Edward Bernays: Mastermind Behind the Selling of Fluoridation

Edward Bernays: “The Father of Spin” and Mastermind Behind the Selling of Fluoridation

George C. Glasser

“It is sometimes possible to change the attitudes of millions but impossible to change the attitude of one man.” Bernays, The Father of Spin (1998)

Back in 1967, I was an apprentice at a silkscreen printing/display company in San Francisco. We did work for most all the advertising agencies in town. As an apprentice, one of my jobs was delivering proofs to the various advertising agencies for their approval before we started production.

On one occasion, I asked an account executive how I would go about getting into the high-end advertising business. The fellow liked me and quite honestly said that unless I went to a school like Stanford, there wasn’t much of a chance. He thought for a moment, went into his office, came back with two books, and said, “If you read these books and learn how to apply the principles, you can work your way up in the business.”

As fate would have it, the books were “Crystallizing Public Opinion” and “Propaganda” by Edward
Bernays. He also told me to go to the library and get "The Engineering of Consent" by Bernays.

In the early 1990s, when my sister decided she didn't like the idea of fluoride being in her drinking water, she started on a concerted campaign to convert me from being apathetic into becoming an activist. She had loads of information; however, she put one article in front of me that hit home: "Fluoride: Commie Plot or Capitalist Ploy" by Joel Griffiths.

Early on in the article, I read:

“This enthusiasm was not really surprising, considering Oscar Ewing's public relations strategist for the water fluoridation campaign was none other than Sigmund Freud's nephew Edward L. Bernays, "The Original Spin Doctor," as a Washington Post headline recently termed him. Bernays, also known as the "father of public relations," pioneered the application of his uncle's theories to advertising and government propaganda. The government's fluoridation campaign was one of his most stunning and enduring successes.”

That's when I picked up on the distinct aroma of a dead rat rotting in the woodwork and began to investigate...
what the drinking water fluoridation game was all about. And in reality, it didn't have anything to do with anything altruistic. It was about getting the public to drink and bathe in toxic waste and believing it was good for them.

The PR behind it was standard Bernays practice. At the onset, sodium fluoride was the primary community fluoridation agent and also a common rat poison; consequently, the pioneer opponents plastered the “rat poison” label all over and were successful.

Also, at that time, the aluminum industry had major environmental problems and bad reputation from fluoride pollution. They needed a way to get rid of their toxic waste, and Bernays was the man to call in and solve the problem for everybody.

A little sidebar here: Not many people are aware that Bernays was thick as thieves with governments around the world and especially the US government. Bernays was the primary consultant in selling public policy for the US government.

With regards to Hitler and the Third Reich, Bernays' work was influential in “Mein Kampf” and Josef Goebbels' hate campaign against the Jews.

Bernays was also instrumental in stirring up
public opinion against the Germans in America during World War One. He and a social psychologist named Walter Lippman played the key role in showing President Woodrow Wilson how to set up a secret body of “managers” to run the war effort along with a body of “advisors” to assist in decision-making. It was the Creel Commission and stands as first committee of public opinion-makers to be set up in the United States.

Bernays was not just another glad-handing, pearly-toothed PR man brandishing a cheesy smile; he had solid connections all the way to the top.

So, I put myself in Bernays’ shoes when they called him to perform the feat of transforming rat poison into an elixir of life. I asked myself how exactly I would make people believe that rat poison is somehow something other than what it is.

First off, you find an equivocal piece of information saying there are health benefits attached – no matter how dodgy it is.

To make a long story short, we would use some moth-eaten pseudo-scientific observation that said a ‘dentist’ observed that people suffering with a condition called dental fluorosis had less cavities. But my attitude would be, ’If I don’t have even dodgy science to back up what I want to say, I’ll just go...”

While the dental establishment and the USCDC say that Dental Fluorosis is ‘merely a cosmetic effect,’ for the millions of people afflicted with the condition, it’s much more. Your teeth are your first impression, and when you have blotchy white spots or rust colored stains on your teeth, people look at you differently - they prejudge you, and subconsciously make decisions about your hygiene, intelligence, and attractiveness. In the United States, 75% of the public drinking water is fluoridated, and the latest CDC estimate is that on average 41% of adolescents have some degree Dental Fluorosis, and about 3.6% of those are serious cases. What are the psychosocial and socioeconomic ramifications and is there a legal remedy? Does Dental Fluorosis meet the criteria for Civil Rights based lawsuits? That is what this booklet is about.
what I want to say, I’ll just go out and hire a mercenary researcher to come up with the results I want to sell to the ‘masses.’

