

**REAGAN vs. CARTER AND MONDALE:
TOWARD A THEORY OF CORPORATE PUBLIC POLICY ADVERTISING**

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This paper takes a look at two questions and then advances one theoretical interpretation of the answers to those questions. The first question is whether or how the business community tried to influence the outcome of the 1984 presidential election by means of advocacy (or public policy-related) advertisements in selected print media. The second question concerns the extent to which the public policy advertising picture was influenced by President Reagan's first-term policies and his overwhelming popularity during the 1984 election campaign. The data bases provide answers to these two questions particularly when compared with similar data from the 1980 election campaign, and begin to reveal the outlines of a broad theoretical explanation of corporate advertising on public policy issues.

This theoretical interpretation should be of considerable interest to students of the political behavior of the large corporation, to those who are interested in how the large corporation influences public policy and, particularly, to those scholars who study the business corporation's efforts to acquire and maintain societal legitimacy and general public acceptance. These insights might also deepen the understanding of marketing and advertising executives regarding this kind of advertising. Although the development of such a theory was not our initial purpose or intent, we believe it is of even greater interest and significance than the suggestive shifts in political advertising revealed by the empirical data of the 1984 campaign, to which we now turn.

Business efforts to influence the 1984 campaign are best seen in the perspective of similar efforts during the 1980 election when Ronald Reagan defeated President Jimmy Carter. Frederick & Myers (1983), in a study of public policy advertisements in three national-circulation magazines during the six months preceding the 1980 election, made the following observations: (1) Pro-Reagan ads outnumbered Pro-Carter ads ten to one; (2) politically-oriented ads increased in frequency in the two months preceding election day, suggesting a special effort by business to influence the public's thinking as the election approached; (3) twenty-three percent of all such ads carried direct, hard-core political messages, and another 53 percent combined some political lesson with sale of a company's product; thus, fully three-quarters of the ads were intended to convey a political point of view; and (4) the heaviest advertisers were business trade associations representing industries with a direct stake in central election campaign issues such as inflation, energy price decontrol, deregulation of transportation, and how to cope with chemical hazards in the workplace and the environment.

While these points all favor the notion that business made an all-out effort to see that its favored candidate was elected, Frederick & Myers (1983) also noted the following points that counteract that view: (1) there was no significant falloff in the number of

politically-oriented ads after the election, implying that no special effort had been made prior to the election; (2) political ads amounted to only about 8 percent of the total of all advertisements sponsored in the three magazines surveyed, representing a "relatively modest" overall ad campaign for political purposes; (3) the authors acknowledged that they did not compare their findings with a similar period in a non-election year, thus forfeiting an opportunity to observe seasonal variations in ads that might vitiate their conclusions concerning business's efforts to sway the electorate; and (4) such a large percentage of the public policy ads linked a political message with a product sale that they concluded that "the major motive operating . . . was commercial, not political" (1983: 81).

These somewhat ambiguous findings create doubt about the overall purpose and function of public policy advertising by business, and for that reason we decided to replicate the Frederick-Myers methodology for the purpose of analyzing the political significance of print media ads during the 1984 presidential election.

Methodology

The same three magazines—*Business Week*, *Newsweek*, and *Atlantic*—were chosen, and all full-page ads were counted for two periods of time: May 1984 through April 1985 (the six months preceding and the six months following the election), and May 1983 through April 1984, the latter period serving as a control year for seasonal-variation purposes. The same categories were used to classify the types of public policy advertisements found: **Category I ads** were directly and obviously political in their messages; **Category II ads** combined political messages and product sales efforts; and **Category III ads** were run-of-the-mill corporate image promotions involving corporate sponsorship of the arts or other such causes. Both major and subsidiary political themes in each ad were identified and then matched for political alignment with a list of salient campaign issues developed by analyzing the two major parties' platform documents. This permitted a classification of each political advertisement as belonging in one of four categories of political allegiance: Pro-Reagan, Pro-Mondale, Shared (both candidates agreed on the issue), and Neutral (an issue that was neither pro-Reagan nor pro-Mondale). Various statistical analyses, including analysis of variance and Chi-square tests, were conducted on the collected data at appropriate points.

Hypotheses

We tested three hypotheses:

- **H1:** If business wanted to influence the outcome of the election, then business would sponsor a larger number of politically-oriented ads prior to the election than following it and a larger number of such ads than had appeared in the same period during the preceding (control) year.
- **H2:** The number of advertisements with political messages would increase following the nominating conventions up to election day.
- **H3:** If business favored one candidate over another, it would sponsor a larger number of ads expressing that candidate's political views rather than those of his opponent.

