

Powell Advises Business on Politics

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When a U.S. Chamber of Commerce officer asked his neighbor, Richmond attorney Lewis F. Powell, how the public could be provided a "more balanced" view of America's economic system, Powell—now a U.S. Supreme Court Justice—came up with an Aug. 23, 1971 "confidential memorandum" that already has gained a place in business history.

Designed to identify the "attack on American free enterprise system" and ways to cope with the situation, the Powell memorandum was first made public not by business but by columnist Jack Anderson.

Just two months before

being nominated by President Nixon, Powell wrote: "Business must learn the lesson long ago learned by labor and self-interest groups. This is the lesson that political power is necessary, that such power must be assiduously cultivated and that, when necessary, it must be used aggressively . . . without embarrassment and without the reluctance which has been so characteristic of American business."

Powell suggested "equal time" on the campuses for the chamber's point of view, a "balancing" of college faculties, monitoring of television followed by complaints to the Federal Communications Commission if warranted, paid advertisements for the business view, a bigger role in the political arena, increased participation in court cases on the side of business, and a generally more aggressive pro-business and free enterprise attitude.

Last week, the Chamber of Commerce's policy-



LEWIS F. POWELL
... "business must learn"

making board of directors took a stand on the Powell plan following a study by a specially named task force. Generally, the task force and directors endorsed most of Powell's proposals but sometimes in a more subtle way.

For example, while the Chamber did not endorse television monitoring, it did recommend that only "highly qualified spokesmen" represent business "particularly in meeting with media representatives," and it asked for wide use of its "new fair, accurate and informative reporting program . . . (aimed) directly at business leaders' communicative needs."

According to the business group, this media program provides "know-how on the means of improving insights on how to respond to distortions and unfair attacks against business." Those who use it, the group continues, "will gain new confidence in their skills, and a better showing in the print and electronic media."

In the chamber's report, being made public today, a "concerted program to increase public understanding of the American economic system and to answer attacks on the private sector" is being launched.

Specifically, the chamber also is calling for formation of a committee on business overview, consisting of top representatives of the Conference Board, Better Business Bureaus,

National Association of Manufacturers, and other groups.

According to the chamber announcement, the "primary" goal of this new group would be to "probe actions and influences that form the public's opinion of business, and to exercise leadership in improving the private sector's stature."

Ironically, the chamber's new effort to improve the image of business came several weeks after the Washington headquarters for the group officially disowned a statement of its elected president, State Farm Mutual president Edward B. Rust, who had praised consumerism in general and Ralph Nader in particular.

"Highest priority" in the chamber's new program is attached to educational ac-

tivities, including films for schools, an advisory group of scholars, development of a "Meet the Press" type program with businessmen questioned by students, and exploration of ways to utilize the resources of the intellectual community in researching and writing.

Earlier this year, however, the chamber rejected one such effort—a task force recommendation for liberalized "adjustment assistance" for workers and firms hit by imports which was written largely by Brookings Institution senior fellow C. Fred Bergsten.

The author said "overt protectionism" of steel and textile industry members of the chamber were allowed to override a majority sentiment in favor of the report.