

communion. This must not be attributed to any kind of superstition, but to a recognition that there are things in heaven and earth that cannot be fully comprehended in terms of logic or science or morality, and to a desire on his part to acknowledge a Supreme Power and to humble himself before it. The apostle James wrote of this power that there is in it no variableness, neither shadow of turning. In many ways these words could be used of Ernie himself.

I end with some words of my own. I shall greatly miss Ernie Wentzel's gifts of wise and clear and undogmatic

judgement. If I wanted to obtain a sound judgement on P.W. Botha, Buthelezi and Inkatha, Cosatu, the UDF, the release of Mandela, judgements which I knew would be free from all spite or prejudice, I would always have gone to him if that had been possible. I have had to write the three most difficult chapters in the second volume of my autobiography, on Adrian Leftwich and the ARM, on John Harris and the bomb, and on Mandela and Rivonia. I am grateful that he had the opportunity to read these chapters before he died, and to give me his judgement and comments upon them, which were of great help to me.

May his soul rest in peace. □

By Ben Parker and Keyan Tomaselli

THE IMAGE OF AN 'OPEN' UNIVERSITY

University public relations officers are facing immense pressures as the economy worsens and as the press, businessmen and visiting 'experts' in economics, marketing and production complain about the unnecessary 'luxury' of university education. The short-term needs of the economy require technical expertise, they argue, and that is what universities should be concerned with.

This paper addresses the question of the image of the university in the present recessionary and politically volatile climate.

We'd like to begin this paper by reference to Kerr's Second Law, which we believe approaches the kernel of any university public relations problem. Kerr's Second Law reads:

In his dealings on the campus, a faculty member is an ultra-conservative, leaning slightly to the right of Herbert Hoover; (in South Africa, that would read Louis le Grange); in his dealings off campus with the general public his position is as a raging liberal far to the left of Karl Marx (1).

A schizophrenic existence, is the life of the average academic.

According to the Public Relations Institute of South Africa, "Public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public" (2). This, it would seem, embodies a dual objective:

1. To evaluate what the public wants and to correlate one's policies and actions accordingly; and then
2. To keep the public informed, in order to win understanding, acceptance and cooperation.

We consider this to be an impossibility when the organisation in question is a university. Universities are not factories producing uniform products. The complement of PR is advertising. Where advertising persuades people to need things they don't want and to buy these with money they haven't got, PR would seem to be aimed at

maintaining an on-going relationship between the purchaser and the producer. Advertising, being media oriented, is the more remote form of persuasion. In contrast, PR is activity-oriented, and works through 'below the line' promotions through personal interactions, talks, conferences and displays. Where advertisers are shielded from face-to-face interaction with their target audiences, public relations officers are in direct contact and often bear the brunt of personally-expressed criticism against the products or institutions they represent.

CONTRADICTORY

Universities are contradictory institutions which relate to society in contradictory and confusing ways. Universities — English language universities, that is — are loosely administered, each department a virtual independent entity in terms of theoretical position, action, course orientation and so on. Even within departments, extreme differences of academic and political opinion occur, and are largely tolerated. There is no interference from anybody — except on occasion from faculty boards — in the way lecturers conduct themselves in terms of their disciplines.

On the one side are grouped the so-called 'liberal arts' courses which fall under the social science and arts faculties. Students to the left of Herbert Hoover tend to populate these faculties. To these we might add, depending on the university, faculties of law and medicine. Students and lecturers in these faculties are identifiable by their long hair, faded jeans and membership of the UDF and End Conscription Campaign. These individuals want to change the world.

To the right of Herbert Hoover are generally the engineering, science and commerce students and some staff. With some exceptions, these individuals are identifiable by their short hair, the wearing of ties, membership of the Students Moderate Alliance and an obvious disdain for arts students. These individuals will only change the world if their incomes are threatened.

The result of these opposites is contradiction. Paradoxically, it is this contradiction that is the strength of academic freedom. This is bad news for PR officers. The public image of English language universities is a fragmented one. How can anybody try to establish and maintain understanding between the university and the 'public' in the face of these odds? 'What the public wants' is simply not an issue — in any faculty.