These three hypotheses were equivalent to those tested by Frederick & Myers (1983). Taken together, they should indicate whether business used electoral advertising

in this form in a special effort to influence the campaign. The test results also should identify the major political advertisers, as well as the issues they considered pivotal.

The 1984 Results

H1 was not confirmed. There is no evidence that public policy advertisements (PPAs) increased significantly in the pre-election period of 1984 or that they declined significantly following the election. However, PPAs in 1984 did increase from 129 to 171, or from 7.2 percent to 8.2 percent of all types of ads, when compared with a similar period in 1983 (the control year). This difference is statistically significant at $p < .0873$, thus suggesting a quickened pace of such advertising in the pre-election period. However, the salience of this apparent surge of political advertising is qualified by the statistically insignificant drop in numbers of post-election PPAs, plus the inconsequential change occurring after the election date in both 1983 and 1984. In other words, one can find little indication that overall numbers of political advertisements increased significantly in the election year.

H2 was confirmed. PPA *frequency* increased beginning six months before the election right up to election day, being particularly pronounced in the two critical months of September and October. Measured in yet another way, we can observe that 41.5 percent of all pre-election PPAs were concentrated in those two months, which represented only one-third of the advertising time available. Data from the control year offer no similar pattern of increased frequency. Hence, it appears that advertisers did increase the number and frequency of their messages to the public as election day approached. Apparently, they had *something* they wanted to say with greater urgency than had been true earlier.

H3 was confirmed. Pro-Reagan ads outnumbered pro-Mondale ads by almost 8 to 1. Thus, public policy advertisements overwhelmingly favored Reagan, although by a somewhat smaller margin than in 1980 when Reagan's advantage over Carter was 10 to 1.

Pro-Reagan ads in *Business Week* were at their high points in July 1984 (14) just before the Republican Party convention in August and again in September and October (12 each). In no other month before or after the election were they as high. Pro-Reagan ads in all three magazines totaled 20 in July, 13 in August, 17 in both September and October, and 13 in November, tapering off in the months following the election. Again, it appears that a special effort was being made, particularly by *Business Week* advertisers, to promote ideas or themes congenial to President Reagan.

Political Salience

As noted earlier, PPAs can be classified by the directness of the political messages they contain. Category I ads are the purest and most direct in focusing on a public policy idea or theme, while Category II ads represent a mixture of political and commercial messages.

The data here reveal a curious situation. While 1984 pre-election PPAs of all kinds declined by one-third when compared with those in a comparable period of 1980, the number and percentage of Category I ads increased dramatically. This finding seems to suggest a greatly enhanced effort by PPA sponsors to get their political messages across to the electorate in the six months preceding the 1984 election, but this would be

true only if the bulk of those Category I ads were devoted to prime campaign issues, a point vitiated by other data to be discussed below. In attempting to understand the main purposes served by public policy advertising sponsored by business, it is especially important to note that Category II ads are the most numerous and account for nearly half of all 1984 pre-election PPAs, thereby confirming Frederick & Myers' conclusion that commercial motives are perhaps uppermost in the minds of those who place PPAs in the print media.

The Advertisers

The ten leading advertisers in the 1984-85 period were Motorola, General Motors, Sun Oil, Internorth, R. J. Reynolds, the Statue of Liberty Fund, Grumman, Ireland Development Authority, Catholic Health Association, and United Technologies. Among these big spenders there is no variation at all between the pre-election and post-election periods that would support an argument that they made an unusual effort to influence the election's outcome. The only two advertisers whose ads dropped in number following the election are the Statue of Liberty Fund and the Ireland Development Authority, neither of which was relevant to the campaign.

Even more striking is the non-political nature of most of the PPAs run by the top five advertisers. Three of the top five paid for Category I ads, but only one of these (Internorth) was obviously pro-Reagan in tone. General Motors' ads on drug and alcohol abuse were in the Neutral political category, as were R. J. Reynolds' ads on smoking and health. Sun Oil's Category II ads on off-shore drilling, environmental protection, and energy resources touched on election-year issues but none of these proved to be central to the campaign.

