

Television Wartime Messaging: For the Love of Unity

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In today's episode of COVID fakery on rye and hold the apocalypse, we begin with a bevy of quotes from Edward Bernays (1891-1995), the acknowledged father of modern public relations, aka propaganda. I include his statements as a warm-up backgrounder—

"This is an age of mass production. In the mass production of materials a broad technique has been developed and applied to their distribution. In this age, too, there must be a technique for the mass distribution of ideas." (1928)

"The engineering of consent is the very essence of the democratic process, the freedom to persuade and suggest." (1947)

"It is sometimes possible to change the attitudes of millions but impossible to change the attitude of one man." (date unknown)

"When I came back to the United States, I decided that if you could use propaganda for war, you could certainly use it for peace. And 'propaganda' got to be a bad word because of the Germans using it, so what I did was to try and find some other words. So we found the words 'counsel on public relations'." (date unknown)

"When Napoleon said, 'Circumstance? I make circumstance,' he

expressed very nearly the spirit of the public relations counsel's work." (1923)

"Domination to-day is not a product of armies or navies or wealth or policies. It is a domination based on the one hand upon accomplished unity, and on the other hand upon the fact that opposition is generally characterized by a high degree of disunity." (1923)

"The public relations counsel, therefore, is a creator of news for whatever medium he chooses to transmit ideas. It is his duty to create news no matter what the medium which broadcasts this news." (1923)

"The only difference between 'propaganda' and 'education,' really, is in the point of view. The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we don't believe in is propaganda." (1923)

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society." (1928)

"Propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government." (1928)

"If you can influence the leaders, either with or without their conscious cooperation, you automatically influence the group which they sway. But men do not need to be actually gathered together in a public meeting or in a street riot, to be subject to the influences of mass psychology. Because man is by nature gregarious he feels himself to be member of a

herd, even when he is alone in his room with the curtains drawn. His mind retains the patterns which have been stamped on it by the group influences." (1928)

The news heads and the talk show heads and the sports heads and the advertisers and bureaucrats and politicians and public health flacks and celebrities are assuring television viewers, with no shame: We're all in this together. Over and over. Night and day. On every channel.

This was the strategy during older wars. No time for disagreement or dissent; there must be a unified response and effort; otherwise, we could lose.

We're all in this together means: fall in line.

If that's share and care and love, it's robot love.

Advertisers, despite their studies and their sophistication and their wall-to-wall profiling of consumers, still believe in the first principle of propaganda: repetition.

Get the name of your product and company out there and don't stop. Do it a thousand times, a million times. As long as you have money to pay for ads, do it.

Look at the insurance company commercials. Progressive, State Farm, Liberty, Geico. The little vignettes they lay on are really the occasion for pasting their company name on the screen. Make these 30-second stories friendly and funny and crazy, but the money shot is the company name.

Pandemic ads and messages follow the same rule. In this case, it's TOGETHERNESS. UNITY. Pounded on and on.

Why? If cooperation and love and togetherness are basic human impulses, why do people need to be reminded of that 24 hours a day, on television?

Does a husband who loves his wife need to see his face and his

wife's face on a screen, on every channel, without let-up, along with a message urging him to adore her?

On the other hand, a person who's been thrown out of a job, who can't find work, who sees his government checks fading down to zero...he needs pacification. That's a tough sell. That sell-job requires a whole lot of repetition...

...In order to produce SHAME in him, if he feels cheated and exiled and screwed. The repetition of togetherness and fake love informs him that the collective citizenry isn't on his side. It tells him his righteous anger has no place in the relentlessly upbeat messaging of "unity." It keeps him feeling isolated.

Now we're getting down to it. Don't let the people who are economically devastated believe they can find each other. Shut them out. Pump them full of television public service ads that paint an "uplifting" picture from which they're excluded.

They may be devastated, but television tells them they aren't on the team if they give their own concerns first priority. If they do, they're non-persons.

After all, when they sit at home watching TV, do they see a cropped video of another unemployed worker sitting in a dark room saying, "THIS IS CRAZY. I WANT TO WORK. I NEED FOOD. MY BOSS CLOSED HIS COMPANY. HE'S BANKRUPT. WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?"

Are they offered that kind of unity? Togetherness?

"Hi. I'm an NFL cornerback. I've made thirty million during my career. Here I am at home with my kids. We're playing games on the floor. I'm enjoying my family. We'll get through this. All of us. Stay safe. Use the time to bring your family closer together."

Major news outlets are under strict orders to keep "disturbing

human interest stories" off the front page and away from their broadcasts. This is also part and parcel of the wartime effort.

It would have to be, since economic devastation is what this fake pandemic is actually all about. No one in the mainstream will let that cat out of the bag. It would be more than a mistake. It would be a confession. It would be suicide.

How about these headlines? VACCINE KINGS WANT TO SOFTEN UP POPULATIONS FOR A NEEDLE IN THE ARM. A RUINED POPULACE IS READY TO BE LED INTO A NEW WORLD ORDER.

Propagandists know that a one-two punch of fear and then assurance works. Scare them with the virus, comfort them with togetherness.

But still, it's a tough sell. It has legs for a while, but then the natives become restless, especially in the hinterlands. People who aren't jammed together in big cities, who live in open spaces, tend to develop immunity to lies. Coiffed press hookers on television dispensing so-called news carry less punch. Farmers know if they can't plant their crops on time, with workers side by side, they'll go broke.

Generally speaking, people who don't see other people who are sick, and don't hear ambulance sirens, start wondering what's happening.

Protests begin. Protests expand.

The fake night of obedience turns into the real day of rebellion.

It turns out that a story about an invisible virus isn't quite the same as a line of enemy tanks approaching. All promoted wars are not equal.

Fauci knows this. Birx knows this. Bill Gates knows this. Mayors and governors know this. The CDC and WHO know this.

They don't really care whether you survive, but they know you care. So, for them, it's a race against time. How long can they keep the lid on? How long can their preposterous messaging work?

Stage magic is an odd game. The performer has to run his tricks quickly, so people don't have the luxury of sitting back and thinking about how he is fooling them. However, the public health magicians and the politician magicians and the news magicians are hemmed in—they're basically one-trick ponies. Virus, virus, virus=together, together, together.

It looks good, but it wears out.

It's wearing out now.

I'll close this piece with a few more gems from Edward Bernays—to urge you to keep your eye on the ball. The real ball.

"If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it now possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing it?" (1928)

"A single factory, potentially capable of supplying a whole continent with its particular product, cannot afford to wait until the public asks for its product; it must maintain constant touch, through advertising and propaganda, with the vast public in order to assure itself the continuous demand which alone will make its costly plant profitable. This entails a vastly more complex system of distribution than formerly." (1928)

"No serious sociologist any longer believes that the voice of the people expresses any divine or specially wise and lofty idea. The voice of the people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up for it by the group leaders in whom it believes and by those persons who understand the manipulation of public opinion. It is composed of inherited

prejudices and symbols and clichés and verbal formulas supplied to them by the leaders.” (1928)

“Propaganda is of no use to the politician unless he has something to say which the public, consciously or unconsciously, wants to hear.” (1928)