

The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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Yet Another Four More Years

THAT last President (much to the satisfaction of our typesetter, who never *did* manage to get the chap's name right) is getting ready to disappear yet again, this time for good. We'll have no more mush from the wimp to kick around. *Nil*, however, *desperandum*. He leaves behind a whole mush factory bustling with busy wimps. There'll be no dearth of kicking these next four years

That Department of Education where the wimps make mush may actually be our departing President's only perpetration destined to live in history. (All *right*. So it *won't* live in history. Would you believe *social studies*?) And for a while there we were afraid we might lose the whole blooming thing, and all because of some idle and off-hand vote-grabbing grandstanding by the other guy. (We'll print *his* name as soon as our typesetter says he's ready. In the meantime, though, that typesetter, who is also our staff augur and the only pundit in America to divine correctly the meaning of the turkey on the White House lawn, has glumly pointed out that the name of the new President rhymes exactly with the name of the Prime Minister of a land with triple digit inflation.)

Well, we needn't have worried. The President-elect hasn't said another word about closing the Department of Education since just before the election. And now he has found a Secretary, who says that he's *not* signed on as captain of the *Titanic*. So we can expect that he will not only keep steering that boat but that he will also take care not to shake it. And he seems a good man for the job. After all, you don't get to be a genuine Doctor of Education by subjecting the pretentious claptap of your professors and colleagues to the unkind and elitist scrutiny of logical thought. And you won't last long as the Commissioner of Higher Education out in Utah

unless you know how to live and let live with the unions and the bold innovative thrusters and the institutes for the study of the problematical parameters of prediagnostic pre-assessment, to say nothing of the legislature and all the deans of the teacher-training academies.

But, on the negative side, it must be said that the man *did* take the job, and we do have to wonder why someone who was once a master sergeant in the US Marine Corps would want to sink into such company.

Politicians are in favor of education. The millions of government employees who operate the public schools have convinced the politicians, and us, that what they do in the schools *is* education. That is a lie. The public schools do provide massive public jobs programs, ready outlets for the countless products of the manufacturers of materials and devices and pseudobooks, sempiternal subsidies for enthusiasts and charlatans, and a captive clientele for the ministrations of the social adjusters and the values clarifiers. Education sometimes does happen in the schools, but only as the result of individual enterprise and never out of institutional intention, which is, in any case, and which *must* be, in a government agency, vigilant against the anti-social and elitist influences of individual enterprise.

So send not to know for whom T. H. Bell toils. He toils for government, which flourishes best in the absence of the informed discretion that Jefferson prescribed as at once the fruit of education and our surest protection against government. But don't despair. It's going to be a long, cold winter in the DED. There may be icebergs.

The Glendower Glitch

WHEN our zany educationists call spirits from the vasty deep, the damned things actually *do* come. If you so much as whisper, within the hearing of one of those Porseffors of PedaGog/Magogery, the dread name of Area-Awareness-Enhancement Modular On-site Methods/Devices, you can be sure that a year later you will find that very demon courted in classrooms and workshops required for certification. If you could name about four

hundred such spooky spirits you could summon up a whole teacher-training academy. But don't do it. We have enough trouble now.

We were reminded of the awesome demonic power of educationistic wordplay while reading *The Official* Grapevine*. (That asterisk is *in* the title, and it leads to this: "Published for the Mounds View School District Staff," of Arden Hills, Minnesota. The *next* asterisk is ours. *) In an article called "Process Completed" we found:

Dennis Peterson, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, has become one of 200 administrator perceiver specialists in the country as certified by the Selection Research Institute (SRI) of Lincoln, Nebraska.

The process toward certification, which Peterson began in 1978, was completed on Friday, November 14, at the conclusion of an "intensive" 2 1/2 day training session held by the SRI in Hopkins. "The process and basic skills which the training develops are used mainly to identify strengths in potential and existing administrators and to focus on these strengths in future personal development," said Peterson.

See how easy it is? All you have to do is stand in the mystic diagram of existing aspects and potential parameters, swivel slowly for about two years ("intensively" for the final two and a half days), relating to felt needs and chanting aloud the subset of secret synonyms for the Great Perceiver, and behold—a mere and humble Assistant Superintendent of Instruction (surely he must be destined for better things than *that*) is robed in the greater glory of Administrator Perceiver Specialistship!

Ah, the life of the mind! Where else but in the schools could such wonders be worked? And just think of what the future must bring. *Quis percipiet ipsos perceptores?* By next year this time some canny necromancer will have conjured up that

* Luckily for the rest of us, the people who operate the schools are as noncognitive about our Constitution as they are about everything else. They don't know that the Fifth Amendment would excuse them from sending out all those silly newsletters and poopsheets. Well, their ignorance is our bliss, so we urge our readers to keep sending us that junk.

gaunt and grisly specter, nothing less than the Great *Perceiver* Perceiver Himself. Then, while Perceiver Specialist Peterson prowls the precincts of the principals, perceiving administrators, both existing and potential, hard on his heels follows the furtive figure of a former facilitator turned Perceiver Specialist Perceiver Specialist, perceiving Peterson's very perceivings, also both existing and potential. And *next* year. . . . The mind reels. It even boggles a bit.

But the educationist dances and jigs. You get grants for that sort of thing in the education business, where it is presumed, and maybe with good reason, that only a certified perceiver can tell an industrious and effective administrator (there must be *some*) from an overbearing imbecile. In fact, any routine act of judgment performed habitually by millions and millions of only slightly observant citizens can become, if given a spooky name, a "skill" to be taught and eventually required. How, after all, can we trust the perceptions of one who has never taken a *single* course—not even one lousy workshop—in perceiving? And how can you expect a schoolteacher to relate to students without training in relating? Indeed, how can you even expect a teacher to answer a simple question in class without a thorough appreciation of the concept of microteaching in the classroom situation.

Microteaching. A potent demon. As it happens, we do understand microteaching. We've been reading all about it in an essay, or something, "Understanding Microteaching as a Concept," by one Robert J. Miltz, who admits that he is the director of the microteaching laboratory in the school of education at the University of Massachusetts. What it might *mean* to understand something "as a concept" rather than as some other thing, we do *not* understand, but the man says:

Most educators know microteaching as a scaled down encounter where a teacher teaches for a short period of time (5-10 minutes) to a small number of students (4-5), with the typical microteaching sessions including the teaching of a lesson and immediate supervisory and pupil feedback. This model has been useful over the years to demonstrate the concept of microteaching. The unfortunate aspect of this model is that it is usually interpreted as the

essence of the microteaching concept, this interpretation has severely limited the use and development of microteaching. Microteaching, as a *concept*, is not simply a scaled down teaching encounter, it is much more.

There is nothing a laboratory director deploras more than an unfortunate aspect interpreted as an essence, especially when such an obtuse misinterpretation might severely limit the use and development of exactly that potion that he cooks up for the taxpayers, who already seem restless in Massachusetts. What *we* deplore is the failure to understand, as a concept, or even as a precept, the logical outrage of run-on sentences. But Miltz has better hope of remedy than we. We've just never been able to build up a market for coherent and conventional prose among the educationists, while they can easily sell one another (bills to the taxpayers) any old remnants or seconds they have lying around. Maybe it's packaging. Notice how astutely Miltz relabels his product, lest all the schoolteachers in Massachusetts tumble to the fact that they've been microteaching all their lives, by gum, and that it's no macrodeal:

What then is the microteaching concept? In its fullest sense the microteaching concept is an opportunity for a person or group of persons to present or develop something to another person or group and then take a look at what was done. This model opens up a wide range of possibilities not available in the more traditional model of microteaching.

There. That should do it. Now we can understand as a concept that almost anything, anything from football in Foxborough to a message from E. F. Hutton, is *really* just a form of microteaching, and that Miltz is about as far out on the cutting edge as you can hope to get.

But, of course, it's not to the point that *we* understand. The other educationists have to understand, and that, as Miltz obviously knows, requires reinforcement mediated by expectable parameters of learning disabilities in both individuals and groups:

First, unlike the traditional model, the definition does not limit microteaching to one person

presenting information. There can be more than one.

Our definitive studies have shown that three out of five educationists at least eighty-two times out of a hundred will, having carefully read that passage, exhibit certain behaviors that *may* be perceived, by some duly certified perceiver, as relevant to an appreciation of the concept of microteaching as a definition unlike a model limited to one person. That Miltz knows his audience.

Miltz takes the last "unfortunate aspect" of microcity out of microteaching by pointing out that "the idea that any size or type of group can be utilized as the receivers eliminates the belief that one must have only a small group of students." How true. And the idea that a pig could be called a cow and bread, cake would eliminate an unfortunate aspect of that tired old belief that if we had some ham we could have a ham sandwich if only we had some bread.

And bread *is* cake. Miltz makes that clear by telling us that "the idea of presenting or developing something frees the restriction that it must be a teaching lesson." And now, that captive restriction free at last, we understand as a concept that microteaching need be neither micro nor teaching. It need only be funded.

But there's one more thing. Feedback. Without videotaping machinery, which takes lots of funding, "it must be honestly stated that [microteaching] can't be done as effectively." So, whether we have "the holding of a problem session," or "an administrator [who] can gain useful insight into his effectiveness" even without the help of an administrator perceiver specialist, or even "a teacher who wants to investigate her relationship with a student on an individual basis," "for small groups or even larger [that should just about cover it] groups," "the real power and benefit comes from being able to actually see yourself doing something." And furthermore:

There is no restrictions [*sic*] on the way one receives feedback or the type of feedback one receives. It is simply stated that the person or persons have an opportunity to see themselves in action. . . . A person may look at the videotape alone, or with peers, or with an

outside supervisor, or with students, or with any number of alternatives.

Well, we don't yet have our own microteaching laboratory here at Glassboro, but we have discovered that everything recommended by Miltz can be readily provided, contingent only on a little funding, at this really neat little motel just this side of Atlantic City. They've even been known to provide, *at no extra charge*, an occasional Microteaching Encounter Perceiver Specialist.

The Reformulation of Conceptualization

THE proposal from which the excerpt below is reprinted was submitted in March of 1980 to a certain Society for Research in Child Development, as to which we can tell you nothing more than its ominous name. To speak of children as "developing" is to reveal a nasty insensitivity both to language and to children. Complications develop, and images, but children learn. Or they would, if we gave as much time and effort to teaching them as we do to the profitable business of establishing societies and soliciting grants for the study of their development.

There are surely no Americans who are just now in greater need of good teaching than those "minority status children" to the study of whose development this proposal claims to address itself. Must that teaching—and must their learning—wait upon the "findings," probably the "definitive findings," of some people who are unable to make their verbs and subjects agree? Will the stupefying disadvantages against which such hapless children must struggle daily be somehow mitigated by the discoveries of self-appointed savants who seem to suppose that "multiple" is a classy synonym for "many"? What can they understand or help others to understand who cannot see the absurdity of "a comprehensive perspective," the logical equivalent of an extensive point? When the formulators of conceptualizations go on to *reformulate* their conceptualizations, what, exactly, will they have done?

