

Commercial Communication and Election Campaigns in the Twentieth-Century U.S. At the Origins of Political Marketing

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A century ago, in the thick of the 1904 presidential election which saw the victory of Theodore Roosevelt, the *New York Times* noted that now “campaigning is only a political name for advertising”. Eight years earlier, in 1896, commenting on the victory of his fellow Republican William McKinley, Roosevelt had observed somewhat maliciously that McKinley had been “advertised [...] as if he were a patent medicine”, the most widely advertised product at the time (McGerr, 1986, pp. 159, 145). Again in relation to the 1896 elections, *Printers’ Ink*, the admen’s trade journal, in turn had claimed proudly that “the methods adopted in booming a candidate differ somewhat from those used in pushing a patent medicine, but the result aimed at in each case is the same: ‘I am what you want [...] Avoid all substitutes! This, in substance, is the appeal to people of both patent medicine and politicians.” (*Printers’ Ink*, 1896, pp. 3-6).

Clearly, to anyone following the 2004 presidential and the 2006 midterm U.S. election campaigns – with their flush of TV ads, image consultants, and expensive media initiatives – these remarks will sound familiar. To the point of creating a dazzling sense of absolute continuity between the *belle époque* and the present day “political marketing”, implying the smooth and painless transplantation of advertising and commercial communication techniques into the world of politics throughout the century.

This article aims to suggest a somehow more complicated picture by charting the bumpy relations between the two domains of commercial and political communication in the U.S. over the last century from a perspective that remains largely unfamiliar to historiography. With few notable exceptions (Westbrook, 1983; Gold, 1987), historical research has, in fact, tended to focus mainly on politicians and political parties when addressing these subjects. What we shall seek to do is to trace these processes from another angle, offering a critical re-examination of political life in the “American century” through the filter of professional publicists and admen.

In Barnum’s Shadow

Let us turn again to the 1896 *Printers’ Ink* article. It was published only a week before the elections and its subject was the Republicans’ campaign, a natural point of reference for admen inasmuch as Republicans were by and large the party of business. Based on an interview with General W.E. Osborne, president of the party’s electoral committee, the article offers an effective account of the changes which made that election contest a moment of transition toward new forms of political communication. This can be seen first of all in the new ascending order of

importance which the general gave to the three main areas of campaigning, inverting the previous order of priorities in propaganda strategy. For him the least important aspect now was the one that had dominated contests during the nineteenth century, namely the town fair atmosphere made up of intense discussions, military parades, drinking sessions, greasy poles, electoral fraud and strong attachment to the cause. This had defined the political style of party democracy, the style historians call either "military", on account of the iron party discipline underlying it, or "spectacular", because of the important role played by popular culture and entertainment based on simultaneous presence and face-to-face interaction (McGerr, 1986; Altschuler & Blumin, 2000).

With barely concealed relief, Osborne left this world full of "buttons, brass bands, banners, fireworks" in the hands of the electoral committees of the individual states, moving up to the second and for him more important level of the Republican information offensive. This level was overflowing with masses of manifestos, posters and leaflets, distributed in all four corners of the nation, in line with the so-called "educational" strategy that had emerged in the 1870s and '80s and had been adopted by middle-class WASP political reformers. These were élitist champions of the idea of voters as cultivated and well-informed citizens as opposed to the noisy mass of voters, prey to the parties and their "spectacular" style, who thronged (and, in the view of the reformers, degraded) the polling stations. There were, however, two differences in 1896: for the first time these publications also appeared in the various immigrant languages, and in order to target these groups efforts had been made to tone down the "educational" excesses of the texts and to use language that was simple and of immediate impact (Cohen, N. , 2002; Mink, 1986).

Then, above all, concluded General Osborne, there was the "chief reliance" of the campaign, in other words, newspapers. On this front the Republicans moved in two directions: firstly, there was the systematic provision of information, both at the request of the newspapers themselves and also upon the autonomous initiative of the special publicity bureaus set up by the election committee; secondly, the publication of paid advertisements, especially in rural newspapers and magazines, in an attempt to neutralize the Populist offensive in country areas. For these ads the party used one of the leading advertising agencies of the time (which historically has remained one of the most important both in America and internationally up to the present day), J. Walter Thompson. Its function, as Osborne emphasized in answer to an explicit question from the interviewer, was however simply to buy space for ads "written mostly by the men in the employ of the committee".

The fact that the general felt he had to make this point clear reflects both the state of the advertising profession at the time and the kind of relationship which politicians sought to maintain with admen. In theory, the fact that the agency was not asked to write press releases was clearly no anomaly in 1896. Up to the early 1890s, advertising agencies had concentrated on buying advertising space in newspapers, generally leaving the drafting of the actual ads to the advertiser, the printers or independent publicists. But the fact that the parties reserved this activity exclusively

for themselves – although, as the interviewer’s question shows, it was now considered an integral part of the advertising profession – was a sign of the rigidly selective and hegemonic way they treated admen. This was also confirmed by the attitude the parties took in subsequent years, even at a time when advertising agencies were in full control of the creative process in commercial advertising and politicians were more or less forced to deal with them as the communication and culture system that marked an incipient mass society began to advance (Walker Laird, 1998). Politicians saw the emerging profession of advertising as a source of tools and especially as a means of gaining access to the vehicles of modern communication such as large-circulation “independent” newspapers, while keeping absolute control over the campaigns, strategic policies and the personnel involved.

