

February 18, 1953

Arab Public Relations in the U.S.

Chester G. Williams, Public Relations Consultant

HRA - Mr. Byrnes
 HRA - Mr. Kopper
 HE - Mr. Hart
 DD/P - Mr. Ganger

"Chester" Williams, former Assistant Chief of PR (1945-47) and Public Liaison Officer of USIA (1947-53), tells me he is negotiating with the Arab mission here, and particularly Egyptian Ambassador Rabih, regarding the initiation of a public relations program designed to improve U.S. public attitudes toward the Arab States. Associated with him in the project is Howard Chase, former Vice President (Public Relations) of General Foods. They would act in an advisory capacity only, with specific programs and activities handled by established channels or agencies such as Hill & Knowlton in New York. Chester is confident a revolutionary change could be effected, despite hostile influences and points to the example of Turkey. "At least," he says, "the Arabs have never reached the point of being referred to as 'the horrible Arabs' like the Turks once were." He thinks an essential preliminary is a real survey of prevailing American attitudes and then concentration on implanting simple and favorable symbols associated with Arabs. Chester is not too sanguine on regards his negotiations, particularly as regards the need for a sound and solid survey. He is afraid the Arabs are awfully naive about public relations and the machinery therefor, with a penchant for elaborate and costly shows, such as Waldorf dinners and speeches, which are either unproductive or contra-productive.

Chester asked me about the attitude of HRA and HE toward such a project. I replied that while I could not speak with authority, I could speak with conviction in saying he could count on a favorable and cooperative attitude. He said he would keep in touch as the project develops.

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