The cited passage is not anomalous. It is typical of the entire proposal, which is characterized not only by frequent errors in grammar and punctuation but, much worse, by mind-twisting absurdities born of tormented syntax, and what

can only be a ritual recitation of unexamined jargon. The proposal, which awards itself the distinction of being "*new* and *exciting*," and offers to "do . . . developmental and ecological views," promises to do them "while concurrently focusing (although indirectly) on historical influences which impact differentially the contextual experiences of minority group children who live in a majority group culture."

(Those children are called, apparently in hope not of precise distinction but only of stylish variation, sometimes "minority group children," or sometimes "minority status children," and occasionally mere "minority children." Fortunately for the sanity of us all, the proposers seem not to have noticed the possibility of naming those *other* children, whose curious and unaccountable existence they must have had in mind in that last part: the minority group children who *don't* live in a majority group culture.)

If you were a ninth-grade composition teacher charged with the education of a student who had written that passage, what would you do? Where would you begin? Would it seem at all to the point simply to *tell* him that *differentially* does not mean *in different ways*, or that *while* and *concurrently* add up to redundancy? Do you think he would take much profit from a discussion of the contradiction in his intention to "focus indirectly"? And could you hope to convince him that *impact*, especially as a transitive verb, has lost its force through too much use in the trendy jargon of grant proposals? What could you do to make clear to such a mind what is wrong with "contextual experiences," of which he is very, very proud?

Forget it. What that writer needs is not a lesson in this and that, not a handbook of helpful hints, but *an education*, a mind raised up in the habit of literacy and *the skill* (it is one and the same thing) of language and thought.

What happened to this proposal, we don't know. It was probably funded by that Society for Research in Child Development, or by some similar outfit, which will now point with pride to its mighty good works. Furthermore, the givers of such grants can rarely be distinguished from the takers, and they are ordinarily quite impressed by things like contextual experiences and the reformulation of conceptualizations. And anyway, it's not *their* money. It's yours.

Spencer and Brookins teach psychology, Allen, sociology. They may be “minority status” grown-ups themselves. (Do you suppose that *they* will be pleased to be so designated?) And, if they are, they are the only “minority status” citizens in the land who will take any profit from the funding of this proposal, which *will* impact differentially on *their* contextual experiences, but won’t be what they need.

—————
An excerpt from:

**The Social and Affective Development of
Minority Status Children**

A Proposal submitted by: Margaret Beale Spencer, Ph. D., Emory University; Geraldine Kears Brookins, Ph. D., Jackson State University; and Walter Recharde Allen, Ph. D., University of Michigan.

The multiple issues raised suggests that a particular type of *structure* and *composition* for the study group is required. Thus, the accomplishment of the aforementioned aims require that the meeting be from a more *comprehensive perspective*. It is viewed as appropriate, in fact imperative, to conduct the study group conference in a “stepwise” fashion by holding two sessions over the extended period of time thus allowing adequate time between meetings to distill ideas and reformulate conceptualizations.

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***Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune,
whose words do jarre;
nor his reason in frame,
whose sentence is preposterous.***



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Voucher, Schmoucher

THERE is very little to be gained and much to be lost in assuring, through education voucher schemes or tuition tax credits, that the public school system will become entirely what it is now only partly—the last, futile hope of the permanently dispossessed and disabled. We say this with testy reluctance, and certainly *not*, as regular readers will know, because we can see any hope that the jargon-besotted and uneducated tribes of educationists and teacher-trainers will ever provide the land with literate and thoughtful citizens, but because there is no chance at all that credits or vouchers would destroy or even mitigate the government schools, which have proven again and again that they can easily digest and transform into nourishment any complaint brought against them. As the better and luckier students—and teachers—escape, our cunning educationists will have no trouble persuading the same old agencies and legislatures that they now need even *more* money. But the voucher and credit schemes probably *will* destroy the worth of the private schools.

To see why, we must consider some popular, widely preached misunderstandings:

“The public schools could provide better education if we gave them more money.” This is false. We give them far too much money. They spend it on gimmicks and gadgets and programs and proposals and whole legions of apparatchiks and uneducated busybodies and Ladies Bountiful manquées. The private schools just don’t have that kind of money. That’s why they’re often so much better. If we were to enrich the private schools, most of them would hire the recently unemployed values clarification facilitators and start offering courses in environmental awareness enhancement and creative expression of self-as-individual-self through collage. In a few years, we would have

thousands of private schools just as bad as the public schools are now. Furthermore, bad private schools, unlike bad public schools, can do as they damn well please just as long as they can find buyers for what they choose to sell, and they will care no more for our opinions, or yours, than the mongers of obscene T-shirts care about our quaint canons of taste. The people who run the government schools can at least be ridiculed and humiliated in public.

All of that must be seen in the darkness cast by another popular misunderstanding: “Parents should be free to choose for their children whatever kind of education they think best.” This is *not* false, for it asserts only a special case of that right to the pursuit of happiness to which we are supposed to be committed. It is, however, irrelevant and (perhaps) unintentionally cynical, for it presumes the possibility of “free choice” in countless millions of innocent citizens who have themselves been “educated” by the life-adjustment slogan-mongers, and who have come to “think” that a good education is an indoctrination in *their* pet notions and beliefs rather than someone else’s. Their choices of schools for their children will be no more the fruit of informed and thoughtful discretion than their choices of deodorants and designer jeans. The support they might withdraw, through vouchers or credits, from one pack of fools and charlatans they would fork over to another of the same, which, furthermore, will usually be an *ad hoc* reconstitution of the first pack, now happily embarked on what is for them just one more obviously profitable, bold, innovative thrust.

We can understand the angry desperation out of which even thoughtful citizens can propose, as remedy for the ills caused by one governmental contraption, yet another governmental contraption. And any system for credits will be exactly that, a wholly owned subsidiary of the state and a bureaucratic agency for the propagation of ideology and the enforcement of “standards.” And the standards will be devised not by the enthusiasts Of vouchers, who don’t really know exactly what they want anyway, but by the same old coalition of educationists and unionists and politicians and social engineers and manufacturers of gimmicks and publishers of pseudo-books, who *do* know exactly what they want, and exactly how to get it.

It is simply naive to imagine that our government, or any government anywhere, will construe tax credits or vouchers as a way of letting its citizens keep, and spend as they please, some of their own money. Such devices will be thought of as “subsidies,” and loftily denounced, especially by those whose livelihoods depend entirely on perpetual subsidization of the public schools, their pandemic problems, and their Byzantine and costly governance, as “handouts” of “public” money. Should credits or vouchers be provided by law, the same law would have to provide, as *quid pro quo* to a tremendous and noisy lobby of government employees, that most of the policies and practices that make the private schools what they are would suddenly become illegal. When private schools are required to hire certified graduates of state teacher academies, and to offer all the mandated mickeymousery of social adjustment disguised as “studies,” and to make sure that the ninth-grade textbook for Appreciation of Alternative Lifestyles doesn’t use any tenth-grade vocabulary words, then the erstwhile voucherites will long for the good old days, when you could at least get what you paid for, and when the private schools actually *were* an alternative to government education.

Those voucher and credit schemes were probably *not* cooked up by a conspiracy of educationists. Those people aren’t that smart. But you just can’t beat them for luck.

Strangers in Paradigms, or, The Hegemony Connection

WE are not guilty of omitting capital letters in the title of the passage reprinted below. Nor is that omission to be accounted, strictly speaking, an “error,” except, of course, in taste. It is merely an example of what is known to printers as “cockroach typography,” an affectation once thought more appropriate in ads for emporia devoted to the swift removal of unsightly hair than to the announcement of scholarly colloquia on the “richness—past, present, *and* future—of our collective humanistic treasury.”

Cockroach typography is named after archy, that courageous cummings of cockroaches, who had to write his poetry by diving headfirst onto the typewriter keys, but could not manage the shift. And had the describer of “the paradigm exchange” been required to compose his piece in the same way, Earth would be more fair.

The paradigm exchange took place not, as you might well imagine, at Checkpoint Charlie in a murky fog, but at the University of Minnesota in a murky fog. It might not have been, however, quite the innocent romp it seems. Indeed, our staff cryptanalyst has concluded that the colloquium was nothing less than a “cover” for a covert operation laid on by a band of royalty-rich humanities professors in collusion with the international banking and fund-laundering cartel. In support of his hypothesis, he contends that the cited passage is obviously in code, which he unravels thus: “Taking stock. Capitalize currency exchanges [and/or] brokerages. Coin bank deposits richness treasury.”

Well, while we do admit that an international conspiracy of professors and bankers is certainly more plausible than a brokerage characterized by exchanges of tools and explorations of modes, and than the examination of forms (*and* the paradigms themselves) through the’ application of modes; and while it is true that the supposedly decoded message makes a bit more sense than the original text, we’re just not buying’ it. Those folk are *intellectuals*, dammit! They aren’t even a pack of educationists, never mind international conspirators. We’re going to give them the benefit of the doubt and assure you that there is probably nothing more sinister in that passage than a muddled and inappropriate metaphor, some vainglorious but routine jargon, and perhaps a pervasive malaise compounded of pretentiousness and the perfectly justifiable fear of academicians that no one out in the world is taking them seriously.

But the cryptanalyst remains unconvinced. He smugly points out that this so-called paradigm exchange provides a morning session called “*Accounting for the Disciplines*” (*his italics*), and then an afternoon session, “*More Accounting for the Disciplines*” (ditto). We reply that disciplines do indeed seem to require lots of accounting for, especially those that might be brokered through papers about “Modes of Space and Interiority: Ontology or Sociology,” “Proust’s Paradigm: A Production, a Figure, an Object of Reading,” to say nothing of “‘Sociality’ and ‘Historicity’ as Categories in Literary Reception” and the “Hegemony of Interpretation.”

That was the point that convinced our stubborn decoder. He finally had to admit that no

self-respecting gang of hard-eyed money manipulators and bagmen would take the risk of doing business with bozos who run so easily off at the mouth. Only a public institution of higher learning can take a chance like that.

So, thank goodness, the paradigm exchange was probably just a harmless frolic of porseffors. And why not? If the poets are to be the unacknowledged legislators of the world, they will surely need some help, some bureaucrats and appliers of analytical models, some paperpushers and methodologists of analysis and interpretation. Those artist types are clever enough in their own little specialties, but you can’t expect them to handle the hard stuff. For that you need porseffors.

It happened once that archy’s boss, Don Marquis, invited the insect to visit him at home, provided only that he come without any friends or kinfolk. To that, the Villon of vermin replied:

boss
you should have learned
by this time
that literature
makes strange
bedfellows

So where is that cockroach, now that we need him?

the paradigm exchange

Taking stock of the state of critical inquiry in the humanities and arts, this colloquium capitalizes on the diversity among the disciplines, and the currency of creative theories and methodologies of textual analysis and interpretation that bring changing perspectives to scholars and students. Exchanges of texts and tools and explorations of new modes of humanistic thinking characterize the brokerage of the colloquium. Through application of numerous analytical models, a variety of art forms will be examined. This will be followed by an examination of the paradigms themselves, coined in the realms that bank deposits from anthropology, physics, history, and linguistics, to literature, philosophy, sociology, and psychology. The Colloquium aims to inventory the richness—past, present, and future—of our collective humanistic treasury.

Yes we have Some Bananas

HERE at Glassboro State College we are blessed with some of America's most outstanding campus humor publications. And they're *free*, too! The citizens of New Jersey cheerfully bear the expense, because they understand (we've told them and told them) that the worst thing that can happen to a school is that it might become *less* fun than a barrel of monkeys.

