

MEMO of the Month

DATE: September 27, 1972

TO : Professional Staff, OPA

FROM : Jack L. Billings
Acting Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs

SUBJECT: Illuminating Affirmatively

Under the Operational Planning System, the Office of Public Affairs has one "objective" which is to be tracked by the Deputy Commissioner for External Relations. The title of the objective is "Affirmative Illumination of Success of Education." With critics continually emphasizing what's wrong with education, the Commissioner wants to counter-balance that by highlighting what's right with education.

In order for this office to provide a continuing report on the achievement of this objective, it will be necessary for us to receive quarterly reports of progress from all units of OPA. The first quarter of this fiscal year will end on September 30. By October 10, we will need a report from each Division and independent unit of accomplishments which can be included under the stated objective.

Although this will necessarily be a quantitative report, the format will be narrative. In other words, we do not want a table showing the number of press releases and actualities produced during the quarter (in the case of the news division), but rather a paragraph about press releases and actualities--or one on each--explaining how these helped to achieve the objective as well as how many were produced and what the distribution was.

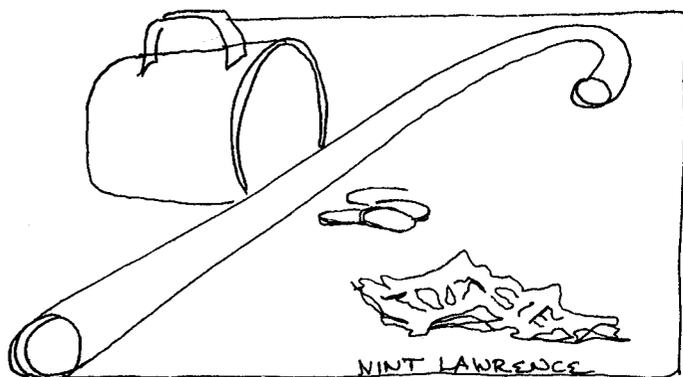
The key to this exercise is the name of the objective. We are to report on those things we did that helped to shed light in a favorable way on educational success. One could, of course, argue that this is, in fact, the entire name of the game for OPA. That would be an evasion of the point. For example, press releases are prepared and distributed about the appointment of new employees of certain ranks and grades. Such items clearly have nothing to do with illuminating the success of education. There are many other activities which also have no impact, except by the most devious route, on this topic.

We should end up with an overall narrative report (one at the end of each quarter) which will clearly tell the Deputy Commissioner what OPA has been doing to help achieve this goal.

Obviously, certain of our publications will fall into this category. Some responses to public inquiry could be so described. The dissemination of certain kinds of materials may also be classified in this way. The production of a Presidential Proclamation might qualify. Seminars, meetings and clinics which we have helped publicize, organize or operate may meet the criteria. Most speeches will probably fall into this category, as will articles in journals and magazines and many, if not most, of the articles in American Education Magazine. Films and other special projects, in most cases, will fit this model, as will the television and radio appearances of program people and administrators when arranged by OPA people. Value judgments must be made, and some thorough searching of files and tapping of memories will be in order.

Responding to this directive will take some creative management on the part of Division Directors and Branch Chiefs in OPA, and the development of the first such report will be the most difficult and must be done in the least time. Distribution of this memorandum is being made to all staff members in order to make sure that all of us are aware of the requirement; clearly, however, it will be necessary for the appropriate supervisors to make the assignments necessary at each level to make sure all the material is submitted to this office no later than the close of business on October 10. Recompilation and transmittal to the next level will be accomplished in the Office of the Assistant Commissioner. Submission to the Deputy Commissioner will be no later than c.o.b. October 16.

Stealing from the Blind



by Marjorie Boyd

The subject of our tale is the Blind Vendors Program, which installs the little stands from which blind people sell candies and newspapers in post offices and other government buildings. Amid the desert of wrecked and overblown government plans, this program has been one small oasis, a tiny but heartening reminder that sometimes government can actually do some good.

The Blind Vendors Program began in 1936—no wild experiment, but a careful copy of a successful Canadian project. The thinking behind it was simple: since someone is going to sell

candies and newspapers to the captive audience in government buildings, the selling might as well be done by someone the government wants to help. By letting blind people do the selling, the government could not only help them earn their own livings, but it could also demonstrate to private employers that blind people were employable.

In its 36 years of operation, the program has directly employed many thousands of blind people and indirectly encouraged industries to hire countless thousands of others. More remarkable still is its economy of operation. Since the program runs on the energy of the blind and supports

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