ON PUBLICITY: IVY LEE'S 1924 ADDRESS TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF JOURNALISM

A PUBLIC RELATIONS RETROSPECTIVE
IN OBSERVANCE OF AEJMC'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

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Abstract: The presentation at one of AEJMC's earliest conventions was a historically important event where the pioneer public relations practitioner articulated most fully his views about publicity. Lee's remarks and the lively Q&A that followed were AEJMC's first major discussion of public relations. This review examines Lee's views about the nature of publicity; objectivity, facticity and disclosure; publicity versus advertising; the market-driven nature of news; the deluge of publicity materials and editors' responsibilities; and publicists' professional ethics.

1. Introduction

Ivy Lee (1877-1934) is credited by many to be the "father of public relations" (e.g. Harlow, 1981, pp. 39-40).[1] When contrasted with his major competitor for that distinction, Edward L. Bernays (Cole, 2007), Lee often pales in comparison in terms of the depth and breadth of his writing and philosophizing about public relations. Bernays, for example, wrote two early books that dealt with public relations topics as well as two textbooks (Bernays, 1923, 1928, 1952, 1955) and sought out presentations before a wide range of scholarly organizations and publications in scholarly journals (Hallahan, 2012).

Ivy Lee published no major tomes articulating his ideas about public relations, although his papers preserved at Princeton include drafts of several unpublished book manuscripts (Finding Aid, 1997; Hiebert, 1966, pp. 157, 342) – efforts that never materialized because of a busy consulting practice and Lee's untimely death at age 57. However, Lee was a frequent speaker before industry groups and published the first compilation of his speeches (about the railroad industry) early in his career (Lee, 1916). His bylined works included only eight small vanity-press volumes, supplemented by a dozen and a half pamphlets, and about six dozen articles (Hiebert, 1966, pp. 338-342). Of the latter, only about 18 articles dealt specifically with publicity, and half of these were part of a series in the *Electric Railway Journal* in 1917.

Perhaps reflecting his low-key, self-effacing approach, Lee often begged off questions from reporters and others when he was asked to explain what he did for his clients (Lee, 1927, p. 27). Indeed, biographer Hiebert observed that Lee was often enigmatic:

> Such misunderstanding was due to the characteristic lack that was Lee's liability throughout his lifetime: his inability to do for himself what he had done so well for his clients. He had no one to fight his case before the court of public opinion. He was rarely able to explain his work adequately or to gain understanding for the underlying principles by which he operated. He often admitted that he did not know what to call himself, and what he did was an art that he could not explain (Hiebert, 1966, pp. 310-311).

However, any misimpression of Lee as being inarticulate or anti-intellectual is unfounded. Indeed, Lee spoke out on several occasions in academic venues about his work and his emerging profession. One of the most important of these was his1924 address in Chicago before the American Association of Teachers of Journalism (AATJ), the predecessor to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

This retrospective, written in observance of AEJMC's 100th anniversary, argues that Lee's (1924) talk to the AATJ was historically important for three reasons: First, Lee's talk was the first forum in which the AATJ is known to have addressed the role of publicity and the emerging field of public relations.[2] Second, the talk provided the focus for the first article on public relations found in *Journalism Bulletin*, the predecessor to *Journalism Quarterly*. Third, the talk also provided the basis for *Publicity – Some of the Things It Is and Is Not* (Lee 1925) – Lee's most important published work in which he articulated his philosophy and views about publicity and public relations.

2. Background: Lee's Previous Academic Talks at Columbia and Harvard

Lee's appearance before the AATJ was ostensibly arranged by an AATJ-affiliated group, the American Association of College News Bureaus, but Lee was undoubtedly encouraged to appear by Professor John W. Cunliffe, who served on the faculty at Columbia (see Cunliffe, 1925). On November 22, 1921, Lee had addressed the students at Columbia, where Cunliffe had introduced Lee as "the foremost exponent of the new art of publicity" (Introduction to Lee, 1921). Lee was no stranger to academia. Lee was educated at Princeton and had spoken in 1910 before students at the London School of Economics while serving as the European representative for an investment banking firm (Hiebert, 1966, pp. 21-23, 59, 60, 63). Lee's appearance at Columbia came on the heels of criticisms about the menace of press agentry (Brown, 1921) and a crusade by the three principal newspaper trade publications to squelch "space-grabbing" publicists (Lucarelli, 1991).

Although a course in publicity had been established at Illinois as early as 1920 (Cutlip, 1961; Hallahan, 2004), Lee's speech at Columbia was the first known time a leading national practitioner of Lee's stature spoke to students at a major university. (Bernays' much-touted course at New York University did not begin until 1923; Goldman, 1948). Lee's talk also might have been the first direct appeal for journalism students to consider a career in public relations.[3]

In his Columbia talk, Lee emphasized that modern publicity (which he also referred to as *public relations*) was more than press agentry. The publicist was similar to a lawyer who provided policy advice, Lee said. "To me the press agent is the least important and least significant feature of the development of modern publicity" (Lee, 1921, p. 6). He suggested that

press agentry merely performed a conveyance role. “Unless I could get into the realm of policy, unless I could advise corporations on the policies they should adopt, which when adopted and explained to the public would show the facts as they existed, I was performing a service of very little consequence” (p. 7).

