

[ca. 1946]

"SELLING YOURSELF"
by
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and
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I find that this assignment is the most unusual and most difficult ever given me. I have had the privilege of being a teacher---if you can call it a privilege ---and I have had the fortune---or misfortune---of being in political office. I do not feel that I am serving tonight as a teacher, but I will try to say things pertinent and somewhat informative.

I don't know how you can consciously sell yourself. You are obviously doing something about selling all the time from the day you are born until you die when you are trying to sell yourself to the Good Maker, hoping to persuade Him that you weren't as bad as you might have been. In every human life there is a process of selling going on all the time.

P. B. Juster should be here. He'd tell you that the first step in selling yourself is to be well-dressed and well-groomed. I agree. But I just finished work in my office as some of you did in yours, and I wasn't a bit concerned about coming over here just as I was. I know that I have a five o'clock shadow; I think some of you have a five o'clock shadow. As a teacher, I used to try to get on common ground with my students. Now that I am on common ground with you, we can go on.

As P. B. would have said, the first thing a man has to do in the business world is to be well-dressed and well-groomed, and since I am theorizing, I agree. I would say that a good appearance is essential to selling oneself. Someone else would say that we have to be friendly, to possess poise or charm. But I want to be more articulate, and more precise, to get away from these platitudinous phrases of how to sell ourselves and get right down to cases.

(1) First, we have to be filled up with a feeling for the essentials of our way of life. We have to understand the kind of society we are a part of. It might be difficult for any of us to sell ourselves on the continent of Asia. In

other words, we have to be adjusted to the environmental circumstances that surround us. We have to know about the creeds that govern the thinking in that society, and to recognize that we are a part of that society, but only a part and a darn small part. In other words, that this world can get along without us. And also, in the same line of thinking, that each of us has something to contribute to the society in which we live; that we recognize that every individual has some semblance of equality; that every one of us has both assets and liabilities. We can sum it up by calling it a sense of humility, but a sense of humility that does not make you an introvert. People who are truly humble are extroverted in their thinking. They know they have something to contribute, and they see themselves as a part of the great scheme of things. The quality of being indispensable does not seem to hold up. We are all a part of society, but we are not all of it. We need some sense of humility.

(2) RECOGNIZE THAT YOU CAN NEVER SELL YOURSELF BY SELLING YOURSELF. I don't know how else to state it. If you will let me be a little spiritual for the moment, it was the Great Teacher who said: "He that is last shall be first and he that is first shall be last." It's a hard principle to remember but it's good doctrine. It epitomizes the quality of serving, the willingness to be a part of things. If you will let yourself be one of the workhorses for a long time, others will make you important.

I call your attention to a book: BETWEEN TEARS AND LAUGHTER by Lin Yutang. I had all my students at Macalester read it. In a chapter on politicians, public officials, and great public and private leaders, a great statesman is pictured standing center stage in front of his audience, taking bows. What a great guy he is! A program has been consummated. His name is in the headlines! Praise rings all around. There he stands in the flush of victory! But Lin Yutang points out that in the wings stands the prompter, and the prompter is the people, the people who made it possible for this great statesman to hold the spotlight as he bows in appreciation of the people's applause. The prompter is telling the statesman what to say, and the prompter is saying to himself: "Isn't this wonder-

ful?" For it was the prompter who put the words in the statesman's mouth. The prompter is the people, and the statesman is only their mouthpiece.

Henry Rutledge has made a good leader. He shines not only because of his own ability, but because of the organization to which that ability is directed, and because of the abilities of the people in the organization. It takes other people to make a man great. The man who boasts of being "self-made" often shows the horrors of unskilled labor. Everyone helps make you what you are.

(3) MAINTAIN A VITAL INTEREST IN LIFE. A philosopher once said that little minds talk about people; mediocre minds talk about things; great minds talk about ideas. We all do some thinking in the realm of ideas. Some of us have a lot of ideas. But before we can make these ideas practical we have to work them through people. We have to show a certain amount of friendliness, of happiness that we are a part of that group. We have to like a man for what he is. I think its important that everyone find a common denominator. I know that some of my best social friends disagree with me violently politically. Some of my friends like modern art or have some other interest or avocation I do not share. Yet these people are my friends because there is something about them that lifts me up, refreshes my whole outlook. I hope that I do the same for them.

In a social gathering at my house, there is every brand of creeds and faiths and ideas that you can think of. One man knows how to save the world by one easy revolution. Someone else has another panacea for our troubles and has a third one backed into a corner to tell him what's wrong with the universe. It's a seven ring circus, and when they leave they all say: "Gee, what a great evening!" Like me, they're interested in all kinds of people.

I also think we need an interest in the affairs of life, in the happenings of the day. There is nothing so dull as to run into somebody who is dead to the life going on around him. They don't know the baseball scores. They lack interest even in the weather report. They haven't even heard of Josephine Lowman's exercises. They are drones without interest in anything. And they can't sell themselves BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T BEEN SOLD ON ANYTHING. The process of selling your-

self is the process of making yourself the recipient of life around you, as well as being a liver of life. It's a reciprocal proposition, a touch and go process.

