

1952

Municipal public relations.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/13097>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
School of Public Relations and Communications

Thesis

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

By

Joan Plummer

(A.B., Pomona College, 1949)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of

Master of Science

1952

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
AND COMMUNICATIONS
LIBRARY

SPR

MS

1952

plum

cop. 1

Approved
by

First Reader .

J. D. T. Rubin
Professor of P.R.

Second Reader

Bertrand Glass
Instructor in psychology for P.R.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM AND METHODS USED	1
The problem	1
Statement of the problem	1
Importance of the study	1
The method	2
II. THE NEED FOR A MUNICIPAL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM IN NEWPORT BEACH	5
Physical description	5
Specific needs	6
Summary	7
General needs	8
III. GROUNDWORK FOR THE PROGRAM	11
Memorandum	11
Suggested program	12
Newspaper opposition	13
Rebuttal	14
Adoption of program	15
IV. INSTITUTION OF THE PROGRAM	16
Mr. Priest's appointment	16
Cost of the program	16
V. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM	19

CHAPTER	PAGE
Annual report	19
Bulletin	20
Summary of bulletin content	24
Press Releases	27
Publicity promotions	28
Permanent organization	29
Summary comparison	30
VI. OTHER PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES	31
Appearance	31
Telephone courtesy	32
Employee training	32
Employees' Association	32
Coffee room	33
Tours	33
VII. HOW EFFECTIVE IS NEWPORT'S PROGRAM?	35
Negative editorial and interview	35
Positive comment and interview	36
Summary	45
VIII. CHECKING THE EFFECTIVENESS WITH STATISTICS.	46
Registration and voting	46
Red Feather and Red Cross	48
Hospital fund	49
Service organizations	50
Volunteer commissions	51

CHAPTER	PAGE
IX. SUMMARY	52
X. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study (1) to emphasize the need for better relationships between municipal governments and the publics they serve; (2) to show how this need is being met by a Municipal Public Relations Program in Newport Beach, California; and (3) to suggest recommendations for the improvement of this program to increase its effectiveness.

Importance of the study. Local self-government has frequently been stressed as the foundation of democracy, and by long practice, has become regarded as the most important feature of our system.¹ It is therefore essential that this local level of government remain in the hands of the people and free from the encroaching centralization found at state and national levels. If we are to continue as a self-governing people, the thing to do is to strengthen our municipalities, understand their functions, and personally participate in community affairs.² In this study an attempt

1. Attorney General v. Detroit, 58 Mich. 213, 24 N.W. 887, 55 Am. Rep. 675, cited by Eugene McQuillin, The Law of Municipal Corporations (Chicago: Callaghan & Company, 1949), pp. 326-327

2. Carl J. Faist, I Get My Money's Worth From Local Taxes. (Reprinted from Saturday Evening Post, November 20, 1948)

was made to show how this understanding and participation can be achieved by employing public relations techniques. And it is hoped that some city officials will be encouraged to institute a program along the lines of the one discussed in this paper, and thus work toward a more vigorous local self-government.

THE METHOD

Newport Beach, California was selected as the subject of this thesis because it offers the opportunity to study the general needs for a municipal public relations program as well as particular ones created by absentee ownership and a mobile population. Recommended by the Government Public Relations Association as having a well developed program for a small town (12,500), Newport demonstrates that size should not be a factor in adopting a public relations policy. Rather, the two most significant factors are public opinion and official action. How these two coincide is the real measure of any public relations status.³ Having been in operation for two years, Newport's program permits close observation of the institution and early development of such a plan.

³ Henry D. Nadig, from a speech at the 1950 Convention of the Michigan Municipal League. Hotel Statler, Detroit, Michigan. October 5, 1950

To define the need for the program and to understand its content, the following methods were used:

1. Study of the town's recent history and governmental structure
2. Analysis of statistical reports
3. Reading available material in the city hall files
4. Analyzing the media used in communicating with the public
5. Non-directed personal interviews with city employees and officials
6. Attending civic gatherings
7. Personal observation
8. Study of the local press

In an effort to discover the effectiveness of the program the following methods were used:

1. Non-directed personal interviews with voluntary leaders - To determine which individuals to interview, separate lists of informal leaders were obtained from the city clerk, the town librarian, the high school principal, and two ministers. The fifteen names that appeared on more than two of the lists were the leaders interviewed.
2. Analysis of municipal and other agency reports
3. Study of the local press

In addition to the opinions revealed by interviewing,

effectiveness of the program was checked further using civic participation as the criterion. It was this phase that necessitated the study of voting records and agency reports. By request, some of the sources of information have been kept confidential.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR A MUNICIPAL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM
IN NEWPORT BEACH

Two islands, a peninsula, and a strip of mainland six miles long would geographically describe Newport Beach in Southern California.

A more detailed description would include: the well developed street system which affords easy access to any section of town but no parking spaces; the new, carefully planned subdivisions of the mainland; the neat yards and modern homes crowded together along narrow streets on the two islands; the long beach front of the peninsula edged with weathered houses; the busy people and the casual people moving about in the five separate shopping centers; and the thousands of boats that are harbored in the channel between the peninsula and the mainland.

In this channel or bay, the two islands are located - Lido Isle and Balboa Island. Both of these may be easily reached by bridge or ferry and are not considered as being isolated from the rest of the city. Three other sections comprise the town, and like the islands, each has its own post office. These sections are Balboa, Newport, and Corona del Mar. The postal divisions are carry-overs from the days before Newport Beach was incorporated. In spite of the continuous interchange of commerce between these sections

the residents are inclined to say, "I live on the Island", or "We have a place at Corona del Mar", rather than referring to Newport Beach.

This sectionalism is the city's greatest weakness and a prime reason why the need for a municipal public relations program was recognized there.

Other complications leading to the development of the program were caused by the geographic lack of unity. Of the city's total area of 4.4 square miles - one third is water. This combination of bay and land necessitates separate fire and police department facilities. Special tasks are also created for the street and water departments because of the bay and ocean frontage.

The recreation afforded by the harbor and ocean and a mild climate is responsible for the vast increase in population within the last ten years. The most recent number released credits Newport Beach with 12,200 inhabitants - this is 175% above the 1940 figures. But the same ideal conditions attract large seasonal influxes of people not familiar with the city or its services. The improvement of this situation was another reason for considering an information program.

The resort nature of this town also accounts for a high degree of absentee ownership. Forty-one percent of the water bills (designating property ownership) are sent to out-of-town addresses. These people cannot be contacted by the normal sources of information such as the local press or

radio. Nor do they have an opportunity to attend council meetings or to participate in other civic organizations when they are not in residence at Newport. Usually a permanent address elsewhere, also means voting registration elsewhere. Yet they own property or have a boat license in the city and must be considered an important "public" by the city officials.

"It is a common error to refer to the public as if it were a definite, homogeneous body. In one sense the public of a city government is often defined as all the residents of a city. This is not accurate, because some non residents may be important members of the public."⁴

The foregoing conditions, summarized below, are peculiar to Newport:

- the city's fundamental lack of unity, high sectionalism
- the special complications of water and land add special costs and services to the departments of city service
- the high transiency which necessitates a constant repetition of information
- the high proportion of out of city ownership not reached by normal sources of information
- lack of property ownership representation on the voting lists

⁴ Elton D. Woolpert, Municipal Public Relations (Chicago: The International City Managers' Association, 1940), p. 5.