The contradictions manifested in English language universities are basically a reflection of our divided society. Different sections of the university are concerned with different needs, different publics and different futures. These differences are manifested in different political alignments, different ways of perceiving one's practice as either student or academic, different ways of putting one's knowledge into practice, and often, a different conception of knowledge itself.

This contradictory image has serious implications for any PR office whose task is to project a positive image of the university. Ortega Gasset's Law governs this promotional minefield:

Between us (university and public) only a relative and indirect and always dubious communication is possible (3).

Now, PR officers are always at pains to paint reassuring, unthreatening images of the university. A study of convocation and other externally targeted PR publications will show an emphasis on the sciences. Scientists tend to be uncritical of their social practice and colour pictures of test tubes and bunsen burners indicate progress, discovery and orderly — to use a favourite political phrase — development. The clinical, sterile atmosphere is somehow reassuring to potential sponsors. The problem is that these same PR departments then try to promote the humanities on the same basis.

STERILE IMAGE

One example of the socially sterile image of the university was the 75th UND Anniversary Supplement published in The Sunday Tribune on 28 July 1985. Not only was no one in the Arts Faculty consulted about the image that was being manufactured on their behalf, but the blurb suggested that the PR office has very little idea about the imperatives working in the arts faculty. The image was of a boring and irrelevant faculty populated by art historians and apolitical individuals. There was no sense of crucial social or political issues being debated, of strategies for democratic development being worked out, indeed, even of persuading students that they are South Africans and that South African literature, for example, is as valid — perhaps more valid — than is the exclusive study of the classics during these turbulent times. While the article did point out that the arts were unjustly ranked as being of less importance than the 'business' faculties, the composite image, in fact, seemed mainly to be a reflection of what the PR office would like the arts faculty to be because that is what it is best able to 'sell'. This is one of the reasons why academics are often reluctant to cooperate with the PR officers of their universities. They perhaps sense that PR people have little sense of what they are doing, while the ethos of an inherited ivory tower demeanor would look less than favourably on too much media publicity. On the other hand, PR departments may themselves be responsible to

governing committees comprising academics who may have little idea of PR.

From our arguments, then, it would appear that the result of PR Law is similar to a modified version of Martin's Law of Communication:

The inevitable result of improved and enlarged communication between universities and the public is a vastly increased area of misunderstanding (4).

The ridiculous image of the university as an academic cloister in which lethargic academics wearing white coats pour over ageing manuscripts or scorch themselves with bunsen burners at their leisure is a medieval hangover. The attitude that students should 'attend to their studies' and leave politicking to 'those who know' is equally a myth.

Universities are supposed to produce knowledge; they are supposed to teach students to think, to reason from first principles; they are supposed to instil moral values in students; they are supposed to educate the new generation of scientists, managers, entrepreneurs, professional people and so on. They are supposed to study the world and its people.

The production of knowledge is an exacting task. It is a tenseful, frustrating and sometimes dangerous task, especially for South African academics during the current period of 'unrest'. The social imperatives facing South Africa at the moment hardly make for study at leisure. It is a task that often puts academics at odds with the System, with politicians, planners and those in control of things. These confrontations are both necessary and desirable — and inevitable. They are the *raison d'être* of academic endeavour. Academics are amongst the few who have a wider view of things. This leads them to criticise processes and actions that on the surface may appear benign and harmless, but which may have untold repercussions for the future.

POSITIVE IMAGE

We have painted a complex picture of the university. We could take it a lot further. But, let's stop to think about what kind of PR is necessary to create a positive image or *images* of the contradictory institution that is the university.

Crucial to the multiple image that needs to be built up of the university is Hacker's Law which states that:

The belief that enhanced understanding will necessarily stir a nation to action is one of mankind's oldest illusions (5).

There is no one image of the university. There is no single public profile. Universities mean different things to different people. To the state they are a necessary burden which has to be kept under control (through the use of Security Police if necessary). To the oppressed masses, some universities offer hope in a sea of repression; to business, universities are nothing more than screw factories producing cogs to fit somewhere (at the higher levels) of industry and commerce. To academics they are the site of struggle of political and academic ideas.

