

It's Time to Make People Electricity Conscious

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Power shortage should come to an end by the time the schemes visualised in the Second Five-Year Plan get into stride. Even today, in many power supply systems, the problem is one of how best plants commissioned could be brought into beneficial use.

Therefore it is not too curly for an energetic campaign to make the country electricity conscious.

WITH the successive Five-year Plans continuing to lay emphasis on power development it has been visualised that the installed capacity, both in the Public; and Private Sectors, will increase from 2.8 million kilowatts in 1953-54 to 6 million kilowatts in 1960-61 the need for making the public electricity conscious must assume importance. In what other ways could this be done except by the time honoured method of publicity? "Advertisement" might be the more appropriate word to describe the art of making known to the consumer the achievements of an Industry and the strong points of the commodity it sells. Whatever the word, be it publicity, advertising, promotion or development, there will be need for more of it in the Electric-Supply Industry in the days to come.

Consumer Satisfaction

Advice or persuasion to a large extent, conditions public habits and the art of publicity is the best instrument to mould the mind, which generally results in the public demanding the goods and services which is made available by the manufacturer. This process is a continuous one, and an ever changing one at that. A fundamental proposition in advertisement practice is that the public is most fickle in its habits. From this arises the premise that not only must the consumer be sold but he or she (the housewife takes pride of place in the electricity market) must remain sold,

"Early to bed and early to rise

Is no darned use if you don't publicize"

is an old adage, but it is just as true today as it was when the lines were composed; it is no less true in the Electric Supply Industry.

All publicity, of course, is intended to end up in better consumer relations and apart from this basic approach, advertisement has also been in the main motivated by the idea of selling the electrical way of life.

One of the criticisms of advertising is that it rams down the throat of people the goods it promotes, resulting in sales being effected to those who do not really want them. This

extreme view takes little note of the prejudices of the average housewife it is the housewife who is the centre of attraction in promoting greater use of electrical energy in the domestic field in that it would take more than a mere advertisement to sell a piece of domestic equipment a second time, should it be found that something; was wrong with the first.

The Miracle Agency

It is generally recognised that electricity is the most interesting and fascinating agency so far discovered by man. This by itself has not meant, that everybody has become "interested" in the product. It is so intangible, one cannot smell it or see it, and it should not be touched! It is, therefore, incomprehensible to the average person, and being incomprehensible he merely says "if it works, it suits me". The Electric Supply Industry must consequently emphasise in the most exciting way possible the advantages which only electricity can offer.

In this country, no major attempt has so far been made to condition the minds of the householders to demand and expect all the electrical benefits available and there can be no two opinions that conversion of the housewives to the electrical way of life is a desirable thing particularly so, as it would tend to improve the load factor in the power systems. This focusses attention on promoting sales of domestic electrical appliances, the media for harnessing electrical help.

Changing People's Habits

It will be appropriate here to discuss in brief the elements of good advertisement which would result in the necessary sales promotion.

Long-term publicity usually moves with a new development, seeking to change the habit of the mighty army of Consumers, and this approach will be needed in areas which will shortly receive the benefit of electricity following the expansion visualised in the successive National Plans. Short-term publicity concerns the meeting of day-to-day problems—how best a particular equipment (as a means of selling more electrical energy) is

to be sold. The latter operation should not be an isolated activity but must, dovetail into the larger plan, one complementary to the other.

How to Do It

A good 'copy' in a daily news, paper or periodical must be interesting enough to attract the reader away from other columns, and having done so, should hold his attention. Also it must have a consistently high reading value and noting value.

Most good advertisements consist of (a) headlines (b) pictures and (c) 'copy'. A strong headline and an attractive picture are basic ingredients of a successful advertisement. Opinions differ as to the effectiveness of long wording in the 'copy' and the success of slogan advertising in certain cases would appear to weigh in favour of brief 'copy'.