Awareness of the foregoing conditions prompted Mr. C. K. Priest, the elected city clerk of Newport, to investigate the possibility of a municipal public relations program for that town.

This investigation revealed other, more general needs which are the basis for the work now being done in this field. The complexity of present day governmental operations is too great to expect adequate understanding by all citizens of the services, policies, and programs of their local government. Taxation and the spending of this revenue are only two areas which must be simplified and interpreted to the layman. Yet each year the individual is expected to vote on a host of other equally complicated issues which directly effect him.

Many groups have assumed the responsibility of "informing" the public about current questions and efforts are made continually to influence the vote. This barrage from pressure groups, editors, commentators, and the like further confuse the individual so that the view he has as he approaches the polls is rarely one that he has thoughtfully considered. Prejudice, personal influence, and emotional bias are no substitute for factual information.

Public apathy has been encountered at all levels of government and in most areas of the country. Other than at election time there is no noticeable enthusiasm on the part of the average citizen for seeking understanding about his

city. He is so engrossed in the daily routine of living that he has neither the time nor the interest to pursue information on how his city is run. A grave error is made by that town which does not publicize its activities. Every organization in competitive business caters to the individual and advertises. Municipal governments should realize that they are competing for the attention and interest of the individual against all of the other activities he participates in.⁵

The individual's contact with city employees is one more general area to be considered while investigating any town's need for a public relations program. Traffic officers, school teachers, and clerks working in city hall associate daily with the townspeople. These employees represent the city; their actions and appearance reflect conditions within the government. An uninformed tax collector or an inefficient clerk can easily bring forth a comment about, "that dumb bunch at city hall". Such a generalization is unwarranted and there should be a continual effort to prevent the discourteous actions that cause such remarks. Hired for a certain job, these employees should be taught the skills of that job - but in addition, and equally important in the eyes of the taxpayer, the city employee should be trained in dealing courteously and efficiently with the public he serves. A telephone call, an inquiry about obtaining a building permit

5. Henry D. Nadig, "The American City Tells Its Story," *The American City*, 64:120, April, 1948.

or a complaint about a faulty street light - these and hundreds of other daily transactions bring the citizen into direct contact with a representative of his local government. Such opportunities for furthering better relations and understanding cannot be overemphasized.

CHAPTER III

GROUNDWORK FOR THE PROGRAM

Sensing this need for a better understanding and tighter relationship between the people and their local government, Mr. Priest stated,

"To combat political apathy something more than routine publication of reports and encouragement of citizen participation in civic functions is needed. The solution, in the opinion of those who have been active in the field, lies in the development of civic consciousness, which in the final analysis is nothing more than the realization by the people that they are a unit with common interests in the political activities of their community. It is this civic consciousness which a municipal public relations program attempts to foster and develop."⁶

Correspondence with officials in other towns already using this type of program gave Mr. Priest ideas that could be adapted to Newport's needs. With additional encouragement and information from the Association of Municipal Public Relations Officers, the City Clerk outlined a program which he sent, with the following memorandum, to the City Manager of Newport in March, 1949.

Memo to: City Manager
From: C.K. Priest, City Clerk

The necessity of a planned public relations program is becoming increasingly evident as the general business readjustment progresses here. The reaction of the public to the City Administration's plans and proce-

⁶ Charles K. Priest, file of speeches in City Clerk's office, Newport Beach, California. March 14, 1949

dures always varies in inverse ratio with business conditions. When money is plentiful, the public takes minor interest in municipal affairs; when money is tight and tax-paying becomes a burden, every phase of municipal administration is watched and subject to quick and often unfounded criticism.

In addition to the evident need for a program noted above, there are two exceptional factors in the City's make-up that require special handling. The first is the high percentage of absentee ownership of property, and the second is the high percentage of transiency in the population. These two factors, which are not likely to change in the immediate future, alone would justify planned public relations.

The suggested program was presented under five main heads, as follows:

I Annual Report

An inexpensive booklet to be distributed over the counter, through the Chamber of Commerce, and possibly mailed out as an enclosure with tax bills. It would contain:

- a. Summarized financial report of the City
- b. "Where your tax dollar goes" - distribution graphs of the tax dollar
- c. "What you get for your taxes" - a summarization of municipal services
- d. "What your government has done" - a report of accomplishments during the year
- e. "What your government plans to do" - a report of short and long term planning ahead
- f. A brief sketch of the City and its growth

II Bi-monthly bulletin

A compact folder to be enclosed with water bills. It would contain:

- a. Reports of projects recently completed
- b. Educational material to build background for planned projects

c. Factual information about the City

III Weekly releases for local newspapers

A column: "City Hall News & Notes" stressing human interest items about City officials and employees.

IV Spot publicity promotions

- a. Departmental features as available
- b. Background factual material service for the press
- c. Photographic service, making use of the facilities and equipment available in the police department
- d. Speakers for civic groups

V Permanent organization

- a. A file of photographic and biographical material covering every city officer and employee
- b. A file of background material covering photos and information on all equipment and projects having value to the newspapers
- c. A statistical file making immediately available comparative figures and analysis on such subjects as population, assessed valuations, tax rates etc.
- d. An historical file containing press clippings, photos, of events of historical interest, landmarks, etc. to build a continuous record of the growth of the City⁸

Several months of argument, opposition, and discussion followed this proposal. The most outspoken opponent of the suggested program was the editor of one of the two local newspapers. Much space was devoted to decrying the "proposed propaganda machine of City Hall" and championing the cause of the newspaper as the traditional means of informing the

⁸ Files of the City Clerk, Newport Beach, California
March, 1949.

public.

An interview almost two years later revealed that this editor had not altered his opinion. He stated quite firmly, "If a town is good and the city administration is honest, there should be no need to publicize the deeds of the city with taxpayers' money. The newspaper is the means by which information should reach the public - it is the accepted media for informing the people."

This argument was met by Mr. Priest with the contention that no newspaper could practically cover all the publics primarily interested in the city; to do so would require 15,000 circulation. In addition he felt that no newspaper could afford to spend the time required to assemble the local government information that should be available to the public. Mr. Priest further noted that the city is the only organization that can speak for the city as a whole; a newspaper publisher, whatever his virtues, is still an individual.

The campaign was heated, but the public information program was finally presented to the Council by the city manager. It was adopted by a vote of four to one, in October of 1949. The dissenting vote was cast by the Mayor who went on record as saying that in his opinion the proposal constituted a glaring example of unnecessary expenditure of taxpayer money and at the time no need existed for a publicity agent for the city. However, the city manager's recommendation

was supported by the four council members whose opinion was voiced by Councilman Roberts in the statement, "The taxpayers are entitled to full and complete information concerning the operation of their city, free from political influence."

