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Arab Public Relations in the U.S.

Chester C. Williams, Public Relations Consultant

NEA — Mr.Eyvande
NEC — Mr. Kopper
HE — Mr. Hunt
NEA/P — Mr. Danner

"Chester Williams, former Assistant Chief of P.R. (1948-57) and Public Liaison Officer of ECA (1957-62), tells us he is negotiating with the Arab missions here, and particularly the Egyptian Ambassador Fahmi, 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 Chest, 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 Bill & Ted's Inn 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 terrible Arabs' like the Turks once were." He thinks an essential preliminary is a real survey of prevailing American attitudes and that concentration on implanting simple and favorable symbols associated with Arabs. Chester is not too sanguine as regards his negotiations, particularly as regards the need for a sound and solid survey. He is afraid the Arabs are, essentially, naive about public relations and the machinery therefor, with a penchant for elaborate and costly shows, such as Ford's dinners and speeches, which are either unsympathetic or counter-productive.

Chester asked me about the attitude of IDEA and NEA 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.