However, over the entire two-year period surveyed, the organizations sponsoring the most Category I PPAs were United Technologies (21), Internorth (17), U. S. Committee for Energy Awareness (17), R. J. Reynolds (15), and General Motors (13). These five advertisers were the most directly political in their communications. The four corporations were also among the most frequent advertisers in the pre-election period of 1984. In other words, in spite of a seeming generalized indifference to central election issues in 1984, some of the biggest advertisers nevertheless seemed intent on sending political information to the public. This seemingly inconsistent behavior may have an explanation, to which we return later.

One of the most remarkable differences between 1980 and 1984 is the displacement of trade associations as the leading type of advertiser and their replacement by individual companies. In 1980, the top five advertisers were trade associations, while in 1984 the top five were companies. As already noted, PPA issues in 1984 were muted and largely non-controversial, which was quite a contrast with the sharply ideological debates of the 1980 campaign. Hence, the trade association "cover" used by many companies in 1980 was not needed in 1984. Even though Category I ads increased in 1984, the issues and themes they contained were not as sharply controversial or tied into the campaign as in 1980.

Yet another factor may be at work in causing four of the top leaders (Internorth excepted) to sponsor this type of advertisement. These four companies had ample reason to feel particularly exposed regarding some public policy issue, and they may have believed that an ad campaign could help strengthen the company's position and image

vis-à-vis general public opinion. It would be logical for General Motors to be particularly aware of public concern about drinking and driving, for R. J. Reynolds to note a rising criticism of tobacco use, for Motorola to express its fears of competitive foreign productivity and imports, and for Sun Oil to emphasize the positive side of energy recovery and environmental balance.

This situation suggests a possible rule of public policy advertising: *Companies will allocate money for PPAs as a function of perceived threats or uncertainty within their environments and as a way of trying to stabilize those issues and to remove or neutralize the threats.* Such an ad may be designed to link the company's interests with prevailing public opinion (as in R. J. Reynolds' efforts to encourage a "fair" public debate about the risks of smoking and the rights of smokers) or the ad may be intended to exert an indirect effect by advocating the election of political figures whose views are closest to the company's interests. When the issue is highly controversial, companies will allocate PPA money through trade associations in order to avoid customer backlash or unfavorable public opinion. Trade associations, though, will become involved only when a large number of companies within the industry perceive the threat as central. Where this degree of industry concern is not present, one or more individual companies may sponsor PPAs in their own name. It is also possible that opinion within an industry—e.g., the automobile industry—on what to do about a perceived threat may differ among the few leading companies, thereby making a unified trade-association viewpoint difficult or impossible to achieve. In that case, an industry leader—e.g., a General Motors—may sponsor PPAs on topics that otherwise would appear under the imprimatur of a trade association. We return to these possible uses of public policy advertising later on.

The Ad Issues

Thus far, our data show that public policy advertisers made considerably less than a wholehearted effort to inject themselves into the 1984 presidential election. The same conclusion is evident when the ad issues are examined.

In 1984, the great bulk of PPAs sidestepped many of the campaign's central issues. We isolated a total of 41 *campaign* issues from the two major parties' platform statements that were related to business interests and were therefore potential subjects of a political advertisement. Of these 41 issues, 14 were not addressed at all by any of the PPAs in our sample. Among the issues appearing most frequently in PPAs, only five—*national defense, patriotism, costs of health care, deregulation, and family life*—played a significant role in the campaign. (Of these, all but *health care costs* favored Reagan over Mondale.) So even where Category I ads appeared in 1984, they were not as likely as in 1980 to deal with issues of major political importance to either side.

Some public policy issues were given central billing as a *major* ad issue, as well as appearing in other ads as a *subsidiary* issue. Of all the ad issues in the sample, 36 were given this "double billing," thus suggesting that these particular issues were of prime importance to the sponsors. Of these 36, only four were central to the election campaign. They were *federal deficit, free/private enterprise (pro), national defense, and taxation*. Only *national defense* appears on the list of the most frequently featured PPA issues.

In the same vein, only six of the 64 major PPA issues dealt with a *campaign* issue that was central to the election. In addition to those just mentioned, they included *import restrictions* and *government spending*.

These results tend to confirm the muted political character of most PPAs during the 1984 campaign. The great majority of public policy issues featured in these ads were not significant for the election's outcome.