This is why *Printers’ Ink* in 1896, while priding itself on the fact that “campaign work is nothing more than advertising”, still had to admit that “to speak of ‘advertising’ a Presidential candidate may, to some persons, seem incongruous”. General Osborne himself was probably one such person, given the supercilious “smile” with which he greeted the request to “interview him on the ‘advertising’” of the campaign and the kind but firm determination with which he replied that “at the [election committee] headquarters” what the interviewer referred to as advertising, was called “politics”.

Indeed, overshadowing the rhetorical cut and thrust between the rather cheeky correspondent from *Printers’ Ink* and the dignified general was an awkward presence that both were probably aware of but which might easily escape the notice of today’s readers of the admen’s journal unless they have the patience to look through the pages of the same magazine some fifteen years later. By 1910 advertising had tripled its turnover since 1890 and had established the practice of offering a package of services to a clientele that now outnumbered those who bought patent medicines. It had also become a much debated factor that was apparently crucial (“the secret of commerce”, in the words of Henry James) to economic and social life in America (Lears, 1994; Pope, 1983).

The occasion for an extended reflection on its past and future prospects was the centenary of the birth of Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891). A master of entertainment and popular face-to-face manipulation, and a pioneer of techniques of showy, tawdry commercial promotion, for two years (1875-76) Barnum had also been (Republican) mayor of his home city of Bridgeport, later representative in the Connecticut House (1878-79) and finally a candidate for senator in Washington, losing the election by a mere handful of votes. Barnum was the emblematic and extreme incarnation of the style we have called “spectacular”, a mixture of popular and political entertainment. Early twentieth-century admen saw him as a figure who cast a shadow over their aspirations for respectability. He made them vulnerable before a political world which, although it had an irrepressible need for new forms of visibility, looked down on admen as heirs to the old “charlatan” of Bridgeport (and to the “plebeian” parties of the nineteenth century) and threatened to regulate their practices by imposing fines and sanctions in the name of rationality and transparency. In 1910, *Printers’ Ink* took the bull by the horns and used this

anniversary as an occasion to point out the distance that now separated them from their embarrassing progenitor. To celebrate him uncritically, it argued, would be as if "medical men should celebrate a hoodoo medicine man". In other words, Barnum was "interesting as a starting point of a profession, but lamentably gross and misrepresentative of the modern development of it"; today the key to success lay in the "reasonableness" and "reliability" of the information provided about the advertised products and not in sensationalism or even fraud (Harris, 1973; Cook, 2001; *Printers' Ink*, 1910, p. 193).

By distancing themselves from Barnum, those within the advertising world who had for years been advocating a "scientific" and "respectable" professional profile strengthened their hand. This did not, however, mean a radical change in advertising's relations with politics. Admittedly, in the decade before the Great War, politics stressed the need to adopt tools typical of advertising, in particular its growing use of visual features such as billboards, ads on trams and short movie spots. It also consolidated the press offices of electoral committees, welcoming press agents and pioneers from the nascent profession of public relations which, like advertising, was also expanding in large corporations. In 1904, for example, among the ranks of those Democrats who tried (in vain) to stand in the way of Theodore Roosevelt in a highly personal and emotional campaign, was a certain Ivy Lee, a promising young journalist who was soon to embark on a long career as an expert on corporate public relations. However, the case of Roosevelt embodied the tendency of the world of politics to appropriate the tools of advertising, while retaining an asymmetric, one-way relationship and pointing out the faults of advertising as such. A highly capable politician and an irrepressible self-promoter with the press and public opinion, Roosevelt made such explicit and insistent use of self-display and media construction of image that leading observers pointed to him as an example of the trend that they had detected (not without a certain amount of exaggeration) whereby candidates were being sold like "any dry goods business and all other kinds of business" (Fasce 2000; McGerr, 1986; Testi, 2000, pp. 11-98; Ponder, 1998).

At the same time, however, Roosevelt missed no opportunity to declare himself an implacable critic of the sensationalist excesses of the scandal-mongering press and advertising. This very same contradiction is also to be found underlying the slogans used successfully in the 1916 election campaign by that other great Progressive politician, Woodrow Wilson. This election marked a further weakening of both the traditional "spectacular" and the "educational" ethos, to the benefit of the journalistic-media dimension. Direct and to the point in the manner of ads, Wilson's slogans (for example, "He Kept Us Out of War") had been devised by George Creel, formerly a muckraker, faithful Democrat, and sworn enemy of the admen and public relations (PR) men of the large companies (McGerr, 1986, pp. 163-171).

The Interwar Years

It may come as a surprise that Creel, only four years later, should publish a book whose very title (*How We Advertised America*) reflected a radical change in his opinion about admen. However, there will be less astonishment if one considers the patriotic aura which, in the heat of mobilization, all of a sudden surrounded the admen as a result of the crucial role they played in the Committee on Public Information (CPI), the federal propaganda agency created by Wilson in 1917 and which Creel was chosen to head (Vaughn, 1980). In his account of the CPI's activity, Creel acknowledged that the war had shown advertising agents in a new light both to him and to others. The rigor and efficiency they had demonstrated and the way they had placed their techniques at the service of the cause, observed the journalist, had helped admen shake off the "suspicion" with which the "majority" of the population had traditionally looked on this sector and those working in it, considered occasionally "frankly as [...] plausible pirate[s] belonging to the same school of endeavor as the édition-de-luxe book canvasser". Admen, concluded Creel, had emerged from the war with "the dignity of a profession" (Creel, 1920, pp. 157-8).