Interestingly, Lee told the students, “I want you from this point on to substitute the phrase “Advisor on Public Relations” for “Publicity Agent” or “Publicity Officer,” or anything of that kind, because it as “Advisor in Public Relations” that the press agent finds his real opportunity to be of public service and to aid in the development of civilization” (pp. 10-11).[4]

Two and half years later, in May 1924, Lee also spoke before classes at Harvard. References in a final edited document intended for publication show Lee addressed classes devoted to sales management, investment banking, industrial management, advertising and industrial finance as well as the Harvard Business School Club.

In his Harvard remarks, Lee explained that his conception of publicity “includes all methods of public expression” (Lee, 1924b, Chapter 7, p. 1) and involved both actions and words. Lee reiterated his proposition that the actual policy of the corporation was critical and noted “we let the publicity of the statements of our acts, to a great extent, take care of themselves” (Lee, 1924b, Chapter 5, p. 14). Lee admonished students,

> In dealing with all your business problems, you should always think not only of the economics and the efficiency and the processes by which you doing the job itself; but that, in your relationships with employees, customers, and the public, you should see to it that the spirit of your business, ideals of your business, the purpose of your business is interpreted to these people. It should be so clearly interpreted that you are doing business in a manner that deserves the continuous support and confidence of the people with whom you come in contact” (Lee, 1924b, Chapter 5, p. 21).

Later Lee explained “The problem of successful publicity is simply the problem of any kind of successful business operation. It is not a matter of legerdemain [sleight of hand]; it is not a matter of magic; it is a matter of doing the simple, square, obvious thing with great sincerity and thoroughness” (Lee, 1924b, Chapter 6, p. 19). He later repeated this theme when he argued that both advertising and publicity policies must be based on the honesty of the product and that successful campaigns are dependent upon simplicity, sincerity and frankness (Chapter 7, p. 19).

In a reference to Bernays’ (1923) publication of *Crystallizing Public Opinion* the prior year, Lee offered this insight about public relations (as well as his contempt for Bernays):

> A book was recently published in New York in which a man takes the entire volume to justify the use of the phrase, “Counsel on public relations.” Public relations, of course, are very important; but they are not the whole of what I conceive to be this sort of activity. If a man could leave it to the idealists, the publicity men, as they stand in my mind, I think should justify to themselves the title of “Advisers in business statesmanship” (Lee, 1924b, Chapter 6, pp. 2-3).

3. "What is Publicity" – Ivy Lee's AATJ Address

As was then the custom, the American Association of Teachers of Journalism met after Christmas in 1924 at the LaSalle Hotel in Chicago.[5]

Lee's appearance took place Tuesday, December 29 at the end of a day of roundtable discussions that had begun with an address on "Advertising. The Child of Journalism" by G.B. Hotchkiss, president of the National Association of Advertising Teachers. Lee's remarks were untitled and billed in the printed program simply as "Address by Mr. Ivy Lee, New York, through the courtesy of the American Association of College News Bureaus" (AATJ, 1924).[6]

His prepared remarks, which he entitled "What is Publicity," encompassed 11 typewritten pages. In keeping with a practice he recommended in his talk (Lee, 1925, p. 11-12), Lee arranged for a stenographer to transcribe the talk and the Q&A session. The resulting transcription was compiled into the first two chapters (pages 7-40) of Lee's 1925 vanity press book on *Publicity*.[7] Lee covered a wide range of aspects of publicity and public relations practice in his prepared remarks and during the Q&A. These can be categorized into six broad areas:

3.1. An all-inclusive approach to defining publicity

Lee began, "I want to tell you something of my conception of publicity and propaganda." He explained that he didn't equate publicity to press agentry. Instead, "As I understand publicity, it is the entire gamut of expression of an idea" (Lee, 1925, p. 7). "Publicity comprises advertising, of course; it comprises the radio; the moving picture, magazine articles, speeches, books, mass media, brass bands, parades; everything in the expression of an idea or of an institution – including the policy or the idea expressed" (pp. 7-8).

Lee cited E.W. Winter, president of the Brooklyn Transit Company, has an exemplar of the ideal executive. He explained that Winter didn't talk, didn't advertise, and didn't make speeches. Instead, "He went to work and made the policy of the company on[c]emore in accord with public sentiment." He described Winter's work as "real publicity" (p. 8).

Regarding propaganda, Lee cited President Calvin Coolidge's remarks from the previous week's meeting of the Association of Newspaper Editors, where the Coolidge argued that propaganda involved presenting only a part of the facts, distorting their meaning, and drawing conclusions that could not possibly be reached based on the facts. (Coolidge had observed, "Of real education and of real information we cannot get too much; but of propaganda … we cannot have too little" – quoted at p. 18).

Lee challenged the audience, saying "Will you kindly tell me of any situation in human history which has ever been presented to the people in the form of a candid survey of all facts?" He characterized Coolidge's remarks as representing the "ill-considered thinking of many people" about propaganda and proceeded to illustrate how the Coolidge administration had engaged in exactly the same tactics when seeking adoption of the Mellon Plan (which became the Revenue Act of 1924 and reduced taxes for wealthy individuals).

In response to a comment by John W. Cunliffe (only Columbia professors were cited by name in the printed version), Lee underscored the distinction between proper and improper propaganda. "If you sign your name to what you have to say, then I can decide whether or not you are an honest man" (p. 28). He observed that a misguided individual might put over something on the public but can still be honest. He pointed to the example of William Jennings Bryan, who "puts over lots of stuff that I know is not so, but he believes. I have absolute confidence in his sincerely. Yet his is proper publicity" (p. 28).