Never fear. It can't happen here, certainly not so long as we continue to enjoy the services of scores of people like those funny folk in Co-operative Education, for instance. Their latest brochure starts *right off* with this absolutely socko bit of dialog: "What is cooperative education? In it's simplest definition, it is learning by "doing.") How about *that*? You're not going to find that class of humor in the Harvard *Lampoon*, you know.

And whatever we may lack in class, we make up for in comedy. Other schools will have a top banana and a few seconds, maybe, but we have middle bananas, bottom bananas, and even a platoon of assistant vice-bananas.

We may even have some adjunct bananas, for some of our ribticklingest copy appears regularly in those little catalogs of cute courses sent out by the Office of Adult Continuing Education. (Even the title gets a snicker, implying the risible existence of that from which it is so laboriously distinguished—Juvenile Instantaneous Education.) Notice, for instance, how the possibly forbidding academic solemnity of a course called "Betting to Win" (wittily listed in the "Finance" section) is entertainingly alleviated when would-be students are exhorted: "Gain a solid and workable understanding of the intricacies surrounding most thoroughbred race tracks." If you've never driven through the traffic circles of southern New Jersey, you might not get that clever joke, but that is *your* failing, and certainly not the humorist's.

Then there's the Psychologists' Conference, open not to just anyone, of course, however adult and continuing, but only to "School Psychologists with intermediate to advanced level experience in personality assessment." What could be drearier? But a Glassboro gag writer can always find exactly the right, deft touch with which to lighten even so dismal an occasion as a convocation of

personality assessors with one level experience or another:

The program is designed to enhance interaction between the participants and guest speakers. All participants and guest speakers are encouraged to stay overnight.

(On the other hand, we could be wrong. Maybe it isn't intended to be funny at all, but simply to suggest, if only to the cognoscenti of interaction enhancement, that adult education is to education as adult books are to books.)

Sometimes, of course, the humor of the Adult Continuing Education catalog is tinged with melancholy. Consider, for example, "Job Options for Educators":

This workshop is specifically designed for educators who wish to explore alternative careers. Participants will have the opportunity to explore various career options consistent with their interests, values, skills and special abilities.

That *is* funny, we admit. Very funny. But it's kind of sad too, don't you think? After all, there just aren't that many openings for people whose interests, values, skills, and special abilities are so accurately portrayed in their contributions to our journals of campus humor.

Well, let's not let that unhappy thought spoil the fun all those wonderful people bring us. Besides, they can always stay on as "educators," laughing all the way.

A Certain Trumpet

WE'VE recently had a terrible fright. Some rascally reader sent us a copy of an essay from a sheet called "Journal of Developmental & Remedial Education." Very promising. Even better, the author, a certain Paul Rice, was identified as Director of Developmental Studies at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Heh heh. What could be better?

As it turned out, a poke in the eye with a sharp stick could have been better. Just imagine our chagrin as we read Rice's very first paragraph:

Amid the recent national fervor in developmental education, I noticed a disturbing tendency: we are having trouble thinking and we are having trouble talking.

When the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? *We* will, and gladly too. But this Rice seemed to be tooting in tune. And sure enough, the obstinate follow kept hitting right notes:

There is talk of intervention strategies, diagnosticians, prescriptionists; of clinics and postures and modalities. We are being medical when we have no business doing so; we are attempting to elevate mundane ideas to academic respectability by giving them proud but meaningless names, and we are attempting to appear in control of situations we don't understand.

So what are we supposed to do with a manlike that? He not only refuses to write the standard educationistic gobbledygook, but he actually *encourages* the same elitist dereliction in others. Should his friends flock to follow his feisty fanfare, it would mean the end of *The Underground Grammarian* as we know and love it.

We are not, however, without hope. This Paul Rice if there really *is* such a person, has probably played his last trump. In the coda, he sticks his neck out thus:

Last week a young man came seeking a job in our developmental studies program. He left his resume. It spoke of 'transhumanistic learning experiences' of 'self-sufficiency experiences,' of 'holistic learning strategies.' No doubt he will find a job somewhere. But I sent him packing.

When that young transhumanistic experiencer reports to the teacher training academy where he learned all that neat stuff, the whole confraternity of educationists will rise in wrath against Rice and bash in his embouchure.



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The Principal and the Interest

INSTITUTIONS feel no pain. Only people can feel the relentless pain of illiteracy, the desperate bafflement of a mind unskilled in the ways of logic and thoughtful attention, and dimly aware, but aware nevertheless, of its own confusion. Schools do not have minds; they have guidelines. Their guidelines run, when it isn't too inconvenient, as far as what they are not at all ashamed to call the parameters of basic minimum competency. Basic minimum competence (why *do* they need that *y*?) is not literacy. It is, however, just enough a counterfeit literacy to convince the minimally competent to fancy themselves literate, except, of course, for those moments of desperate pain.

And there is even worse in store for the pseudo-literate victim of the schools. As bad as it is, self-knowledge is better than public exposure. Imagine, if you can, the pain of a certain high school principal who now finds himself publicly humiliated and accused of incompetence because of an article he wrote, so innocently, for the school paper. Here are some excerpts:

The County office has coordinators in all areas that is willing to help when help is needed.

Every one who participated are to be commended for a job well done. We did not win as many senior games as we would have like too, but both teams showed excellent sportsmanship.

The Senior High band and the Junior High band were always there at the ----- stadium when we need them. The Cheerleaders cheered the Drill Team performed. The motivation and the momentous was there. It worked as clock word or a puzzle each part fell in place at the right time. If you were at the statiurn with me. I am

sure you would have been satisfied with the performance.

The article also displayed some startling spelling errors, such as “surch” for “search” and even “intonative” for “innovative,” and if there exists an educationist who can spell correctly only one word, the odds are seven to one that that word will be “innovative.”

A dismayed parent, doing exactly what we have often urged, sent a copy of the principal’s article, with appropriate commentary, to a local paper, and irate citizens petitioned the school board to remove the principal for incompetence. The superintendent said that he would “handle the matter as a personnel problem rather than in public.” The resolution, if any, we do not know.

The principal further injured himself with defenses so pathetically irrelevant or implausible as to suggest even greater incompetence. He claimed that the piece was a hastily written rough draft, and that he expected that someone on the school paper would “edit” it. His errors, however, are characteristic not of haste but of ignorance; and few parents could have been consoled by his implicit admission that students on the school paper had higher standards, and would do their assignments more conscientiously, than the principal. The poor man put forth as evidence some other pieces he had written for the same paper, pieces in which his competence was demonstrated by “few errors” rather than many. He pointed out, as though the conventions of spelling, punctuation, and syntax appropriate to English prose were different from English prose *in newspapers*, that the education of principals does not require courses in journalism. And, most astonishingly of all, he further excused himself by telling the parents who had entrusted to him the intellectual instruction of their children that he was, after all, “an inexperienced writer.”

An inexperienced writer. The man is a graduate of a small college, probably with a degree in education. He has a master’s degree, probably in educational administration, from a state university. Can these distinctions, such as they are, be attained by an inexperienced writer? Did he write papers? A master’s thesis? Did his teachers find no fault in his writing, or in his scholarship, which they could not possibly have assessed without reading what he had written?

And that school board that made him a principal and that now faces a nasty “personnel problem” too delicate to be “handled” in public, did it consider his academic and intellectual achievements? How did it measure them? Was that principal never a teacher? What could he have taught, who is so meagerly practiced in literacy?

Regular readers will have noticed that contrary to our usual practice we have not given the principal’s name, or even the name of that stadium. We don’t want you to care who he is, because this case is nastily vexed by the fact that he is black, and that the parents who seek his removal are white.

In one way, that is irrelevant. The academic and intellectual distinctions appropriate to a school principal are whatever they are, for principals of any color. And if such distinctions are *not* required of principals, which is generally the case, illiteracy and ignorance are no more to be accounted demerits in black principals than in the thousands of talentless gym and shop teachers who have wangled their ways through guidance counselling and curriculum facilitation to become white principals.

In other ways, however, this hapless principal’s color is all too relevant. It permits him to claim, as he does, and perhaps even to believe, that the charges against him arise from racial hostility. And he may be right, which is *not* to say that the charges are groundless but only that hosts of white principals who deserve similar discomfiture remain unindicted. We’re on the principal’s side; we favor equal exposure and humiliation for *all* the ignoramuses who have been awarded, by virtue of silly degrees from academies of educationism, undemanding employment in the public school jobs program.

But we are *not* on his side when he says that “there are more people interested in the education of students than in this petty kind of bias.” The blackness of the principal and the whiteness of his opponents are, for some purposes, not to the point, but the redness of that herring cannot be ignored. It is precisely in the cause of “the education of students” that we must object to academic deficiencies in principals of any color whatsoever. Furthermore, the principal’s pathetic ploy makes us wonder: What notion of “education” does he harbor, in which the elementary mechanical skills of literacy are of so little importance? And, even

worse, if he in fact believes that the ignorance of an inexperienced writer is being condemned only because the writer happens to be black, would he prefer that it be *excused* only because the writer is black?

No, the poor man simply has no legitimate defense. But he *does* have a legitimate complaint. Since he seems unlikely to think of it, and since almost all the rest of us can legitimately make the same complaint, we are going to make it.

That principal is suffering. The students, and their parents, are suffering. The whole town is suffering, and so is a whole nation, where fewer and fewer of those who call themselves “educators” have attained even the once standard level of mediocrity. But some people are not suffering. The teachers who handed that principal his high school diploma without having taught him even such simple things as spelling and punctuation (what *else* did they neglect?), they are not suffering. And the professors who took their pay from his tuition and gave him passing grades and a college degree and sent him forth as a certified educator and wrote warm letters of recommendation to graduate schools, all without knowing, or caring, that he was “an inexperienced writer” who couldn’t even spell or punctuate correctly, they are not suffering. And the educationists who welcomed him (and his money) into the high calling of scholarship and pronounced him a “master” and in every way fit mentor of youth and who testified to his intellectual prowess and consummate learning to an unwary (and now unhappy) school board, they are not suffering.

The principal thinks himself educated. And why not? All those people *told* him that he was educated, and they gave him the papers to prove it. So what else can he believe now but that his troubles are the result of racial discrimination? And he may still be right.

Did all of those culprits pass him along because they didn’t *know* his weakness? Bad. Because they didn’t care? Worse. Or did they presume that his race would probably make superior intellectual achievement unlikely and would also protect him from the consequences of its absence? The worst. Beyond these three unsavory hypotheses, we just can’t imagine any others.

Uncomfortable Words

I say unto you, Every word that a clergyperson shall speak, he/she shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment.

WE don’t usually trouble ourselves with the jargon or gobbledygook of elected officials or captains of industry. If voters and stockholders can find no fault in the babble of mindlessness and mendacity, they have their reward. For the same reason, we have ignored the trendy claptrap of pop religiosity, stoically denying ourselves even the easy pickings to be found in what William Buckley has so perfectly named “The Rolling Stones Version of the Book of Common Prayer.” But even our saintly forbearance has its limits, and Edward W. Pierce, III, a self-confessed clergyperson in Akron, has exceeded them.

