

**WAGING AND WINNING
THE WAR OF IDEAS**

by

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**The Public Relations Society of America
39th National Conference
Washington, D.C.
November 12, 1986**

INTRODUCTION

For four days early in November more than 2,000 of the nation's leading institutional communicators--members of the Public Relations Society of America--met in Washington for their 39th National Conference.

The conference theme, "Public Relations: Democracy in Action" served to remind us that public relations is a vital and constructive force at all levels of our democratic society and is grounded in our First Amendment rights.

How vital and constructive was put into perspective by the President of The Heritage Foundation, Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., in a major address to PRSA members. In his talk, "Waging and Winning The War of Ideas," Dr. Feulner discussed the role of Heritage in the public policy arena saying, "We man the ivory towers as well as the trenches in this war of ideas. We define the objectives, devise the strategies, and manufacture the ammunition. The war of ideas is a war of words--a war of intellect. It is a war of great importance because, as Richard Weaver said, 'ideas have consequences.' Lenin put it this way: 'Ideas are much more fatal things than guns.'"

At an "off-site" Professional Development Seminar Heritage's public relations management team provided a standing room only audience in Heritage's Lehrman Auditorium a first hand look at Heritage's public relations program and the success it has experienced in selling the conservative vision in the marketplace of ideas. Herb B. Berkowitz, Vice President of Public Relations and Hugh C. Newton, President of Hugh C. Newton & Associates public relations agency and long-time counsel to Heritage, described the role of public relations at Heritage, its specific activities and results, including the program designed to introduce Mandate for Leadership II: Continuing the Conservative Revolution. This effort was awarded a Silver Anvil Award by PRSA, the industry equivalent of an "Emmy" or an "Oscar." Highlights of their presentations are included.

Dr. Feulner's speech and highlights of the presentations by Hugh Newton and Herb Berkowitz will give you an insight into the success of The Heritage Foundation and why it is winning the war of ideas.

WAGING AND WINNING THE WAR OF IDEAS

by Edwin J. Feulner, Jr.

It is a pleasure to be with you all today. I should mention that our Vice President for Public Relations, Herb Berkowitz, told me to be candid with you--kind of like the bootlegger in one of President Reagan's favorite stories:

It seems that 25 of San Francisco's top bootleggers were arrested back in the days of Prohibition. And as they were being arraigned, the judge asked the usual question about their occupation. The first 24 were all engaged in the same professional activity. Each claimed he was in public relations.

When he got to the last one, the 25th, and said, "And what are you?" the last prisoner said, "Your Honor, I'm a bootlegger." The judge was surprised, but he laughed and he said, "Well, how's business?" And the last prisoner replied, "It'd be a lot better if there weren't so many PR men around."

Well, just like the bootlegger, I will try to be straightforward. And I should say that business at The Heritage Foundation is good because, unlike those PR men, we have not been shy about where we stand.

It was just a little more than a year ago that I had the pleasure of meeting some of you in New York at the PRSA banquet at which The Heritage Foundation was honored with a Silver Anvil Award, the public relations industry's mark of excellence. But winning such an award does not mean our work was done. Hardly. In the world of public policy, the war of ideas never ends. Tomorrow is another day, and there is always somebody ready to challenge you.

For example: this year Congress passed the most sweeping tax reform measure in contemporary history. Before the ink was even dry some congressional leaders were talking about the need for fine tuning. Others were more straightforward: in the 100th Congress, they admitted, efforts would be made to raise the newly cut tax rates. After all, they argue, Washington needs the money to finance the deficit.

Yet tax reform is hardly the most divisive issue facing Washington. On a daily basis Congress and the public policy community debate hundreds of different proposals that directly affect our businesses, our jobs, our families, and our future--whether we work for The Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit hospital, or a Fortune 500 corporation. As a result, you and your colleagues in the public relations profession are being called upon to play an increasing role

in the ongoing war of ideas that shape U.S. and world events. But unless you understand how to fight that war, you cannot hope to win.