3.2. Objectivity, facticity and disclosure

When extending his discussion about the nature of propaganda, Lee addressed the question of objectivity, although he did not use the term per se. Lee cited Walter Lippmann (1922), who argued that "the whole of public affairs" cannot be reported and this "unappreciated fact is one of the fundamental problems of public opinion." Lee similarly argued that the ideal of giving "all the facts" was impossible, because of the human nature of the author and of the audience.

"The effort to state an absolute fact is simply an attempt to achieve what is humanly impossible; all I can do is to you my interpretation of the facts," Lee contended (p. 21). To illustrate the point, he suggested that if the attendees at the convention left the hotel, walked down the street and returned, and then were asked to describe what they experienced, no two people would agree as to what they had observed (and thus would not report it in the same way).

In a similar vein, Lee argued that when he made a statement to the attendees, everyone in the room understands the statement differently because every word would evoke different connotations within each person. In an incisive statement that presages our understanding of the active role that audiences play in persuasive processes, Lee explained:

> If my interpretation of the facts appeals to you tonight as correct and sincere; if my interpretation seems to embody accurate observation and sound processes of reasoning, and I speak to you again tomorrow, you are going to pay considerable attention to me; you are going to believe in me to a considerable extent. And then if you find the next day it is the same way, and again, the next day, and the next, you are going to believe in me, more and more. But if after thinking it over tomorrow and my interpretation of the facts tonight does not ring true, that it is contradicted by other facts you may have ascertained, then when you come to hear me speak tomorrow night, you will discount a good deal of what I say because you will have found that what I said tonight did not stand the test (pp. 21-22).

Lee suggested "That is the whole process with reference to propaganda." Admitting propaganda has become a bad term and he did didn't know a better "derivative," Lee pointed out that propaganda simply meant "to propagate ideas." According to Lee, all that can be done to offset problems of propaganda is to disclose the source: "[A]ll that can be involved in [countering] propaganda is a demand, which the public is entitled to make, that when it is given information upon which it is expected to form conclusions, it shall know who is doing the telling, who is responsible for the information." Indeed, failure to disclose the source was "the essential evil" of propaganda (pp. 22-23):

> If you utter a false statement to the public it will be pointed out very quickly because there are a million eyes that are looking for every false statement that comes along. If a person utters an untruth to the public that person is going to stand well in the public eye for only a very short time. In order to protect myself against having the sources of my information perverted and poisoned I want to know who is telling me these facts. If a man tells me the truth and keeps on telling the truth, I will believe in him more and more as time goes on, just as you do in all relations of life. But if a man or an institution tries to put something over on me or the public, we are going to get on him very quickly (pp. 23-24).

During the Q&A, when asked about the difference between proper and improper propaganda (a distinction later emphasized by Bernays), Lee responded that proper propaganda involved revealing the source – a condemnation of the then-common practice of sending news notices to newspapers without any identifying information. Although Lee might have later regretted his choice of an example based on subsequent criticisms of his work for Russia and Germany, Lee gave the example of a person issuing a statement "espousing the cause of the Reds in Russia." He argued that such a statement would be perfectly proper propaganda "for you have a right to say anything you like as an American citizen." He added, "The only point is: what is the source? I feel that if the public knows that, that is all you will ever need in the way of protection. If you go out and emit lies, you are going to be discredited very quickly" (p. 25).

3.3. Publicity versus advertising

In his introduction, Lee drew the distinction between publicity and advertising – which was a major theme in his talk and the discussion. Whereas publicity encompassed the entire gamut of expression, Lee described advertising as a "mere phase of publicity" and, as noted above, listed advertising in the litany of activities he considered publicity (pp. 7-8).

In his famous 1906 Declaration of Principles, which he did not reference in the speech, Lee had admonished editors that his then-new firm was not an advertising agency and "if you think any of our matter ought properly to go to your business office, do not use it" (Hiebert, 1966, p. 48; Russell & Bishop, 2009).

In his talk, Lee succinctly characterized the difference between news publicity and advertising when he observed, "News is what the people are willing to pay to have brought to their attention; while advertising is that which the advertiser himself must pay to get to the people's attention" (p. 13). To illustrate the difference, he explained how baseball is news while motor cars are not. Because of people's inherent interest in sports, professional baseball news represents commercial facts that people are willing to pay newspapers to publish for them.

Concerning the ongoing debate in the industry about newspapers giving away "free publicity," Lee described the vendetta against publicists as pure and "continuous" propaganda. He noted, "…they would hate to call it propaganda, but that is what it is—designed to extinguish the life of what they call the press agent or the publicity man (which seems to be synonymous to them)" (p.15).

During the Q&A, Lee noted that most of the objections he received about publicity were from newspapers where "the business department and the editorial department are one and the same." Big newspapers knew how to deal with the onslaught, and small-town publishers were simply befuddled by the mass of propaganda and publicity material sent to them, According to Lee, the latter often wrote back saying "Don't send me any more!" (p. 29).

Lee observed there were more publicity agents in 1924 than ever before. He also opined "There was never so much so-called 'free publicity' offered to the public as there is today and if it wasn't found of value to somebody, it wouldn't be offered and printed." He added, "To say that there is an inherent virtue or vice in so-called 'free publicity'—a foolish phrase, by the way—is manifestly absurd." Despite the squabbling, Lee reported his business continued to grow (p. 15).