This verdict was immediately echoed in many business and publicity circles. Even the world of politics seemed to share this view, and, in the fall of that year, the Republican election committee, for the first time in a presidential contest, put Albert D. Lasker, a leading figure from the advertising profession, owner of the agency Lord & Thomas, in charge of its propaganda machine. Systematically, and with equal success, Lasker applied the techniques which had already been tried out in selling commercial products to the dull candidate Warren Harding. He used testimonials and "comparative" promotions - designed to prove the superiority of his candidate over his rival - exactly as he had done with products such as beer, meat and cans of beans. He exploited the fact that as an adman his knowledge of women's consumer culture made him more responsive to the female world than male-dominated political parties could ever be. The parties, in fact, were still in search of an appropriate language to use when addressing women (who had been recently granted the right to vote with the XIX amendment). To this end he expanded the role of the future first lady in the campaign, making her into a focus of discussion in the press around the subjects of fashion, women's shopping and leisure. Such discussions were aimed at arousing voters' interest in this harmless and unproblematic area, firmly beyond the political and civic claims of the women's movements (Finnegan, 1999, pp. 129-38; Morello, 2001).

The feeling that this was a turning-point is reinforced by the presence of another adman, Bruce Barton, as communication consultant for the Vice-presidential candidate Calvin Coolidge (particularly in need of support in this area as he was if anything even more anonymous than Harding). Younger than Lasker, but himself heading for a formidable career, Barton had made a name for himself in the CPI during the war. He shared with Lasker an exceptional political sensibility compared to other admen of the period. Their sensibilities differed, however, in origin and nature: Barton's was more deeply rooted and bore a stronger religious imprint, while

Lasker's was more recent and had been formed in the intense debate that had broken out over Wilson's "Fourteen Points." Lasker had been persuaded to contribute professionally to the Republican campaign during a meeting with his own political idol, Theodore Roosevelt. Evidently Roosevelt must have overcome his aversion to the "heirs to Barnum", given that he welcomed him with a warm: "So this is Lasker. They tell me you're the greatest adman in America". Roosevelt's strongly anti-Wilson views made a breach in Lasker's latent isolationism. As the son of German immigrants who had fled authoritarian Prussia in the middle of the nineteenth century, Lasker was particularly sensitive to the idea that the United States should keep out of the problems of a postwar Europe incorrigibly incapable of emerging from its past (Morello, 2001; Buckley, 2003; Gielow, 1997).

Numerous factors favored the rise of Lasker to the position of directing the electoral propaganda apparatus: Lasker's political enthusiasm, the new-found positive image of admen which the CPI had created in public opinion, and the temporary, utter confusion in the Republican Party electoral machine. After years of uninterrupted success, the Republicans had been shaken by consecutive defeats in the last two presidential elections and were thus prepared to do anything to reverse the trend. But while it smoothed the way for him in 1920, this exceptional and apparently unrepeatable combination of factors prevented Lasker from establishing an important precedent for himself and for others. After various largely frustrating experiences with this and subsequent Republican administrations he eventually returned to his own business.

In the "roaring" Twenties the economic prospects of the advertising industry were particularly tempting. Orders soared under the stimulus of a thriving market and advertising became increasingly popular among businessmen due both to the CPI effect and the incentives offered by a wartime law still in force which made it possible to deduct advertising expenses from taxes. Thus in 1925, for every seventy cents spent on any form of official instruction a dollar was spent to "educate consumers on what they want or do not want to buy". Status grew apace with business: at the annual meetings of the professional advertising associations, leading political figures such as Coolidge and Hoover enthusiastically hailed advertising as "an agent of civilization", "ministering to the spiritual part of business" (Olney, 1991; Marchand, 1985; Strasser, 1989). And yet, throughout the decade, much to the openly expressed regret of some of them, the official role of admen and PR men in the electoral and post-electoral period was intermittent and essentially subordinate. Admen were at the mercy of the political wavering and personal predilections of the candidates and parties (which seemed in any case to prefer using journalists and publicists, especially those familiar with the emerging medium of radio) and were anxious not to expose themselves excessively by becoming identified too openly with one party, feeling that this might damage their business relations.

People like Barton, who were more directly enthusiastic about politics, were in for bitter disappointments. When in 1925, after having been part of Coolidge's winning electoral staff, Barton suggested that the newly elected President use radio in a way

which, ten years before Roosevelt's fireside chats, would have enhanced its valuable function as a means of mediation between the national leader and the microcosm of the family audience, he was given a clear rejection. Six years later, not even in the face of the enormous image problems the Hoover administration was experiencing as a result of the great crisis did Barton manage to overcome the reservations of the gray and awkward president, who considered him "too emotional" to be nominated press officer, as suggested by some of his aides. Hoover decided instead to give the post to the much more modestly-gifted journalist and Republican sympathizer, Thomas Joslin (Craig, 2000; Liebowich, 1994; Ribuffo, 1981).