CHAPTER IV

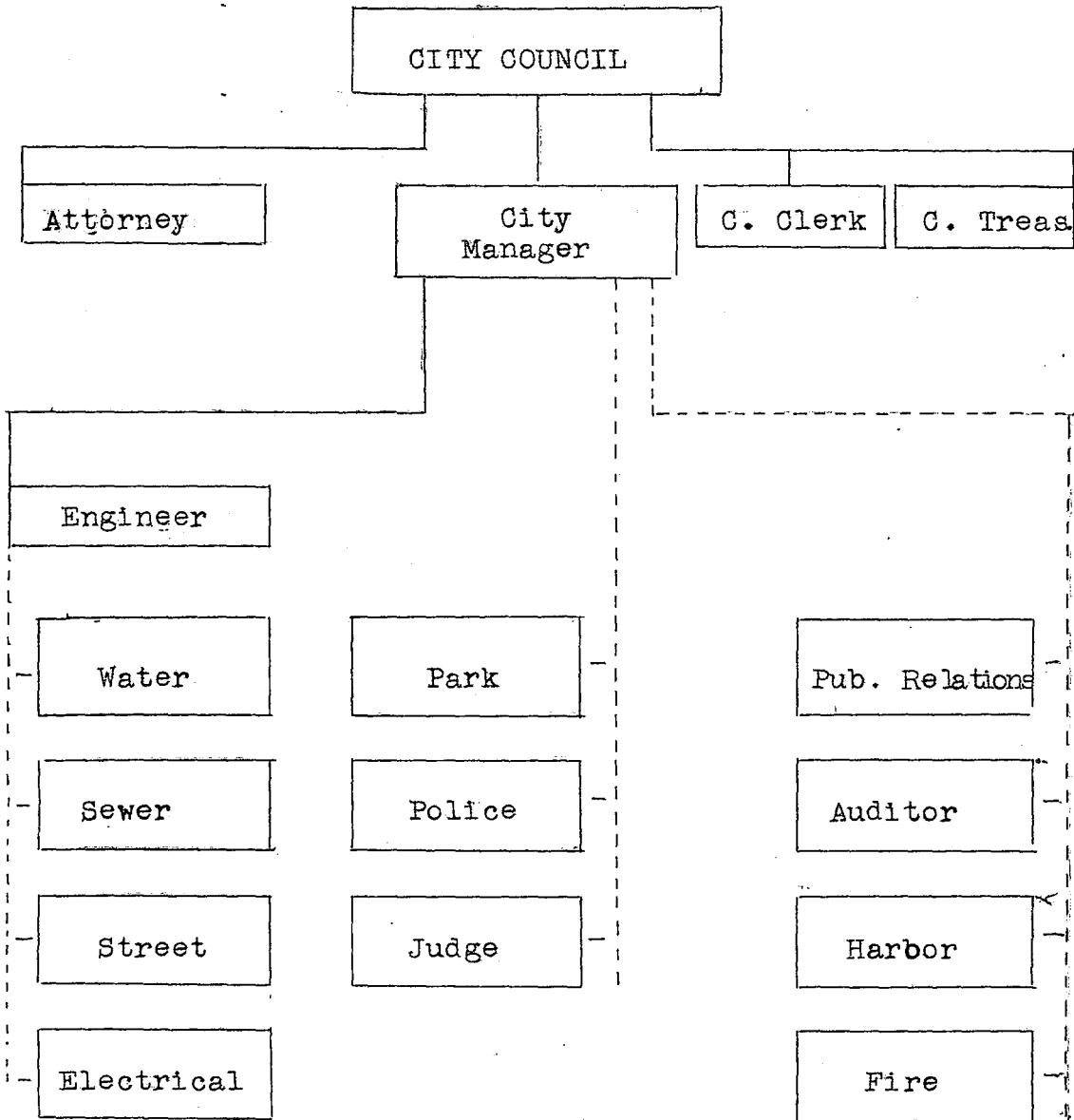
INSTITUTION OF THE PROGRAM

Because of his interest in this field and his fifteen years of experience on the editorial staff of the Springfield, Massachusetts "Union", Mr. Priest was well qualified to institute this activity. His recent election as regional vice president for the Western States of the Government Public Relations Officers keeps him continually informed of developments in the field.

His appointment by the Newport Beach City Council as public information officer makes him responsible to that body and more directly to the city manager. At the same time Mr. Priest is serving as city clerk; this is an elective position, accountable to the voters of the town. A look at the organization chart on the following page shows the relationship of these two offices to each other and to the rest of the civic departments.

No budget allowance was made when the council voted this program into effect. Rather, the cost was left to the discretion of the public relations officer for the first year until an estimate could be determined. At this time there is still no definite provision in the budget. However, an accounting of costs for the first two years of operation

ORGANIZATION CHART OF NEWPORT BEACH
SHOWING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS



shows an expenditure of \$998.87, excluding salaries. This is the amount spent for the preparation and printing of the first six information bulletins. The mailing charges, of approximately \$360.00, added to this, bring the total to \$998.87 - roughly \$1,000.00. Other public relations activities are carried on, but as they are not yet classified as such their support is charged off to other departments, such as personnel, maintenance, training, etc.

This indefinite situation will probably continue until a well-rounded program has developed and its cost determined. Although Mr. Priest, the City Clerk, handles these other activities, his official capacity is defined in the minutes of the Council meeting of October, 1949. This statement reads, "... responsibility of assembling statistical information and preparing same for inclosure in periodic reports to the taxpayers."⁹

⁹ Files of the City Clerk, Newport Beach, California
Minutes of the City Council meeting of October, 1949.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

A comparison of the original outline with the actual program, after two years in operation, will give a clear picture of how the program has developed; what elements it now contains; and what the plans are for its future expansion.

The annual report. When it became evident that the budget could not support both the bi-monthly bulletins and the annual report, Mr. Priest decided in favor of the bulletins. His action was prompted by the generally accepted belief that the task of keeping the public well informed is a constant one. Periodic pamphlets, he felt, would be more effective, contain more timely information and temporarily, at least, serve the same purpose as an annual publication.

Each one of the six reports which was to be included in the annual publication has been presented in one or more of the bi-monthly bulletins. The 1949 and 1950 December issues gave a monthly account of the government's activities of the previous year and outlined the long and short term plans for the future. Municipal services were summarized and "pie charts" employed to show the sources of city income and the distribution of the expenses. No other financial report of the city has been offered. Growth of Newport was graphically

presented in "before and after" diagrams in issues at different times during the year. Thus the content of the proposed annual report has been covered and presented systematically and periodically, and it is believed, more effectively, than could have been done by one yearly all inclusive report.

The bulletin. The bulletin, originally intended by Mr. Priest for bi-monthly distribution, has developed into a quarterly publication. After experimentation it was discovered that less frequent distribution made it possible to present new projects of the city and offer background information without the repetition which might have resulted from the bi-monthly arrangement. This kept the citizens informed of timely developments yet guarded against loss of readership that would have resulted from the reuse of the same articles or ideas.

The first issues of the bulletin were sent to those whose names appeared on the city's water department lists. However, because of technicalities they were mailed separately and not included with the water bill. The circulation has been expanded to include those maintaining boats in the harbor. The most recent mailing, made October 1, 1951 totaled 7,250 copies; the approximate breakdown being 59 per cent within the city and 41 per cent mailed to outside addresses. It is admitted that the present addressing system results in duplication but at the present is the most economical method

available. Mr. Priest is currently working on a master list which will include the four publics interested in the bulletins' information, and at the same time eliminate the duplication caused by those appearing in more than one of the four groups.

