

REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MANUFACTURING CHEMISTS ASSOCIATION

James E. McKee Jr., Chairman
Public Relations Committee

November 22, 1976

The hazards of holding the same office for two years are obvious. My position today is not unlike that of a re-elected politician. It's important to assess what was said to this audience last year!

In 1975, the Public Relations Committee report covered two main points for future action:

1. That we would focus more sharply on major opportunities as well as the larger problems of the chemical industry, and
2. That we would establish closer relationships with other functional areas of MCA so a more meaningful contribution to the industry's total communications could be made.

These things have been done.

The assaults on the chemical industry by media and government in the past 12 months have made it imperative. In addition, the opportunity to participate in Dr. Heckert's Special Committee on Toxic Substances Legislation demonstrated what can be accomplished through interaction of functions when proper leadership is provided.

Spurred by today's public demands and the proof that joint committee action can get things done, the Public Relations Committee stepped up its practice of meeting with the leadership of certain other functional committees, particularly Government Relations, Technical and Legal Advisory.

This was started about 18 months ago to gain a better perspective of MCA's needs. What we have found is that we can work together -- that we can have a common purpose and pursuit. We have agreed upon issues that should be the greatest concern of the association. These are human health and the environment, and increasing government constraints which erode industry's management of its resources. Cooperation to date has prompted us to adopt a plan for industry spokespersonship, encompassing an even larger number of functional committees.

The plan was proposed by a former chairman of our committee, Ned Brandt of Dow, and adopted at our September meeting. Most of the committees we have approached have already responded favorably. These committees are Air Quality, Water Resources, Solid Waste, Occupational Health, Government Relations, Legal Advisory and Chemical Regulations Advisory.

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The plan calls for establishing a task force with representatives of those committees and the public relations committee to stimulate spokesmanship on the public issues.

Each committee will be asked to provide basic facts and a statement representing MCA's position on their function as related to government, health and environment. The Air Quality Committee, for example, will provide facts on what the chemical industry has done about air pollution, and provide the industry position on current legislative and regulatory matters.

Members of the task force would serve as coordinators of the project, recruit the best possible spokesmen from MCA's membership and arrange platforms in leading cities where maximum exposure to our point of view can be gained. We have in mind prestigious platforms like the Economic Club of Detroit, with accompanying appearances on local radio and TV plus newspaper interviews.

The task force would be responsible for placing industry material in the hands of selected spokesmen, coordinating appearances on a geographic basis and making sure that the load was properly spread among the member companies.

Each speaker would develop his topic in his own way, weaving in the MCA-developed material at will.

The type of spokesmen we have in mind are you gentlemen, the directors of MCA, supported by other chief executive officers not present today.

The plan has both short- and long-range advantages: The short range is obvious -- to gain some badly needed statements of the chemical industry point of view in various media. The longer range advantage will be gained as we build up this corps of spokesmen. MCA has a constant need for industry experts who can provide statements and make appearances on relatively short notice.

News media, as you know, will use responses to issues and handle "the other side's" position when the story is breaking. There is no public relations benefit in a tardy response. It's either ignored or becomes a liability as its availability provides the media opportunity to retell the whole sordid story.

We hope to get this plan underway in early 1977.

It goes without saying that all on-going PR programs are being directed toward the same issues to which the spokesmanship plan will be addressed.

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ChemEcology will expand further its coverage of member company success stories in the areas of environment and toxic substances.

Participation next April in the American Women in Radio and Television spokesmanship program for lay audiences will stress positive contributions by the chemical industry with emphasis on health and environmental protection.

MCA News will continue to report on industry and company programs in these key public issues so that good ideas can be shared across the membership.

We are considering an idea proposed by our member from American Cyanamid, Joe Calitri, whereby awards could be given to member company plants which have achieved goals in energy conservation. This program, of course, could demonstrate MCA's dedication to energy conservation and show that even without a national energy policy -- the industry is dedicated to conservation.

We will also continue our three-times-a-year Chemical Issues & Commentary -- the survey of member companies to identify emerging issues. This practice goes back to 1973, when we began polling people participating in MCA activities in six companies and the professional staff of MCA. That panel has now grown to 19 companies and MCA with over 400 respondents. And it's the study upon which we base our forward planning we share with you today.

Gentlemen, it's well known that the 95th Congress will inherit most of this year's environmental and energy issues. Water and air pollution legislation will doubtless take over the spotlight recently occupied by toxic substances. Chemicals in food and food packaging will join other lurking problems like pesticides to keep all of us busy. We must be prepared to answer our critics, to itemize consequences of tradeoffs and to accentuate the positive side of the chemical industry.

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