

AMONG WOMEN

Public Relations.

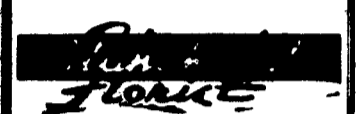
By Mary Leason Snyder

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Practically every organization, whether profit making like a big corporation or non-profit making like hospitals, educational institutions, clubs, yes even parish organizations, has today a director of public relations.

Some clubs still refer to the chairman of this work as "publicity chairman" but the more exact term in most instances is public relations chairman.

Just recently in the nearby city of Syracuse a city-wide institute of public relations for clubs and church groups was sponsored by a woman's journalistic sorority. Meeting once a week for four weeks representatives of various organizations considered what makes good public relations.

While I may be running the risk of insulting the intelligence of some of my readers, I should like to review some of the salient points of public relations. During the year I talk with many public relations chairmen and I know that there is sufficient interest among the readers of this column to justify this topic.

MANY PEOPLE in charge of public relations think their job is getting the name of the club

or its projects into the newspapers. This is fallacious reasoning because poor publicity is often worse than none at all.

To be effective publicity must be accurate. If one group in an organization is given credit for work done by another committee, more hard feelings are stirred up than interest aroused. So for the sake of emphasis, let's repeat, news reporting must be truthful and accurate.

It must also be timely and brief to be printed in the average daily newspaper where it must compete with international, national and local articles of wider appeal.

ARISTOTLE'S warning to writers, to avoid starting "ab ovo" but to plunge "in medias res" is particularly true of news-writing. An article should start with the most significant fact.

Many authorities insist that the opening sentence should state clearly the who, what, where, when, why, and how. If the five W's and the how are not in the first sentence they should definitely be in the first two. Another hint to publicity chairmen, names are important. Give the full name and middle initial. In the case of a married woman, her husband's name should be given; for example, Mrs. John Smith, rather than Mrs. Evelyn Smith; unless Mrs. Smith, specifically requests the latter form. Incidentally, this rule also applies for widows.

And to get in a little advice helpful to the publicity chairman, you will lighten her work considerably, if each chairman sends in correct committee lists for her to use in her news-writing.

YOU MAY KNOW which Smith Evelyn Smith is, but your publicity chairman may not, so she is forced to make inquiring telephone calls or to consult a city directory if one is available. And one last comment on publicity work, practice in writing is important. Study the news style of the papers to which you are sending articles and endeavor to conform.

Don't be discouraged if the editors change your copy considerably at first. With practice and persistence you will find that your submitted copy requires less and less editing.

Parents must not command a son or daughter to marry. Marriage must always be left a matter for the person's own free choice.

The Dramatic Flaw In 'Martin Luther'

By GERALD WALKER

Mr. Walker is an alumnus of New York and Columbia Universities. Some of his literary works have appeared in "American Vanguard" (1952), "National Anthology" (1946), and in Columbia's publication, "The Jester". He has authored a new play, "A Candle And Forever", which will open in New York City on Dec. 16. Mr. Walker is not a Catholic.

Most of the criticism of "Martin Luther" has dealt with its historical distortions; much of the praise has been for its acting and photography. Nowhere, however, has this

we know. His scripture. But the film can never bring itself to admit this. We continue to hear a repetitious insistence on "scripture" — which, like "democracy" or "the rights of man," is easy on the ears but quite meaningless until defined.

A parallel situation in history comes to mind: the American Revolution of 1776. Abuses there were plenty (and corrupt practices, too) within the British Empire and much ritual chanting of "freedom," "democracy," and "the rights of man" among the aggrieved colonists, who also claimed that they did not wish to sever themselves from the mother country but only wanted to cleanse it of its imperfections.

WHAT POWERFUL, and perhaps sadly omnipresent, human motive lay beneath the surface of this battle-cry rhetoric? Charles Beard answered this question with finality as regards the American Revolution: the colonists wished to void their fiscal obligations to England. Self-interest. To interpret the events of 1776 in terms of the rights of man would be as incomplete as it would be naive. So, too, the Reformation.

That there were principles involved, we do not deny. We do strongly deny that there was no self-interest or calculation or simple ambition in a man whose tenacity of purpose would tend to indicate something of an over-erose rather than a deficiency. A man who could so strongly dramatize his position that he married a nun. A man shrewd enough to win over the German Princes by reasoning more fiscal than spiritual. A man not above a bit of opportunism, as witness his savior-like re-entrance upon the white horse of moderation when he chastises Caristadt for implementing the very engine of revolt he (Luther) had set in motion.

IF THERE IS condemnation in this, it is not of Luther, who was, after all, a man subject to defects as well as aspirations. Rather, it is of the film makers. For, aside from the fatuousness of omitting first-hand knowledge of man's duality from the life story of a religious leader, a much graver error was committed. By means of a subtle and brilliantly insidious editorializa-

tion-by-camera-lens, all Church practices are forced into a lack-step simile parade which, after a while, has the effect of making one look askance at even the simplest act of devotion. Shadow is everywhere. The Church is not only portrayed as dying, but as killing by inches as well. This is slanting, not reporting. Why?

The answer goes back to the essential lack of conflict in the white-washed, unheroic portrait of Luther, as he appears in the film: an unreal, papier-mache figure struggling vaguely and transparently with an ambiguous word—scripture. No hero there, and no dream either. When no hero is available to dramatists of the second order (because they themselves cannot produce one) they sometimes attack the problem from the other end: that is, they paint as strong a villain as possible, and if the villain is wicked enough the audience may be convinced that the other fellow on stage is a hero after all.

AND SO THE film's spuriously "liberal" protests against corruption are a necessary patina with which to cover a trail of half-truths, distortions, and omissions.

So, too, "Martin Luther" has unwittingly become not so much a pro-Lutheran film as an anti-Catholic one. And a very definite distinction exists in this writer's mind between criticism of Catholicism and anti-Catholicism.

The former is based upon a critic's honestly held and well-reasoned belief that the Roman Catholic Church is wrong on this point or that. The latter falls into the category of non-selective denunciation, a process in which the mind has no part.

To go on now to the point at which the film breaks off—it can in no sense of the word be considered a resolution — we see Luther in church following a tenderly soap-opera-ish scene with

his family. The German Princes have decided to support themselves by supporting him. He is inspirationally framed by little halo-effects in the lighting, a choir sings in the background, the music surges to a climax. The End.

End? Surely one can see that this is only the beginning. Lying ahead, there is a new church to establish, new doctrines to lay down, and, necessarily, new "crutches" to be devised on which Luther's own church would have to lean.

In short, Martin Luther had still to learn that the pristine quality comes easier to a critic on the outside than to a "sullied" administrator.

AS JOURNALISM, then, the film is inaccurate and incomplete. It falls woefully short in still another sphere, that of intimating the full spiritual picture of man in his world—which is just another way of saying art. It is not a sequel that we are asking for, just the whole story. The most cleverly shaded photography will never be a substitute for that.

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