

# Letting the Light Shine: A Quaker Guide to Using the Media

*By Simon Risley. Quaker Home Service, London, 1996. 57 pages. £3.50/paperback.*

*Letting the Light Shine* is a helpful media guide for both the media novice and the seasoned communicator. Simon Risley has spent his life in advertising and public relations, first in secular advertising agencies and more recently as the director of fundraising and public relations for a London-based charity. He has been a Quaker since 1983.

The British perspective of the short manual only underscores the universal truths of working with the media. Risley organizes his guide under two broad categories of media work—public relations and advertising. His “checklists of do’s and don’ts” make the guide a helpful resource for organizing media efforts.

It is critical, says Risley, that persons doing media relations follow the rules of the trade. For example, learning the basics of what a news release looks like and to whom and when to send it are essential to getting your message heard. Risley emphasizes preparation—getting acquainted with the media in your community, building ongoing relationships with journalists, and learning how best to get information to them (mail, fax, e-mail, etc.)—for effective communications.

Risley outlines the peculiarities of each media form (newspapers, radio, etc.), as well as the traits they share. He points to the importance of finding the local angle to a national story, and he encourages Quakers to take control of media interviews. Persons facing a media interview should be prepared, use questions as a springboard to make the points that are important to you, and never say anything you wouldn’t be comfortable seeing in print.

Risley focuses the second part of his guide on advertising, encouraging persons working in this area to make sure they know their aims and objectives. Advertising offers users the opportunity to say what they want, though a cost is attached to that privilege. Effective advertising demands understanding who your audience is, speaking in terms they understand, and choosing the right medium to reach them.

Perhaps Risley gives his most important advice in his closing summary—communicators should always plan ahead, keep their message simple, and evaluate and learn from what they've done.

In an increasingly mediated world, Risley's advice to Quakers to communicate with clarity and simplicity feels amazingly fresh.

—Ron Byler