In a recent issue of a newsletter called “minister,” we found Edward Pierce’s prescriptions for “Using the Pastoral Relations Committee as a Support Structure.”* Hear what uncomfortable words he saith:

The schematized model that follows is an attempt to visualize a pastoral/ministerial relations committee that will be a support structure. This paradigm is in no way meant to be a final or complete answer to the quest for a viable support mechanism for clergy. It is a model recommended by the interface of the study, experience, resources and evaluation of three years’ experience in my own ministry.

Now that’s exactly the sort of thing that *will* happen to anyone who lets an interface, especially the interface of the experience of his experience, recommend a model, a *schematized* one, at that, importantly different, no doubt, from an ordinary, *unschematized* model, which passeth all understanding anyway. To be sure, what actually *does* follow looks more like a simple outline than a model, schematized or not, but we can’t be sure. This is our first encounter with a model that is an attempt to visualize a committee, a committee that will be a structure. But then, religion *is* a mysterious business, isn’t it? It even allows room for the existence of a paradigm “in no way” meant

* We suspect that the lower case *m* in “minister” is *not* an example of the cockroach typography we were discussing last month. Maybe it’s simple humility?

to be the answer to a quest but well worth putting forth anyway. (“In no way” is probably a more pious version of “not,” as in: Thou shalt in no way covet thy neighbor’s viable support mechanism, nor his ox. On another hand, however, it may be from a hitherto unsuspected translation of a once famous Pauline admonition: “Let thy Yea be Yea and thy Nay, in no way.”)

We are not taken in by Pierce’s calling. We know the language of the clouded mind when we see it, and we have to conclude, with dismay but not surprise, that the educationists have infiltrated the seminaries. When he describes his “viable support mechanism,” Pierce is also describing, and in standard pedagogue, the typical class in an “education” course:

The type of process with which I have had the best success is the problem-solving variety. In this arrangement, there is a problem poser who defines the issue as succinctly as possible; a facilitator who acts as a clarifier and maintains the process; and problem-solvers who compose the rest of the group, seeking to elaborate and support the issue by suggesting various alternatives and solutions.

It’s all there. The type is not only a variety but also an arrangement, a series of pointless distinctions, like those elements, aspects, and facets, without which the teacher-trainers might actually discover that they have nothing to say. The problem, however, is also called an issue, as though problems and issues, unlike types and varieties, required *no* distinction. And that makes a problem—or is it an issue?—for those hapless problem-solvers. When they ought to be busy solving the problem, they are set instead to the curiously inappropriate task of *elaborating the issue* (whether succinctly or not we don’t know), and to the absolutely incomprehensible task of *supporting* the issue. And then there is that facilitator, who, not content even with that exalted rank, insists on acting as *a clarifier*, thus undermining himself by implying the need of a clarifier who knows how to act *as a facilitator*, lest facilitation be left undone.

And when Pierce gets to his outline, the one he calls a “schematized model,” he provides the mind-twisting suggestion that the pastoral relations committee include “between 3 to 5

members.” Try to figure that one out. Shortly thereafter, we come to item 4, “Choosing and Implementing Strategy,” under which we find, of course, as item 4a: “Input and Inclusion of Spouse.” There is *no* 4b. So much for the strategy of pastoral relations, and a little plug for sacerdotal celibacy too.

Well, we don’t really care how clergypersons think and write, since we are not required by law to drop money into their collection plates. But we *are* fascinated by the fact that Pierce’s prose, both in style *and* content, is an exact replica of the mindless maunderings we get from our educationists, who *do* make off with great bundles of legalized swag. Somehow, though, it all makes sense.

After all, the schools have for decades been gradually transforming themselves into insipid and semi-secular churches, preaching the pale pieties of social adjustment instead of teaching difficult discipline. At the same time, the churches have transformed themselves into insipid and semi-secular schools, teaching the pale pieties of social adjustment instead of preaching difficult doctrine. Both have found more profit in peer-interaction perception than in precepts, and readier rewards in guidance and relating than in stern standards. No more teacher’s dirty looks, lest creativity flag, and, lest self-esteem be disenanced, no more sinners in the hands of an angry God. The principal can say with the pastor, “My brother Esau is a hairy man, but *I* am a smooth man.”

And smooth they are, and featureless. We never hear in their words the ring of a human voice, but merely the drone of ritual incantation in something not quite language. They are full of high sentence indeed, deferential, glad to be of use, politic, cautious, but not meticulous. They are Milton’s “blind mouths.” Should Socrates appear among them, proposing the examined life, or Jesus, saying “Thou fool! This very night shall thy self-esteem be required of thee,” they would be glad to interface and share concerns in a type of problem-solving variety of an arrangement, elaborating and supporting the issue and suggesting various alternatives and solutions.

They, who were to have been the salt of the earth, the zest of life’s best endeavors, are become a tepid mess of pottage. Wherewith, indeed, shall they be salted?

Alexander the Haigiographer

[from *The Manchester Guardian*, February 8, 1981]

GENERAL Alexander Haig has contexted the Polish watchpot somewhat nuancely. How, though, if the situation decontrols, can he stoppage it mountingly conflagrating? Haig . . . paradoxed his auditioners by abnormalling his responds. . . He techniqued a new way to vocabulary his thoughts so as to informationally uncertain anybody listening about what he actually implicationed. At first it seemed that what [he] was impenatrabling was at basic clear. . . . But close observers have alternated that idea. What Haig is doing, they concept, is to decouple the Russians from everything they are moded to. . . . Kremlin experts thought they could recognition the wordforms of American diplomacy. Now they have to afreshly language themselves up before they know what the Americans are subtling. . . . If that is how General Haig wants to nervous breakdown the Russian leadership, he may be shrewding his way to the biggest diplomatic invent since Clauswitz. Unless, that is he schizoprenes his allies first.

*Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune,
whose words do jarre;
nor his reason in frame,
whose sentence is preposterous.*

THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN is printed from hand set type on an elderly (*circa* 1935) cylinder letterpress, a Webebdorfer "Little Giant." Such a press, long out of manufacture, can be bought for little money, and the technology of printing is not hard to learn. "Freedom of the press," A. J. Liebling reminded us, "belongs to the man who owns one." So stop asking us what you can do.

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The Interest and the Principle

FROM time to time we find ourselves wondering why our traditional victims, almost always people with jobs in the school business and therefore at least mindful of the importance of education, write such terrible English. The obvious explanation just doesn't go far enough. While it is easy to see that they are poorly educated and often not very bright to begin with, that still leaves us to wonder why such people went into the school business at all, why the school business so readily accepted and nourished them, and why so little of the presumable influence of the intellectual life seems to have rubbed off on them. Now, thanks to George Orwell, we have a better explanation.

Consider first a few words from one William Paton, Superintendent of Schools in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, in *Forward*, a fat pamphlet of education blather about "gifted/talented education" put out by the Wisconsin Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Paton, who laments "a dirth" of suitable teachers and hopes that someone will "give voice on a statewide basis," writes like this:

It is readily apparent that the major issue facing those of us concerned in this area deals with the question of how we shall provide equal and quality programming opportunities which respond to the needs of *all* children.

So. The merely apparent seems to be invisible to educationists, perhaps because they are always concerned in an area; they have to wait for the *readily* apparent. And the issue (*major*, naturally) deals with the question, the question of how. And what, exactly, are programming opportunities? Programs? Courses? Field trips? Or are they some improbable opportunities for the children to program some quality into an educational system run by grown-ups who can't make sense?

Well, who cares? Wait. Here's a better question. Who *doesn't* care? That we can answer. William Paton doesn't care. He's written his piece and probably listed it on his vita as a "scholarly publication," so why should he care that it makes no sense to say that the issue deals with the question? Big deal. And, while it is hard to believe that anyone except a penniless old mother would *read* an educationist's "scholarly publication," those others of Paton's ilk for whom the piece was intended won't care either. How can they? They are themselves quite concerned in areas where issues deal with questions.

In the essay "Politics and the English Language," his fullest exploration of the inevitable influences of thought and language upon one another, Orwell shows us how to understand *why* the Patons of Academe do what they do.* He speaks of the writer who is unable to say what he means, the writer who inadvertently says what he does *not* mean, and the writer who, improbable as it seems, is not *interested* in what he is saying and who is therefore indifferent as to what he might mean. The first two suffer merely from incapacity, but it is that very incapacity that is engendered and sustained by the indifference of the third. The babblers of educationism write and think badly because they are not interested in education.

Can you detect in Paton's prose some impassioned concern for the intellectual nurture of those "gifted/talented" students, who are probably far more attentive and thoughtful than the bureaucrat who presumes to superintend them? Was it out of deep commitment to the value of clarity and precision in the work of the mind that Paton found the issue that deals with the question of how quite good enough for his purposes? What practiced discipline of the intellect, what love of learning, can we suppose in a man who will not even lift his pen a moment to consider what he means by "quality programming opportunities"? And if these are "little" things, shall we conclude from them that this busy superintendent will nevertheless give his powers of attentive thoughtfulness and meticulous workmanship to his superintendence of the big things—like education?

* This is an Orwell Memorial Issue. You will find more about this much neglected essay in the next article.

How can it be that people choose to spend their lives in a calling that interests them so little that they won't trouble themselves to make sense when thinking about it? Adam Smith answered that question long ago:

It is the interest of every man to live as much at his ease as he can; and if his emoluments are to be precisely the same, whether he does, or does not perform some very laborious duty, it is certainly his interest, at least as interest is vulgarly understood, either to neglect it altogether, or, if he is subject to some authority which will not suffer him to do this, to perform it in as careless and slovenly a manner as that authority will permit.

Where there is an inward commitment to the worth of knowledge and reason—not only because they are useful, but because they are good—the authority of principle is enough to ensure both the interest and the good workmanship that lead to clarity and precision, and even to grace, in statement. But the typical training of an educationist, which often begins with a skimpy C minus undergraduate major and peters out with a "doctorate" in education, the highest rung on the ladder of social promotion, seems neither to require nor to foster such a commitment. If it did, they would not, they *could* not, write their habitual, inane gibberish.

And, as they lack the inward authority of principle, they lack also the supervision of outward authority. They have jobs in agencies of government, where people may sometimes be held accountable for some things, tardiness, perhaps, but never, *never*, for the quality of the work of their minds. In the entire, tremendous apparatus of public education, there is *no one* who will say, "Look here, Paton. This just won't do! Surely, the high calling that you have chosen, and which has, by the way, rewarded you rather handsomely, especially considering that with the devotion and ability that *this* stuff suggests you'd never be superintendent of *anything* in an outfit that had to show a profit, deserves more thoughtful attention and—yes, dammit!—*respect* than you have given it!"

But they have principals, not principles, in the public schools. So the legions of Patons will go on forever, securely enjobbed among the like-unminded, impervious to intellectual discipline,

which isn't in their job descriptions, serving what does not interest them but is much in their interest, at least as interest is vulgarly understood.

Politics and the Eglinsh Language

“Our civilization is decadent and our language—so the argument runs—must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes.”

The bottom line objection against industry-sponsored educational materials is how many more products the company will sell as a result.

The multiplicity of commodities, as Ivan Illich criticizes, induces a new kind of poverty . . .