The next problem was sanitizing the rat poison image that came with the sodium fluoride into ‘Mr. Friendly Cavity Fighter.’ That was easy enough; you just call it “Fluoride,” a generic term and drop the negative connotation of sodium.

You’ve already got the people in government to back up everything you say, so the basic endorsement is solidly in place – no problem there.

Next, you have to sell the idea to the public. Well, that’s standard operating procedure. You get the boys in white lab coats with a doctor or scientist title in front of their name to endorse the practice. In fact, why not just hire some actors who are articulate and attractive to play the role. The public will believe anything they say as long as they look and sound like a compassionate doctor.

For instance, all they have to say is ‘9 out of 10 dentists recommend fluoride in the drinking water.’ The ‘masses’ will believe anything a man in a white lab coat tells them even if it is a bunch of crafted lies.

I got a better idea; I’ll get the American Dental Association to back the campaign. That way, I can get ten out of ten dentists to endorse community water fluoridation.

To purchase hard copies recommended for presentations to lawyers with whom you might be discussing a dental fluorosis lawsuit or councils considering fluoridation - point of purchase below.

The cover was designed specifically for the maximum visual dynamics with a three dimensional quality on a glossy cover. If you want to hit home with the message, buy the thirty-six page booklet and carry it with you to make truly memorable presentations - something the opponents will never forget nor ever want to see again.

With "Dental Fluorosis: The Psychosocial Issue," there’s no need to carry armloads of copies or cumbersome scientific books that no one will read.

As Marshall McLuhan said, "The medium is the message."

In the United States, approximately 21,000,000 young people between the ages of 12-15 years are the victims of a failed public health measure which is "unreservedly endorsed" and aggressively promoted by the American Dental Association and "recommended" by US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as "one of ten great public health achievements of the 20th century."

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dentists to back community water fluoridation. On top of that, I can get the coveted ADA "Seal of Approval" stamped on it without the extortionate price tag.(That's exactly how Bernays did it.)

But there there's one troubling problem; it's the people whom I can't pull the wool over their eyes. How do I sideline them, make them look like fools to their peers, and discredit the distracters?

Well, this is where we bring group psychology and Freudian concepts into play. Bernays liked to call it the "herding instinct." The key is to exclude the dissidents from the herd as being different and not belonging. Then it's easy to label those dissidents as being different and marginalize them from the 'herd' consciousness, as e.g "kooks and crackpots."

Because of the herding instinct, the herd members will inherently assume that anyone against the practice is kook or crackpot by the time we've finished propagandizing the gullible 'masses.' That way, it is possible manipulate the herd into shunning the critics thus discrediting anything they say.

As a matter of fact, I'll hire some writers to write crazy, off the wall rants for the editorial page and nutty space ship theory articles about fluoridation to attract all the kooks and crackpots to

Phosphate Fluoride Toxic Torts
by Gary O. Pittman

I edited and contributed to Gary O. Pittman's "Phosphate Fluorides Toxic Torts." A few months back, Gary contacted me and said he was writing a book from his perspective about the seven year toxic tort case. He asked me if I would edit and contribute to it. I was more than happy because I've waited 13 years to be a part of telling the whole story. The original article I wrote about the case back in 1998 is "Death in the Air."

If anyone one who reads Pittman's account still thinks water fluoridation is a good idea, to put it bluntly, they're 'brain dead' and any attempt at resuscitation is a pointless exercise in futility - they're a 'pull the plug,' write-off. There's no credible
come out of the woodwork and jump on the anti fluoridation bandwagon. That way I have real examples to use to discredit and marginalize the honest people.

At that point, I can assure that the people in the herd will instinctively shun the outcasts for fear of being excluded from the 'herd' and also being labeled as kooks and crackpots themselves. It works on the 'masses' every time - they never get wise to that trick.

Now, it appears if I have all my ducks in a row, but unfortunately there is one fatal flaw in the foundation of my plan to sell the 'masses' on swallowing my rat poison as a beneficial public health measure; it’s dental fluorosis!

However, if by some chance it becomes a problem, we can always say: "Dental fluorosis is a classic public health trade-off" – an acceptable minor risk - resulting from "a beneficial, cost-effective public health measure which reduces inequalities in dental health."

That’s the best way to casually brush-off ruining millions of kids’ teeth. The ‘masses’ will suck it up as acceptable coming from the actor in a white lab coat that says he represents the American Dental Association’s benevolent division.
I figured that flaw out and presented it in the first article I ever wrote about fluoride in 1995; “Dental Fluorosis: A Legal Time Bomb.” Dental fluorosis was then and even more so now, the ‘Achilles Heel’ of Bernays’ master plan.