When the new listing has been completed it will cover the following:

1. 9,000 real estate taxpayers
2. 6,000 water users
3. 2,480 boat owners
4. 6,194 voters

It has been noted that only 2 per cent of the citizens belong to all four groups; 65 per cent of the boat owners have no other recorded interest in the city; 25 per cent of the real estate owners have no further interest than the ownership of unimproved lots. Here is a challenging opportunity to encourage those in the 65 and 25 per cent groups to make use of other community services and to stimulate them to participate in all civic activities.

Preparation of the leaflet is handled entirely at city hall, but it is printed by a local concern. This was believed to be a fairer arrangement, rather than offering the contract to either of the two newspapers. Giving it to the one would have been undesirable because of the opposition already mentioned, and if its rival had been granted the job

there would doubtless have been accusations of favoritism.

There is no set routine of what subject matter will be covered by the bulletin. The city clerk discusses current and planned work with individual department heads and then determines the information to be included in the next issue. This technique has proved successful in offering the most important material to the public and at the same time preventing friction between departments. By serving as coordinator of information, Mr. Priest has encouraged cooperation rather than competition among city employees. There is no need for attempted "space grabbing" for publicity purposes as a review of the pamphlets shows that each department has received almost equal representation.

With the exception of one issue, the size of the bulletin, when folded, has been uniform. For easy handling and mailing purposes it fits neatly into a regular three and a half by six and a half inch envelope. A United States postage permit is employed, the mailing cost being one cent a copy. The over-all size when unfolded varies, dependent upon the material covered and the illustrations; most recent issues have been slightly over 12 inches square.

One Christmas issue was printed on light green stock with red ink, but all other copies of the bulletin have been in black and white. The format is headed by the title,

This Is Your City. Underneath this is a sketchy line drawing of Newport as seen from the air and a copy of the city's official seal. Following the number of the issue is the statement, "A Factual Report on the Operations and Expenditures of the City of Newport Beach, California.

Each folded surface is used making four columns with independent announcements. The inside surface of the leaflet, when completely unfolded, is devoted to one project, and this article is usually accompanied by an illustration.

The outline listed three areas that information in the bulletin would cover. They were:

1. Reports of projects recently completed
2. Educational material to build background for planned projects
3. Factual information about the city

To observe how this outline has been carried into effect and expanded, it is necessary to summarize, in some detail, the content of each of the bulletins.

All copies now list the names of department heads and city officials under the column Your City Administration. The services of the city also appear in each issue with office telephone numbers. A photograph of city hall is found in recent issues with the attendant announcement of council meetings and the invitation to visit the various departments. Other information common to most copies of the bulletin

is the Citizen's Calendar, a listing of official dates of registration, election, and tax payments. This information which is used repeatedly is the type that citizens have occasion to refer to frequently.

A summary of the content of each issue of the bulletin follows:

Number one. Issued during December of 1949, this first copy of This Is Your City gave a brief monthly summary of civic accomplishments for the foregoing year. This was balanced by a prospectus of 1950 projects - already approved or under construction. Two line drawings were included; one, an architect's sketch of the new city yard being built to house all city machinery. The other drawing showed the income and expenses of the city in "pie chart" form.

Number two. Statements by authorities on municipal government were quoted in an apparent attempt to justify or explain the publication of the leaflets. This may have been done to counteract the editorial comment from the opposing newspaper. Fire protection was the subject dealt with in this issue. A balance sheet was used to show how far the city had progressed toward a recommended increase in water and fire department facilities. The benefits the citizens would gain in reduced fire insurance rates, when the Board of Underwriters' recommendations had been met, was clearly explained.

Number three. The many tasks of the street department plus impressive statistics on local trash collection were the factual data presented. A three by six photograph depicted some of the modern equipment recently acquired by this department. One third of the city tax dollar goes for this service. Notes on how to help keep the city clean completed the issue.

Number four. Because of the amount of illustrative material, this copy of the bulletin was considerably larger than any of the others; unfolded it measured 20 by 14 inches. Much factual information on the growth of the city plus several photographs of recreational advantages gave it the tone of a chamber of commerce advertisement. Two large city maps made a pictorial comparison of the improved lots between 1936 and 1950. Seeing the future and selling the citizens on their town seemed to be the purpose of this fourth report.

Number five. An explanation of city taxes was dealt with in the form of graphs and a bar chart. An interesting comparison showed the steady decline of the tax rate during the past 25 years. An article on the library gave figures on the number of volumes as well as the addresses and hours of the main and branch library.

Number six. This was the Christmas issue of 1950 printed in color. Facts about 1950 and long range plans for the future were outlined. A summary of a Master Plan was given to acquaint readers with what had been done by the Planning Commission and what remains to be done. To emphasize the need for this planning, figures of expected population and car ownership up to 1980 were estimated. A new map of the city's main streets showed the number of cars that travel over them on a peak day.

Number seven. More about city planning and a general explanation of zoning regulations - credit was given to the volunteer Planning Commission and the time and place of their meetings was printed. The citizens were asked to attend these meetings and offer suggestions so their neighborhoods would develop as they wish. Civilian Defense information and pointers on safety during an air attack were included in this issue.

Number eight. The work of another volunteer group - the Park, Beach and Recreation Commission - was explained. Their meeting time and an invitation to attend followed a squib on how the individual citizen could help. A new column called News and Notes brought the reader up to date on construction and street changes within the city.

Extra enclosures are sent with the bulletin on occasion; these have included a message from the police department of a crime prevention nature and an appeal from the Red Feather. An effort is being made to limit this extraneous material so as not to detract from the original intent of This Is Your City.

Press releases. Point three under Mr. Priest's suggested program mentioned weekly releases to local newspapers, more specifically, a column stressing human interest items about city officials and employees. This has not been carried into effect. In giving the reasons for this omission Mr. Priest stated, "I tried press releases for a while but it just made the reporters lazy - they wouldn't dig for a story or take much interest in what was handed them. If they find a feature story themselves from the different department heads they feel it isn't canned propaganda, and in the long run I believe this method is more effective."

The city clerk further commented that he "gets along fine" with reporters from both local newspapers even though the editor of one is in sharp disagreement with him. Another reason why the column has not originated at city hall might be found in the offhand remark of some of the townspeople interviewed. This was to the effect that opposition of the one editor caused, "city hall to fear that their releases or notices would be editorialized before they were presented

as news."

Council meetings always furnish news and so a press conference is held after each one. The business of the meeting is discussed, points clarified, and any background information needed is supplied by the city clerk. Thus the work of the council is fully reported after the meetings, but no announcement of the agenda is printed in the paper prior to these semimonthly meetings. It is contended that this prior notice is not advisable because the agenda is not closed until the council opens its session and even then new business may be initiated from the floor.

Publicity promotions. Outlined under part four, spot publicity promotions, are departmental features, background material service, photographic service, and speakers.

Once again the editing of departmental features is left almost entirely to the reporters supported by occasional leads from the city clerk's desk. As stated earlier, factual background material is always given to the press when it is available. The photographic service has been hampered by the lack of accessible facilities. The equipment in the police department is available but has not been used more than a couple of times. Pictures used in the fourth bulletin, depicting recreation facilities, were courtesy of the Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Furnishing speakers for civic groups is one of the primary functions of the public information program. The city manager, engineer and city clerk are those most frequently called upon - the subject matter of their talks covering most of the functions of the city government. Because many of the council members and city officials are members of local service clubs they are in favorable positions for passing on information. Another method used to disseminate information through speakers is done in conjunction with the complaint department. Mr. Priest explained that if someone complains about a fire hazard in a certain area, he immediately sends for a representative of the fire department who investigates the complaint and offers to speak to a group in that neighborhood about fire prevention and their area in particular.