Though corporate-sponsored teaching materials in many subject areas are responding to the needs of a relevant curriculum, they might also be viewed as expedient and defensive public relations in vested ideologies.

WE have decided to begin memorial observances of *1984* a little bit early, since such subversive activities may not be permitted when 1984 rolls around. The epigraph above, however, is not from *1984* but from a celebrated essay, “Politics and the English Language,” in which Orwell considers mendacious and mindless language far more common and insidious than the dramatic and perhaps too obviously perverted Newspeak of *1984*. The other passages, written in the Eglinsh language, are all from *Hucksterism in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools*, by one Sheila Harty. Fortunately for Sheila Harty, Orwell did not live to read this book. He would have found even “industry propaganda” less reprehensible than school Eglinsh, for industrialists, unlike “educators,” have never promised to devote themselves to the life and work of the mind.

Whether Sheila Harty will ever read “Politics and the English Language” we cannot say, but it seems unlikely. She doesn't really have to, you

see, for her book has already been awarded, by some other people who seem never to have read that essay, what the National Council of Teachers of Eglinsh, out of the serene presumptuousness that ignorance alone can bestow, the George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contributions to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language.

We have so far, as many readers will remember, done nothing more about the NCTE than to demonstrate its culpability in the mishap at Three Mile Island, the aborted raid into Iran, and one trifling collision of a Metroliner and a work train that didn't even kill anyone, but now it's obvious that we have to stop coddling those people. And we also notice that this weird award comes, to be precise, from the NCTE's Committee on Public Doublespeak, an especially shifty bunch. They're the ones who smugly hand out brickbats for the silly and devious language of businessmen, bureaucrats, politicians, and Pentagon spokespersons (which term the NCTE approves), but never seem to notice the inane cant of the educationists or even the trendy jargon of Eglinsh teaching. They wax mighty wrath at “enhanced radiation devices,” but they'll not drum out of the corps those experts “thoroughly trained in grammar, usage, and linguistics,” who tell us, in their report on the Third National Writing Assessment:

While there may be a sense of sections within the piece of writing, the sheer number and variety of cohesion strategies bind the details and sections into a wholeness.

In “Politics and the English Language,” Orwell cites and discusses examples of the “slovenly . . . language that makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.” Grim as Orwell's vision for the future was, he never dreamed that we would one day actually have to worry about gross and obvious solecisms in the public language of supposedly educated people. The faults in his examples do not include such grammatical gaucheries as “bottom line is how” or the pathetic baffled-freshman-trying-to-sound-fancy “as Ivan Illich criticizes.”* But even without such crudities,

* Poor Orwell assumed, naturally, *that* that sort of language was not the problem and would never get past editors anyway. He could never have guessed that whole generations of editors (and countless other

Harty's prose displays all the perversions of language that Orwell named: avoidable ugliness, staleness of imagery, and lack of precision.

Orwell was more specific. He discussed the routine use of the dying metaphor, that involuntary verbal twitch that tells us "that the writer is not interested in what he is saying." That seems at first an unlikely charge, especially in polemic writing, but *having an interest* in a cause is not the same thing as being interested in what you are saying. It is exactly the former that *does* lead to the thoughtless recitation of cant and stock phrases; it is the latter that demands thoughtful attention. Was it out of thoughtful attention that Harty *chose* to characterize an otherwise unspecified attribute as "responding to needs," or was it out of her own habitual responding to the stimulus of conventional educationistic jargon? Was it after a judicious consideration of alternatives or after a jerk of the knee that she decided to distinguish one certain objection from all others by describing it as "the bottom line objection"?[†]

It was not out of skillful attentiveness but out of its opposite, routine thoughtlessness, that Harty ended up with "bottom line" at all, placidly content, apparently, with a particularly inappropriate jargon term borrowed from the enemy. It is out of that same thoughtlessness that the authors of Orwell's bad examples litter their prose with terms almost completely lacking in meaning [and that] do not point to any discoverable object, but are hardly ever expected to do so by the reader." Harty would know, if she

innocents) would be taught, by the NCTE and allied forces, that a persnickety preoccupation with accuracy is an elitist device for the repression of democratic virtues like self-esteem and creativity.

[†] Does she mean to say, as her garbled syntax suggests—"the bottom line objection . . . is how many more products the company will sell"—that increased sales are the *worst possible* result of "industry propaganda" in the schools? You would think that a pack of Eglinsh teachers, most of whom live on money taken from taxpayers, would favor flourishing industries and a vigorous economy. You might even think that the same people, who are devoted, of course, to the intellectual life and the freedom of the mind, might fear some even graver (or *bottomer* line) consequences of propaganda—*any* propaganda—in the classroom.

bothered to think about it at all, that her readers would accept "relevant curriculum" and even "vested ideologies" just as uncritically as she does.

Enough. You can do the rest of this yourself. Reread Orwell's essay. Even in those tiny fragments of Sheila Harty's prose, you will easily find all the items listed in Orwell's "catalogue of swindles and perversions." We have to get on with frying the *big* fish, the one who gives out prizes in Orwell's name for such rubbish.

Before it was catapulted into national prominence by being mentioned in *The Underground Grammarian*, the National Council of Teachers of English was an obscure special interest lobbying club (a vested ideology, if you prefer). Its one little claim to fame arose, strange to say, from what had to be either ignorance or a deliberate rejection of Orwell's most important assertion about language. Where Orwell thought language not "a natural growth" but "an instrument which we shape for our own purposes," the NCTE, in a time of troubles, made political points for itself (coincidentally taking its members off a hook and reducing their workloads at the same time) by announcing that every student had a right to a language of his own. Thus, to require of students the spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax of the "ruling class" was to deprive them of their rights.

Such logic would not have delighted Orwell. It finds the language of the student a "natural growth," like acne, and then proposes to protect him from the oppressive demands of conventional English because language is an instrument shaped for some purpose.

But that doesn't trouble the NCTE. What, after all, is logic? Just another tricky instrument contrived out of language. They don't care about Sheila Harty's prose, which reveals nothing more than the state of her mind; they love her *sentiments*, which show that her heart is in the right (which is to say "left") place.

Well, they may be sorry. Those greedy merchants may just this once put principle before profit and cut off the free supply of charts and filmstrips and brochures, and millions of teachers all over America will find themselves desperately trying to figure out what a teacher deprived of teaching materials is supposed to *do* in a classroom.

...And furthermore

HERE's *another* superintendent of schools, Richard C. Hamilton, Ed. D., who superintends the love of learning and the growth of intellectual power among the youth of North Hampton, New Hampshire. He is a man, as the educationists say, very giving of self, and *perfectly willing* to lighten the darkness of grown-ups *too*, as he does in his latest annual report:

A new phrase has caught my ear and I would like to use it in discussing you, your children, and the ensuing relationship. The phrase is "centering down." "Centering down" to me means a placing of one's interest in a central focus, a separating of the important and the not so important, mentally reducing things to a discernible entity.

Well, the darndest things *will* catch the ear in a cold climate, but this one sounds really neat. Come on now, haven't you always *wanted* to reduce things to a discernible entity and all that other good stuff? And how about the meaning and purpose of *life*? That interest you any?

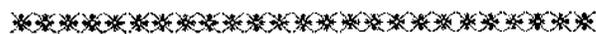
To "center down" in regard to our children is to me a putting into focus what we are here for.

Well, *sure* you want to learn to center down, and of *course* it's hard. It's positively *philosophical*. But don't you worry, bless your heart. You're going to have the unmitigated help of Richard C. Hamilton, **Ed. D.**, and he's a *professional educator* who knows how to explain very complicated things even to the likes of you so that you can understand them right in the comfort of your *own home*! Ready? He-e-e-e-re he goes!

Have you "centered down" by climbing into a tent formed by the kitchen chairs and a blanket? Have you "centered down" by agreeing to put up with what goes with a puppy?

Now you get out there and center down and BOOGIE!

Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune, whose words do jarre; nor his reason in frame, whose sentence is posterous.



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The Little Old Lady and the Linguist

ONCE in awhile, just to see how the other half lives, you ought to read *Today's Education*, an uplift and self-help journal put out by the National Education Association, a trade union, for the aid and abettance of its members. The articles are often remarkable demonstrations of the encouraging fact that you don't need a sense of humor in order to write funny copy.

In the April-May issue of that journal, we discovered a mildly entertaining piece by one James C. Bostain, identified only as "Linguist and Lecturer on Language" in Alexandria, Virginia. He is displeased with some supposed "grammarians" who claim that their "rules" are statements of fact rather than judgments. If we could *find* those silly twits passing themselves off as grammarians, we'd defrock them quicker (*not* quicker) than you can punctuate a non-restrictive clause.* However, unless they are all lurking in English departments in the schools of Alexandria, we just don't know where to look.

Bostain starts off by solemnly announcing—keeping a straight face is especially important for a humorist—that "'I didn't eat nothing' is simply an alternative form of 'I didn't eat anything.'" From that only slightly muddled revelation (the

* A fortunate example, although certainly not a fortuitous† one. The "rule" for the punctuation of non-restrictive clauses does indeed provide a *writer* with a way to indicate a certain kind of relationship that is regularly indicated by a *speaker* of English, regardless of place, learning, or status, by *one* certain pattern of intonation. And that's a fact.

† For *thinking*, it is necessary to be able *and* regularly inclined both to make countless such distinctions and to recognize them as made (or left unmade) by others. Of course we could, if we chose, use "fortunate" and "fortuitous" to *mean* the same thing, but only a fool would do that which must diminish his ability to make *fine* distinctions. And that's *another* fact.

second is not precisely a *form* of the first, except to those uninterested in fine distinctions), he goes on to “argue” thus:

Grammarians, trying to unify the three R’s by making the principles of language as absolute as those of arithmetic, feel that a linguistic double negative *ought* to have a positive significance. Sometimes they feel so strongly on the question that, in the face of all the evidence, they assert that it *does* have a positive significance. This is a free country. We are entitled to our wishes and opinions, but it is important not to confuse them with facts.

Well, we figured that if there were *one* living grammarian on the face of the earth who might take such a feisty stand, it just *had* to be our faithful subscriber and friend, retired English (and Latin) teacher, and constant correspondent, forever fuming over the needlessly split infinitive, and announcing, from the evidence of certain subtle but indubitable violations of the principle of parallel structure in *The National Review*, the imminent collapse of Western Culture as we know it, that implacable Grendel’s Mother of grouchy grammarians, the Little Old Lady in Dubuque.

Persnickety? That dear lady is *so* persnickety that she wouldn’t even hesitate to waggle her finger right in the face of a Linguist and Lecturer on Language who was so disrespectful of language as to say that one sentence is an “alternative form” of another. We can hear her now, patiently explaining that those who want to think precisely will be *delighted* to observe the purely conventional and so very useful distinction provided by “alternative” and “alternate.” They will not, therefore, heedlessly—and even *rudely*, as a gratuitous violation of one of the conventions that make civilization possible—use “alternative” as an alternate “form” of “alternate.” (She can *pronounce* quotation marks.) So we sent our man in Dubuque to discover what that famous fussybudget had to say about the double negative:

OUR MAN: Is it your understanding, Ma’am, that a boy who says that he didn’t eat nothing is *really* saying that he did eat something?