Media Placement

Anyone wishing to influence public opinion through advertising will have some strategy for placing ads where they will carry the greatest weight. Of the three magazines we studied, advertisers preferred *Business Week* for ads of all kinds (54.5 percent of the total), while *Newsweek* came in second (38.7 percent), and *Atlantic* was a distant third (6.8 percent). *Business Week* also captured the largest number of public policy advertisements and gave over a larger portion of its advertising space (5.16 percent) to political ads than did *Newsweek* (4.18 percent). *Atlantic* is a smaller circulation magazine and is not used for general purpose advertising as heavily as the other two; as a result, political advertising consumed a larger proportion (14 percent) of its total ad space. There is little evidence that *Atlantic's* PPAs are more pointedly political than those appearing in *Business Week* or *Newsweek*.

In general, advertisers with public policy messages in mind used the three magazines as one would expect. *Newsweek* was the favorite place to put *political messages aimed at a general readership*: 42 percent of all Category I PPAs in both the control year and the election year were carried in this magazine, with each of the other two magazines registering lesser proportions. Advertisers chose *Business Week* for *combined commercial and political copy*: 65 percent of all Category II PPAs in both the control year and the election year were found in *Business Week*. *Atlantic* was the choice for *corporate image PPAs*: 52 percent of Category III ads in the election year were placed there.

In looking for signs of increased political advertising in the election year, the only statistically significant finding concerns the drop-off in PPAs in *Business Week* following election day. The decline from 92 pre-election PPAs to 58 in the post-election period cannot be explained as a random variation, although the statistics are not strong. Similar variations are not seen in the two comparable periods of the control year, so there is a hint here that *Business Week* advertisers put more of their efforts into the pre-election period than after the election.

Business Week's position in this kind of public policy advertising is noteworthy, if seemingly odd. Since its readership is composed predominantly of people in business or closely associated with business in one way or another, one might ordinarily question the need to focus so much pro-business advertising on those already disposed to that point of view. PPA sponsors in *Business Week* seem to be "preaching to the converted," *as far as strict political messages are concerned*. However, it is worth remembering that most *Business Week* ads are Category II in nature; that is, they convey both political and commercial information. These dual-purpose or so-called "hybrid ads" (Winkleman, 1985: 22) would tend to cluster in a magazine beamed to a business audience. In spite of this explanation, though, there remains an element of seeming irrationality in spending so much effort and money in merely reinforcing already confirmed political commitments

within the business community *unless the ad's purpose was considered to be primarily commercial or unless the typical public policy advertisement is serving some other less obvious purpose than either commercial promotion or political advocacy*. We believe that both of these possibilities exist as explanations for what otherwise may appear to be irrationality or inconsistency or wastefulness on the part of advertisers. These matters are discussed below.

The Costs of Public Policy Advertising

During the two-year period covered by this study, advertisers spent a total of \$17,375,054 on 581 public policy ads that dealt with 100 different issues or themes. The average cost of a PPA was \$29,905, and the average paid for coverage of an issue or theme was \$173,751. During the critical six-month period preceding the election, some 171 PPAs were run in the three magazines at a total cost of \$5,184,701, with an average ad costing \$30,320 then.

In both periods, the largest number of PPAs was placed in *Business Week* but most of the PPA spending went to *Newsweek*: over two-thirds in the two-year period, and more than half in the pre-election period. The explanation is simple: *Newsweek's* average rate for a full-page ad was \$66,717, while *Business Week* charged only \$15,055 and *Atlantic* wanted still less—\$10,140 (*Standard Rate & Data Service*: 66: Nos. 1 and 2).

Clearly, any organization that wanted to stretch its PPA dollars as far as possible would be inclined to use *Business Week* rather than *Newsweek*. The latter's larger, more general audience would partially offset its cost disadvantage, while *Atlantic's* smaller circulation would make it less attractive in spite of its lower ad rates. Here we have a partial explanation of the phenomenon of "preaching to the converted"—that is, to a business audience—which appeared in both elections. It's cheaper. Besides, a corporate advocate may at the same time score a valuable commercial point by running a "hybrid" or "piggyback" (Category II) ad which will be seen by potential customers as an indication that the firm is on the "right side" of public issues.

Comparing 1980 and 1984

Three major differences emerge when comparing public policy advertising in 1984 with that undertaken in 1980. We believe that all of these differences are due to an incumbent President whose first-term policies had favored business and who was expected to continue those policies if re-elected.

The most striking change in 1984 was the muted political impact of public policy advertisements. PPAs represented a slightly smaller percentage of all kinds of ads (8.2 percent) than in 1980 (8.4 percent). The issues they touted were much less central to the campaign than had been true when Reagan challenged incumbent Carter. Far fewer sharply ideological themes were featured in 1984. We attribute these changes to the confidence that Reagan supporters felt regarding his chances of re-election, plus his incumbency which obviated the need for a 1980-style "throw the rascals out" campaign.

