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PEOPLE

Marketing Talk: A Success Story

BOSTON (UPI)—Bob Walker and his American Program Bureau (APB) have come a long way since the night seven years ago when a banjo player, stripper and orchestra went out to entertain a manufacturers' group.

APB has become the world's largest lecture agency, saturating the nation's campuses with a stable of more than 400 speakers, ranging from Ralph Nader, Pierre Salinger, Julian Bond, Dick Gregory, John Kerry and Bernadette Devlin or Jane Fonda to Lt. Gov. Lester Maddox of Georgia, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, Rod McKuen and ex-pro football players Jerry Kramer, Bernie Casey and maverick Dave Meggsey.

The start came in January, 1965, when Walker left a relative's lecture business in Boston to start APB, tapping primarily the college campuses instead of women's clubs, church groups and other associations. Banjo player Pat Terry, the stripper and Les Smith's orchestra were APB's first offering.

"We got something like \$350 for that night—and it wasn't even a college," Walker recalled. "But it was a matter of survival at that point. We needed the money and the group got a good night's entertainment.

"Those first couple of months were tough," Walker said, "and that was all I had right away. I was lucky, what with all the bills for printing, rent and everything else. Everyone, it seems, but Ma Bell—the telephone company—stuck with me. They gave me credit and it helped get APB started."

Now, with revenues of more than \$4.1 million last year, APB doesn't have to worry about whether the printer will wait another week for his check. And the telephone company still gets paid on time—and Walker said his monthly phone bill runs around \$12,000.

"What happens," he asked, "if someone is held away from these kids? Say, like Timothy Leary. He becomes a sort of god, someone mystic or something. But we put Leary out there

with Dr. Sidney Cohen from the National Institute of Mental Health. Cohen destroyed him."

APB hasn't turned down any speaker because of his beliefs, Walker said, "and we never will. We'll take any person—from a radical or Leary or anyone else—and put him up before an audience, then let the audience be the judge and jury.

"That's our philosophy and we think it's more of a service to the country and the people than a disservice."

Given the opportunity, Walker said he would like to entice Vice President Spiro T. Agnew into signing with APB. "I'd guarantee him \$500,000—a half-million dollars—for the first year. He's worth that much, at least. He's not speaking now but he's still the hottest speaker in the country."

Obvious major topics for 1972 will be politics and China, he went on, with the occult or spiritual and mystical speakers also becoming popular once more.