LITTLE OLD LADY: Pshaw! What it *means*, young man, is that unless someone cares enough to rap him a good one across the knuckles now and then, the poor child will be a little hungry all his life.

OM: But, Ma’am, what about this Mr. Bostain? He’s an actual Linguist and Lecturer on Language. He’s even good enough for the National Education Association, a very exclusive society devoted entirely to the life of the mind and made up of the nation’s most accomplished scholars and intellectuals. Bostain is sure that grammarians like you will insist that a double negative *does* have “a positive significance.”

LOL: Land o’ Goshen. I’m not sure *what* to say to that. “I didn’t eat nothing” surely *does* have a “positive significance.” It’s explicit and unqualified. What it does *not* have, as anyone who speaks English can tell, is an “affirmative meaning.” It is only in a few contexts that *positive* is an appropriate antonym of *negative*.

OM: But haven’t you proved Bostain’s point? Although what he says is no less “wrong” than that double negative, you *were* able to understand him.

LOL: Well, bless your heart, young man, of *course* I was. But Mr. Bostain *does* require some figuring out, which is not the case with that neglected tyke who says that he didn’t eat nothing. However, if it is Mr. Bostain’s ((point” that thoughtful and educated readers *can* figure out what language like his *probably* means, then I do agree. But I also believe that a man who styles himself a Linguist and Lecturer on Language owes us something better than a *probable* meaning. He should at least try to be as clear as the little boy who didn’t eat nothing. We don’t have to figure out what it is *he* means. Furthermore, that child *doesn’t* owe us anything; he does not pretend to instruct us.

OM: Are those *facts*, Ma’am, or wishes and opinions?

LOL: They are *judgments*, sonny. They are *statements* about *worth*, reached through an intellectual process that depends on other *statements*. The greater your power of clear and accurate statement, the better your judgment. I am ready to adopt different judgments, but not from a man who cares so little for clarity and accuracy that he gives us nothing better than some probable meaning, and so little for *fact* that, in order to say anything at all, he has to pretend that the woods are full of “grammarians” who fancy that language is no more complicated than algebra.

OM: But Bostain says that you grammarians confuse your opinions and wishes with facts. Mightn't he say the same of your judgment?

LOL: He well might. Indeed, it seems inevitable. A man who speaks of confusing opinions and wishes with facts when he probably means *mistaking* wishes and opinions *for* facts seems little likely to have either the power or the habit of thoughtful discrimination, which would protect him from mistaking his wishes and opinions, and even his pretenses, for facts.

But that *is* an interesting lapse. Thoughtless writers often *do* reveal things that they don't mean to. That poor man must have felt, however inarticulately, that he didn't want to confuse his *readers* with facts.

She *is* a hard case. But she's a teacher, and she asked us to send on to the "Poor man" the one, absolute rule of grammar that might improve him: Silence is golden.

Approaching, from our positive heteronomous perspective, an epistemological purview, we can expand our delivery system of the word and say:

Urban Studies is trash. Or, if you prefer, Urban Studies *are* trash. They are *all* trash, all those hokey and trendy "studies" designed to create, *ex* absolutely *nihilo*, jobs in Academe for those who either would not or could not master the intellectual scholarly disciplines within which *anything* can be studied. To understand what happens in cities calls for exactly those powers by which we can understand, if we *can* understand, what happens in discotheques or on the Staten Island Ferry, and there is as much academic justification for Sunday School Picnic Studies as there is for Urban Studies or Women's Studies or Intercultural Multiethnic Studies, and we're sorry we said that, because within a year some wifty bible college will *have* a Department of Sunday School Picnic Studies, and our local teacher-trainers, compleat chameleons and cunning contrivers; of cultish contraptions, will puff up their already bloated experiential continuum of distinction, with a secular counterpart: the Nondenominational/ Multicultural Class Christmas/Hanukkah/Solstice Party Studies Module, to be completed in a graduate workshop.

This evil-tempered outburst was provoked by the excerpt reprinted below. It is the work of the

mind of one Raye G. Richardson, associate professor of Urban Studies at San Francisco State. He wrote that stuff in support of his application for a place on the university's "literacy committee." Let's hope that he didn't make it, lest the committee's presuppositions of meanings *also* fail to obtain literacy, as the term literacy committee mandates.

However, while we would never say that "literacy has a deeper meaning than simply the ability to read and write, since that has no clear meaning, we *do* say that literacy is not the same thing as the ability to read and write. Literacy is the ability, *in language*, to make sense and to detect nonsense. It is the ability to devise understanding and reach judgment in a series of connected, coherent statements.

Consider the benighted blatherers whose writings we regularly display, the educationists and apparatchiks who bleat about transhumanistic learning experiences that *may* be identified as operational facets of noncognitive, mode enhancement. They can *all* read and write. They can *spell*—even hard words like *epistemological* and *heteronomous*. Many of them can often punctuate. In fact, they embody perfectly that highest degree of excellence that our silly education mongers can imagine—basic minimum competence. But they are *not* literate.

And what about poor Richardson, would be member of the literacy committee? Shall we hope that our children will grow up to be as literate as he, so that they too can become college professors and approach *their* words from a positive heteronomous perspective? Can we hope that their epistemological purviews will be so inclusive "that, no one will notice, the ludicrous absurdity of those commas they occasionally drop between subject and verb?"

Carpet-bagging educationists were among the first of the tribes to sneak across the border and dump their trash in Academe, where it soon turned septic and seeped into the ground water as toxic waste. The educationists, who had no native tongue but *were* able to imitate certain sounds and sometimes even whole words, quickly developed a language-like lingo of their own in which to write their own credentials and legitimate the archetype and progenitor of all the spurious "studies," nothing less than "education" itself—Studies Studies, as it were.

Since then, drawn no doubt by the fetid emanations from the poisoned springs, and delighted to discover that Educante is so *easy* to learn, and that they *pay* you to recite it, new tribes beyond counting have flocked to the easy pickings. You can see them from here, squatting in their encampments out on the fringe of the campus, practicing the pronunciation of *parameter*.

Sometimes, from the way they look at you, it's almost as though they understood what you were saying. But, although the WORD is ever the same, the presuppositions of meanings from different backgrounds won't obtain.

In the context of the urban university, literacy has a much deeper meaning than simply the ability to read and write. Constantly expanding delivery systems of the word, require ever expanding skills of analysis and interpretation of the word. The word then as symbol must be approached from a positive heteronymous perspective. That is, although the WORD is the same, from different cultural, racial and economic backgrounds the presuppositions of meanings may not obtain literacy, then must be as inclusive in its epistemological purview as the term urban university demands.

New Highs, New Lows Big Bucks for Bantam Books in Booboisie

Slow readers could lead to fast sales, book publishers believe. Bantam Books Inc. launches a series of "high/low" paperbacks, designed to hold high interest for teen-agers with low reading skills. Scholastic Inc. expanded to more than 100 titles a series of paperbacks for teen-agers reading as low as the second-grade level.

The books usually offer simple plots, short sentences and many pictures. Most treat subjects that captivate teen-agers such as disco music and love. Bantam's titles include "Disco Kid" ("All set to boogie and no place to go") and "Rock Fever" ("The rest of his life was a mess, but Doug was alive when he sang").

Rising attention to the low reading levels of many students helps prompt schools and libraries to buy these books, says Thetis

Powers Reeves, publisher of High/Low Report, a newsletter.

[from The Wall Street Journal, March 20, 1981]

SURE, there's one born every minute, but what good is that? That's a lousy 525,600 new suckers a year. Well, shoot, when you consider our infant mortality rates and the obvious fact that a hefty percentage of those kids might escape suckerdome entirely just purely out of dumb luck by being born into the wrong kind of family, the day may come when there won't *be* enough suckers in America to buy all those lottery tickets or support the manufacturers of pornographic T-shirts and keep *CHIPS* and *The Dukes of Hazzard* at the top of the charts.

So let's hear it for those swell folks at Bantam Books, and a big hand, please, for those schools and libraries, bravely bearing through the gloom of back-to-basicsism the glowing lamp of minimum competence and maximum bottom line.

And kudos and laurels, too, for Charles F. Reasoner, professor of elementary education at New York University. Reasoner (what a *splendid* name) is editor and the leading intellectual light at Laurel Leaf Library, Dell's arsenal of high/low books with lots of pictures. As long as America has educators like Reasoner meeting the needs of corporate enterprise, there will never be any shortage of housewives who need to be told that their kitchen cleaner will *also* clean the bathroom, and no one will ever even wonder *why* shiny flakes mean true coffee taste or if deodorants are really necessary, and *Gilligan's Island* will go on forever.

Here's an example of Reasoner's astute editorial judgment, always on guard against anti-social incitements to critical thinking, the nasty skepticism that can actually be caused by so simple a thing as a sequence of complete sentences. It's a passage from *Brainstorm* ("Never give a sucker an even break"), by Walter Dean Myers, also the author of *It Ain't All for Nothing*:

They had not expected the summer storm. In 2076 the science of weather was very exact. The storm had not lasted very long. There was some thunder. A few flashes of lightning. And it was over. Then the strange reports started. People found lying in the streets. They weren't dead.

But they had no idea who they were. In the worst cases they couldn't speak.

They were taken to hospitals. They were tested carefully. All proved to be healthy. Healthy but helpless. When they were hungry, they would cry. When they had been fed they would lie still. Sometimes they would make soft noises. Finally they were sent to Brain Study unit for more tests. Then came the discovery. Their minds were gone!

There. That should keep the little buggers healthy but helpless. Give'm a few pages of that every day, and in no time at all they'll be lying still, making soft noises.

✉ Shirley Hufstедler, erstwhile Secretary of Education, has written to us, first to ask where we found the passage attributed to her, and then to assert innocence, which she promises to prove once she can unpack her papers. Frankly, we think she *is* innocent, and her proof may provide us an interesting story. We'll keep you informed.

Summertime...

...brings all sorts of good things, but it does *not* bring *The Underground Grammarian*, which will not come out again until next September. Nevertheless, the summer relief crew will be right here, hard at work, answering the mail and filing all the examples of horrid English that you will, of course, keep sending in.

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*Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune,
whose words do jarre; nor his reason in frame,
whose sentence is preposterous.*



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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The Principals of the Thing

ENTIRELY by coincidence, in this issue we bring you yet another piece about written English and the work of the mind as practiced by a high school principal. That title, of course, once named the *principal teacher* in a schoolhouse, but now it usually suggests some pushy apparatchik who, if he ever *did* teach, found teaching an insufficiently self-esteem enhancing career option for one of his talents. Hard, too.

Among schoolteachers, the folklore is that principals start out as gym or shop teachers. Untroubled by homework to grade or assignments to read, they have lots of time to sit around in the evening rap-sessions for which the local teacher academy grants graduate credits. They become counsellors, or coordinators' or facilitators, even perceivers. Then, untroubled by homework, and so forth, they soon become principals, thus passing easily from the lowly rank of "teacher" to the lofty one of "educator." So it is that the principal of any given school is not likely to present an example of disciplined scholarship and intellectual prowess.

Indeed, from the examples we've seen, we are ready to guess that principals can rarely present an example of basic minimum competence. They write either the vapid jargon of educationism, or the awkward distortions of baffled, but pretentious, ignorance, or some pathetic, malformed hybrid offspring of the two.

