

# News Notes

## FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS

[*Editorial Note: The following communication is of considerable importance to all those concerned professionally with public opinion research. Therefore, gentle reader, though the purport may at first be obscure, we hope you will read it—all of it!*]

*Evolution of the Office of Opinion Research Personnel.* The first official meeting of The American Association for Public Opinion Research was called to order at 11:58 a.m., September 5, 1947 by its charter President, Clyde Hart. Almost simultaneously luncheon was announced (and the dining hall was three long blocks away). Perhaps it is for reasons of hunger that only two motions were acted upon. One created the Office of Opinion Research Personnel (pronounced OORP), the other adjourned us to the groaning board.

Hunger being what it is, there was no discussion of the first motion. But the fact that it was the first order of business and that unanimous action was taken was no accident. The first responsibility of the young profession of opinion research should be personnel—and primarily the young personnel which will determine the future quality of the work.

New professions are usually born of older ones. Psychology was the progeny of Physiology and Philosophy. Public Relations leapt from the loins of Psychology and Pressagentry.

Opinion Research had several parents. This is not amoral. We have

simply been led too far by our biological simile.

Personal knowledge of the obscure backgrounds of a number of prominent Opinion Researchers (no names will be revealed) leads one to suppose that any of the following occupations prepare one for this new but honorable profession:

Paramount Talent Scout  
Customer's Man  
Retail Jeweller  
Professor of Elizabethan Literature  
Certified Public Accountant  
Copy Writer  
Journalist  
Professional Dog Trainer  
Public Health Expert

This listing of a mismated ancestry is more interesting than orderly. Does it mean we must tell our grandchildren, actual and anticipated, they must serve such a mélange of apprenticeships if they are to be accepted as members of The American Association for Public Opinion Research? We hope not.

There is meaning to this disorderly list, however. It demonstrates that in the early days of our profession neither training nor experience was as important as other ingredients. Without meaning to be didactic, we may suggest that prominent among these other factors are:

1. Ingenuity.
2. True extroversion, whether or not concealed by personal shyness.
3. Mathematical perception.

4. A Lincolnian conviction that the people—all of them—are important.

These four ingredients of a useful, productive opinion researcher will continue to be essential. But now that the expansive, adolescent growth of the profession is tapering off and development is becoming more qualitative than quantitative, two other ingredients become more essential. These are (1) *professional training* specifically planned to prepare students to enter the field, and (2) *practical experience* in the field. It is then entirely proper that the First Order of Business represents an effort to acquaint aspirants and newcomers into our profession with the training and experience most likely to contribute to their advancement. We should, as well as we can, pass this information on to those who, some of them unknowingly, encourage or discourage young people from entering opinion research. We should also consult with those who plan the content of courses, hopefully preparing young people to enter our profession. Probably, though this is putting the burden before the proof, we shall learn that courses which combine field operations, practice in tabulation and analysis and pure theory contribute most to the future success of students.

Another duty facing us is the appraisal of present and anticipated opportunities in the profession, and of present and anticipated aspirants. Such appraisals are prerequisite to steps tending to keep supply and demand in reasonable balance.

Having learned what we can of the number, kind, and requirements of opportunities and the number, kind, and

abilities of aspirants, our most obvious responsibility is that of matching the one to the other.

Taken altogether, this represents a task which the Association's Committee even though it includes such able men as S. Shepard Jones, John W. Riley, Jr., and Julian L. Woodward, cannot at once accomplish to its complete satisfaction. Time will be required. Also, although the Association has a splendid treasurer, it has as yet no treasury. But thanks to volunteered aid, progress is being made. Having stated our ambitious aims, we append a modest progress report and a hopeful request to the readers of the *Quarterly* for their immediate and continued cooperation.

*Readers Requested to Notify OORP of Public Opinion Courses.* The Office of Opinion Research Personnel has already started listing courses given in American colleges and universities which seem preparatory to a career in the field. Requests to registrars of all colleges mentioned in the footnote on page 85 of Dr. A. M. Lee's article in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring 1947, elicited some replies which were satisfactory, many which were incomplete. It established one point: such courses are listed under a wide variety of departments, including Sociology, Statistics, Business Administration, Political Science, Marketing, and others. We earnestly desire a complete list of all teachers and courses dealing with 1) statistics, as applied to the sampling of people in an area; 2) questionnaire construction, phrasing of questions, field operations, tabulation, analysis, and other practical problems; 3) the significance of public opinion and attitudes, politically, sociologically, etc.

*Quarterly* readers are the people most likely to be aware of such teachers and courses. We beg them, therefore, to communicate information to the *Quarterly* or this committee. We hope to help teachers of such courses by telling them 1) of job opportunities in the field and 2) of the kind of training research groups are looking for when selecting new employees.

. . . *And of Possible Employers.* The office is also listing organizations in the United States which employ one or more people to collect or to analyze opinion research data.

A second favor we would like to ask of *Public Opinion Quarterly* readers is: *Please let us know of any organizations employing opinion research personnel which have not heard from us.*

Eventually we hope to have a fairly accurate picture of the *kinds* of jobs in the field and the *number* of people in each kind, and some estimate of expected openings. We hope also to compile a consensus on the qualifications employers look for, as to ability, specific academic training, and experience.

*Listing of openings.* Even though we have barely started, we have received a few requests for candidates, and have made some referrals, at least two resulting in permanent employment and others in temporary positions.

Unless requested to, we do not release names of organizations requiring personnel. Instead we provide them with names and information concerning candidates most likely to fill their needs. They make the contact. *No fees are charged. Quarterly readers are urged to inform us of openings that exist.*

*Listing of applicants.* American Association for Public Opinion Research members have already referred a number of people to us, and *Public Opinion Quarterly* readers are urged to do so. We have an application form which we will send on request, or applicants can call at our office and fill out the blank here. (Suite 2112, 551 Fifth Avenue, New York).

LUCIEN WARNER,  
*Committee Chairman*