Special Problems

In the case of the Electric Supply Industry, most of the appliances are in a price bracket where the purchaser is forced to consider the pros and cons of the article before making a decision, as many other more urgent needs compete for a place in the domestic economy. When a housewife buys an electric cooker, she expects that it should give full value commensurate with the cost, for, outlay on a cooker might mean denial of another want. The 'copy' of advertisement therefore assumes great importance. What is stated in it must, be precise. It should not be wordy prose. It must be imaginative and excite curiosity but at the same time, it must give an accurate description of the performance of the equipment. Self-interest on the part of the consumer is natural, and regard must be given to this by the advertiser if he wants the reader to become a customer.

Having stated these fundamentals, the approach to the problems of the individual supply system must be evolved to suit the needs of the area concerned. Where, national or State newspapers do not have large circulation, medium of the screen, poster publicity and distribution of printed

handbills might be suitable alternatives.

Great 'Plus' in Electricity

Most of the points made above deal with consumer goods in general but the principle remains the same in the case of the Electric Supply Industry. The buying of a durable article like a refrigerator or a cooker or a water heater is not an impulse purchase. To create a desire—and consequently a demand—for an equipment with a high unit price, even if facilities for hire purchase are available, calls for much persuasion, in fact greater persuasion than advertisements coaxing the reader to use, say, a particular brand of soap. The public generally buys what it desires, and it is the task of publicity to create the desire for the electrical way of life. The Electric Sup-

ply Industry has particular advantage in this—the cleanliness and the absence of smoke in using electricity for cooking and hot water. But the 'main plus' is the hope of modern living which electricity can stimulate and the task of publicity, to repeat, is to create the desire.

What of Industry?

The need for presenting the potentialities of electrical development in Industry, too, is no less important. The immediate selling problem here is easier, for, unlike gas, or kerosene, which competes with electricity as domestic fuel, there is no other convenient form of power which can assist industry to develop. Here desire-creation can take the form of impressing the industrialist that there is no problem which electric power cannot help to solve. The in-

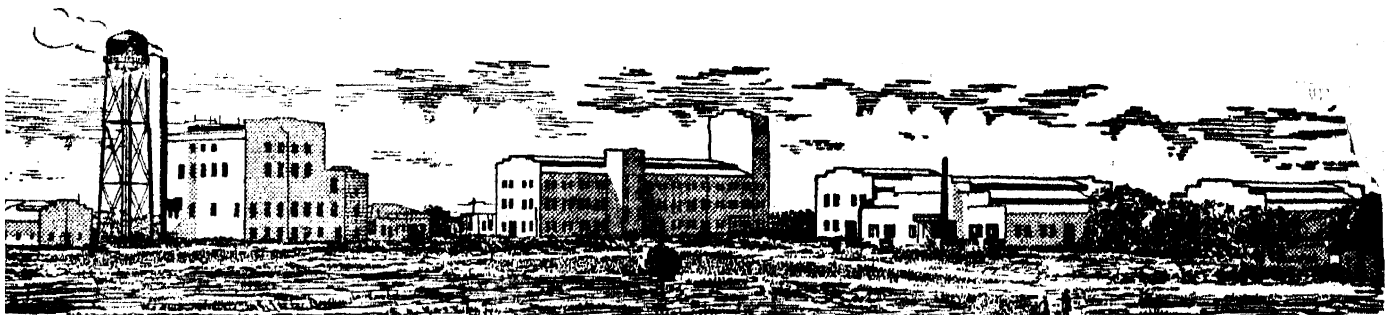
dustrialist must be made to ask himself, "Where am I not using electricity?" instead of merely asking "Where should I use electricity?" By the above process, productivity could improve.

All this may sound phoney when in large parts of the country "acute power shortage still persists. But power shortage would come to an end by the time the schemes visualised in the Second Five Year Plan get into stride. Even today, in many power supply systems, the problem is one of how best plants commissioned could be brought into beneficial use. Therefore, it is not too early for an energetic campaign to make the country electricity conscious. What Mr Therm can do is a story which must be put across to the country at large in time.



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