Permanent organization. The permanent organization of the public relations program which is to contain certain biographical and background material, a statistical and historical file has been started but progress is slow. In addition to personnel records, the only biographical material available on city employees and officers is derived from press clippings. This is used for employee promotion write-ups and obituaries. Pictures of employees are available, and the Ensign, the local paper favoring municipal public relations, makes frequent use of these in feature stories.

Information from the statistical file has been used in the quarterly bulletins; and previous city records have made this file relatively complete. The newness of the program and the dearth of printed matter are the causes cited by Mr. Priest for the difficulty in building up the other files.

Summary comparison between proposed outline and actual program. During the two years that Newport's municipal public relations program has been developing, the original outline for distributing factual information to the public has, with two exceptions, been followed and expanded. The exceptions, however, were merely in matters of form because the material to be presented by annual report and weekly news releases has been given to the citizenry by other media.

By adhering to this outline with the changes that have been made, any public relations official for Newport should be able to continue to present to each person all the material necessary to enable him to understand the functions and operations of his city government.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

The primary tools employed by the City of Newport Beach to interpret the government's aims and functions to the public are the bulletin and the talks given by city officials. This information is sent out to the citizens, but when the citizens come to city hall they are able to have first hand experience, through contact with employees, in the daily operations of their local administration. A close relationship of this nature creates a lasting impression, for appearance, convenience, and courtesy are high on the list of "little things" that contribute to good public relations.

Appearance. Surrounded by nicely landscaped and well cared for grounds the city hall at Newport gives an extremely favorable appearance. The parking area provides ample space adjacent to one side of the building. Constructed within the past few years, the city hall itself is of a one story, modern, sprawling design with flat or slightly sloping roofs covering the three wings which branch out from the main entrance. Many large windows plus light colored walls give the interior a pleasant atmosphere. All doors and department enclosures are neatly lettered, and small signs in the halls direct visitors easily.

Telephone courtesy. Citizens having reason to telephone city hall receive an equally courteous and efficient impression. The telephone company is primarily responsible for this because of instructions given city employees in telephone courtesy. The training is brief and is offered as a refresher from time to time. Questions which come in at the main switchboard are directed to the proper department or to the city clerk. Calls are made periodically from the city clerk's desk to different departments as a check to be sure that pleasant service is maintained.

Employee training. Training of employees in their specific tasks and in the little courtesies of public relations has been initiated by department heads. This is not a standardized procedure. Special attention has been given to this training in the purchasing department. The present purchasing agent was enrolled in courses at the University of Southern California, at city expense, to give her the opportunity to understand and perform her job better.

Employees' Association. This organization is also concerned with the on-the-job efficiency of its members. One of the objects of the Association, mentioned in the by-laws, is to "...advance the welfare, education and effectiveness of the members...by instruction in civic affairs..." Other points listed under the organization's aims include,

"promoting harmony and understanding in our business...relations and creating a friendly spirit among ourselves and the citizens at large." If these last two points are continually carried from the paper into practice, the Employees' Association will have contributed substantially to the improvement of the city's relations with its public.

Coffee room. Indirectly contributing to this improvement was the coffee room instituted for the employees. For their convenience a room within the city hall was equipped to enable them to make coffee and have snacks during their morning and afternoon rest periods. Prior to this, employees were frequently seen walking between city hall and the nearest restaurant - a block away. Although this walk required no more time than the rest period to which they were entitled it did create an unfavorable impression. The employees enjoy the coffee room, finding it more convenient and conducive to friendlier relations among themselves as well as with those who complained of seeing them on the street.

Tours. It was noted earlier that each copy of the bulletin, This Is Your City, contained a standing invitation to all citizens to visit the city hall and see the city administration in action. Although no open house has been held for this purpose, tours have always been arranged for groups. This task now comes under the public relations

activity and to it has been added "Visitation Day." Scheduled classes are directed through the building; the duties and accomplishments of the departments explained. Each year there is also a planned "Scout Day" participated in by both boys and girls. Scouts are chosen to hold the city offices, and business is then conducted under the guidance of officials. The youngsters' preparation for this day and the experience itself is valuable as a lesson in local self-government. A better understanding of the city's aims, problems, and functions results in a greater appreciation of civic responsibilities.

CHAPTER VII

HOW EFFECTIVE IS NEWPORT'S PROGRAM?

A method of examining the effectiveness of Newport's public relations activities, and the quarterly bulletin especially, would have been a comparative study of local newspaper content before and after institution of the program. This, however, proved unsatisfactory because of the negative bias of one of the two town editors. Favorable comment in the other paper served to negate the opposing view; for this reason no valid results could be drawn.

An example of the bias displayed by the one editor is to be found in an editorial printed the week following C. K. Priest's appointment as public relations director.

"Padded payrolls in industry have cost many foremen and superintendents their jobs, income, and reputation. In the Newport Beach city administration it seems to be a matter of common practice, endorsed by at least four members of the city council who were a party to the most recent violation of the people's trust.

In one resolution the city council at their last meeting removed from the office of city clerk the duties of deputy tax collector. This work in the same resolution was shifted to the office of city treasurer where it rightfully belongs. Then to create sufficient 'titles' to keep the city clerk busy he was named 'statistical and informational officer' and the expressed provision was made that there be no cut in salary.

To further demonstrate the bad intent of the city council, because the city clerk had nothing to do and it was necessary to create a position for him, they hired

him a deputy city clerk.

The one resolution padded the payroll in permitting the \$135.00 per month paid the clerk as deputy tax collector to remain on the payroll and then ordered an assistant for him at \$2,000. per year.

Thus the people of Newport Beach were taxed \$3,500. to maintain an employee who didn't have enough work and then to engage him an assistant 'not to do the work that he didn't have in the beginning.' We imagine that the first propaganda document issued under the city clerk's editorship will propound at length the methods of successful business to pay unnecessary employees for doing work that doesn't exist." ¹⁰

Almost two years later an interview with this editor showed that his attitude had not varied. He emphatically exclaimed, "No attempts on the part of a municipal propagandist to cover up the maladministration at city hall will perpetuate him in office. It is indigestible opium. Surely you don't think that a man working at city hall and reporting for city employees will tell you anything the administration doesn't want you to know. The things printed in that propaganda sheet are just lists of officials, departments, and phone numbers, and the write ups are just copies of articles that I printed in this paper.

I believe it is illegal, unethical, and unprincipled for a city administrator to spend the taxpayers' money for propaganda - to tell the taxpayers how good the administration is. You see the same thing on the federal and state

¹⁰ Newport-Balboa Press, October 20, 1949

levels. One department alone in Washington has 1,700 paid press agents. In order to keep their jobs and to appear important they think they must have several people under them so they hire people to publicize them. They try to create a need where a need doesn't exist. It's happening in the state government too and we've got to stop it before it goes any further here."

Another comment by this same interviewee emphasized his misunderstanding of the coordinating effect of the program. "If the local administration gets by with this they will think of another way to spend money uselessly. Soon the fire department, then the police department will want to publish a leaflet showing what they have been doing and how good they are."