Most educationists, however, will claim that principals are chosen not for the quality of their English, but for their administrative abilities. It is not a principal's job to be a scholar or an intellectual, but rather to know the standards, to make judgments, to keep order. Even if we were willing to agree that such things were paramount in the work of a principal, which we're not, we would have to assert that it takes either superstition or simple stupidity to suppose that

those who couldn't even learn to write clear, conventional English will suddenly, as we dole out their Ed. D.'s, grow in knowledge and wisdom.

Educationists are hot for "self-expression." Good. Let them eat it. A piece of writing is the expression of *a self*, a portrait of the mind of its maker. What incoherencies, inconsistencies, incongruities, and incivilities we find in the one, we must suppose in the other. Writing is public evidence of private acts, the concrete record of knowledge ordered, or not, thought pursued, or not, and understanding discovered, or not.

That is why we *teach* writing, if we do: not to make a nation of writers, but so that students can consistently do and assess the work of thought, and know and understand themselves (and maybe some others) at the same time; so that they can know, and even know that they know how to know, the difference between thoughtfulness and nonsense, between order and confusion. We wonder how many public school principals would *want* teachers to teach those abilities. It's not good for the dignity of your exalted rank, to say nothing of your self-esteem, when even the students gather to cackle at your memos.

We are going to make a special effort, this academic year, to bother those bozos. All we need is the evidence. And many of our readers are teachers—with principles.

☞ We regret to say that most readers of this issue will find, at the end of the first line of the first column on page 3, a word that looks like "or." Earlier in the press run it looked like "of."

The Other Ignorant Army

"When the community appeals to higher standards of academics, that always kills spiritual values. All those schools like Yale and Harvard started out as Christian schools, but then they got concerned with quality."

THOSE are the words of the Reverend Mr. Rex Heath, quoted in *Time*, June 8, 1981. Heath directs the life of the mind and the search for knowledge at the Mother Lode Christian School in Tuolumne

City, California. He speaks as one who might stoutly profess obedience to at least two thirds of the first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind. Sixty-six and two thirds percent falls short of the perfection commanded elsewhere, of course, but maybe it's a passing grade at the Mother Lode Christian School.

Heath is a member of what calls itself the Moral Majority, a populous club of dedicated television watchers who have so industriously practiced tube-boobery that they can claim to detect important differences between the randy imbecility of "Three's Company" and the mawkish imbecility of "Little House on the Prairie." Other members of the Moral Majority (or, in memory of that president who brought into Washington the doctrine of salvation by faith, not works, the Peanut MM) are the Secretary of the Interior, who expects that the Second Coming will take our minds off the high price of fuel, and a certain Robert Billings, a functionary of the Department of Education. In his manual for promoters of new schools safe from concerns with quality, Billings, whose perceptiveness surpasseth that of the guidance counsellor who can detect a two percent drop in self-esteem way down at the end of the hall, ordains that "No unsaved individual should be on the staff!"

The "Christian" school movement (it may comfort some *other* Christians to see those quotation marks) is a natural, but often bizarrely mistaken, reaction to the dismal failures of the government school systems. (Can that Heath, for example, actually *believe* that the public schools incite godlessness by "appealing to *higher standards* of academics," whatever that weird locution might mean?) To some it obviously seems that such a movement is at least a return to the "basics," including deportment and posture. And it is true that many shoestring academies teach elementary reading, writing, and ciphering far better than the public schools.

If they do, however, it is not because they are Christian, but because they are shoestring. Most of the teachers are amateurs, utterly uncertified. They just don't *know*, poor dears, that before you can presume to teach, you need some courses in how to relate, both to self and others, as individuals and groups; that you must be able to perceive and diagnose each and every child's

unique combination of cognitive style and learning disability; and that you must be proficient in utilization of audio-visual devices and implementation of remediation via packets of nifty learning materials. Serenely ignorant of all that, and then some, the earnest ladies of the kitchen table curriculum just go right ahead and *teach*. Some of them can probably even *make* lemonade, right in their own homes, from actual lemons!

So the Christian schools—or *any* small schools that can exclude from their faculties the graduates, saved or not, of schools of education—can provide in a relatively short time that “basic minimum competence” that, in the public schools, is still the misty and ultramundane El Dorado of our highest aspirations. But what then? Is there a life after basic minimum competence? What will be the *point* of reading and writing, themselves only the barest beginnings of thoughtful literacy, at the Mother Lode Christian School, where the vigilant Heath, supported, you’d better believe, by *exactly* like-minded colleagues, sleepeth not, neither slumbereth, keeping guard against diabolical appeals to higher standards of academics?

No school governed by ideology—any ideology whatsoever—can afford to *educate* its students; it can only indoctrinate and train them. In this respect there is no important difference between the “Christian” schools and the government schools, although the ruling ideology of the former is more completely codified and publicly proclaimed. In the same respect, for that matter, those schools are not unlike those of the Soviet Union, which also claim to have on their side THE TRUTH, although the latter do seem to be the more devoted to excellence *in training*.

Having made such assertions, we are led to wonder what hope there might be of discussing them with Rex Heath, and how such a discussion might go. Would *both* parties be willing simply to admit that such a discussion might at least be instructive, and might, at best, provide new understanding on both sides? Would *both* be willing to do the homework, read and consider the thoughts of many different minds, seek and organize what can be known, separating it scrupulously from what can only be inferred or postulated? Could they so much as agree that knowing, inferring, and postulating, as well as the

expectably parlous believing, are in fact *different* from each other? Would *both* be willing and able to discern and reject even their own non sequiturs and false analogies? Could there even be agreement that such a discussion *should* be governed by logical principles?

Lacking such conditions, and the skills and propensities that impose them, there can be no thoughtfulness, no weighing of conflicting assertions, no search for understanding, no inquiry into meaning or worth, and thus, no judgment. There remain only such things as beliefs, whims, fancies, notions, and wishes. And bunk.

Those skills and propensities that impose the conditions in which we can *think* are the substance of education, fortuitous side-effects, sometimes, of training, and absolute impediments to indoctrination. The skills are the skills of language, the power of clear and accurate statement, and of coherent, rational discourse. The propensities are the habits of a mind accustomed both to practicing the work of thought in language and to pondering it as done by others. Among those propensities are the certainty that rational discourse will lead to new understandings, since the possibilities of language have no limits, and, for the same reason, the doubt that any understanding can ever be final and perfect. “For us,” said Eliot, himself a Christian resolute to the point of relentlessness, and whose works do not appear very often on lists of approved reading in the “Christian” academies, “there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.”

And an “educator’s” business—if that word, now routinely usurped by the likes of professors of audio-visual methodology and assistant superintendents for supplies and Rex Heath, can ever be rescued from facetiousness—an educator’s business is trying, and leading students into all the ways of trying: testing, refining, probing, weighing, inquiring, essaying, doubting, wondering, searching. A *trainer* is properly excused from such concerns; an *indoctrinator* must anathematize them. Thus it is that the “Christian” academies, out of the very principles on which they are founded, can never *educate* anyone.

In that, of course, they are not worse than the government schools. They are only just as bad. What is anathematized in the “Christian” academies is, in the government schools, derided

as “uncreative” by the practitioners of self-esteem enhancement; scorned as “authoritarian” by the rap-sessionists of values clarification; condemned as “elitist” by the basic minimum competence drudges as well as the smug egalitarians who rejoice that a few of the impoverished children who, if lucky, will spend their lives in dull and brutish labor, can nevertheless balance their checkbooks; and, by most others, whose training in the teacher academy never suggested the possibility of thinking about thinking, simply neglected.

It’s no wonder that the Peanut MM thought it good to rise up and smite those troublers of the land hip and thigh. But it’s no comfort either. We are not watching a struggle between the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, but the benighted clash of ignorant armies, in which we, and millions of children who might have grown up to be thoughtful and productive citizens, are caught in the open between the lines.

However, here at *The Underground Grammarian*, we’re not going to let ourselves be slain as noncombatants. For all that we’ve been saying for so long about the government schools, and without the slightest intention of refraining in the future, we’re going to take their side. And we urge our readers (or at least those who are not at this very moment writing in to cancel their subscriptions) to do likewise and not to remain silent.

For us, the decision was not difficult. We asked some questions: Of the parties to this conflict, which is the more likely to forbid its students certain books and to make it harder for *anyone* to find them? Which would, if it could, close down pestiferous publications like this one? Which one, when sufficiently pressed, and we do intend to press, will eventually accuse its enemies of warring against God?

Furthermore, the government schools have one supreme, if unintended, virtue. They are such chaotic and Byzantine bureaucracies, ruled over by herds of inept and dull-witted functionaries, that some good teachers, genuinely devoted to the life of the mind, can often go undetected for years. For some few students, those dissidents make all the difference. But in the “Christian” academies, much smaller and tightly controlled, the dissidents are all too likely to be sniffed out quickly by the Unserved Individuals Committee.

The issue is not curriculum or methodology or family life or even the private enterprise system. The issue is freedom. The mind simply cannot be free without the power of thoughtful inquiry. If the mind is not free to gather knowledge, to form understanding, to judge of worth, and then, out of the best that it can do in knowing, understanding, and judging, *will* what it deems good, then there can be no such thing as morality, a system intended to judge the worth of individual *choices*. The “Moral Majority” must be, in fact, some *other* kind of organization. Its avowed dedication to ignorance and thoughtlessness—Heath is not alone—belies its very name.

Lacking the informed, willing assent of thoughtfulness, obedience to even some presumably unexceptionable precept is just another passion, tepid though it well may be. And who can be led by unexamined precept into one passion can as easily be led into another. And still another. He can be neither free nor moral, only impassioned. Should there be enough of his kind noisily applauding themselves for the “sincerity” and “correctness” of their shared passions, they will show us what Yeats meant by the “worst,” who are “filled with passionate intensity.”

And what of the “best”? Are they out there? Is there a Mental Minority? Was Yeats right about them too? Have they “lost all conviction”?

It must be so. There is mostly silence, a silence that seemed at first disdainful, then tactful, then wary, and that by now has turned simple cowardice. Those educationists, who have so long trumpeted their love of excellence, have fled as usual into the mighty fortress of Low Profile Poltroonery. Maybe this storm, too, will blow over, or maybe a savior will come, bearing some really neat innovations.

Prudent publishers, busily gathering into barns and ever mindful of textbook adoptions in Texas, are eager to be oh so open-minded. Albert Shanker, hoping the ninety and nine can fend for themselves while he takes care not to lose a dues-paying one, tuts a tiny tut from time to time.

“Know ye not,” wrote Saint Paul, who may have momentarily forgotten about the laborers who came late to the vineyard, “that they which run a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?” History, as H. G. Wells said, and that was way back *then*, “becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.” And by

“education” he didn’t mean basic minimum competence or an indoctrination impervious to thoughtfulness. However, by “catastrophe” he meant catastrophe.

Just now, there seems to be only one runner on the track, and, unhampered by concerns with quality, undeterred by appeals to higher standards of academics, he isn’t even looking over his shoulder.

The Great Iacono Flap

It has come to my attention that the announcement that I conveyed via the intercom the day following the Chester High-St. James basketball game which I disapproved of the loss. It was inferred, unfortunately, that I placed the reproach upon my coach. I wish to rectify that immediately.