The fact is that the crisis and the later advent of the New Deal forced Barton and the majority of admen close to the Republican party to come to terms with problems of professional status and in some cases of pure and simple survival that were much more tormenting than the frustrations arising out of their relationship with their political side. A sharp fall in orders (down 38 per cent from 1929 to '33) added to the mounting criticisms voiced by consumer movements against the excesses of "shrill" and aggressive ads (which were brought out in the early 1930s in the desperate attempt to regain clients and were indeed denounced by Barton) and the consequent threats on the part of Washington to publicly regulate advertising activities (Marchand, 1985; Fox, 1985; Jackaway, 1995).

As if that were not enough, the person who came to occupy the White House for the next twelve years was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who successfully exploited his innate interest in questions of information and his personal charisma in a shrewd "business marriage" with a commercial radio system that was well disposed towards the president because it was concerned to obtain guarantees against the forms of regulation demanded by the various anti-monopolistic movements of teachers, consumers, radical and progressive militants. With his famous "fireside chats", prepared with the help of radio journalists and experts (but not admen) responsive to mass society, Roosevelt seemed to prove wrong the judgment of the PR guru Edward Bernays, who in 1928 had mercilessly criticized politicians for being unable to "dramatize themselves". The Republicans' attempt to counter Roosevelt in the 1936 campaign (in which Barton was also involved) by entrusting public relations to a Chicago adman who was an expert on radio was in vain. Nor was Roosevelt stopped by the accusations of manipulation leveled at him by his numerous detractors; accusations which mounted when writers and communicators such as Norman Corwin, who were equally active both in the culture industry and in progressive, left-wing politics, came up with radio electoral campaign announcements which combined information, music, and show business in a highly unconventional way (Houchin Field, 1990; Jamieson Hall, 1992; Goebel, 2002).

Barton and his agency, Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn (BBDO), fought against the New Deal indirectly, in the form of intense institutional advertising campaigns for some large companies. In these ads business interests became mixed with the ideological effort to help the corporate world regain the favor of the public by projecting a "responsible" and "productive" image of companies as a depository of

the best virtues of the nation and a privileged vehicle of its future developments (a vision summed up in the famous slogan *"better living...with chemistry"* coined for DuPont). Then, in 1938 – perhaps sensing renewed opportunities for the Republicans with the return of the recession, the darkening of the international picture, and the constitutional crisis between the presidency and the Supreme Court – Barton decided to try and realize his childhood dream of making it to Washington. He entered the political arena in person and, thanks to the popularity he enjoyed in high society and advertising circles in New York and with the help of some powerful business clients, won a seat in the House. During his term of office, he stood out for the constancy with which he implacably, every week, presented a draft law to revoke the New Deal measures, earning widespread popularity among parliamentary journalists. Two years later, at the end of his term of office, he pursued the dual objective of moving up to the Senate and at the same time – together with other leading business communicators such as Stanley Resor of J. Walter Thompson and Raymond Rubicam and John Orr Young from the eponymous agency Young & Rubicam – supporting the 1940 campaign of the Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie (Marchand, 1998; Ribuffo, 1981).

Both efforts were thwarted by the staying power of the New Deal coalition, which was based largely on Roosevelt's personal popularity. Barton appeared to underestimate Roosevelt's level of popularity in a letter written in the spring of that year, addressed to the Republican deputy Governor of New York, Charles Poletti, who asked him to use his contacts in Washington to arrange for a meeting with the President at the White House. Barton replied that he did not think he could "arrange to have [him] meet the Great White Father", suggesting instead the possibility of an appointment with J. Edgar Hoover, the all-powerful Director of the FBI. He was convinced, he concluded, that "Hoover [...] is much more interesting and will be more useful to you, as we intend to keep him here after January 1, 1941, whereas we have different plans in regard to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue" (Barton, 1940).

"A Clearer Picture"

Defeat led Barton to withdraw from direct political engagement but did not stop him from continuing to write about public affairs, especially foreign affairs, and giving advice. Again, however, he frequently met with further disappointment. Particularly negative was his experience in 1948 after BBDO had been given an official contract by the Republican election committee. Barton was thrown off the committee and removed from the entourage of the party's candidate, the Governor of New York State, Thomas Dewey, because his proposals clashed with the patronage policy of the Governor's closest advisors. Probably for this reason, and not only, as he said officially, because of his concern that an explicit consultancy relationship with politics might damage the company's fortunes, four years later Barton reacted negatively when the BBDO was again approached by the Republican election committee about another formally paid contract. Only the name of the candidate finally persuaded him to involve his agency in the campaign, at a time when BBDO, with its over 2000 employees, was gathering the fruits of prosperity and the new expansion of advertising business which characterized the 1950s. The candidate

happened to be an occasional bridge partner of his, General Dwight Eisenhower (Ribuffo, 1981; Diamond & Bates, 1992).

Scholars are unanimous in considering this campaign a turning-point in the relations between advertising and politics. However, it happened without Barton playing a decisive role, given the emerging emphasis on the new medium of television, which was not the professional province of the now over sixty-year-old adman, who had worked mostly with the press and radio. Thus, when, in 1952, BBDO was specifically asked by the Republican election committee to manage the relations with the TV stations, the man in charge of the account was Ben Duffy, the agency's expert of the sector. This happened, however, in the context of an intricate communication strategy which at some point, on the initiative of Eisenhower's personal election committee and of the oilmen who financed it, called in another advertising agency, Ted Bates. Less successful than BBDO in terms of turnover, Ted Bates had recently, however, made a name for itself with some bold and striking TV commercials that lasted only a few seconds and which had marked the success of the M&Ms, with the slogan "Melts in your mouth, not in your hands". Equally short commercials (twenty seconds) - again made by Rosser Reeves, a go-getting adman with aggressive promotional convictions who was also a rabid anti-communist - were made for the ex-general; they consisted of a series of telegraphic questions and answers between an off-screen voice and Eisenhower, who calmly and in a "common sense" manner came up with a quick answer to the most difficult question ("Can you cut taxes, Mr. Eisenhower?" - "We can and we will...we will put the lid on government spending") (Wood, 1990, pp. 265-66).