Importantly, Lee prized advertising. Although he dismissed two questions about whether people buy newspapers simply for the ads and then explained that people wouldn't buy newspapers containing only advertising (p. 27), Lee described value of advertising this way:

> I think practically every institution in the country which ought to advertise, has an advertising department. I think a very large number, if not all, of the more important corporations have today something tantamount to a publicity department. Of course, as I said, I view publicity as embracing advertising. I am constantly advising my clients to advertise, but it is not because of any ethical preference for advertising as against so-called publicity. It is because I want to call attention to certain things, and I cannot do that except through advertising. Advertising is the effective way to project an idea in a great many instances (Lee, 1925, p. 34).

3.4. Lee's audience-centric, market-driven approach to publicity and news

Lee bluntly told the journalism educators in attendance that he never asked editors or reporters to print anything in their papers. "In the first place, I think it is very bad business, very poor policy on the part of anyone to make such a request; and furthermore, I always feel that If I make it, and the papers printed a story or article at my request—which they would not have printed if I had not asked them to—the people would not read it" (Lee, 1925, p. 9-10).

This stance reflected Lee's audience-centric, market driven approach to publicity. He argued that newspapers publish as news only what people will read. He recounted for the educators his normal reply when a prospective client summoned him because they wanted to get an item on the first page of the newspaper: "I cannot do anything of the kind. If you want a subject to get on the first page the newspapers, you must have the news in your statement sufficient to warrant it getting on the first page." Although he admitted that he knew the editors of many newspapers, he explained, "nothing is more ridiculous than the idea that anyone can get the papers to print what he wants them to print" (p. 9).

Lee might have been first practitioner to clearly delineate how news values drive publicity. Editors, he said, understand that if a story won't be read, it is futile to print it. He explained that "Their estimate of the news value of an article is entirely with reference to the

probability of its being read by a substantial number of readers of that publication" (p.10). Editors develop their sense of audience interests through experience. In the same vein, Lee explained how he would urge clients seeking balanced coverage of a controversial issue to let the transcript from an event speak for itself. Advocates on one side or the other of a controversy must say something worth publishing if they expect to obtain exposure (pp. 11-12).

Asked about how newspapers respond to materials received from him as a representative of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Lee dismissed the importance of the publicist versus the client as the source of the material. "Well, they would not get it from me as a publicity man of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The Pennsylvania Railroad Company would be responsible." In the same vein, he argued that a corporation head is no different from a publicity agent in being responsible for the veracity of publicity; responsibility falls to whomever is involved in the issuance of information (p. 26).

3.5 Unsolicited publicity materials and the responsibility of editors

Reflecting his market-driven approach to journalism and his Progressive Era beliefs about the value of openness and facts (Ewen, 1996), Lee ascribed a central role to newspaper editors. Lee argued that editors can and should choose from a wide range of materials and select stories they think are of most interest to and in the readers' interest. With regard to the campaign against space-grabbing led by *Editor & Publisher*, Lee observed, "[I]t seems to me that advice is being given to editors which it would be foolhardy for the editors to accept" (p. 16).

> If I was an editor and had offered to me any kind of information, I would welcome it with open arms; I would exercise my own judgment as to whether it was news or not, as to whether it was of any value to my readers. I would exercise such initiative and ingenuity as I wanted to employ to ascertain whether those facts were correct or not; I would do anything I pleased with the material offered to me; but as to objecting to having such information offered to me, it seems to me that by doing so I would convict myself of stupidity (pp. 16-17).

In his prepared remarks, Lee compared criticisms about the amount of publicity material available to editors to complaints that Macy's displays too many attractive items on its department store shelves. In the case of the plethora of publicity materials available, he compared a newspaper editor to his wife, who can exercise complete control over her pocketbook and doesn't have to purchase anything when she goes shopping (p. 17). Lee invoked this same consumer analogy, but referred to Wanamaker's Department Store s in Philadelphia, in response to a later question about publicity that should be treated as mere advertising (versus, as the questioner explained, news "of a specialized character, of an institution or corporation, which is very helpful and very useful"). Lee responded: "I think you are quite right. But the editor has the complete answer. All he has to do is throw the material into the waste basket" (p. 33). Lee elaborated:

> Of course, there is a great deal in the thought that many publicity men are very much more clever than newspaper men, so that the less clever newspaper man does not know how to deal with the situation. The material seems so good that he does not dare throw it

> away, but he thinks it ought to be printed as advertising, so he is in a great quandary. This is a serious problem…. (p. 32-33).

He concluded his talk this way:

> So all this talk about publicity, "free publicity," and the evils of and menace of propaganda, it seems to me can be resolved by just saying to editors:
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> "Use your judgment when information comes to your desk," and by saying to the public: "Exercise your right to demand knowledge to the source of the information which is given concerning any fact" (p. 24).

3.6. Questions about professional ethics

Ivy Lee ended his prepared remarks with the two pieces of advice for editors and audiences quoted above. He added, "I think if you apply these rules you would find that practically all of the possible evils of publicity and propaganda can be cured" (p. 24). Not surprisingly, Lee's remarks prompted extensive questions and comments. These dealt with both the topics addressed in his prepared remarks (summarized above) but also the impact of the modern publicity agent and the ethics of publicity.

Professor Cunliffe of Columbia took the floor to argue that two or three sets of interests must be addressed in discussing publicity-- including the interests of the public, the interests of newspapering, and interests of the professional journalist. Cunliffe lamented what he described as "the whole transformation of the art of gathering information for newspaper service" (p. 29; also see Hiebert, 1966, p. 307). For Cunliffe, "The old village or small town way of sending out enterprising young men to gather up the news in the community has become impracticable." Drawing on ideas suggested by Lippmann two years previously (Lippmann, 1922, p. 218), Cunliffe posited that the publicity agent had "become possibly a necessity of our modern life" (p. 30).

