

FRANK PICK

LONDON

London to-day is a little mad. The Coronation, from being the ceremony of a day, is becoming the business of a season. Such are the consequences of modern developments in publicity. In a sense the clothes, the uniforms, the jewels and orders, the state coaches and all the other paraphernalia of the affair are just so many examples of publicity material. London to-day is also not looking its best. The parks are full of scaffolding and timber. The Spring can hardly bring its consolation of flowers. However it is useless to complain. London at any rate has the distinction of having a king and if its natural beauties are to be temporarily marred it intends to replace them with an elaborate expansion of more cultivated and sophisticated beauties. The London season is to be prolonged and to surpass itself.

For prosperity has returned, though whether the foundations are fully secured or not, the next few years can alone show. Even the working classes have money to spend on things other than bare necessities. Perhaps 40 per cent of the average family income of this class is free for disposal in any way that they may like. As a result they are fair game for publicity campaigns. They can be sold all sorts of things by shock or mass appeal. As a result, too the wireless and the cinema flourish; the car and cycle, the bus and coach, empty the population out on Sundays and on holidays into the open spaces of the country; the football and ice-hockey season is more brisk and popular than ever. London is lively.

As always happens when there is much everyone asks for more, and the question arises whether it is safe to count on moderation governing our standards of conduct.

For in a democratic country where there is freedom to choose and decide for oneself, success turns upon a self discipline which is neither quick to learn nor easy to maintain but which, if once learnt and respected, gives dignity and power to the whole people. Success also turns upon a sweet reasonableness which, if pursued consistently, liberalizes and enfranchises mind and spirit.

In such circumstances it is plain to see that publicity holds a conspicuous place in affairs though publicity, alas, is only rarely an appeal to reason. Sentiment, prejudice, passion, may be stirred instead. Publicity so easily becomes propaganda. How important, therefore, to try and establish decent

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limits and worthy motives in publicity. How important, therefore, to have magazines which will submit the whole material of publicity to critical review, not only in its technical aspects but in its social and cultural aspects.

There is really no such thing as London. It is a figment of the imagination. It is the creation of publicity. There is the ancient city of London, the one square mile with its money market and civic pomp. There is the County of London with solidly built 117 square miles, for which the London County Council provides efficient administration. There is greater London splashing into 6 counties and covering 693 square miles which, for a long while, represented the ambit of the influence of the metropolis; and now therefore is London Transport, extending to 1986 square miles in which London Transport provides for the movement of the 9½ million inhabitants. It is so vast a territory, of so varied a character, that no one can grasp it as a whole. It really exists in the constant weaving of its people to and fro like shuttles in a loom. They build up a pattern of life which is London, a pattern of life which publicity seeks to reveal and explain. It may take half a century yet to give to this London comely form and substance, to find for it real unity. If London Transport affords the basis upon which it is constructed and upon which it grows, publicity must find for it the soul and purpose by which it lives. London Transport,

through its publicity, seeks to draw attention now to one phase, now to another phase, of the life of Metropolis. It seeks to show how all the various parts of London can be linked together; how to build up for instance, a university centre, a pleasure centre; how to turn to best account the great markets which provision the Metropolis; how to distribute the people as between their homes and industry; how to make use of the girdle of open spaces as a means of health and refreshment; how to allow to large numbers of the people opportunity to practice the sports which they find it so

attractive to watch. In all these ways the publicity of London Transport has a definite aim and purpose; and it seeks to combine with the pursuit of this aim and purpose a demonstration of the current attainment of designers and artists.

