

PROPAGANDA

This is defined as that branch of the art of lying which consists in very nearly deceiving your friends without quite deceiving your enemies. It is an important skill for you to cultivate; by careful study of the words of your colleagues you will simultaneously learn how to advance your own arguments in their most attractive and convincing form; while ensuring that those of others do not unnecessarily cloud your judgement or cause you to reconsider your views.

The two styles of propaganda most frequently seen are *Conservative Liberal Propaganda* and *Liberal Conservative Propaganda*. These differ only in the means by which they appeal to your innate wish to do the right thing in the current circumstances, however much you might regret not being able to support what superficially appears to be the right thing in the general case or in the longer term. This is how you may distinguish yourself from a reformer, who instead emphasises the benefits that his proposal will bring the university three centuries hence.

It is not unheard of for an Adullamite to attempt to employ the art. Happily you need not concern yourself much with this; for his prose is at once so bluntly phrased as to be transparent, and so badly written as to be meaningless; moreover, it contains sufficient in the way of misplaced punctuation and unintentionally amusing statements to keep a comma-hunting pig in clover for many an hour.

The Non-Placet and the Young Man in a Hurry do not bother with propaganda; the former because he knows that his views are right and that all right-thinking men must agree with him; the latter likewise.

The different classes of propaganda having been identified, we may now turn our attention to the subtleties of the art. The usual forms employed by the Conservative Liberal are as follows.

The Principle of Positive Spin has the singular advantage of also being employed by the reformer, with the enticing possibility that your proposals may get confused with his by the Adullamites, who assume that all positive statements must emanate from the Council. The principle consists in repeatedly emphasising the positive aspects of your proposal (no matter that there are none) while downplaying the negative (which are far too many to enumerate so you will not bother to waste your time, or anyone else's, by so doing). You may also optionally choose to misrepresent the position of your opponent (known as *Corner-Painting*); or indeed, should you wish to indulge in a little sport, to misrepresent your opponent himself; the extreme form of this is known as *Reductio ad Absurdum*.

A particularly pleasing application of the principle comes when you can show that by not adopting the current proposal the university will save money now; the fact that not implementing it will, over the next five years, cost the university far more may cheerfully be omitted from your exposition. This will make the Adullamites, rubbing their hands together as they try to propose a way of diverting the savings to some project of their own, certain to vote against the proposal. Thus will you become widely known as a Good Business Man.

Corner-Painting is a phenomenon that has been allowed to flourish due to the rather curious practice of speakers being permitted to ramble at some length without interruption rather than entering into a true dialogue. Since your opponent is thus unable to present his own position it is necessary for you to expound it for him, that you might better be able to reply to the points you believe he would make. This form of the art appeals particularly to younger members of academic dynasties, who have been trained in it since birth; this should not be taken to suggest that others cannot develop and perfect the skill.

When presenting your opponent's proposal it is of course necessary for you to make some abridgements to his text so that you can move swiftly on to your counter-arguments. Quoting him out of

context is a popular tactic at this point. You should also make sure to introduce some slight alterations in his stated position; alterations that are at once so minor that he would appear petty to complain even could he determine their precise nature; and so major that his entire position collapses and his proposal appears ridiculous.

Reductio ad Absurdum is one of a number of splendid techniques imported from the mathematical arts. It differs from Corner-Painting in that it is used to destroy the credibility of your opponent, rather than merely the cause he supports. For this reason it is a tactic to be used sparingly; if you employ it too often your opponents will learn from example; and the likelihood of retaliatory attacks on your own credibility will be much increased. It is therefore a risky technique when adopted by those lacking either a saintly aura or the prospect of imminent demise.

If, however, you find yourself in a position where you have a particularly vexatious foe then this is what you must do. On each and every occasion that he says something that is not clearly thought through, or (and this is particularly fruitful) when the quality of his scholarship is questioned, you make a note of it. When you have accumulated sufficient evidence that, when presented with it in one fell swoop, any reasonable person would be convinced that your enemy is lacking in the intellectual rigour required by either a sound scholar or an academic politician, you may make your move.

