhere and during every time, no matter what the political system, is “stability.” In terms of contemporary politics, Bernays’ counsel remains quite familiar.

When the example of the leader is not at hand and the herd must think for itself, it does so by means of clichés, pat words or images which stand for a whole group of ideas or experiences. Not many years ago, it was only necessary to tag a political candidate with the word “interests” to stampede millions of people into voting against him, because anything associated with “the interests” seemed necessarily corrupt. Recently the word *Bolshevik* has performed a similar service for persons who wished to frighten the public away from a line of action.

Hear that, you liberal, commie, unpatriotic could-be terrorist?


Who will keep America safe? W!

As for contemporary liberals, Bernays with some bemusement noted that

good government can be sold to a community just as any other commodity can be sold. I often wonder whether the politicians of the future, who are responsible for the maintaining the prestige and effectiveness of their party, will not endeavor to train politicians who are at the same time propagandists. It will be objected, of course, that propaganda will tend to defeat itself as its mechanism becomes obvious to the public. My opinion is that it will not. The only propaganda which will ever tend to weaken itself as the world becomes more sophisticated and intelligent is propaganda that is untrue or unsocial.

For once, Bernays was not cynical enough, as the propaganda run up to the Iraq war clearly demonstrated. He went on to add:

This invisible, intertwining structure of groupings and associations is the mechanism by which democracy has organized its group mind and simplified its mass thinking. To deplore the existence of such a mechanism is to ask for a society such as never was and never will be. To admit that it exists, but expect that it shall not be used, is unreasonable.

In the American political system today, the words that come out of the mouths of the political class are all calculated, analyzed for psychological effectiveness and then repeated ad nauseum. For that, we can thank in large measure Sigmund Freud’s devious nephew. 

For those interested in examining the roots of social psychology, have a look at the writings of a pair of French sociologists. Gustav Le Bon wrote *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895), while his friend and colleague Gabriel Tarde wrote *Laws of Imitation* (1903). In the Anglo-American tradition, we have the British political theorist Graham Wallas, who taught Walter Lippmann at Harvard, and wrote *Human Nature in Politics* (1908), along with the American sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross, author of *Social Psychology* (also 1908). Finally, there is Wilfred Trotter, a British social psychologist who wrote the suggestively titled *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916). And who could forget George Creel’s delightful *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (1920). Beyond that, the bibliography in Stuart Ewen’s *PR!*, from whence the above citations were culled, is sure to delight the most devoted social psychology spelunker!

and reportedly develops plans for a campaign to “sell” the war effort. It is announced that a committee of movie studio heads and TV executives, coordinated by Motion Picture Association of America president Jack Valenti, is formed after a meeting between industry bigwigs and White House adviser Karl Rove. The committee discusses the development of wartime trailers, distribution of movies to troops and public service announcements aimed at both domestic and international audiences.
— John Hanc, *Newsday* (2001)

2001 With assistance from Washington, DC-based PR firm the Rendon Group, the **Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) is formed**, with a mandate to propagandize throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Western Europe. The Rendon Group played a large role in creating the Iraqi National Congress, and is alleged to have provided advance PR support “selling” the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld closes down the OSI after public outcry results from news coverage of the organization, although the Office of Global Communications, a White House organization charged with essentially the same tasks, is formed shortly thereafter.

2005 Leading African American conservative Armstrong Williams, cofounder of Graham Williams Group, a public relations agency in Washington, and frequent advocate of individual accountability and ethical rectitude, acknowledges in January that the Department of Education had paid him \$240,000 to promote its “No Child Left Behind” initiative during radio and television appearances. Federal law actually prohibits covert government publicity or propaganda campaigns.



Public relations pitchmen of note (left to right): George Creel, Walter Lippmann, and Ivy Lee