A second big change is seen in the kinds of issues and themes embedded in PPAs. *Energy* issues, which led 1980's list, virtually disappeared in the 1984 campaign. Another 1980 issue leader—*inflation*—was not among the top ten PPA issues, nor was *government regulation*; in fact, the only reference to government among the leading 1984 issues was *government-business cooperation*! *National defense*, *patriotism*, and *family*

life—all matters championed strongly by Reagan—were either at or near the top of the issue list. Reagan campaigners could and did argue that his first-term policies had produced positive results in all of the areas that had been the subject of public policy advertising in 1980. With those gains in hand, other issues became the focus of 1984's ads, but as noted above, many of these were not among the campaign's main debating points.

A third change, directly attributable to Reagan's policies and his incumbency, is seen in the major types of 1984 advertisers. As noted earlier, individual companies replaced trade associations as the leading public policy advertisers, due to the watered-down rhetoric of political advertising in the Reagan-Mondale context. For those companies that wanted to express their political preferences through PPAs, 1984 was therefore "safer" than 1980 since the image risks were lower. The trade association buffer was not as necessary.

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of Reagan's policies in the political advertising sphere was the great surge of fund-raising efforts sponsored by non-profit organizations concerned about causes ranging from health care to conservation to renovating the Statue of Liberty. Cut off entirely or partly from government funding, these nonprofits were responsible for almost 16 percent of PPAs in the two-year period and ranked second in the number of PPAs sponsored. Taken collectively, the nonprofits outranked even trade associations as public policy advertisers. A number of the fund raisers stated explicitly in their ads that they had suffered from government cutbacks and needed funds from the general public. So, while the specific content of such ads might not have been relevant to the campaign's main issues, the fact that these organizations felt a need to make a public appeal for support was a function of candidate Reagan's first-term policies.

Theoretical Implications: The Function of Corporate Public Policy Advertising

In their 1980 study, Frederick & Myers asserted that ". . . all advertisements, whether purely commercial or intended to influence public policy, have ideological import and function. They help cement the [business] system together, validating its declared purposes and higher ends. . . . As long as this covert function is performed well [by the ads], there is little need for a blatant media campaign that might squeeze out the opposition's viewpoints" (1983: 80). The 1984 PPA data support this interpretation which can be used to help explain some of the odd traits of this species of political advertising. However, we believe that their views can be extended even further to help answer the question of why business sponsors public policy advertisements at all.

The evidence suggests that the typical business perspective on this kind of advertising is inward-looking, self-interested, defensive, and more commercial than politically proactive or consciously ideological. In 1984, the election was *almost coincidental* to the bulk of public policy advertising. A few companies and trade associations had political-ideological axes to grind, but not many, and sometimes the ax had little to do with the campaign or its main issues. This state of affairs seems at odds with normal expectations of self-interested corporate behavior, particularly in view of the considerable sums of money expended in this way. *Public policy advertising is an ongoing institution that exists independently of election campaigns.* A presidential election may influence this institution, as it did in 1980, but not by very much. In

general, this kind of advertising tends to be *micro* oriented toward narrow company or industry interests, not *macro* oriented toward large political interests.

The explanation for this state of affairs is to be found in the "covert" function of such advertising. One first has to see that "Advocacy advertising is part of that genre of advertising known as corporate image or institutional advertising" and that ". . . one of the main purposes of corporate advocacy advertising [is] to seek social validation or legitimacy for [a company's] actions" (Sethi, 1977: 7, 329). A company can strengthen its public acceptance by promoting a favorable corporate image through corporate advertising, *even if it encounters strong public criticism* (Garbett, 1982: 104).

It would then be possible to argue that an election year PPA would produce this intended favorable outcome for its sponsor if the ad were seen by the public as either "being on the right political side" or as simply expressing a political view generally credible to the public. An ad reader would come away from a PPA with a favorable impression *of the company* as a result of the ad's linkage with a positive political point of view. To achieve this goal, it would be the task of PPA copy writers to detect the public mood concerning political candidates and to link any given company's PPAs *to that mood* (and to any given candidate only to the extent that the candidate reflected views compatible with general public attitudes).