Concluding the interview the editor stated, "Charlie is a good city clerk and I supported him for the office. He's competent but he should not spend the taxpayers' money to keep himself and others on the job. Probably forty per cent of those leaflets are read but they're used for political reasons."

This interview represents the only negative comment offered by any citizen questioned about the program. Ironically, the comments of the editor of the Ensign, the other town paper, were typical of those voiced by most of the others interviewed.

Replying to the question, "What do you think has been the effect of the bulletin This Is Your City?", he said, "There's been much comment about that pamphlet since it started but now all the comment I hear is favorable. I think that the taxpayers feel they are getting a better deal from the city and that the sheet really tells them what is going on. Of course, the main reason for this feeling of confidence is because of Charlie Priest - he's a good man for the job and has kept the material unbiased, non-political. However, if someone else were to edit it or a new city clerk be elected, it might become a political tool and be nothing but propaganda."

Speaking from the viewpoint of a newspaper man and a taxpayer, he went on, "I understand it costs about \$100. an issue and my question is - 'Is it worth it?' That's difficult to answer because you can't measure the value of information in terms of money. Naturally I would like to see the information given to the public through the Ensign, but the city can cover a much larger circulation especially those out of town owners who have just as much a stake in the government as those who live here permanently."

Realizing the need to inform the absentee owners about the city government, the thirty-five year old editor of the Ensign showed his concern for the "other publics" of the city and the advantage a city publication has, circu-

lationwise, over either local newspaper. His final comment proved that he also realized why the city had started issuing the pamphlets. "We've only had this paper a couple of years and we think the city hall is doing a good job public relationswise. You can't blame them for wanting to get a straight line to the taxpayers. It was really the fault of the other paper that this program got started. It's too bad that the editor didn't give the city fair treatment and print the news accurately - it would have saved all this expense."

A ceramic manufacturer who has been a frequent member of volunteer citizen improvement committees had this to say, "I personally think it's a good idea. I know there are two sides to the the issue because the papers want to print the news - that's only right because that's the business they're in - but people don't read everything in the paper. They read the sensational stuff and let the statistics go. When they receive a report on the city they know what it's about and will read it without being sidetracked by admittedly more interesting news."

Others spoke highly of the unbiased nature of the material offered in the pamphlet. The explanation of policies and the clarification of issues and planned programs were also cited as services the leaflet performed. A realtor now serving as head of one of the civic organizations

represented this view when he was asked, "How effective do you feel the bulletin has been in combatting misinformation?"

"From a public relations angle that pamphlet is a good item. It gives the straight dope and I believe it is an accurate picture of what goes on at city hall. The information printed is definite and gives definite answers to questions that have been raised. We know what policies the administration is following and what the plans are. When people have the correct information they don't have to guess at what's going on. If it did nothing more than squelch rumors it'd be worth while, but so far it has done much more than that."

Two others supported this view. Another realtor, a long time resident of Newport stated, "I admire the publication because I detected no note of propaganda. Everything reported is timely and important to the community."

An elderly banker agreed, " I don't think they could get away with anything other than facts because people can't be fooled that easily."

Another Newport citizen, owner and manager of a restaurant on near by Coast Highway, spoke of the unbiased reporting in the leaflet and also mentioned the layout used. "The breakdowns, analysis, charts, and comparisons show that a good deal of attention has been given to the make-up of the sheet. I think the figures used are correct because they are clearly detailed. Some people will say it is propaganda,

but that's because it's against their proposition. To my mind that isn't straight thinking but that's usually the way it goes. If it supports your proposition it's public relations - if not, it's propaganda."

The graphic presentation was mentioned by other interviewees who felt that when something is presented so clearly and openly it really creates confidence because the reader believes the information to be entirely correct.

"Take the budget breakdown, for instance," answered the postmaster in one of the five shopping areas. "Almost everyone is interested in what happens to tax money - how much is spent for school, for street repair, for life guards, etc. This division of money is in a clear and concise diagram. Other businessmen have said that they refer to the bulletin to answer questions on this score."

"What effect do you think Newport's public relations activities and public information program have had on citizen participation in civic affairs?", was the question put to a former candidate for city council, now serving as president of a local service organization. Taking a broader view of the entire program, he responded, "It's excellent and exactly what's needed in these days of confusion. I just wish the county had a similar program and published such material. It's really a job to dig up the information the people want and the local government handles it very well."

I believe it was a smart idea to start this report to the people because I think that the people will have a real interest and participate in something that they have complete information on and that they thoroughly understand. They want to know what's going on and what is planned for their city. If it is going to cost them more money - and it usually does - they want to know where it's going. Once they know and understand the need, they usually support the move."

As two residents of Balboa Island pointed out in response to the question of increased citizen participation, "The more we know about the city government, the better off we are. It creates interest when problems are discussed and presented and there are plenty of problems. The potentialities are great and I'd like to see them go ahead with it because it has brought more people to the council meetings. We used to see the same faces but now more people are aware and taking an interest and I believe it is due to the facts they're getting through this pamphlet. Right now the facts deal with problems facing particular city departments and the community as a whole so we know what is happening when it's happening."

"I remember one issue particularly," commented a woman who had served on the new charter committee for the city two years ago, "That was most timely because it dealt with our water situation just when we were considering the

Metropolitan Water District. For once everyone had a chance to know what decision we were facing and a lot of the people came forward and participated in the decision. This is the best way to handle civic problems," she continued, "Because more people are satisfied. If they aren't, it's their own fault for not speaking up. They now have the opportunity to know what is going on - their only excuse is lazyness. By continuing with the pamphlet and more volunteer committees we may be able to get rid of the lazyness."

Another interviewee, a retired lumberman who resides in Newport only six months out of the year, substantiated this remark. "A properly informed citizen is more able to offer criticism and constructive suggestions for the government of the city as a whole. The city officials are to be commended for undertaking a plan of periodically giving the taxpayers factual information on the functions and operations of their city government. One thing that is especially gratifying is the number of people that read the leaflet and know what's going on. In some of the speeches I make I refer to facts that have appeared in the bulletin and the audience is familiar with what I'm talking about."

And from a different point of view a school principal observed, "It's just as important to tell the taxpayer what's going on down at city hall as it is for the town to furnish

the facilities for policing, sanitation, etc. If we know what the city is doing we can offer suggestions and people always like to know that their opinions are being listened to. It's really like a two way street."

The Mayor of Newport voiced a similar opinion. "As a member of the council I voted for this program from the start. Since it has been in operation I really believe we couldn't get along without it. The situation in this area is getting to the point where everyone should know what's going on. We're too crowded down here. There are a lot of people that come down here and want to live and don't want anyone to bother them. We can't have it that way because everyone lives too close not to be concerned about his neighbors' problems. By sending out information directly from city hall, the taxpayers are given current information about the most pressing problems confronting the city and we want them to take an interest in them. Things are just too crowded.

"More folks turn out for the council meetings now and this is one way we find out what they want. We council members do a lot of listening. We have to listen to everyone. Some suggestions come from newcomers who aren't familiar with our area and don't know about the practicality of their recommendations. But their suggestions help us to know what the people want so we listen to them all."

