



Bernays' Ideas on Propaganda Continue to Haunt Americans

When Americans see the bizarre responses of the mainstream media and the progressive politicians to tragedies such as the Tucson shootings — for instance, the proposal to ban rhetoric or symbols perceived to be violent — many wonder how the country has come to this strange place where elitists are moving to gain control at the expense of individual liberties. Perhaps one need not look past the Woodrow Wilson administration for the answer.

Today's politicians and progressives seem to have taken some notes right out of the works of Edward Bernays, President Wilson's propaganda master. The author of books such as [Crystallizing Public Opinion](#) (1923) and [Propaganda](#) (1928) — both of which were heavily utilized by Adolf Hitler's Nazi propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels — Bernays has been credited with manipulating public opinion about such varied subjects as World War I, smoking, and even bacon. He has been dubbed the "Father of Spin" and the "Godfather of modern public relations" because of his extraordinary ability to alter public opinion.

What today's politicians seem to share with Bernays is the mentality that they are in fact members of an elite class, and that it is their sole responsibility to manipulate the huddled and often confused masses.

For example, Bernays declared in *Public Opinion*:

Ours must be a leadership democracy, administered by the "intelligent minority" who know how to regiment and guide the masses. The common interests very largely elude public opinion entirely, and can be managed only by a specialized class whose personal interests reach beyond the locality.

He also indicated:

If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, it is now possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing it.

According to Bernays' daughter, Ann,

Democracy to my father was a wonderful concept, but I don't think he felt that all those publics out there had reliable judgment. That they very easily might vote for the wrong man or want the wrong thing. So they had to be guided from above. It's enlightened despotism.

Similarly, in his January 11 appearance on Tom Hartman's liberal talk radio show, progressive thinker John Dean, former Nixon counsel, commented:

What the studies show, the empirical studies over — almost, you know, well over a half a century of studying this issue — they really show that about 25 percent of a given population easily follows into the authoritarian personality-types.

These are people who, as I said, like to be told how to think [and] what to do. Some of them who were more aggressive in their personality want to jump out in front and say, "Follow me." But they will follow their leader until they get their turn. And they look upon others who don't see the world as they do as outsiders.

[These people] are very susceptible to the direction they get from their leaders.

That's why I think it's very irresponsible for the Palins, the Becks, the O'Reillys and the people who



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feed this violent atmosphere, they should realize ... the people they're dealing with. They're smart enough to look at this information and know indeed they can provoke this kind of behavior.

Likewise, Obama's regulatory czar Cass Sunstein has indicated that the presence of too many choices can be confusing to the American people. In describing the premise of his book, *Nudge*, he virtually claimed that the American people were too ignorant to make proper decisions:

We think there is a little Homer Simpson in all of us. Sometimes we have self-control problems, sometimes we're impulsive. In these circumstances, both public and private institutions, without coercing, can make our lives a lot better.

According to Sunstein, once that reality is accepted, Americans can be "manipulated."

Joe Klein of *Time* magazine noted, "It is very difficult to thrive in an increasingly competitive world if you're a nation of dodos."

Congressman John Dingle (D-Mich.) has discussed the difficulties of trying to control the people:

The harsh fact of the matter is when you're going to pass legislation that will cover 300 million American people in different ways, it takes a long time to do the necessary administrative steps that have to be taken to put the legislation together to control the people.

Conservative pundit Glenn Beck has dubbed this the "rancher/cow" mentality: The progressives view themselves as the ranchers, and the average Americans as the cows — incapable of formulating their own thoughts and willing to be herded into a fenced area.

Beck contends that the elites have managed to make some headway in their power struggle by preying on the youth:

We used to be taught as kids ourselves that there was no such thing as a stupid question. We were encouraged to be curious.... You know who's protected to ask questions and say controversial things [today]? Not the students — they get downgraded for that. Only the elites. Only the ranchers. Only the professors.

For example, in September 2008, Joe Biden said this of Obama's critics: "All this talk about how different Barack Obama is. They're just not used to somebody really smart. They're just not used to somebody who is really well-educated."

Similarly, liberal pundit Bill Maher observed of politicians' efforts to sway public opinion on healthcare: "Members of Congress have recessed now so they can go home and listen to their constituents, an urge they should resist because their constituents don't know anything."

Such opinions explain why outspoken critics of presidential administrations are accused of hateful rhetoric. Questioning authority is a criminal activity.

Americans today are not encouraged to "question with boldness," as Thomas Jefferson so artfully phrased it — that is, unless they are questioning the Constitution's usefulness and whether it is an outdated document.

Preying upon impressionable minds was a notion President Woodrow Wilson embraced. He once asserted, "The use of a university is to make young gentlemen as unlike their fathers as possible."

It is the elitist mentality that allows billionaires such as George Soros and wealthy Americans such as Andy Stern to believe that they are above the very rules they would like to see imposed on the American



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people.

Similarly, former Vice President Al Gore, nearly 100 years after Edward Bernays, declared at a conference of young people in Washington, D.C.:

There are some things about our world that you know that older people don't know. Why would that be? Well in a period of rapid change, the old assumptions sometimes just don't work anymore because they're out of date.

The belief that they are above the fray explains how liberals in Washington could propose banning violent symbols and rhetoric following the Tucson shootings, when these violent assertions have been made by their own man, President Barack Obama:

- "I'm ready to duel John McCain." — Sept. 30, 2008
- "I want you to argue with them and get in their face." — Sept. 17, 2008
- "... so I know whose ass to kick." — June 8, 2010
- "We're going to have just hand-to-hand combat up here on Capitol Hill." — Oct. 2010
- "We're gonna punish our enemies and we're gonna reward our friends." — Oct. 2010

Likewise, it is their elitism that drives liberal politicians to implement a nanny state — one in which it is the responsibility of the federal government to see to the individual's wants and needs. It is this attitude that fuels programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, and policies such as gun control.

For example, the Obama administration has announced that it will be reviewing regulations for redundancies to ensure that agencies are operating smoothly. On the surface, the effort appears well-intentioned, except that once again, the president has circumvented Congress by issuing an executive order to carry out the process. Likewise, what is also mentioned in the executive order that has not been touted in the media is the following: "In weighing costs and benefits, for instance, agencies may now consider equity, human dignity, fairness and distributive impacts."

Only elitists believe they have the right to make such determinations.

The key to Bernays' ideas on propaganda is the notion that the masses must never know that they are being manipulated. Instead, they must believe that they themselves have conceived the ideas or have come to the very conclusions to which they were actually led by the leaders. Bernays declared:

In practice, if all men had to study for themselves the abstruse economic, political, and ethical data involved in every question, they would find it impossible to come to a conclusion about anything. We have voluntarily agreed to let an *invisible government* sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issues so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions. [Emphasis added.]

Eliminate choices and oppose views of the masses. So much for the days of President George Washington, who asked to be met on the "battlefield of ideas."

Perhaps that explains the concerted efforts to destroy conservative critics such as Glenn Beck, Sarah Palin, The John Birch Society, and others.

The similarities between the progressive elitists of today and Edward Bernays are stark. It is becoming increasingly evident that Bernays' ideas are taking form at the hands of the ruling elite in Washington.



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