Both the 'product' and 'target market' are fragmented. Perhaps what is required is a PR campaign that tries to legitimate the contradictory nature of the university, identifying the strengths of the institution, rather than creating an image of what it is not.

Thus far we have provided a picture of the difficulties faced by public relations personnel in their attempt to characterise a university and present an amenable and accessible package to the universities' constituency (or public). The nub of these difficulties centres on the differentiation between different kinds of academics and the contradictory nature of academia itself. These difficulties are compounded by the diverse nature of the university's constituency and in particular the different expectations that are held by potential students and by potential employers.

These difficulties, which may seem overwhelming, are those that exist at present: what we now want to do is to show how these difficulties are a mere molehill compared to the mountain that is fast approaching as developments within Southern Africa make a major impact on the nature of a university. The first factor we wish to discuss is the introduction of the SAPSE system and secondly, the 'reopening' of the universities to all applicants.

GRADING AND SUBSIDY

SAPSE, and its counterparts such as the new grading system employed by the CSIR, have important implications for the nature of the university. South African universities have always been Janus-faced: one face turned towards the developed metropolises of the West, the other towards the complex mix of developed and developing, urban and rural, that constitute their backyard. Until now, the university has managed to accommodate both faces with only a mild degree of schizophrenia. The new grading and subsidy systems, however, have driven a wedge between the two faces and force a university to choose which face it will favour.

Amongst the UTASA (the English language University Teachers Association of South Africa) universities, Wits and UCT, are now emphasising their commitment to the standards of excellence embodied in the international academic community. This will ensure their government subsidies through the ability of their academic staff to compete in the international arena. Their constituency is international and the consequence of this is that research and publications must be relevant to existing international debates and areas of research. The commitment is not just to excellence but to the primacy of issues deemed important by the international academic community. The conflict between the two faces of the university comes when issues and debates which are important in the South African context are not deemed relevant by the international community. These universities face the danger of becoming isolated from the mix of communities that exist in South Africa itself and which feed them with students.

Other UTASA universities, such as Natal, are emphasising their commitment to the communities in the surrounding region (6). Their participation in the international arena will be based on those areas of local concern which are deemed relevant by the international community. Their primary commitment, however, is to be the needs of their communities. While this may raise problems for funding, it is likely that alternative sources can be found, given the international political acceptability of this commitment.

The Afrikaans universities are in an even more difficult position. To a large extent they are isolated both from the

international community and the broad South African community. Their traditional reliance on the white Afrikaner community as their only constituency will be insufficient to sustain them under the new system. As we have seen in a recent article by Jack de Wet in *Die Suid-Afrikaan* (7) and ensuing debates in the newspapers, some academics are already aware of these dangers.

THREE SCENARIOS

We now want to look at three scenarios in relation to the 'reopening' of the universities.

1. Universities that are committed to international standards of excellence and which are open to all will experience a slow increase in students other than white. The majority of potential students will be unable to meet the high academic standards required for entrance and accreditation. The consequence of this will be a growing separation from the mainstream of debate and research which is appropriate, relevant and necessary in the South African context.
2. Those universities that choose to remain white and uni-cultural will face dwindling financial resources and student populations. The end result will be deterioration of these institutions as they become increasingly irrelevant to Southern Africa.
3. Those universities that choose to become 'community' universities, open to all, will experience fairly rapid increases in students other than white. Their major problems are going to be in the area of academic standards and the complexities of practising education which is multicultural. However, their relevance to the South African context will ensure their future.

RELEVANT

We want now to focus on this last scenario as it is the most relevant one and look at the implications for the image of a university. The tensions that already exist will be greatly exacerbated. The idea of a UNI-versity will become anachronistic. The term 'university' has two important connotations:

- (1) a commitment to universal academic standards; and
- (2) a commitment to one particular cultural heritage.

Under scenario (3) mentioned above, both these commitments will have to be abandoned. There will be many cultures involved in the university and academic standards will have to vary according to relevant and appropriate contextual criteria.