And that is where organizations such as The Heritage Foundation come into the picture. We man the ivory towers as well as the trenches in this war of ideas. We define the objectives, devise the strategies, and manufacture the ammunition. The war of ideas is a war of words--a war of intellect. It is a war of great importance because, as Richard Weaver said, "ideas have consequences." Lenin put it this way: "Ideas are much more fatal things than guns."

The Heritage Foundation itself was just an idea not much more than a decade ago, when a small group of conservative activists and intellectuals incorporated Heritage as a nonprofit, public policy research organization dedicated to a renewal of traditional American values--free enterprise, capitalism, limited government, greater individual freedom, and a strong national defense to protect these liberties. What these men with a dream had in mind was a conservative think tank with the ability to deliver cogent and useful information to key policy makers in a timely fashion. Because they were politically involved, they understood that ideas do matter--if the ideas are available when an issue is being debated, not weeks or months after the debate has ended and the decision has been made.

In those days, we jokingly used to say a phone booth was big enough to hold a meeting of conservative intellectuals in Washington--those were the days when conservatives were seen as wedded to stale old ideas from the past. We were opposed to change, our critics charged. We were considered irrelevant by the opinion makers in the media and the power brokers in the Congress.

Times do change, and the dynamic physical and intellectual growth of The Heritage Foundation has reflected that change and been instrumental in bringing it about as well. The Heritage Foundation, by building a solid institutional base in those early years and establishing a reputation for reliable scholarship and creative problem solving, soon became a key player in the battle of ideas. As a result, many of the major initiatives on Washington's agenda can be traced to the work of Heritage--vouchers in education, the move toward privatizing many government services, efforts to streamline the Pentagon, an economic growth-oriented tax and trade strategy, and many others.

It was The Heritage Foundation, for example, that in 1981 funded a major \$100,000 research project on anti-missile technology. The results were published in 1982, and one year later, our vision of the future became President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative.

Not all new ideas are as dramatically revolutionary as a layered defense shield capable of shooting enemy missiles out of the sky. Almost all are more down to earth, both literally and figuratively:

the supply-side tax cuts of 1981 and 1986; the recent law to sell the government's rail freight system, Conrail, to the public through a stock offering; establishing "enterprise zones" in decayed urban areas, and so forth.

In December 1980, just weeks after the first Reagan election, in a public policy book called Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration, The Heritage Foundation offered the incoming Reagan Administration more than 3,000 such proposals. In later 1984, we published a follow-up volume with some 1,300 specific proposals. The special public relations program we put together to market this book to our target audiences won the Silver Anvil.

Since the late 1970s, in fact, we have published several hundred studies each year, offering Washington policy makers our ideas. Some are grand ideas, such as Star Wars. Others are less dramatic, such as proposals for reforming the tort liability system, how to end government involvement in agricultural production and marketing, or ways to get the private sector involved in the space satellite launch business. Today Heritage is looked upon as one of the key architects of public policy in Washington. We have an annual budget of more than \$12 million and a staff of more than 100 outstanding academics, researchers, and managers.

The important thing for this audience to understand is that public relations at Heritage has been part of the action from the very beginning. I came to Heritage as President in the spring of 1977, and from that moment on, public relations has played a key role both in terms of making institutional policy and in carrying out that policy. We were very aware from the start that ideas percolate up and filter down. Public opinion remains a powerful force in the American political system, and any organization that does not seek to cultivate it is fighting an uphill, probably losing battle.

Heritage's aggressive public relations effort has made it one of the most visible research institutes in the nation. But public relations at Heritage involves more than just institutional visibility or getting our name in the news. It is intended to focus the attention of the Washington policy-making community on the new ideas crafted at Heritage and to stimulate thoughtful discussion of those ideas at the very highest levels.

