

which most people were informed and influenced. Instead, the major source of information and influence was the opinion leader—a person of the same socioeconomic level who spread information and persuasion among his peers.

This two-step theory of communication, as it is called, is still current, although some theoreticians, Dr. Westley among them, argue that the search for particular opinion leaders among peer groups is a false one. What happens, he says, is that most people gain much of their information from the mass media, but when they come to make decisions they tend to make them on the basis of interaction with others—their family, friends, people of like opinion.

"I don't think there's any question that the mass media provide some important things for decision making," he says. "First of all, the agenda, if you will, for your personal discussion, and the semantics, the terms and categories.

"But there's also no doubt about the importance of group validation in reaching decisions."

**But the two-step process** is one which many practitioners of the art will argue with, holding that the media have much more persuasive powers than they are given credit for.

And regardless of the outcome of the 1970 elections, there has undoubtedly been a substantial increase in the use of survey techniques, voter analysis and campaign planning since 1968. The trend is bound to continue.

"We certainly know a lot more about voters these days," says Dr. David Rosenbloom of Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y. "But my preliminary impression is that some consultants made some phenomenal blunders." He cites as examples the race run by Sen. Ralph Smith (R-Ill.) against Adlai Stevenson III, in which a campaign to tag Stevenson as a super-liberal backfired, and the Senate campaign of Rep. Richard Ottinger (D-N.Y.), which was laid out early to combat fellow liberal Sen. Charles Goodell (R-N.Y.) and was unable to stave off the challenge of Conservative William Buckley.

There is no doubt, says Dr. Rosenbloom, that campaigners have more accurate information, and more kinds of information, about the voters than they ever had before, and that they are making campaign decisions based on the additional information. But their ability to use it still depends on how smart they are.

"Before," says Dr. Rosenbloom, "campaigners were making stupid decisions on the basis of little or no information. Now they can make stupid decisions on the basis of a lot more information." □

## LEAD HAZARD

### Consumers and the earthenware problem

What some have termed today's consumer revolution is sometimes merely a newly sensitized awareness by the general public of safety hazards and manufacturing deficiencies in the products they buy. Often lacking is the ability to do much about the problem.

A case in point is the recent uneasiness about the possible dangers of lead poisoning from certain kinds of earthenware used as food containers. Recent medical cases and a widely publicized scientific report (SN: 10/10, p. 301) on the subject have prompted new concern among persons wondering how they can know if the earthenware pottery they buy is safe.

Unfortunately, say those knowledgeable about the subject, there is no simple answer. Earthenware dishes, pots and pitchers come from a wide variety of sources, each requiring a different avenue for safeguarding the potential consumer.

Many large domestic manufacturers belong to the U.S. Potters Association, which maintains strict standards for the amount of lead release permissible. The maximum is seven parts per million. Though this number is quite safe, a spokesman for the association says it strives to keep the level at five or fewer parts per million. In January the association began granting a seal of approval to all products meeting their standards, from both member and non-member manufacturers. To earn this seal, a manufacturer must submit samples of his earthenware every six months to a certain independent testing laboratory. Since this program is new, however, some manufacturers whose programs pass muster have not yet received seals.

The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for testing imported earthenware and has considerably expanded its program for examining such products. The FDA is also empowered to confiscate domestically manufactured earthenware releasing more than seven parts per million lead, if it is shipped in interstate commerce. But such measures are of only limited help, the FDA acknowledges.

Nevertheless the efforts of the Potters Association and the FDA may eventually guarantee the safety of imported earthenware and earthenware from large domestic manufacturers. But the rise in popularity of pottery making as a hobby in recent years has seen a huge proliferation of earthenware produced by amateurs.

The amount of lead released by a glaze depends on a number of things—the glaze's lead content, the temperature at which the pottery is fired and the

time of firing. Most amateur potters use the glazes to obtain an attractive shiny surface, but they may not be skilled or knowledgeable enough to maintain just the right firing conditions. Since many of these products are not shipped in interstate commerce, the FDA has no legal jurisdiction over them.

One possible solution is for the manufacturers of hobby glazes to label their products with the exact firing conditions necessary for a safe product. The National Ceramics Manufacturers Association is currently campaigning for this. The FDA may then have jurisdiction over such labeling and could ensure its accuracy.

Another possibility, suggested by an FDA official, would be to make available to the general public the testing kit the FDA uses to determine lead release of imports. Hobbyists and small manufacturers could apply this test to their finished products to determine their safety for use as containers for food and liquids. □

## SCIENCE NEWSBRIEFS

### Lasker Awards

For pioneering work in bone marrow transplantation and for research achievements in processes of hormone regulation, two scientists last week received the Lasker Awards for 1970, the United States most revered prizes in medicine and biology.

The Albert Lasker Award for distinguished work in clinical medical research, carrying a \$10,000 stipend, was presented to Dr. Robert A. Good of the University of Minnesota. The jury emphasized his feat of transplanting bone marrow cells into immunologically deficient children (SN: 10/18/69, p. 358). Work elucidating the function of cyclic AMP, which mediates hormone activity throughout the body, earned Dr. Earl W. Sutherland of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville the \$10,000 prize for basic medical research. □

### Environment administrator

President Nixon last week nominated William D. Ruckelshaus, now an assistant attorney general, to be head of the new Environmental Protection Agency, scheduled to become a reality in December.

Ruckelshaus immediately involved himself in a current environmental controversy: whether the Internal Revenue Service should allow continued tax exemption for environmental and other public interest organizations. IRS should continue the exemption, he said. □