The salient impressions resulting from the interviews of prominent citizens may be summarized as follows:

1. Straight forward reporting in the pamphlet with the resultant confidence of the public is credited to C. K. Priest, city clerk and information officer.
2. The effectiveness and current wide acceptance of the leaflet are primarily due to the unbiased nature of the report - which it was feared might have been used as a propaganda tool.
3. Greater circulation is assured because it is a city publication - greater readership is assured because the information offered is not competing with the sensational news in the papers.
4. The layout is appealing, the diagrams clear, thus encouraging understanding of the functions of different departments and the programs of the entire administration.
5. Timely information creates interest, understanding, and support.
6. Citizens learn what problems face their city, and their participation makes the ideal of two-way communication a reality.

CHAPTER VIII

CHECKING THE EFFECTIVENESS WITH STATISTICS

Although the informal leaders interviewed cannot represent all of the city's publics, it is felt that they do reflect popular reactions to civic policies and practices at this time. The general impression is that the public information program and more specifically the factual bulletin, is responsible for increased civic activity. This impression can be checked to some extent against statistics to determine its validity. Criteria used in this instance to measure civic activity are voting registration and actual voting, Red Feather and Red Cross fund raising campaigns, hospital campaigns, and voluntary service organizations. In studying the following comparisons it is important to remember that the first Newport quarterly report was mailed out in October, 1949.

Registration and actual voting. In comparing these two aspects it should be noted that the California total registration figures rarely correspond with the actual number of eligible voters. There are two reasons for this discrepancy:

1. The permanent registration system, effective since 1936, permits a voter to remain on the rolls until

he fails to vote in both the primary and general elections of an election year. Because the rolls are only cleared at two-year intervals, names may be left on the rolls of voters who have moved out of the city or have died.

2. The transiency factor is exceedingly high. "We are the movingest people I ever saw", as one Newport resident put it, and figures tend to verify this colloquialism. In one Newport precinct, for instance, only one voter out of a total registration of more than 200 has remained at the same address since 1936.

As a result, total registration figures are heavily in excess of the actual number of eligible voters and are always discounted by as much as ten per cent. It has been asserted by some political observers that the dead wood on the rolls at city election time in April is as high as twenty per cent.

The city election of April 13, 1948 was preceded by an exciting campaign which culminated in the election of three new councilmen. This was a hotly contested election in which control of the city council changed hands. Records show that 3037 voters went to the polls out of a total registration of 5864 - a fifty-two per cent turn out. This was prior to the publication of any civic bulletin.

In the off-year election of April 11, 1950, with only two councilmen being elected, there was, nevertheless, a total of 3313 votes cast out of a total registration of 6282. This represented a slightly greater turn out of voters than two years before when there had been the additional stimulus of a heated political controversy. Three This Is Your City pamphlets had been issued at this time. And in the off-year general election in November, 1950, 5383 voters out of 7524 registrants went to the polls - a voting percentage of 71.5. The voters had received five bulletins.

Because of the different nature of these elections and the divergent issues before the public it would be foolish to think that really valid conclusions could be drawn or that a one to one relationship between the bulletins and the voting record could be proved. Future elections should add more conclusively to the case, but it is now possible to see a trend toward greater turn outs at the polls. It is an indication of increased civic participation in Newport's voting record.

Turning to the Red Feather and Red Cross fund drives and their attendant success or failure, another indication of civic consciousness may be found. For the past two years Newport Beach has been the first community in the State of California to reach their goal and the first to pass their quota in the Red Feather campaigns. In 1950 their quota was

exceeded by thirty-five percent and with a goal in 1951 of \$16,000. the drive brought in an extra thirty per cent. Accompanying each bulletin mailed out prior to the campaigns was a message from the local Community Chest explaining services and expenses.

The Red Cross drives in the last two years have more than met their quota but the success has not been quite as outstanding as that of the Red Feather organization. In 1950, with a \$11,000. goal the city raised \$11,909.; the 1951 drive for \$15,600. went over the top to the tune of \$16,000. The signal success of these campaigns points to unusual civic consciousness and city pride.

Hospital fund raising campaigns have also been used as a criterion for judging civic activity. Newport has had such a campaign on for the past three years and it is still in progress. Funds are being raised throughout Orange County in which Newport is situated, but the new hospital is to be located at Newport so the contributions from the local citizens would naturally be greater. A total of \$85,000. has been raised by individuals in Newport which is far in excess of the amounts raised toward it by other cities in the county. Although the hospital will be available to citizens from the county and along the coast line, its proximity to Newport and the current opportunity to watch

its construction doubtless influence the donations.

Activity within the city's voluntary service organizations has been on the increase. Of the fifty-nine associations in the city twelve are purely civic organizations. Practically all of them have developed within the last four years, and their membership grows with each year. The spirit in these various associations is marked; so much so in fact that C.K. Priest was prompted to remark that sometimes they think a number of minority pressure groups have developed to plague the city. However, an effort is now being made to stress the necessity of a city-wide viewpoint in all these groups. This represents the sectionalism which the city clerk as acting public relations director has been attempting to overcome, and he is confident that a degree of unity will eventually be attained.

Almost unintentionally this unity is being brought about by the members of the Planning Commission and the Park, Beach and Recreation Commission. Composed of volunteers, these two citizen groups meet once a month to plan for the future of Newport. Living in different sections of the community and also belonging to some of the "sectional" service organizations, the members of these two commissions are appointed to work for the betterment of the entire city. This picture of the whole is carried back to individual neighborhoods, and more citizens are given the opportunity

to see the advantages of over-all, long range planning for such a crowded area instead of the sporadic efforts by small groups to improve their small areas.

In addition to bringing about a degree of unity, these volunteer commissions, created within the past year, indicate the personal interest citizens are taking in advising the city council. The two most recent issues of the bulletin have been devoted to the work of the Planning Commission and the Park, Beach, and Recreation Commission encouraging citizens to attend the meetings, to keep posted on the activity and to offer suggestions and help. In this way the needs and wants of the people are brought first hand to the attention of the city officials. The Commissions thus serve as an outstanding example of two-way communication.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY

The Southern California community of Newport Beach was chosen for this study to show how the need for a municipal public relations program was recognized and met and to determine whether or not this program is responsible for improved service by city departments, increased understanding of their municipal government by local citizens, and more active participation in that government by the citizens.

Recognizing the specific and general forces operating in Newport and sensing the need they created for a definite program, C. K. Priest, the city clerk, offered a prospectus for an information program to the city council. Lengthy argument ensued but the program passed by a vote of four to one. In October, 1949 Mr. Priest, a former newspaper man, was appointed to serve as information officer in addition to his elected position as city clerk.

Quarterly bulletins have proved an effective means of informing the citizenry. Subject matter of these leaflets is determined by the need to prepare the public for city projects. All departments are given fair representation and their accomplishments reviewed. Three areas of

information are covered in the text of the bulletins: reports of projects recently completed, educational material to build background for planned projects, and facts about the city.

Other methods of communication are included in this young program for more frequent contact with the public than the bulletin permits. The newspaper reporters are encouraged to dig out their own stories from department heads so the material will be fresh, with the human interest approach. Council meetings are handled in the same manner - always being followed by a press conference.

No formal speakers' bureau has been set up under the program. This phase is left to the individual council members, department heads, and city employees in general. Over the past two years Mr. Priest's talks have dealt with the specific conditions in Newport Beach caused by the tremendous increase in population. He is also taking his case for municipal public relations to the people, explaining that it is both their right and duty to be fully informed about their local government.