Lee agreed. He noted that modern life had become very complex and that the changes in journalism were parallel to the changes that had transformed justice from relying upon informal arbitration to a complex system of courts based on rules of evidence and pleadings in accepted forms. He elaborated:

> So in the person of the modern publicity man, we have someone who is marshaling the evidence for his side, in accordance with accepted forms, and the newspaper must adjust itself to that. If I were a newspaper man I should welcome every article of information which any publicity man would give me, from any source, and then I should go to work to develop my story in my own way. I should insist upon seeing the principals whom I wanted to see. I should insist on having first-hand access to anyone I thought had any information concerning this subject; and if I found persistently and consistently that some publicity man always told me the truth and never gave me a "wrong steer," I should in time come to place a great deal of dependence upon his word. Yet I should always exercise my judgment, my own ingenuity, and insist upon keeping the very best possible contact with the original sources of information (p.31).

Lee strenuously objected to any notion that a publicity representative serve as a roadblock who or should deny a journalist access to the real source of information. However, he qualified his statement, saying "That does not mean that you have the right to ask every man in a responsible position to give you a personal interview about any question that you may want to ask him. But it does mean that you are entitled to a first-hand answer to any legitimate question" (pp. 31-32).

Lee shrugged off a question that asked whether most publicity at the time was honest publicity. "Well, you are asking me a big question. I do not know." In the next query, an educator expressed concern that the job of the impartial journalist was being taken over by the partial publicist. To which Lee fired back, "If the presentation of news is going to become one-sided, and shall continue like that, I admit that it would be a very dangerous situation" (pp. 33-34).

In one of the most probing queries, Lee was asked how he would respond if a client provided information for a possible announcement about which he had doubts. The questioner asked, "Just how far do you have to convince yourself, or do you have to convince yourself at all, before you send it out?" (The questioner opined that in order to retain confidence the publicist should not distribute anything without being very sure about it.). Lee replied:

> Well, I would not have any corporation send out a statement of fact which I know absolutely was a deliberate lie. I might send out over their name, and not over my own, a statement of policy, of opinion, with which I do not agree. They would be responsible for it. If I advise a corporation as best I can, then it is the corporation's own responsibility to make its decision (p. 35).

Despite such as situational response, Lee went on to emphasize the ethical implications of such an action:

> A publicity man's character comes very quickly to be his stock in trade very much as with a lawyer. Every man has got to work according to his own conscience, with a knowledge that one whose ethical standards are low are going to be quickly discredited and that the man whose ethical standards are high is going to gain the public confidence (p. 35-36).

Lee's comment prompted the lively exchange with Dean E.W. Allen of Columbia, who asked Lee whether it was ethical for a publicist to ever send anything to the papers for publication that he believed served his client but not the reader. Lee's response was simple – a publicist was no different from anyone else and cannot be dishonest and get away with it. However, a publicist might work for a corporation that adopts a policy not in the public interest. With Allen's permission, Lee reframed the question as whether one was "entitled" to publicize such a policy.

> Certainly not, [not] over your own name. But the institution is entitled to issue it over its name. I may have my views concerning a situation and urge those views upon my client. The client may think, and think honesty, quite differently—and may be right (p. 36)

In a follow-up question, Allen opined that publicity that does not serve the reader is not proper publicity. But Lee disagreed, saying that proper publicity is anything that is honest. He repeated

his observation that the views of William Jennings Bryan were injurious to readers, but were honest nevertheless:

> Error dreads nothing so much as the light, and I as a member of the public would not want anything other than to have a corporation that is wrong go before the public and tell the public that it thinks it is right. The very fact of that publicity is going to be the surest corrective of the error. People who are wrong, mostly, as a result, do not want publicity. If you find a fellow who is really looking for publicity, he is apt to think he is right (p. 37).

Allen then pressed the point, "Did I understand you to say that proper publicity should serve the interest of reader? Lee snapped, "No sir, I said proper publicity is any publicity that is honest." Allen then asked if it were also "acknowledged." Lee responded:

> Acknowledged and responsible. Who is to determine whether it serves the interests of the reader or not? That is the point. The reader has got to determine that, whether it serves his interest or not. All of us are apt to try to think that what serves our own interests is also the general interest. We are very prone to look at everything through glasses colored by our own interests and prejudices (Lee, 1925, pp. 37-38).

Another questioner expressed the view that much of the matter published as news in newspapers does not serve the interests of the readers. Lee replied, "Well, who is to be the judge of that. Is that not the editor's job?" The exchange continued as the questioner opined that it does not come within the category of proper publicity to which Lee had referred. Lee responded, "But how are you going to determine that? Suppose I issue a statement. I may believe that it does serve the interests of the public. You have a right to disagree with me. But am I not entitled to a hearing?" (p. 38).

Another questioner asked whether it were ethical of a publicity man to try to put something over on an editor and thus the editor's readers. "Well, if you mean by 'trying to put something over' doing it dishonestly, I should say, no." (p. 38). Asked if readers are fairly well safeguarded if he knows the source, Lee concluded the Q&A by saying:

> Even the most clever man, if he constantly utters lies or half lies, or takes an unusual position, sooner or later will be found out by the public. Is not the surest corrective of error the very publication of an unsound position? ... An incorrect statement given to the press is like issuing a bad check: you will get it back tomorrow from the bank, through the Clearing house. If you issue an untruth in a public statement, it is going to be challenged just as soon as it sees the light.
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> … It is remarkable to me how very sensitive officials of a corporation are themselves to having misstatements of fact put out concerning their own company. … If the Pennsylvania Railroad issues a statement, every man on that railroad considers that statement when he reads it in the paper the next morning, and if it has the smallest error of fact, statistics or suggestion in it, you will hear about it immediately. And the chief urge to make the correction public will come from inside the company (pp. 39-40).