(4) FEEL A DETERMINATION TOWARD YOUR GOAL. Along with recognizing that you're a part of society, cultivating a sense of humility and a type of gregariousness, there is a necessity to feel a determination toward something. We have too many apathetic people in this world. If a business man considers hiring someone, he wants to know the goal of that potential employee. What does he want out of life? Surely not just the job he is applying for. The executive isn't flattered by the man who says his ambition begins and ends with the job at hand. The executive wants the applicant to say that he'd like to have the boss's job. A man who says that reveals whether he has any designs on the future beyond a mere existence. You need a PERSONAL DETERMINATION TO MAKE SOMETHING OF YOURSELF AND OF YOUR COMMUNITY OF WHICH YOU ARE A PART.

I have always believed that Wendell Willkie's greatest mistake in his Wisconsin campaign lay in telling the people that they ought to save the world. Few people want to save the world. But they all want to save themselves. To save the world is a tough proposition and a big order for the average mind. Now if Willkie had told those Wisconsites that they could save themselves by cultivating a different attitude toward the world; if he could have identified their own personal salvation with the welfare of the world, he would not have suffered the political defeat that he did. Willkie knew how to sell himself. He sold himself more in a short period of time than probably any other man in history. He was a regular guy. He was full of good feeling. He liked people. He recognized his sense of humility. He recognized a keen interest in the affairs of his country, and in the affairs of his contemporaries. He was willing to give and take, willing to argue. He was filled up with the things of life. He had a determination for something.

A man's determination can be detected either in his personal ambition which determines him to do something for himself, or, more subtly, when he works for the organization of which he is a part, and thereby develops himself.

(5) BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE LIFE ABOUT YOU. And that includes

participation not only in big things but in all phases of your community life. To be able to participate requires practice. One of the main reasons people say nothing in a public meeting is that they have never said anything for the first time. Until a man talks that first time, he is like a child who has never learned to talk. People who have lived sheltered lives wonder why labor leaders talk so easily. They have come up the rough and tumble way. It's been a hard way, but they've known from the first day that the squeaking wheel gets the grease. They have learned their lesson of participation. They are good competitors. I believe in the competitive system. I love competition.

Someone may say of your Leadership Institute: "After you train all these fellows for leadership and have all this intensive drive and recognize that you have something to contribute, won't you have too many leaders?" Now I don't think this country has too many leaders. I don't think we have enough leaders with the qualities of being able to teach and to persuade, to formulate a policy and interpret it to the great mass of people. I don't say that since there are 435 members in the House of Representatives that there are 435 leaders there. There is plenty of room in the United States Congress for more leaders. Look at Clare Luce. Why did she suddenly reach the headlines? Because she was a participant. She was articulate. In selling the program she believed in, she sold herself. I think the same thing can be said of Dr. Walter Judd. He was a participant in our national life, going around telling of the hypocrisy of our foreign policy in dealing with the Japanese and Chinese. He was definite about it. He was sincere about it. He preached as well as lectured. He was a participant in church. And all of his qualities of gregariousness sold him to the voters in the Fifth Congressional District.

Most people have a lot of trouble getting into things, in trying to take an active interest in the policies of any organization. Most people want to go home at five o'clock. Most people want to come to work as late as they can and not take on any more duties than they have to. They want to work in a routine, normal way. They don't want to make the sacrifices necessary if you're going to get ahead.

Participation means, too, that you are able to express yourself, to get out into different groups, to belong to different groups. Belonging is an enriching experience. The fifty-seven races and creeds represented in the population of Minneapolis are one of the reasons for the city's preeminence as a cultural center, far beyond expectations in relation to economic resources and population. It is the expression of people in business genius, in the arts in their broadest sense, in energetic labor movements that is born of diversity in our community structure. These fifty-seven creeds and races leave something in every job of participation. They enrich the whole quality of our life. I think diversity is a good thing. I think opposition is a good thing. Lots of people wonder if I believe in competition. Now there is nothing I like better than a good argument. I'd rather campaign than be in office. But I don't believe in arguments in which you lower yourself by fighting the battle only half-way square, where you deal in personalities and rob a man of his character.

The success of participation is dependent on observing the rules of the game. There must be some semblance of equality between the opponents, some semblance of rules observed, some semblance of guiding principles. And in this competitive system of ours, in the realm of ideas, there is clear-cut competition in our social participation.

Participation is important from another point of view. I belong to several different groups, and I like it because I think it makes me a better man, a more rounded personality. I think it's important to know something of what is going on in the other fellow's world. I think you ought to get in to attend union meetings. Those who are alarmed about government in business might get into government and discover how the process works. Business men worried about government interference need on-the-job training in government. I think a man should know something of the religious life in his community, something of the social life. I think he ought to be able to go into the lowliest home and talk to these people on their own terms. A TRULY EDUCATED MAN IS ONE WHO CAN TALK TO PEOPLE IN TERMS THEY CAN UNDERSTAND NO MATTER WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE. One reason they say

that men in academic life live in ivory towers is that it's almost impossible to get a professor out of the university to participate in the life of the community. He wants to be in his office or classroom so many hours a day. He wants to meet so many students a day. He wants to lock his door at a certain hour. He wants to go home and be anemic.