It would be difficult to underestimate the role played by TV in making commercial communication and admen acceptable in politics. As the first means of mass communication invented and developed for exclusively market purposes, television had certain peculiar characteristics (technological, expressive, and financial) which reduced the presence of publicists and other traditional figures of propaganda organization who were active in the parties or who managed radio debates, rallies and what remained of the exhausting marathon tours of the country that Truman, for example, was still undertaking even as late as 1948. However, it would also be mistaken to forget the resistance and difficulty faced by the new forms of publicizing candidates from several quarters. In the early days, Eisenhower himself voiced his disapproval and perplexity and once during the recording of a spot was apparently unable to stop himself from making the far from enthusiastic comment, "To think that an old soldier should come to this". There were also protests from the Democrats when a leak put into their hands the scripts of Republican commercials, triggering their condemnation of the "high-powered hucksters of Madison Avenue" and their "cornflake campaigns" (Samuel, 2002, pp. 36-37; Diamond & Bates, 1992, pp. 44-63).

Other factors combined to heighten and complement the role of television and to shape the novelty of this campaign. Contributing to this was a general atmosphere favorable to business (public opinion gave it an approval rating of 76 percent

according to surveys carried out in the early 1950s) such as had not been the case for the last twenty years (Fox , 1985, p. 173; Tedlow, 1979, p. 149; Fones-Wolf, 1994). Another reinforcing factor was the crisis of the parties and the incipient personalization of politics, exemplified at the Republican convention by Eisenhower's victory. Eisenhower was not a professional politician, nor was he the party's official candidate, but he was a war hero who could count on an independent election committee financed by the large corporations, a figure who was well suited to the personalization required by the new medium.

Finally, one cannot forget the growing presence of a crucial vehicle of the hybridization of market surveys and the political dimension, namely opinion polls. Although proved spectacularly wrong at the elections in 1948, polls, thanks to the role of thermometer of democracy attributed to them by the "clash of civilizations" of the Cold war (Hogan, 2000), preserved and indeed re-iterated the promise, formulated by George Gallup in the previous decade, to "count the voices" and sound, through the rational-emotional mix of "attitudes", the opaque depths of the interest groups into which the population seemed to have dispersed (Herbst, 1993). Indeed, when it came to deciding on spots, the Republicans made ample use of such surveys to test the practicability of the new instrument of communication.

The first presidential contest where there was television coverage of the party conventions, thanks to sponsorship from the two main television producers (Westinghouse for the Republicans and Philco for the Democrats), the 1952 elections saw advertising, both political and commercial, flood the television screens and the 39 per cent of houses which had a TV set. The ad with which Westinghouse sponsored the Republican convention made it look as if commercial and advertising culture had taken revenge on politics. It presented two overlapping images: a contemporary print of the historic Lincoln convention in 1860 and a shot of an unidentified candidate leaning out of a television. Suggesting at one and the same time the reduction of the true citizen to a spectator and the adoption of TV as the vehicle of a new and higher form of democracy, the caption read: "TODAY YOU GET A CLEARER PICTURE. Only those inside Convention Hall in Chicago were able to see the nomination of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Now millions can see the convention on television". Indeed what television viewers tuned in to the convention coverage saw more often were not candidates or debates but Betty Furness, a former film actress recycled for TV to endorse Westinghouse's products. By the end of the convention, anyone who had had the patience to watch her 158 appearances between one political message and another would have discovered that Furness had been on screen for a total of four and a half hours, during which time she had opened 49 refrigerators, looked inside 12 gas cookers, switched on 29 washing-machines and dish-washers and turned on 42 television sets (*Saturday Evening Post*, 1952; Samuel, 2002, pp. 36-37).

The fact that the 1952 elections marked a turning-point is confirmed by the significant consequences they had in both parties. Among the Democrats, the apparent success of Eisenhower's spots spurred them to follow suit. Consequently, at

the next elections, they too tried to secure a nationally important advertising agency to replace the modest, medium-sized company hired in 1952 to develop a series of live television programs which were marked above all by their failure to meet the commercial demands of the medium (in one of them their candidate, Adlai Stevenson, was still talking when the presenter interrupted him because time had run out and they had to make way for the commercials). The Democrats managed to hire an agency, although one which was inferior to their opponents (in 25th position on turnover, while BBDO was 3rd), and noted especially for a lucrative advertising campaign for a make of bra, and in 1956 obtained a series of television spots, lasting a minute, modeled on the Republican spots from four years earlier. They recalled the promises made by Eisenhower and went on to criticize the president's failure to deliver on individual questions. Although definitely less awkward than the tortuous efforts of the previous elections, the Democratic spots, from which their candidate was missing (again it was Stevenson, who refused to participate directly), failed to deliver victory to the challenger over the incumbent, who this time relied solely on the consultancy of BBDO.