The entire foundation of selling community water fluoridation was built on the flaky foundation of Dental Fluorosis (See The Story of Fluoridation).

While the “CDC [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] has recognized water fluoridation as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century,” the ‘public health achievement’ is also responsible for, on average in the United States, 41% of young people from 12–15 years having dental fluorosis. Kids in that age range with moderate to severe fluorosis are about 3.6%.

Looking at percentages alone is a PR slight of hand, but crunching an actual estimate in real numbers is another story: in the US, approximately 21,403,768 between the ages of 12-15 years have dental fluorosis, and of that, approximately 770,535 have moderate to severe fluorosis.

Interestingly, we have fifty-six years of fluoridation with a constant year on year rise in the incidence of the condition "benefits outweigh the risks, public health measure."

"Many mornings when we employees would get out of our vehicles (women) our panty hose would dissolve off our legs. It was explained to us that it was a chemical fall-out not to worry – Our boss Norman Bullock would see that each of us girls would get $1.00 to get another pair of panty hose." (Excerpt from written deposition.)

Gary Pittman and his co-workers were systematically exposed to toxic substances while working for Occidental Chemical Corporation’s north Florida phosphoric acid plants and mines. "Phosphate - Fluorides - Toxic Torts" is a personal narrative by Pittman describing his seven-year battle with Occidental while suffering with chemical poisoning, and the obstacles he had to overcome in the pursuit of compensation. Occidental Chemical Corporation was no stranger to Toxic Tort litigation. They were the company named in the 1979 landmark case, “United States v. Occidental,” about the "Love Canal" public health disaster in the late 1970s. In 1995, the "Love Canal” case was still in the courts when Pittman, a co-worker, and attorney, Dorothy Clay Sims took on the mammoth Occidental machine with their legions of law firms. Did Pittman win? Yes and no. When you have your health, you can
that coincides with the expansion of community water fluoridation. Due to this remarkably successful 'public health achievement,' the total number of victims of this debacle is astronomical and probably more than 100,000,000 people in the US - one-third of the population.

The problem is so out of control that recently the CDC recommended lowering the fluoride levels in drinking water to reduce the incidence of dental fluorosis.

However, in pre-rehearsed interviews, American Dental Association representatives (dentists) are coached to indignantly say, 'I've been a dentist for (so many years), and I've only seen one or two cases of dental fluorosis in my entire career.'

They simply dismiss it as something that is very rare. However, 21 million kids in a very small age group range have been victimized by the American Dental Association's aggressive promotion of community water fluoridation and they simply shrug it off as the reasonable cost of reducing tooth decay in the overall population.

To me there's the malodorous stench of a maggot infested dead rat (Bernays) behind the scenes that cooked up some kind of nefarious scheme to make money from fluoride ruined teeth, and the always make more money, but when you are poisoned and debilitated, there's not enough money in the world to buy back your health.
American Dental Association's reasons for pushing fluoridation aren't motivated by any sort of benevolent social responsibility.

Community water fluoridation is nothing more than a Bernays' "smoke and mirrors' public relations con-job the American Dental Association has been milking for fifty-six years all while ruining tens of millions kids teeth and lives.

In reality, all they have managed to do is permanently disfigure at very least 21 million of the kids' teeth in the United States! Then, they have the audacity to call water fluoridation 'one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century!' Actually, it's more like the 20th century's greatest public mental health catastrophes.

The American Dental Association representatives have been coached by media professionals and public relations specialists to deflect any negative issue you might bring up - and condescendingly denigrate you thus marginalizing you from the 'herd.'

Now, the problem with the fluoridation groups is that there is no focus. I've watched this game for over sixteen years, and I won't be a part of any group because no one really has a grasp of the public relations angle and that Dental Fluorosis is the
stake to drive into the heart of the beast.

Showing photographs of dental fluorosis at presentations where American Dental Association representatives are attending is like the first rays of morning sunlight shining on a vampire.

The advice I would give anyone fighting the fluoride fight is to read Dental Fluorosis: “The Psychosocial Issue” and start using the book and what’s in it to deconstruct one of Edward Bernays’ “most stunning and enduring successes.”

As the old cliche goes: 'A picture is worth a thousand words.' Raising the awareness of what dental fluorosis is and the psychological pain it causes people, especially children, is placing the promoters in the category of callous, sociopathic child abusers thus isolating them from the 'herd.'

"The best defense against propaganda: more propaganda." Bernays

For more about Dental Fluorosis
Go to Spots on My Teeth