The image of a community university would appear to become highly fragmented. However, this is only so if one continues to wear apartheid spectacles in which diversity is seen as separateness and disunity. Within a multicultural community university there will be underlying unities that bind the diversities. These unities revolve around the processes of academic practice — the critical, speculative and exploratory nature of the academic enterprise.

This point is also important in relation to the upgrading of technikons and the increasing competition they will pose to the universities. What distinguishes the university from the

technikon is that technikons are essentially technicist. They have clear objectives and know where they are going and what they are doing. Universities are essentially agnostic institutions: they can't know where they are going, although hopefully, they know what they are doing. It's a bit like the difference between Columbus and the Mayflower pilgrims. Columbus didn't know where he was going, but he discovered America. The Mayflower pilgrims knew where they were going.

To conclude, public relations will never be able to present a clear image of a university while it tries to define the university in technicist terms and to produce an image which can be sold like any other package. But if PR officers accept that they have no package to sell, but rather an ideal and a commitment which is essentially agnostic, uncertain and indefinable and they concentrate on creating an understanding of the underlying unities that are embodied in the academic process, they will be in a position to educate the community — or public(s) — as to what to expect from a university.

If they consider themselves educators rather than salesmen then they may be able to come to grips with the image of a university (8).□

REFERENCES

1. Kerr's Second Law quoted in Martin, T.L. 1973: *Malice in Blunderland*. McGraw-Hill, p. 120.
2. Malan, J.P. and L'Estrange, J.A. 1969: *Public Relations Practice in South Africa*. Hansa, Johannesburg.
3. Gasset, O. 1957: *Man and People*. WW Norton, New York, p. 140.
4. Martin's Law of Communication quoted in Martin, *op. cit.* p. 44.
5. Hacker, A. 1970: *The End of the American Era*. Atheneum, New York, p. 143.
6. Booyesen, P. de V. 1984: *Inaugural Address*, University of Natal, Durban.
7. de Wet, J. 1985: "Ons universiteite en hul narvorsingsgehalte", *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, (Winter), pp. 8-11.
8. UCT has made a breakthrough in this area by appointing Dr James Moulder, a former philosopher, to the post of Director of the Public Relations Division.

By Leslie Witz

MISPLACED IDEALS? THE CASE OF UNIBO A REPLY TO J F DE V GRAAFF (*Reality*, January 1986)

Bophuthatswana has always been regarded as unique among the bantustans created by South Africa's apartheid structure. Although Bophuthatswana was given "independence" in 1977 its President, Lucas Mangope, has consistently stated that independence is merely a stepping stone towards a "greater independence" for a united South Africa. The primary reason for accepting independence, he has asserted, is to turn Bophuthatswana's back on apartheid and build "a model of non-discrimination that can act as a catalyst in the whole of Southern Africa". (1) That model is supposedly enshrined in the bantustan's constitution which embodies the principles of non-discrimination, non-racialism, human rights and the rule of law.

It is within this framework that the territory's major tertiary institution, the University of Bophuthatswana (Unibo), is intended to operate. Established in 1980, Unibo proclaims itself to be a totally non-racial institution with complete autonomy from the Bophuthatswana government. The University's official publication, its calendar, proclaims loudly that the university has "full academic freedom to determine whom it will appoint, whom it will enrol as

students, and what it will teach". It goes on further to state that the university is controlled by a Council which encourages all staff "to help develop the theoretical framework needed for the emergence of a 'post-separate development' dispensation in South Africa".

IDEALISM

It was these principles which gave rise to the aura of idealism which permeated Unibo in its early years. Johan Graaff, one of the original staff members at Unibo, relates in the January 1986 issue of *Reality* how he and the other members of staff believed they "were re-creating a little piece of paradise". Here, for them, was a homeland university which did not take as its model the bush colleges but the liberal institutions like Wits and U.C.T. Although Mangope at times acted with an iron fist he always listened to reason and allowed the university its autonomy. Crucially then it was Mangope's character which allowed Unibo to develop its liberal image. "My own feeling", Graaff states, "is that Mangope is less authoritarian than the likes of Matanzima".