The second important consequence of '52 was the confirmation of the hiring of the Barton agency by the Republicans. Especially the way in which this happened suggested an unprecedented rooting in the political entourage. For the first time BBDO moved from one to the other campaign without interruption, and in fact was also given a consultancy also during Eisenhower's first term of office. Having been awarded an official contract with the party election committee that was renewed after the first victory, BBDO continued to work for the Eisenhower administration when the president had to present some domestic policy plans on TV in 1953-54. And then, in 1955, it started preparing for the following elections without any other agencies at their side (Jamieson Hall, 1992, pp. 118-119; Reichert, 2003, p. 28; Fox, 1985, p. 310).

The fortunes of BBDO started to decline, however, in 1960, when, with the Eisenhower era over, the wheel started to turn in favor of the Democrats. The fact that the person who spread make up on Nixon's face so badly (a circumstance that was to contribute to the disastrous outcome of his famous first television debate with John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK)), happened to be a BBDO man may even point to the reversal of a trend, suggesting that admen were defeated by the natural brilliance and charisma of a candidate whose style was reminiscent of the later Roosevelt. The impression is reinforced when we look at Kennedy's election committee and find that the men officially at its center were not admen or PR people but a politician, Jack's brother Bob, and a publicist, Ted Sorensen. Sorensen, together with a former radio consultant to Roosevelt, prepared Kennedy for the television debates whose introduction was greeted (in theory, rightly) as proof that the media and "especially television" offered the possibility of a path of dialogue, of a "large-scale debate".

Yet, looked at more closely, even Kennedy's election to President confirmed that a point of no return had been reached in the communication features of the campaigns. This was the observation made in the heat of the moment by the historian Daniel

Boorstin, who compared the debates to quizzes, calling them a “clinical example of a pseudo-event, of how it is made, why it appeals, and of its consequences for democracy” (Boorstin, 1961, p. 41). More recently other scholars have come back to the centrality of “image” as opposed to content in what still remain the most complex presidential debates held so far. Secondly, the paid spots with which the Kennedy campaign followed up the first debate with Nixon significantly reinforced the visual effect of the debate. Repeated incessantly and shown everywhere, they took a lucid and merciless selection of the only shots from the face-to-face debate which showed the Republican rival particularly ill at ease, in terms of expression and mood, despite the validity of his answers. The cost of these short clips, produced by the advertising agency Guild, Bascom and Bonfigli, catapulted Kennedy’s television budget – which could rely on Kennedy Sr.’s financial resources and earnings in the world of entertainment and advertising – a fifth above Nixon’s.

Thirdly, and most importantly, by using the consultancy of a marketing company, JFK was the first candidate to systematically transpose the idea of market segmentation into politics and to specifically address the various segments of the electorate, identified on ethnic or religious grounds, rather than appealing, as Barton had always recommended, to the undifferentiated mass of the “public.” (Cohen, L., 2003, p. 336) If we add to this the consultancy that Chester Bowles, adman converted to Democratic politics, gave Kennedy on running the convention and the fact that Kennedy used not one but two advertising agencies, preferring in some cases to employ the services not only of Guild, Bascom and Bonfigli, the agency provided by the party, but also of Jack Denove Productions, a company he had worked with independently during the primaries, one cannot but agree with those who have seen the 1960 elections as a deepening of the process of personalization and commercialization of campaigning (Chester Bowles Papers, b. 260, ff. 968-972; Westbrook, 1983, 156).

Just A Bad Joke?

The two following elections, in 1964 and 1968, introduced, albeit as yet only to an embryonic degree, three further innovations that signaled the crucial transition toward the communication forms that now dominate the present political scene. The first of these innovations took place among the Democrats in 1964, and was marked by the first appearance under the Democratic symbol of an important advertising agency, the up-and-coming Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), which stood out for an ironic, anticonformist style that reflected and exploited the counter-cultural mood of the time. Running the risk of earning itself “the possible resentment of some of our giant Republican clients”, the agency, already used by Kennedy in 1963 ahead of his re-election campaign, agreed to work with the successor to the assassinated president, Lyndon B. Johnson. But it was not the image of Johnson that set the tone for the campaign. DDB took another direction, making a series of television spots aimed at highlighting the danger of nuclear conflict in the event of the Republican candidate, the warmonger Barry Goldwater, winning the election. The most dramatic and controversial of these spots went down in history. It went on air officially only

once and was then withdrawn in the wake of Republican protests with the Fair Campaign Practices Commission, the federal body whose job it was to supervise the regular running of the campaign. The ensuing outrage, however, produced the opposite effect to what the Republicans hoped for: the spot was repeated an infinite number of times on countless television programs about the case and in the end was seen by everybody. In a superimposed shot it showed a small girl in a field of daisies under the dark shadow of a nuclear explosion. This spot inaugurated the trend to make "negative advertising" that centered on the "demonization" of the adversary and which was to become the key to political propaganda (Jamieson Hall, 1992, pp. 172-177; Jackall & Hirota, 2000, pp. 125-126).