If you are feeling particularly courteous you may elect to alert your foe to your impending attack by means of a shot across his bows in the national press. This will be sure to focus his attention and ensure his presence in the Senate House on the next available occasion. Sometimes, though, enemies unhelpfully appear in the Senate House before these preliminary formalities have been completed. In this case it is perfectly acceptable to proceed as if they had been and to deliver your carefully prepared attack regardless. With luck he will be taken completely by surprise and will fail to muster an appropriate defence; each absurdity will strike home and his credibility will be thus reduced. There is however one *caveat* that should be noted at this point: his unexpected presence that afternoon may be explained by his having accumulated sufficient evidence to reduce you.

The Appeal to Learning is a cunning tactic that is often used to encourage the Non-Placets and the more straightforward of the Adullamites to support an apparently weak and indefensible proposal. This technique requires you to pepper your proposal liberally with *bons mots* in classical, and other, languages. Your audience will nod sagely as he spots and understands a reference that would have gone over the head of someone less learned. His feeling that he is an intelligent and important man will be confirmed and he will be more favourably inclined to the rest of your arguments. A variation of the technique concentrates on the Cantabrigian loyalty of your audience; congratulating the university on its foresight in entirely fortuitously adopting some proposal in 1872 (possibly because no one was awake enough to notice the disadvantages) will to many of the Non-Placets feel like a personal commendation. Such are the methods of the Conservative Liberal.

Liberal Conservative Propaganda tends to appeal more to the emotions than to the intellect. A common theme is reliance on the Bugbear of 'What will Dr. — say.' or, even better, 'What would Dr. — have said.' The latter argument is the more convincing for the reason that it is well-known that Dr. — died in 1893, so his responses to the proposal are by necessity imaginary, and are all the more fearful for that.

Doomsaying is a favourite tactic of the harried Liberal Conservative. You should first ensure that you show your commitment to the future of the university by describing in great detail the unforeseen abyss into which it would have fallen in adopting the current, apparently innocuous, recommendations if only it had not had you there to save it from itself. You must reassure the current Council that you would in no way dream of suggesting that it had anything but the purest of motives in mind when making the proposal; so pure, in fact, that you are sure that this must be why they failed to notice

the unfortunate loopholes in it. For particularly spectacular effect you may then continue by dangling before your horrified audience the ghastly spectre of some future rogue Council abusing the dangerous powers the loopholes in the proposal could grant it.

The method works particularly well when combined with an *Appeal to History*. This allows an inspired combination of both forward and reverse invocations of the Wedge. By careful perusal of past proposals on this matter you have discovered that the reason that the university is in its current parlous position is that no one presented sufficient (or indeed any) opposition to the earlier proposals. You may then lament that each step in and of itself was but a small reform, but that taken together as a whole the situation of the university has irredeemably changed for the worse. Another mathematical technique, that of *Extrapolation*, can then be used to imply that the current proposal may again appear to be a minor step but that it will lead to dire consequences in half a century's time. This is not a particularly convincing technique as it is easy to follow the steps of history and see which reform led to which consequences, whereas clairvoyance is necessarily a more uncertain art. Nevertheless, in the right circumstances (particularly if Washing of Linen has recently occurred) it can be used to great effect.

One final, anomalous, category of propaganda must be mentioned. It is often found when a brilliant scholar finds himself forced by extreme conditions to take to politics and is governed by the *Principle of Overblown Rhetoric*. Used to adoring followers who hang on his every word he has a tendency to exaggerate his case using fanciful examples and fearsome anecdotes from his field of expertise. The technique does not work as well as might be expected for two reasons. The first is that due to his brilliance no one has any respect for him. The second is that his field of expertise is of no interest to anyone present and references to it serve only to remind them of the first.