You must, of course, get their attention first. The competition in Washington is fierce. There are 100 Senators, 435 Congressmen, dozens of House and Senate committees, hundreds of lobbyists, trade associations, and labor unions, the many executive departments of government, and the White House itself, all competing on a daily basis for attention. It is the task of our public relations team to get as big a piece of the pie for our research product as we can.

Press attention, though, is a means to the end. The bottom line is getting results. Gaining the attention of the policy-making community is the critical first step. If you have their attention, they are more likely to actually take the time to read and consider what you have written. Then and only then can a research organization such as ours, which does no lobbying and makes no political contributions to any candidates or parties, hope to affect the decision-making process.

How effective have we been?

Just a few quotes: Commentary magazine said of Heritage that it "has come to be regarded as the most important think-tank in Washington." The New York Times Magazine referred to us as "The most aggressive and disciplined of the conservative idea factories." TASS, the Soviet government news agency, called us the "brain center" of American conservatism and New York's Village Voice characterized us as "The capital's most important think tank."

Comments such as these, as this audience knows so well, do not happen by accident. They are the result of hard work by an organization that has successfully waged, and is winning, the war of ideas in this country. And public relations--your profession--has played an important and integral role in the process.

At this point, let me go back to the early 1970s when I was working on Capitol Hill and became aware from first-hand experience that conservative ideas rarely worked their way into the public policy debate. Oh yes, we conservatives had the Hoover Institution. And in Washington were the American Enterprise Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. But we lacked an institution to translate thought into action--an organization that could take pure research and apply it to the day-to-day questions facing our policy makers. What was lacking, from a conservative perspective, was an organization that could wage a war of ideas on a daily basis, in a generally hostile environment, with the energy and sophistication to win.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. In 1971 Congress was debating the SST (the Supersonic Transport), an issue that divided both conservatives and liberals in Congress. On the one hand, some conservatives argued that the government should get involved in the development of the SST because of technological spinoffs that could benefit the Pentagon. On the other hand, it could be argued that if there was indeed a market for the SST, the private sector would produce such a plane to meet the demand.

Debate was heated, votes were cast, and an excellent study arrived on my desk that thoroughly laid out these arguments. It brilliantly defined the debate, but it arrived a day after the

vote--one day late. I immediately telephoned the president of the organization that had produced the study, congratulated him on the excellent scholarship, and asked why we did not receive it until after the fight was over. His answer: they did not want to influence the vote!

That was when the idea for The Heritage Foundation was born. At Heritage--and today at many smaller institutions patterned after Heritage, liberal and conservative alike--we do want to influence the debate. We want to set the agenda. We want our ideas to prevail in Congress, in the media, wherever thinking people are involved in policy making.

Because of the vast number of issues facing Congress, there is a desperate need for concise studies, which cut through the rhetoric and lay out the arguments so Members of Congress can make informed choices on the issues before them. Early on, therefore, we decided on several operating principles:

- o The product has to be credible.
- o The product has to be produced and disseminated in a timely fashion.
- o The product has to meet the "briefcase test."
- o The product has to reach the right people.

Who are our target audiences? Congress (and congressional staff), the Administration, and the national news media. A typical Heritage paper goes to just 7,000 carefully targeted people.

But research and production of policy papers is not--as it might be elsewhere--where our job ends. It is only the beginning. That is where public and media relations, and similar programs targeting Congress and the Administration, come in. This is when we climb out of the ivory tower and into the intellectual trenches.

Unlike lobbyists on Capitol Hill, a policy-oriented think tank needs to stay in front of the power curve--to operate on the cutting edge of public policy. We are trying to shape tomorrow's policies today. Unlike a university, we do not see ourselves merely as a forum for pure research--where competing ideas can be debated. Our role is not to compromise or to consider only what is politically and pragmatically possible. Our role is to study, analyze, and apply innovative solutions to public policy problems and press for change. As the former chief economic adviser to Senator Edward Kennedy told The Wall Street Journal recently: "Heritage is a constant ideological presence." To us, that is high praise. Or as one of my colleagues says: "There are no pacifists in the war of ideas."