I wonder how many professors who have written textbooks on political science have actually participated in a party caucus or an important convention, in the affairs which make a political party great. As observers they may have been there, but only as participants could they have known and felt what was really happening. You have to feel your way into things to get the spirit of them. There isn't any way you can explain what is going on unless you are part of it. An observer at a political convention can easily say: "I can't see why you're so bothered about that." Only if he is in it will he, too, be bothered.

(6) TO SELL YOURSELF, YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF ALONG MANY LINES. A man who makes a good chairman of the Junior Association of Commerce has been preparing himself all the way up and down the line: he was chairman of his groups in high school, in college, in church, in clubs. You have to prepare yourself as much for participation as much as you do for a place in the professional world. You can't kid anyone if you aren't fully prepared to hold your place in medicine or engineering. If your ambition is to be appointed to an office, you must have put in a long time of preparation for that appointment. The man whom I have just appointed chief of police has been preparing himself for 22 years. He has functioned in every division of the department now under his direction. He has all along shown a keen interest in its workings. He has gone to night school at the University of Minnesota. He has a background which enables him to understand the life of which he is a part. When he became a sergeant, he was the youngest sergeant on the force. When the time came for me to appoint a new chief of police, this man who had prepared himself for the job, seemed to be the logical choice. There are other outstanding men in the department.

(7) TO SELL YOURSELF, YOU MUST HAVE AMBITION. When I spoke to business men

in Northfield this noon, I told them I believed in high wages, in collective bargaining, in good working conditions. I also believe in a full day's work. I believe a man on the job ought to have enough ambition to do a full day's work, and to want to do a good job. Determination, participation, preparation ... and now ambition. I see people who have prepared themselves for eternity but haven't enough ambition to get there. They have diplomas hanging all over them, but they haven't enough ambition to put their preparation to good use. They haven't any DRIVE. Now I grant you that some of this has something to do with glands. But I think ambition is pretty much a matter of how well you have adjusted yourself to life. I think we can either release our energy or our energy can frustrate us. Ambition enables us to draw on our fundamental capital of energy. What we have to do is to adjust our lives so that we can release the energy we have.

(8) TO SELL YOURSELF YOU MUST LEARN THE ART OF COMPROMISE. The practice of this art has a lot to do with how well you sell yourself. Every one of us ought to have some definite set of opinions. The environment of which we have been a part has molded our life and our thinking along certain lines. I can never forget the dark days of the depression in South Dakota, the cruel experiences my parents endured from 1926 to 1937. We are all conditioned by the experiences we have had. Yet I think it's always important to remember that other people have had experiences, too. The deductions that you make from your experiences are not necessarily more valid than the deductions that the other person makes on the basis of his experience. People say you mellow with age. That being so, it's a good thing that you're as sharp and rambunctious as you are when you are young, for you're sure going to be mellowed by the time you reach old age. The art of compromise is only possible when you begin to recognize that you may not be God, and that your opinions are not 100 percent. For there is a common denominator among men. There are degrees of closeness to each of our fellow men, but the heart of our belief is our common denominator. We can peel off the leaves of the artichoke without sacrificing the kernel. Your ambition makes you willing to shoot for the stars, but you know you'll settle for less.

I believe that one of the real political problems in America today is that on one end of the scale clusters a group of people of Fascist mentality. They have made up their minds that they know how to run this world and they are going to run it. They number about two and one half percent of the population. At the other end of the scale clusters another two and one half percent of the population, violently opposed to every Fascist idea, with an ideology contrary in all respects. These groups act as choppers, attempting to destroy in their effort to dominate the 95 percent of the population that lies between them. They are willing to slaughter the 95 percent in their own nefarious practices rather than compromise on any point.

Now we, if we are to attain our objective of selling ourselves, have to consider that some phase of our particular belief may be in error, and we must be ready and willing to make a few little side deals, but maintain the fundamentals of our principles.

Compromise was the essence of the writing of the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution hasn't a single article that any member of the convention really wanted in it. It doesn't reveal a pattern devised by any one person who was at the convention. Benjamin Franklin termed it a "bundle of compromises". The secret of the art of compromise is to be able to compromise our means without sacrificing our ends, to make a little step one way or the other, but never lose sight of our destination.

ADDENDA

by

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In the Dartmouth Alumni Magazine I read about a new course being set up at Dartmouth College on Leadership; just the sort of series we have just completed. I think it has been a swell thing. I'd just like to add a word about confidence. When a youngster rang our bell the other evening and offered to sell doughnuts, I asked him why he was so sure the doughnuts were good. And with all the confidence in the world, the boy looked up at me and said unhesitatingly: "My mother made them." He could have given a dozen sales arguments, on how they were made in a spotless kitchen, on certain ingredients that went into their making, on the stuff

they were fried in. But he didn't need any of these sales arguments. He wrapped up all the arguments in that one little phrase of confidence: "My mother made them." If we have confidence along with all these traits and qualities that have been discussed, that's all we need....confidence in ourselves and in the product we sell.



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