4. Cunliffe's Critique and Commentary in *Journalism Bulletin*

A year after Lee's appearance and following publication of Lee's reprint of the talk -- John Cunliffe wrote a brief article, "The Case for Publicity" for the second volume of group's new scholarly journal, *Journalism Bulletin*. Cunliffe began by saying, "Mr. Ivy Lee has paid the American Association of Teachers of Journalism the compliment of publishing the address on Publicity he delivered at our annual meeting." Cunliffe concluded by observing ""Mr. Lee's contribution to the discussion is of sufficient value to be well worthy of the more permanent and attractive shape in which it has been issued" (Cunliffe, 1925, pp. 23, 26).

Cunliffe recapped key points in Lee's address and stressed the importance of disclosure of sources. He commented that while written statements in the form of handouts might be useful in disputes or on topics in which the public has a keen interest, "the newspapers have a natural reluctance to serve out mimeographed information in the form in which it is delivered to them." Furthermore, the reader might regard these as "canned goods, perfectly wholesome but not very stimulating and probably deficient in vitamines (sic); he has a preference—perhaps a prejudice—for news freshly gathered by the errant reporter" (Cunliffe, 1925, p. 24). According to Cunliffe, reliance upon outside source material might make news columns more informative and authoritative, but less interesting – especially in light of the fact that the public wants to be enlivened and amused rather than seriously informed. As an example, he pointed to the sensationalized coverage surrounding the biggest news event of that year, the sensationalized Scopes trial that pitted Darwin's theory of evolution versus belief in creationism.

Cunliffe recalled that suggestions made at the Chicago meeting included the need for newspapers to pay reporters sufficiently "to keep the clever newspaper men from being tempted away into publicity agencies" and thus newspapers would be better able "to avoid the skillful traps of set for them by the publicity agents." About the call for newspapers to boycott publicity materials altogether, Cunliffe characterized such advice as "counsel of despair" and sided with Lee. Cunliffe wrote:

> News is still news through whatever channel it might come, and the only reason that would justify this policy of exclusion would be the possibility of putting the publicity agencies out of business altogether. This possibility is so remote that practically it does not exist. The publicity agencies are here to stay—not merely because they are in a well-established and profitable business, but because they are an inevitable outcome of the complexity of modern life. A great industrial, philanthropic or educational organization will not be content to rely on the haphazard relations to the newspapers which formally prevailed. The organization may not desire free advertising or even publicity, but it does desire that is operation should not be misunderstood and misrepresented. However, offensive the publicity agent may be held in some quarters, his appointment is often a defensive rather than an aggressive move; often, also, it might be admitted, it is due to a desire to keep before the public eye interests which otherwise, in the scramble for publicity characteristic of our age, might be overlooked or forgotten. Neither of these motives is criminal or even blameworthy, and so long as these motives prevail, the publicity agent will hold his place and perform his function (Cunliffe, 1925, p. 25).

5. Discussion

Although publicity might have been discussed at one or more organization's earlier meetings, Ivy Lee's 1925 address was the first plenary session where public relations was showcased and the publicity's vital role in the modern system of public information was recognized and discussed. Appearing at only the group's tenth meeting, Lee was the first notable public relations figure, and can be counted among the first prominent industry leaders from any field, to address the group.

His AATJ address also stands as one of Lee's most important – and last – formal statements about the nature of his work. Prior to 1924, Lee's most comprehensive statement about publicity was his 1916 speech on "Publicity as Applied to Public Service Corporations" presented to the American Electric Railway Association (which he also chose to reprint in his 1925 volume). Then, Lee explained, "Publicity in its ultimate sense means the actual relationship of a company to the people and that relationship involves far more than *saying* – it involves *doing* [original emphases]. A requisite of any sound publicity must be, therefore, the giving of the best possible service" (Lee, 1925, p. 48; Ewen, 1996, p. 84; Goldman, 1948, p. 9; Hiebert, 1966, p. 88; see also Lee, 1920).

Lee's AATJ talk was reprinted in an early edited volume of readings on public opinion (Lee, 1928) and was cited prominently by his biographer (Hiebert, 1966, pp. 304-305). Indeed, the talk stands as his final major public statement on the topic; his later published works dealt with various other topics, particularly international issues. Lee discussed his work and philosophy in only a handful of subsequently published works, most notably an interview in *American Press* (Ripley, 1926; quoted in Cutlip, 1994, p. 154) and a chapter on corporation publicity in a handbook for freelance writers (where he essentially repeated the talking points from his 1924 talk; Lee, 1926).

Interestingly, Lee never mentioned the term "public relations" in his talk – despite having used the term periodically over the previous decade, including the several references cited herein. Notably, from 1921 to 1925, *Public Relations* was the title of the periodic clipsheet his office compiled and circulated about current affairs and client activities (see Hiebert, 1966, p. 153 and plates following p. 240).