Seen in this light, it is clear that the relationship between ad and candidate is the reverse of what one might expect. The normal assumption is that the PPA is used to sell a candidate to the electorate. Hence, the company promotes the favored office seeker. However, the covert function of PPAs suggests that it is the other way around. The company's task is to tie itself to the best (that is, the most popular) candidate, in order to legitimate itself to the public. Therefore, the candidate promotes the company.

The marketing concept of "stimulus generalization" supports this view. A company may market a "family" of products bearing the same names or symbols. If one of these products has been successful, another of the related products will be more readily accepted because consumers will have accumulated positive experience with the family brand name. The satisfaction from one positive buying experience is generalized to the entire line (Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1983: 279-282).

Following his 1980 election, President Reagan created a positive national climate. Patriotism reached new heights, nationalistic pride was restored after the beating it took during the Iranian hostage crisis, family life was again valued and defended, inflation was blunted, and various other upbeat themes found widespread public support. Thus, marketers sought to associate their company name and their product with these accumulated positive feelings. Internorth, for example, in one of its ads tried to capture the Spirit of America with a picture of the American flag and the single word "Patriotism." The ad's objective was to acquire the benefits of stimulus generalization by affiliating the corporate name with the prevailing patriotic national mood. This particular ad simultaneously emphasized a theme congenial to the Reagan candidacy while neatly identifying the company with a widely popular feeling. So in this case the PPA served a dual purpose: it promoted the candidate while allowing the candidate's patriotic convictions to promote the company.

If the prevailing political mood is evident, as it was in 1980 and 1984, then one would expect most of the PPAs to go to the "correct" or most popular political side. What would therefore appear to be a blatant effort on the part of business advertisers to

sway the election in pro-business directions would actually be a stampede by business to hook its star to a public mood that is perceived to be favorable to the status quo of the business order. Although the outcome would be the same, regardless of the advertiser's motive or intent (that is, most PPAs would favor the pro-business candidate), some of the apparent irrationalities of public policy advertising would be explained. PPAs might or might not express direct political views; advertisers might or might not make a special effort prior to the election; PPA budgets might or might not increase as election day approached, or fall after the election; seasonal variations might or might not be correlated with the expected cycles of public policy advertising. The ad choice depends less on these matters than on building a bridge between public thinking and corporate interest.

Although some of the "hard core" Category I PPAs might try to "sell" a particular point of view or a particular candidate's position, *even in those cases* the ad sponsor has probably made a judgment that the ad expresses the public's opinion or at least what the public would like to think, given a little encouragement. The blander Category II ads, by virtue of their more homogenized political content, would come even closer to paralleling public thinking and are, in addition, designed to speak directly to a specific product audience since they also contain a commercial pitch. Category III PPAs, almost by definition, link the corporation and "good causes" together in the public mind. In this way, all three types of PPA perform the overriding function of causing the public to see the corporate advertiser as socially legitimate in the sense of expressing ideas compatible with the prevailing public mood. It is this function, rather than any pointed political persuasiveness, that public policy advertisements serve.

In the realm of presidential politics, this hypothesis could be tested by examining PPAs in an election year when the *leading* candidate (as expressed in public opinion polls) is perceived to be an anti-business candidate or at least is less pro-business than the other candidate(s). In that case, one would normally expect business to try to shift the electorate's allegiance from the leading candidate to a more pro-business one. If so, PPAs would then go *against* the grain of public opinion, thus posing a threat to the corporation's social and public legitimacy with respect to presidential politics. The last election in which this situation prevailed would have been the 1964 Johnson-Goldwater campaign, when Johnson was generally favored but Goldwater was thought to be more attractive to business and particularly free-market thinking. However, Johnson was so pro-oil industry and pro-defense industry, and the real debate was so much about the two candidates' military policies concerning Vietnam, that a good "clean" test of the hypothesis might well be impossible.

In summary, the results of our study of public policy advertising during the 1984 presidential election lead to three conclusions: PPAs favored President Reagan overwhelmingly; individual corporations, as opposed to trade associations, were more willing to advertise openly on pro-Reagan themes than in 1980; commercial motives continued to be a major factor behind most PPAs; the prominence of not-for-profit fundraising advertisers is explained by President Reagan's policies restricting the outlay of government funds; the issues featured in PPAs were relatively bland and generally not central to the election campaign; and the predominant, though latent or covert, function performed by PPAs was to legitimate the corporate system by linking business interests more securely with those attitudes and orientations perceived by the general public to be best for society generally.

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