In order to appreciate the second innovation we need to move forward another four years and to transfer to the Republican camp. In 1968 Nixon won the election, reversing the negative reputation that had dogged him ever since his clash with Kennedy. He was helped by a lavish and very inventive targeted campaign, financed by the party election committee. It was run by Roger Ailes, an independent adman and media specialist who had perfected the "segmented" Kennedy approach, which he now transferred onto the visual plane, using television spots of high technical quality that were differentiated according to the sections of the potential Republican electorate it was targeted at. But the real novelty came when Nixon took office. Ever concerned about his image, obsessed by the potential risk of news leaks, anxious to keep a tight control on communications within the restricted circle of the so-called *personal presidency* and sheltered from the parties and professional politicians, Nixon created the White House Office of Communications to take care of the relations between the presidency and the media (and in particular TV) and even nominated as his chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, a former manager with J. Walter Thompson, the agency which had repeatedly advised him since the 1960 campaign. So for the first time a commercial communicator finished up in the *holy of holies* of the executive. The consequences of this move were, however, anything other than edifying, given the major role played by Haldeman in the "Watergate affair" (Maltese, 1994; Cohen, L., 2003, p. 339). Certainly less deleterious, but even then not sufficiently effective as to retrieve the then compromised fortunes of his client, was Jimmy Carter's appointment of the Georgian adman who had run his successful election campaign in 1976 as head of the Office of Communications in the final phase of his White House adventure (American Association of Advertising Agencies, 1972 & 1976).

Independently of the results, however, the cases of Nixon and Carter show how, in the period between the 1960s and 70s, the fact "that a president should include advertising and public relations people in his inner circle was not [...] by now an aberration" (Fox, 1985, p. 313). But if we turn back to 1968 and look at that year's Democratic campaign, a third and decisive novelty emerges which has to do with the formation, extraction and professional profile of political communicators. That year, the man in charge of the Democratic election committee dismissed DDB and decided to give the job to a personal friend, a former businessman and occasional Democratic media consultant from the 1950s, Joseph Napolitan. Napolitan was the first example

of what would shortly be called political consultants, in other words communication and media experts trained in the typical principles of advertising and market surveys, but applied directly to politics. Compared to admen on loan, as it were, to politics, people they worked together with and to a large extent replaced, political consultants had the triple advantage of having a better knowledge of political life, a consequently higher degree of specialization (which allowed them to move in a complex and fragmented market, working with more ease on the individual segments of a campaign) and freedom from the typical concerns that beset admen about the possible negative consequences that the temporary shift to politics might have on their main task of working for companies (Jamieson Hall 1992, pp. 35-6 & 236-37).

There had, in fact, been some precedents for this new figure: in the 1930s and 1950s, Whitaker and Baxter, a PR agency active in California had concentrated its activities exclusively on political campaigns. Complementing the use of radio with the experimental application of the most sophisticated and unscrupulous techniques borrowed from company advertising and public relations (surveys, blanket mail shots, the use of a negative personal tone against one's adversary, pseudo-editorials in newspapers), in the 1930s Whitaker and Baxter had successfully run all the main Republican campaigns which involved the California business world. An example was the crusade in the business world against the candidature for state Governor of the popular radical author Upton Sinclair in 1934, and then later against some courageous proposals for pension reform advanced by progressive and left-wing forces which were regularly thrown out by referenda orchestrated by Whitaker and Baxter (Walker & Sklar, 1938, pp. 84-88; Mitchell, 1992; Goebel, 2002, pp. 181-189).

This agency was, however, for a long time an exception, the product of the particular conditions in California, namely the chronic weakness of the parties, excessive suburbanization (which put the stress on virtual as opposed to direct and widespread mobilization) and the influence of Hollywood's "society of spectacles". In the 1970s, political consultants started to adopt and refine the Whitaker and Baxter model, extending it to the rest of the country, just as the whole of the public sphere in America was beginning to resemble California.

To understand the change brought about by the rise of political consultants we need to focus our attention on three aspects of the new electoral communication panorama. The first is the success of the already mentioned "negative campaigns". Strictly speaking these were no novelty and in fact controversy and debate, even of a personalized nature, which has been seen on a large scale in North American public life since the colonial age, has rightly been considered a sign of political vitality and health. According to a recent research, "in every year from 1952 to 2000, there have been more policy specifics in contrast ads than in so-called positive ads." (Jamieson Hall, 2004). It is a very different question, however, when personal attacks are used almost as weapons – a phenomenon reported several times in the last twenty years – exploiting the number of occasions for manipulation provided by media instruments such as TV, compared to the opportunities for monitoring and debate that existed in

the period of face-to-face relations. This situation is then made worse by the absence, in our present-day world, of adequate public spaces and opportunities for the direct collective discussion of what is conveyed by the media. In this context, and in the hands of political communicators whose aim is to obtain a result at all costs, "negative" campaigns, on the one hand, lend themselves to particularly serious forms of distortion of facts, and, on the other, can become an easy substitute for the discussion of substantive questions. The effect is to produce the so-called "strategic manipulation", which concerns not so much the substance of things as what scandal-mongering chit-chat prevents people from saying and seeing, which in turn contributes to frame the political agenda. A glaring example of both such dangers inherent in negative advertising can be seen in the celebrated TV ad offensive launched by George Bush sr. during the 1988 elections against his rival, the Governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis. In explicit and emotionally forceful ads, Dukakis was given responsibility for the violence committed by a Black prisoner in Massachusetts during a weekend furlough, on the grounds that granting such furloughs were one of the measures introduced in Massachusetts prisons under the governorship of the Democratic candidate (West, 1993; Brinkley, 1997; Jamieson Hall, 1992).