In part, this omission reflects the way how the terms publicity, propaganda and public relations were used interchangeably by people during the period. For example, practitioner John C. Long's (1924) book (published earlier in the same year) used both "public relations" and "publicity" in the title: *Public Relations: A Handbook of Publicity*. Lee viewed "public relations" as an outcome of publicity work, not the term to describe the work itself – a idea advocated by some researchers today (Hallahan, 2010). This is also consistent with the recent observation that historically public relations "was not relationship oriented; that is relationships were not cultivated for their own sake, there was always a reason for the outreach" (Lamme & Russell, 2010, p. 355). Over time, as the term became more generally accepted, Lee used the term more frequently and called himself both an advisor (see Lee, 1927, p. 74) and counselor on public relations (Hiebert, 1966, p. 87).[8]

Public relations within AEJMC began with Ivy Lee. Indeed, one of Lee's legacies to public relations education is that he began the discussion and started the legitimization of public relations within AEJMC, concurrently with the more general recognition of the field's role in our modern public information system. Various other initiatives followed over the years, culminating in the creation of AEJMC's Public Relations Division in 1966.

Lee's second legacy relates to his engagement as a practitioner in journalism and communication education. Lee predated Bernays in terms of an interest and involvement in PR education and serves as the first major example of the *expert presenter* who has shared his or her expertise with educator and student groups. This is probably the most common model of how practitioners can participate in public relations education. However, since Lee, other practitioners have assumed other important roles: *scholarly author*, *careers promoter, professional author/editor, textbook author, practitioner-turned-educator, education advocate, donor, fundraiser,* and *personal mentor.* Notably, practitioners can serve in multiple roles. While some prominent practitioners were *contrarians* and disavowed professional PR education (such as Arthur W. Page; Griese, 2001, p. 330), derivative historical research should be pursued to consider more systematically how prominent practitioners have contributed to public education through the years and their impact on the public relations body of knowledge and education.

Importantly, Lee's talk was substantive – and dealt with topics relevant to the *journalism* problems of the day and the conflicted relationship been journalists and publicists (Rodgers, 2010). He also squarely addressed the problem of public relations ethics – a topic that continues to be of keen interest. Although some of his comments at times seemed contradictory (such as the importance of the publicist being credible vis-à-vis the corporation being the ultimate source of the information), Lee provided sage advice that remains as relevant today as it was in 1924. He dealt with core issues of honesty, completeness, disclosure, respect for editors and audiences, and personal conscience. Lee used a question during the Q&A session (when he was asked about the career opportunities in corporate publicity work) to promote the importance of his craft and to inspire a high standard toward which today's public relations practitioners (and students) of both sexes should still strive:

> Well, I think the opportunities are almost unlimited. Every corporation, every institution in the country, ought to have what, for want of a better form, we may call a publicity man. And then if he is a real man, he is going to become more than a mere press agent. As he develops, he is going to see that is it is not merely a rubber stamp proposition. He will see that his job cannot be done if he is merely to have policies determined and then be told that he must "put them over." … If he has the personality, brains, and judgment, he is going to be able very soon to show the heads of the corporation that the policy of the corporation is the vital thing, rather than the mere information that is put out to the public (Lee, 1925, pp. 26-27).

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Note on Sources and Acknowledgments

Ivy Lee's Papers are housed at the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, MC085. Finding Aid: http://findingaids.princeton.edu/getEad?eadid=MC085&kw=. AEJMC's papers at housed at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison. Finding aid:

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/wiarchives.uw-whs-us0154af. Edward L. Bernays' papers are preserved in the Library of Congress. Finding aid: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2003/ms003016.pdf. The author wishes to thank archivists Adriane M. Hanson, Jonathan R. Nelson and Patrick Kerwin from these three organizations, respectively, for their assistance in obtaining and/or verifying the existence of materials in their collections.

Endnotes

[1] Lee's career was chronicled by his principal biographer (Hiebert, 1966) and has been critiqued in several histories of the public relations (Cutlip, 1994; Ewen, 1996; Olasky, 1987a, b; Pimlott, 1951; Raucher, 1968; Tedlow, 1979). Aspects of his work has been analyzed by others: the adoption of his 1906 declaration of principles (Russell & Bishop, 2009), his role in the 1913-1914 railroad rate campaign (St. John, 2006), his advice to the Rockefellers in response to the Colorado coal strike (Hallahan, 2002); his controversial work for the German Dye Trust (Hainsworth, 1987); and parallels in his career to British practitioner John Elliot (Harrison & Moloney, 2004).

[2] Emery and McKerns's history of AEJMC (1987, p. 9) makes a reference to both Edward L. Bernays and Ivy Lee appearing before the group. Edward L. Bernays actually is listed on the program of the American Association of College News Bureaus, an affiliated group composed of college publicity managers, and was scheduled to appear December 28, 1922. Whether Bernays actually participated cannot be confirmed. No manuscript or transcript for such a presentation is found among Bernays' papers (Jonathan R. Nelson, personal communication, March 19, 2012). Bernays' extensive bibliographical record lists no subsequent speech to AATJ or AEJMC (Larson, 1978). The AATJ program for 1923 lists Ivy Lee as a speaker for in a 45-minute session during a joint meeting of the AATJ, the AACNB and the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism on Friday, December 28, 1923. Lee's topic was "Publicity as a field for graduates in journalism." No manuscript for such a presentation is found in Lee's papers (Adriane R. Hanson, personal communication, February 24, 2012). AEJMC's archives only contain the printed convention programs from the period (Patrick Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 2012). It is possible that Lee appeared and then was invited back to address the larger groups in 1924.