Dispensing factual information keyed to create active citizen interest is a major part of the planned program. But just as all business organizations must be conscious of courtesy, so the city must continually remember the "little

things" that make lasting impressions.

Modern architecture, a large parking area, and the well-kept grounds of the buildings are partially responsible for the favorable impression a visitor receives when making a call at city hall. But more important are the courteous greetings, prompt replies, and efficient service which every citizen has a right to expect from municipal employees. In Newport some department heads have assumed the task of training their employees in the techniques of dealing patiently with the public. The informal atmosphere that pervades the city hall results in a friendly approach, but at times there is a tendency to be lax about routine. An example is the failure to keep a record of registered complaints and what action was taken.

Because of the negative bias of one of the local newspapers it was found to be impractical to compare editorial comment before and after the institution of the program. Having observed the information program in operation for two years this editor still considered it to be, "...propaganda and an attempt to white wash maladministration." His comment stood alone on the negative side; the opinions of other voluntary or informal leaders questioned were favorable and encouraging.

It is felt that the opinion of the informal leaders

reflect popular reaction to the city government, and the interviewing of some of these more active citizens resulted in the following concensus of opinion: Straightforward, unbiased reporting in the pamphlet, with the resultant confidence of the public, was credited to Mr. Priest; appealing layout and clear diagrams encourage understanding of the functions of different departments and the program of the entire administration; timely information creates interest, understanding and support.

This general impression of increased citizen activity was checked against statistics to determine its validity. Comparing registration and actual voting figures prior to and after October, 1949 (the date the first Newport factual report was mailed), it was possible to see a trend toward larger turnouts at the polls. Another statistical indication of increased civic participation was found by studying the figures of fund raising campaigns for the last two years. Both Red Feather and Red Cross exceeded their goals. Newport Beach was the first city in the state to reach its Red Feather quota in 1950 and again in 1951.

Activity within the city's voluntary service organizations has increased to the extent that Mr. Priest's efforts to overcome the town's sectionalism are going to have to increase. However, he feels that the need for a

city-wide viewpoint will eventually bring unity of action among these factions. An important step has been made toward this harmony with the work of the Planning Commission and the Park, Beach, and Recreation Commission. These two groups of volunteers interpret the desires of the public to the council and advise it on future city-wide planning. The problems of the Commissions are taken directly to the people at open meetings, and in this way they serve as an outstanding communication link between the municipal government and its publics.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the recognized weaknesses of municipal public relations programs is the sporadic emphasis on one activity causing other equally important parts of the program to suffer. At one time a city may direct all its energies toward a clean up campaign; once results are achieved this effort will slacken, and in its place employee courtesy and efficiency will be stressed.¹¹ At another time there may be emphasis on forming policy to more nearly reflect the public will or to keep the citizenry informed about changes and plans. All of these activities when organized and carried on continuously form a public relations program. Accentuating only one aspect at a time will, of course, have some beneficial effects - but municipal public relations is not a campaign; it is a program of service.¹²

Newport Beach has not yet had time to develop this over-all program. Less than three years ago their public information idea was launched and is now carried on

¹¹ Municipal Personnel Administration. (Chicago: The International City Managers' Association, 1947), Pg. 368.

¹² Elton D. Woolpert, Municipal Public Relations (Chicago: The International City Managers' Association, 1940), p. 4.

enthusiastically, gaining support and confidence for the city administration, and simultaneously encouraging citizen participation in local affairs.

Gradually a civic consciousness is evolving from the understanding created by the presentation of institutional facts and long range objectives. Understanding, in itself, may not breed cooperation, but it at least delimits the area of indifference, suspicion, or distrust.¹³ The volunteer citizen commissions appointed to study the park and recreations problems of Newport are healthy examples of active participation. Serving in this capacity, the committee members gain a thorough knowledge of the city's aims and are able to relate these aims to the contacts they make professionally and socially. In return, suggestions and recommendations are registered by the citizens which may eventually be interpreted into municipal policy.

Information through the bulletin, speeches, and personal contact has served its purpose well. Public interest and understanding have developed a closer working relationship between officials and citizens thus giving Newport's policies a closer relationship with public opinion.

¹³ C.A. Harrell, "Organizing Communities For Coordinated Action," 96:89, July, 1948.

~~opinion.~~

In these aspects of public relations - policy making and two way communication - Newport is progressing well.

The area of employee relations with the public, however, has yet to be brought under the program. At present, hiring and training is the responsibility of individual department heads, and there is no one accepted method followed by all.

Most current sources agree that getting along with the public is a factor of prime import for a municipal employee and on an equal par with job knowledge and efficiency. It is, therefore, recommended that a policy of selection and training be adopted by the Newport administration which would be applicable to all departments. Personal and telephone contacts, correspondence, institutional facts, and job skill must all be considered. The small size and informality of the organization encourage the use of supervisory conferences as the method of instruction.

During the interviewing of active citizens there were no comments voiced lauding the service or courtesy of the city employees - nor were there any complaints. This area of service, apparently taken for granted in Newport, should be closely examined by employees and officials to bring forth suggestions for simplifying procedures required of the citizens and for improving upon departmental operations.

The democratic procedure of the supervisory conference is conducive to airing these recommendations as well as offering the training techniques for bringing them into effect.

If officials and employees are on the alert in all personal contacts for attitudes or reactions toward the city, they may discover weak points in the city's public relations activities.¹⁴ A more careful noting of registered complaints would also be helpful as a guide to areas needing improvement. It is suggested that Woolpert's procedure for handling complaints be used. He lists four principal stages - receiving the complaint, assigning responsibility for investigation and correction, following up by a central person, and notifying the person making the complaint that it has been corrected.¹⁵ It is essential to keep a written record of complaints as a means of noting if corrections are permanent and of comparing more efficient service to the number of complaints.

By continually seeking constructive suggestions from all sources, by applying these suggestions to official procedures, and by a systematic selection and training of employees Newport should be able to have a well-rounded program of service. This, with their well-developed program

¹⁴ Henry D. Nadig, "The City Tells Its Story," The American City, 96:77, December, 1948.

¹⁵ Elton Woolpert, Municipal Public Relations (Chicago: The International City Managers' Association, 1940), pp. 24-5.

of public information should stimulate intelligent and active local self-government, the most important feature in our democratic system.¹⁶

¹⁶ Eugene McQuillin, The Law of Municipal Corporations (Chicago: Callaghan & Company, 1949), p. 326.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Faist, Carl J., "I Get My Money's Worth From Local Taxes," Saturday Evening Post, 79:15, November 20, 1948.

Harrell, C.A., "Organizing Communities For Coordinated Action," The American City, 96:89, July, 1948.

McQuillin, Eugene, The Law of Municipal Corporations. Chicago: Callaghan & Company, 1949. 728pp.

Municipal Personnel Administration. Chicago: International City Managers' Association, 1949. 435pp.

Nadig, Henry Davis, "The City Tells Its Story," The American City, 64:120, April, 1948.

_____, "The City Tells Its Story," The American City, 96:77, December, 1948.

_____, "The City Tells Its Story," The American City, 97: 46, April, 1949.

_____, "Public Relations For Your City," (unpublished paper read before the 1950 convention of the Michigan Municipal League, Detroit, Michigan, October 5, 1950.

Woolpert, Elton D., Municipal Public Relations. Chicago: The International City Managers' Association, 1940. 50pp.