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Public Information Program of the American Institute of Accountants

Frank A. Gale

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PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM OF THE
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS

By Frank A. Gale, New York

Assistant secretary, American Institute of Accountants

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Mr. Chairman and Presidents of the State Societies-

It is a pleasure and an honor to be with you today and to have the opportunity to present in brief the story of the work the American Institute is doing to promote and develop our public relations.

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Several years ago at the fiftieth anniversary meeting, ~~in fact~~ your council permitted me to speak before it for the purpose of putting ^{it} for it the steps we proposed to take to develop the public relations of the profession. I remember distinctly telling the gentlemen who then held ~~the~~ high office ~~as presidents of state societies~~ as presidents of state societies, that the first thing we wanted to do was to build upward from the good start which the Institute had already made.

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Today, I can report progress to you. Through the efforts of the Institute, and with the cooperation of those state societies which have been in a position to help constructively, we have made ^{ci} ~~decided~~ progress in our public relations. At the time I first took advantage of the opportunity to address this ~~honored~~ Council, I made much of the point that public relations includes other things besides news publicity. I stressed this point for the reason that the person who is unschooled in this art of making the public know about what you do and what you stand for is likely to make the mistake of regarding publicity as the beginning and the end of public relations.

~~As this point~~, I must make it clear to you that I am not discounting the importance of publicity. In most cases, it is the printed expression of the things we are trying to say and do. But, it is not ~~even~~ the major part of public relations. The major ^{part} ~~might~~, ~~for the purposes of this brief talk~~, be divided into two parts which are ~~the~~ themselves of major importance. They

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~~They~~ are: (1) strengthening of the interior organization, so that there is a maximum of effort toward securing new members and a maximum, too, ^{effort in} of convincing those members they did the right thing in joining their state society and the Institute; (2) agreeing upon the story to be ^{to the public} told and presentation of a united professional front in telling that story.

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The approach to the public is not a simple matter of telling all of the people what we are doing. It is not necessary to tell all of the people. The thing to do is to tell the right people. Who are the ¹⁰right people? They are the business men, the bankers, legislators and others who should know the basic facts with respect to the importance of the services of the certified public accountant.

In telling the right people about themselves, the accountants must utilize many media. One of these is, of course, ¹⁰publicity, or that presentation of news facts about ourselves which we call publicity. But, the more important media are contacts with the individuals and groups who should know about us, ~~and of whom, fortunately, many already do know the things we want them to know.~~

~~Let me say here that,~~ From the public-relations standpoint and from the standpoint of reality, the profession of accountancy, insofar as the presentation of a united front in public is concerned, is divided into two parts. One of these is the state society, or the state societies collectively. The other is the Institute. In order to present ¹⁴a strong professional front to the public, these two groups must work together. By working together, I do not mean compulsory agreement upon every professional question that ^{arises} ~~comes up~~, but I do mean constant effort by both to present the facts about accountancy to the public. Both the Institute and the state society must be constantly on the alert to develop every opportunity to present the important facts about the

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profession to the right groups and individuals.

What have both of these parts, these coöperating halves, of the profession accomplished ^{so far?} For one thing, there is evidence that, when we take the country as a whole, there has been a great gain in publicity results. More state-society meetings are reported more fully in the daily press than before. This means but one thing ^g that the state societies have become ~~more~~ alert to their publicity opportunities. I hope and believe it is due in no small measure to careful study and reading by public-relations chairmen of the publicity and public-relations manual which the Institute issues to incoming presidents, public-relations chairmen, and others interested.

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There has been a gain too, in the approach of the state societies to opportunities in public-relations channels [other than publicity. There has been an increase in the number of speakers from outside groups at state-society meetings; there has been an increase, too, in the number of state-society representatives at meetings of outside groups. This is the very essence of good public relations.

What has the Institute been doing to develop this important work? ~~It has accomplished much.~~ In the first place, it has been on the alert to ^{develop} ~~develop~~ its acquaintance among government, associations, and other leaders whose understanding of the basic purposes of accountancy and its values as a social force can be counted upon to bring strong coöperative support to the profession and, in months of danger, help it to protect itself against legislative and other acts which may endanger its independence.

There have been many examples of action by the Institute which have helped the profession. Many situations have arisen in which the institute has developed sympathetic contacts which cannot be talked about. It would not be on the side of clever public relations to broadcast the facts about many situations in which contacts of the Institute properly

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developed have made friends for the profession in high places. I would like to review for you here certain acts of cooperation in which are the very essence of good public relations. For one thing, there is the regional conference in which there is an ideal opportunity for cooperation and for presenting publicly the facts about accountants and what they are doing, saying and thinking. These conferences present to the profession an unusual opportunity to develop interchange of ideas among its members and to bring to accounting groups as speakers leaders in business, the other professions and in government. As you know, the institute cooperates actively with regional conference committees in planning conference programs, in the securing of speakers, and in publicity arrangements.

~~(Public Information Report)~~

~~It is~~

It is customary for accountants to constantly look ahead for new opportunities to develop their professional activities and widen their field of usefulness. With this fact in mind I would like to present to you at this time a program of activity by which each state society in the year 1940-41 can develop its public relations. ~~PROGRAM~~

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This program I have in mind has seven parts to it, so I therefore will offer it as a 7-point program. Here it is: (1) Intensify your efforts to increase the membership of the state society, not on the basis of an undignified and unprofessional drive for members, but on the basis of giving to each prospective member at least the opportunity to learn of the activities of the society and of the advantages to him in membership therein. (2) Devise interesting meetings and other activities to hold the interest of members. (3) Develop a definite public relations consciousness and plan activities which present through the public a good example of service by the accountancy profession in the public interest. (4) Establish and maintain contacts and relations with outside groups. (5) Know your state and national legislators. Invite

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them to your meetings and ask them to speak, not on strictly political matters but on broad subjects involving government and public affairs. Convince them that accountancy groups have no axes to grind and do not play politics. There is no politics involved in a friendly approach by your state society to state and national legislators. (6) Promote actively the natural business year in your state and arrange joint meetings with business, bar, and other groups for the purpose of discussing national business year. (7) Study the public questions of the day in your state and in the nation and make these subjects of discussion at at least one meeting each year and, if possible, two meetings or more each year. These meetings will offer a splendid opportunity for invitations to legislators and important business and professional leaders in your state to appear as speaker.

I know this seems to be an ambitious program, but in some degree ~~or other~~ each state society can venture some part of this schedule in 1940 and 1941. It follows closely the general public-relations conception of the American Institute ^{of Accountants}. In any planning you may attempt under this proposed program, we at American Institute Headquarters will do all we can to help you.

Aside from its natural obligation to develop itself professionally, the accountancy profession can find no problem more worthy of its attention than the problem of developing its public relations.

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