[3] In the conclusion of his talk at Columbia, Lee compared public relations to law, adding "…and I want to impress on you that while it is a wonderful thing to be engaged in the active work of journalism, I respectively submit that in participating in the great work of spreading the ideals upon which the world may base just judgments, upon work for industry which when explained and known to the public opinion of the world may perhaps promote the cause of progress, there is an avenue requiring the highest possible qualifications" (Lee, 1921, p. 13). Interesting, Lee seemed to be encouraging smart journalists to consider entering the field directly. Elsewhere he noted that he taken experienced newspaper personnel into his office, "…and we usually find it takes about two years for them to unlearn what they have [learned] previously" (p. 10).

[4] Interestingly, Lee presaged several ideas commonly attributed to Edward L. Bernays. For example, Bernays emphasized the importance of creating "circumstance," which in turn provided the basis for publicity coverage, whereas Lee told students, "The great idea underlying this kind of publicity work is to dramatize your ideas, dramatize your personality, dramatize the idea you want the public to obtain" (Lee, 1921, p. 9). Similarly, Lee clearly predated Bernays in his recognition of the importance of understanding social science. He invited students to come to his office to see his library to "see the extraordinary collection of books on psychology, all the elements that go into the making of crowd psychology, mass psychology. You must study human emotions and all the factors that move people, that persuade many in

any line of human activity. Psychology, mob psychology, is one of the important factors that underly [sic] this whole business" (p. 12). Hiebert (1996, p. 151) pointed out Lee maintained a sizeable library of books, magazines and newspapers -- a collection that eventually included 10,000 volumes. Lee's practice, similar to that of Bernays, reflected a shift from promotion to shaping public behavior based on sociology and psychology.

[5] The association, which was founded November 30, 1912, in Chicago, had met only nine times previously -- on the college campuses of Wisconsin (twice), Columbia, Kansas, Missouri and Northwestern as well as in Chicago. No meetings were held in 1915, 1918 or 1919. Only 15 schools were represented or approved that year for membership in the affiliated Association of American Schools and Departments of Journalism (AASDJ Minutes, 1924). In this same year, *Journalism Bulletin* began publication (renamed *Journalism Quarterly* in 1928) and the Kappa Tau Alpha fraternity at the University of Missouri was approved for nationwide expansion.

[6]The AACNB's separate printed program listed the session as a joint meeting with Teachers of Journalism with address by "Ivy L. Lee, New York Publicity Specialist. Subject: Publicity as Related to Colleges and Universities" (AACNB, 1924). Despite the listed topic, Lee never addressed college publicity nor public relations specifically.

[7] This discussion is based on the final typeset version of Lee's remarks, which are substantially unchanged from the original typewritten version found in Lee's papers (Box 9, Folder 9) and more readily accessible to interested parties. The presentation, originally titled "What is Publicity" was changed to "Publicity and Propaganda," and the transcription of the Q&A session was titled "Answers to Questions About Publicity" in the 1925 vanity-press book. A footnote explains that Lee gave the same talk "in substantially the same form" before the Advertising Club of New York on January 20, 1925. Worldcat.org lists the volume being available at only 100 libraries worldwide.

[8] Lee eventually became recognized (along with Bernays) as a "public relations counsel," witnessed in a 1928 Metropolitan Insurance Company report on the "Functions of a Public Relations Counsel" (Hiebert, 1966, p. 87). An undated manuscript about the skills required for a career in the public relations in Lee's papers suggests that he eventually embraced the term and used publicity in the more narrow sense of conveying ideas to the public. The three-page document appears to be an excerpt from a speech and emphasized understanding people and the world they live in and being prepared to provide competent advice. Three requisite skills included meeting as many people as possible and learning how to meet them graciously, traveling, and acquiring a broad understanding of the modern economic system (including a list of suggested courses). He added: "So far I have discussed public relations. I would like to point the difference between public relations and publicity. While the two go arm in arm to a certain extent, publicity in its narrow sense means press agent work, the mere releasing of stories. Public relations involves the determination of policies and the formulation of fundamental practices from which publicity will be forthcoming automatically if the policies and practices in themselves are basically sound. However, no one can overlook the fact that publicity work must be handled accurately and correctly and presented in a clear, clean cut manner if it is to be understood. That is the job of the respectable press agent, to disseminate news in a manner so that no one can fail to understand the exact meaning of the information. The public relations man must do both (Lee, n.d., quote at p. 3)

[9] Lee's biographer noted that Lee spoke again at Columbia in 1932 (Hiebert, 1966, p. 306). One of Lee's employees chaired the Columbia Journalism Alumni Association (Hiebert, 1966, pp. 298-299) – a fact that garnered ridicule for the school from Upton Sinclair (1923, vol. 3, pp. 323-328), who had earlier labeled Lee "Poison Ivy" (Sinclair, 1920, pp. 311-313). Columbia's Dean Carl Ackerman was a close friend who depended upon Lee for guidance (Hiebert, 1966, pp. 306-307). Also following his death, a

sympathetic radio dramatization of Lee's life was produced at Emory University, directed by Raymond B. Nixon, who later served on the faculty at the University and was a long-term editor of *Journalism Quarterly* (Hiebert, 1966, p. 299). Several notable journalism professors were Lee's friends and disagreed with later criticisms of Lee (Hiebert, 1966, p. 306). These included Ralph D. Casey at Minnesota (who also authored a publicity textbook, Quiett & Casey 1926) and James Melvin Lee at NYU (no relation), who had hired Bernays to teach his course on public relations in 1923 (Goldman, 1948, fn45, p. v).

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