The Heritage Foundation's influence exists not just because Ronald Reagan is in the White House. And winning the "war of ideas" is not merely a matter of getting our candidates elected to office. Waging and winning such a contest involves commitment, talent, creativity, and patience--because there is a new battle every day and we are here for the long haul. It involves providing information, ideas, and people to help move the public policy debate in a certain direction; it involves gradual changes in structures, in the way we look at things, and ultimately in the way we are governed. All of this depends on the power of ideas.

Let me give you an example how my colleagues at The Heritage Foundation have taken an idea, applied it to a public policy problem, and gradually changed the way our policy makers in Washington operate--in this case, in the area of urban policy.

The idea of Enterprise Zones is a simple notion for greenlining the inner cities.

- o Peter Hall (British socialist) delivered a speech on Enterprise Zones to the Royal Town Planning Institute in 1977.
- o Stuart Butler wrote a Heritage International Briefing Paper in 1979.
- o In June 1980 The New York Times printed Butler's op-ed article.
- o Republican Jack Kemp and Democrat Bob Garcia started coalition building.
- o Heritage started sponsoring public policy forums, seminars, and roundtables.
- o Enterprise Zones was a 1980 campaign issue for Ronald Reagan and John Anderson.
- o In 1981, Heritage and the American Legislative Exchange Council sponsored a conference in Atlanta for state legislators and black entrepreneurs.
- o Stuart Butler's book Enterprise Zones: Greenlining the Inner Cities appeared in 1981.
- o Reagan referred to it in the 1982 State of the Union Message.
- o In the 1984 election, both Reagan and Mondale endorsed it during their televised debate.
- o This past June, Enterprise Zone legislation passed the Congress.

o In the six years it took the U.S. Congress to pass Enterprise Zone legislation, 32 states passed their own laws and created a total of 250 separate zones.

Every step of the way, the Heritage Public Relations team was involved in the effort--first focusing on the radical new idea itself and later keeping critical media and public attention on the issue as it moved through the policy process.

The bottom line is that Washington is now working from our agenda in this area. People are not talking about big government throwing more and more money at a problem that seemed to defy solution. Congress is now looking at additional market-oriented solutions to urban decay, such as Urban Homesteading--the privatization of public housing.

This very specific example shows how one man, with the right institutional base, can change the entire debate on a major public policy issue involving billions of dollars and major programs that have been around for decades.

The important lesson in the Enterprise Zone example is that ideas do have consequences, but just producing an idea is not enough. If that were the case, we could have stopped with Peter Hall's speech to the Royal Town Planning Institute--the pure research phase. To be successful, the idea had to be marketed by the right people to the right people during the applied research phase.

Institutions, such as the Institute for Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Institute in London and The Heritage Foundation, Brookings Institution, and American Enterprise Institute in Washington, popularize ideas in a number of ways. All host conferences, lectures, and seminars and publish policy reports, books, and monographs, but in our case we carry a project a step further and aggressively market our policy proposals to the media elite and other opinion makers. In 1985 alone, we hosted more than 200 lectures, debates, and other public forums on issues facing Washington. In all, about 10,000 people attended these functions. We also published more than 250 background studies, monographs, lectures, and articles and arranged for dozens of expert witnesses to testify at congressional hearings. Through such programs--and the vigorous public relations effort that is involved in virtually every activity--we are able to promote various ideas on a continuing basis and press for change. But this takes time.

Selling ideas takes time. Procter and Gamble does not sell Crest toothpaste by placing one newspaper ad or running one television commercial. They sell it and resell it every day by keeping the product fresh in the consumer's mind. Organizations like The Heritage Foundation sell ideas in much the same manner. Or as The Wall