The definition of the agenda and the relationship with a public "constructed" as an audience point to the second key element in the electoral panorama to have emerged in the last thirty years, the now utter centrality of surveys and marketing tools. This gives rise to serious effects of volatility and distortion of the political dynamic, with candidates tending to respond to the most immediate and unthinking moods of those sections of the electorate considered to be significant by giving these voters back emotional and misleading fragments of these moods in the form of media-created "personalities" that have been carefully constructed on paper rather than offering political strategies founded on real issues and collective interests (Westbrook, 1983, p. 166).

These effects are then transferred from the electoral arena to government itself. In recent years we have seen the extension of the use of public opinion polls and surveys as tools in the formulation of policies. Already present especially under Nixon (Jacobs and Shapiro, 1995), this practice has gone through good times and bad and even experienced a leap forward during the Clinton presidency. Indeed it is still far from clear whether "presidents use polls to tailor agendas and market policies," or "to reverse their policy preferences, or to preserve them regardless of citizens' views" (Eisinger, 2003, p. 185). Unquestionably, though, we have entered an era of "permanent campaign", with policies inspired in many ways by the ever changing trends of the polls (Towle, 2004) and founded on the blurring of the distinction between elections and government. A parallel crossover has taken place between politics and entertainment. Already present in the past, this phenomenon has now taken on ever more widespread and almost imperceptible forms and has been intensely practiced by an increasing use of instruments such as television talk shows. This dual blurring of distinctions represents the third constitutive factor of present-day political marketing.

On the threshold of the 2000 election, unbridled negative advertising, “permanent campaign,” and confusion between different areas of discourse forced leading historians such as David M. Kennedy to point a finger at “political consultants”, accusing them of “turn[ing] politics into a bad joke” and “having suggested to candidates such as Governor George W. Bush [...] not to say anything concrete and meaningful about a single public issue” (Kennedy, 1999). Kennedy’s words seemed to find confirmation in the way the campaign actually unfolded. With the acquiescence of television and the press, the campaign heightened, as in previous years but even more so, relational and personal elements and reinforced the idea of the contest as a “horse-race” (with the consequence that, during the TV debates, support gradually grew for Bush jr., seen as a “ugly duckling” and outsider compared to the “know all” and “rigid” Gore), at the expense of any extended discussion about real issues (Alsina, Davies and Gronbeck, 2001; Pflau, 2002; Rodgers, 2001).

A comprehensive picture of the 2004 elections goes well beyond the confines of this article. Indeed, according to one student, the campaign showed that “more American voters consider policy to be more important than character” and that “acclaims would be more common than attacks”. Yet the same scholar acknowledges that “the president’s campaign believed it would be easier to increase Kerry’s undesirability than to increase Bush’s desirability” (Benoit, 2005, p. 40). And in fact at some point the worst forms of negative advertising and unfounded personal attacks took center stage, prompting observers to notice that “all that’s necessary is to make the other side look even less acceptable” (Cohen, A., 2004). Furthermore, according to other scholars, the campaign revealed “a return to more traditional and comforting conceptions” in a “period of national anxiety” rather than a thorough engagement with the most thorny issues at stake (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2004).

All this calls for further longitudinal research (Thurber, J. A. & Nelson, C. J., 2004), that, without demonizing current political marketing (Scammell, n. d.), exaggerating its role, or idealizing a “lost world” of discussion and deliberation (Schudson, 2004), probes thoroughly its structural nature as a powerful industry, as well as a pervasive and potentially manipulative alternative to mass democracy (Hecló, 2003; Sussman and Galizio, 2003; Crenson & Ginsberg, 2003; Patterson, 2003).

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While the data we use are from very recent election cycles, the importance of agency problems in the candidate-consultant relationship is not limited to recent political history. In fact, these issues were central during the creation and evolution of the political consulting industry. Political consultants have an important role in shaping the content of political advertising and advertising strategies across campaigns. Medvic (2006) argues that one of the primary functions of political consultants is to craft messages that emphasize issues where voters will positively evaluate the candidate and negatively evaluate the opposition. Political campaigns in the United States are not merely a civic ritual and an occasion for political debate. Campaigns are a multi-billion dollar industry, dominated by professional political consultants using sophisticated campaign management tools. Though the quadrennial presidential election attracts the most attention, the United States has a huge number of elected offices. Bringing elections back into political history is a multifaceted project. The method pursued in most of the chapters in this volume is the investigation of important presidential elections, an approach that highlights contingent moments of political change or consolidation. Though elections provide a snapshot of political opinion at a particular historical moment, underlying structures, dynamics, and languages connect them across time, giving them their own internal logic and self-perpetuating mechanisms. The subject of this chapter is one of the most prominent threads running through... The election, it seemed, was one of the most significant in the twentieth century—the GOP answer to 1912, 1932, 1964. Keywords: Political marketing, Russian political market, political parties, United Russia, Mass Media, political PR. We'll elaborate on the role of different constituents of political marketing including the aspect of political communication and PR. The factors contributing to political marketing efficacy will be analyzed in reliance on different perspectives of the scholars. The second objective is to overview political activity of the party United Russia with a view to analyze its marketing efficiency further on in the study. By collecting factual data on the party's marketing activities we'll be able to build a whole picture of United Russia's marketing strategy.