CAN our schools ever hope to rise above their own principals? It seems unlikely. Consider for instance a certain A. N. Iacono, whose words, conveyed in this case via bulletin on December 12, 1980, you have just read. Iacono—Oops! We should have said *Doctor* Iacono. University of Pennsylvania, ya know. Fine old ivy league school. Real high standards. OK. *Doctor* Iacono is the principal of Chester High School in Chester, Pennsylvania. Here’s the rest of his bulletin:

First, I had apologized to Mr. Wilson in the presence of Mr. White, Athletic Director, after the announcement for my error for which I maintain my innocence. Second, the following day, I made another announcement personally to Mr. Wilson explaining and apologizing for my actions. Third, I apologized to Mr. Wilson in the presence of Mr. Zyckowicz because of a grievance which was lodged. Fourth, I am apologizing to the faculty via my own volition and by no method a prompting from anyone because of those receivers of my announcement that perceived it as unprofessional.

I adhere to the dictum that professionalism must be maintained at all costs, and by no means would I thrust any aspect of our profession which may be construed as negative.

For the latter I abjectly apologize. However, I will continue to maintain my stance that I

appreciate winning, and I want to be part of a winning team. This is by no means a reflection upon any individual but rather an indictment of my personality.

Yes. Well, we do agree, although we would prefer not to stick to a dictum, that “professionalism” should be maintained,” whatever that means. However, we find it hard to figure out exactly what profession it is of which *Doctor* Iacono will so prudently thrust by no means (or method) any aspect which may be construed as negative. *Doctor* Iacono signs himself “Principal,” but the quality of his prose, which he apparently does *not* disapprove of the loss, suggests something less than the academic and intellectual excellence that we might have expected of a learned *Doctor* and leader of youth in the ways of the life of the mind. In fact, if the basketball players of Chester High School can dribble and pass with twice the grace and precision, and love of excellence, with which their principal plays his little game, it’s going to be one hell of a long season.

In spite of his lofty *Far be it from me*, and precisely because of incompetence in language, the medium of thought, the hapless *Doctor* Iacono does manage to thrust some aspects of his “profession” that must be “construed as negative.” His solecisms and gaucheries are outward and visible signs of certain inward and ideological aspects,* the very aspects that have foisted upon us schools whose chief academic officers† just can make sense—neither via intercom nor volition.

Buried in that ludicrous prose is the far from ludicrous belief that incompetence, which *counts* in sport, *doesn’t* count in the mind. *Doctor* Iacono, an educationist who knows that self-

* Educationistic readers will find all this easier to understand by reminding themselves that an aspect might just as well be a facet. Or a factor. Or a component. Or whatever.

† But it may be that principals *don’t* think of themselves as “academic” officers. A recent *Bulletin* of the Council for Basic Education quoted some school superintendent who apparently could see no irony at all in proclaiming himself “a leader in education except for curriculum.” Those who automatically equate the money that is spent on the schools with “funding for education” would do well to consider the implications of those words.

esteem is far more important than mere accuracy and precision, blithely refers to his evidently garbled and thoughtless announcement as “my error for which I maintain my innocence”!

Farther down, there is even a hint that the “error” may have been no such thing at all. *Doctor Iacono* does make it clear that if there had been any “prompting” it would have been “because of those receivers of [his] announcement that perceived it as unprofessional.” So there.

And there, in miniature, is the guiding ideology of educationism, an anti-intellectual, no-fault relativism, where it just wouldn’t be *fair* if mere errors had consequences, and where the meaning of facts and events is not the object of thoughtful inquiry but rather a *sentiment* that some receivers may perceive. It is only through consistent application of such principles that we get such principals, who can neither dribble nor pass on paper, but who will thrust no negative aspects and will bravely maintain their stances that they appreciate winning.

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Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune, whose words do jarre; nor his reason in frame, whose sentence is preposterous.



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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Hopefully, We Could Care Less

The shame of speaking unskilfully were small if the tongue onely thereby were disgrac’d: But as the Image of a King in his

Seale ill-represented is not so much a blemish to the waxe, or the Signet that seal’d it, as to the Prince it representeth, so disordered speech is not so much injury to the lips that give it forth, as to the disproportion and incoherence of things in themselves, so negligently expressed. Neither can his Mind be thought to be in Tune, whose words do jarre; nor his reason in frame, whose sentence is preposterous; nor his Elocution clear and perfect, whose utterance breaks itself into fragments and uncertainties. Negligent speech doth not onely discredit the person of the Speaker, but it discrediteth the opinion of his reason and judgement; it discrediteth the force and uniformity of the matter and substance. If it be so then in words, which fly and ‘scape censure, and where one good Phrase asks pardon for many incongruities and faults, how then shall he be thought wise whose penning is thin and shallow? How shall you look for wit from him whose leasure and head, assisted with the examination of his eyes, yeeld you no life or sharpnesse in his writing?

READERS often ask about the source of the elegant and old-fashioned sentence that appears somewhere in almost every issue. It is from *Timber, or, Discoveries made upon Men and Matters*, by Ben Jonson (1573?-1637). It was to Jonson, habitué of the Sun, the Dog, and the Triple Tun, that Robert Herrick, another such, addressed his not entirely frivolous prayer: “Candles I’ll give to thee, and a new altar; and thou, Saint Ben, shalt be writ in my psalter.” The words of the wise are as goads, and we might all grow more thoughtful through declaiming, in solemn ritual, before we put a word on paper: “Neither can his mind be thought to be in Tune...”

And if you’d like to be more fussy than we, you can add the part that we leave out: “nor his Elocution clear and perfect, whose utterance breaks itself into fragments and uncertainties.”

Many of our readers *are* more fussy than we. They often write, asking why we don’t “do something” about people whose utterance breaks itself all too regularly and predictably into fragments and uncertainties. Culprits most

frequently indicted are teenagers, television reporters—especially sports reporters, athletes answering silly questions put *by* television sports reporters, government functionaries, and Howard Cosell. There seems to be a pattern there. However, while the abolition of television, athletics, and teenagers would, of course, bring many happy returns, none of them would be linguistic. And we would, in any case, still be left with the government functionaries. And everyone else.

Our fussy readers are mostly too astute to complain about the obvious nonsense of social amenity, although some of them are saddened when instructed to have a nice day, or to hear, from some putative grown-up on the telephone, “Bye-bye.” They begin to itch when they hear things like “irregardless,” “between you and I,” and the much castigated but apparently invincible “hopefully.” They are exasperated, at the least, to hear that style of discourse in which not only young people but also many entertainers (including athletes), artsy-craftsy folk, populistical professors, and even some vegetarians, seem forever trapped, the wandering recitation copiously punctuated with “see?” “like,” and “y’know.”

Hopefully, we could care less about such things, and *hopefully* is exactly *how* we would care less if we *did* care less. We care a little, just enough to preclude hope, but not enough to make us want to “do something.”

There is a big difference between talk and writing. They are not merely optional ways of expressing the same substance. Talking is normally a social act; writing, unless it is simply copying the given, must be private. It needs the “leisure and head, assisted with the examination of the eyes,” time, solitude, a visible record, and attention.

How we speak, in the press of the moment, is usually the result of habit. How we write, in solitary thoughtfulness, *can* be the result of choice. Our educationists are socializers with political intentions. They fear the choices of the solitary mind, which is why they prefer “teaching materials” to *a* book by *a* person, and they imagine understanding in the collective, which is why they “teach” by rap session and send out questionnaires. If you nag about speech habits that annoy you, those people will gladly offer

“literacy” through *other* habits inculcated by *more* courses in speech and interpersonal communication.

The substitution of genteel habits for vulgar habits is not education. It’s just a *different* indoctrination. So try to put Howard Cosell like out of your mind, you know?

A Little R n’ R

The chief vices of education have arisen from the one great fallacy of supposing that noble language is a communicable trick of grammar and accent, instead of simply the careful expression of right thought. All the virtues of language are, in their roots, moral; it becomes accurate if the speaker desires to be true; clear, if he speaks with sympathy and a desire to be intelligible; powerful, if he has earnestness; pleasant, if he has a sense of rhythm and order.

John Ruskin

JOHN RUSKIN, now dead and irrelevant, and an intransigent elitist in any case, is not much consulted by practitioners of modern educationism, who consult only each other. That way they run no risk of *ever* figuring out what to do and why, and coming thus to the end of the lucrative and frolicsome labors of innovation.

A mind like Ruskin’s offers no enhancement of self-esteem to our self-appointed bestowers, of “humanistic” values. If Ruskin understands correctly that the virtues of language are “in their roots, moral,” it follows that its vices are not merely mechanical failures in the execution of some “trick of grammar,” but evil deeds. If the desire to be true makes language accurate, what desire makes it inaccurate? If sympathy and thoughtfulness engender clarity, what engenders vague mealy-mouthing and inflated jargon? If power comes from earnestness, whence the typically conditional and periphrastic evasions of educationistic prose, in which “findings would seem to center around,” and a rose “may be perceived as being” a rose? And what does he lack, whose writing is distorted and ugly?

Let’s consider, keeping Ruskin in mind, a brief passage from one of those innumerable task-force reports that serve to justify, here at Glassboro, the salaries of swarms of administrators and

professors of imaginary subjects. The one who wrote these words, like the creep who pants into the telephone, prefers not to give his name:

This study supported the conclusions that practicing academic deans could benefit by possessing an expectancy of being able to control their work environment in order to successfully implement role responsibilities.

First, let's try to be fair. Even generous. We suspect that Ruskin would suspend his stern standards where the writing at issue is simply the work of an utter ignoramus. And who are we, to forbear less than Ruskin? It is often true that the language of the unschooled *is* clear, accurate, powerful, and even beautiful, for those merits do not depend on tricks of grammar. That being so, some sticklers might well require clear, accurate, powerful, pleasant language *even* from utterly uneducated administrators and professors, but we do have to be reasonable. After all, this is a state teacher college, democracy in action. It simply wouldn't be *fair* to measure by the standards of traditional schooling and education those members of our faculty and staff who have been deprived of such advantages. So, if the author of our example is *not* a villain, but only a victim who couldn't possibly have known better, we'll take it all back. All he has to do is ask.

In the meantime, though, we do have to declare that the passage lacks those virtues that Ruskin finds moral.

It is not accurate. To speak of "practicing deans" is to invite entertaining but irrelevant speculation. Are there, in fact, some *nonpracticing* deans, disconsolate and dispossessed, lurking in the dark turnings of the corridors of power? Are deans *supposed* to practice on our time? And if they should actually manage to *implement* their responsibilities, would they have fulfilled them, or established them, or devised them? All are possible in this lingo, where programmatic thrusts and non-traditional aspects are just as implementable as responsibilities.

The passage is not clear. That first phrase suggests that "conclusions" already drawn (could the writer have meant *hypotheses*?) were thereafter "supported" (could he have meant *drawn*?) by the same conclusions. Furthermore, following the word "conclusions," we find only

one candidate for conclusionship, and a weird one at that. Is it enough for a dean (practicing) merely to possess an *expectancy* (expectation?) of being able? Wouldn't it be better if he were simply *able*? And what does he *do* if he is able to control the "work environment"? Turn up the thermostat? And how are a dean's "role responsibilities" to be distinguished from a dean's responsibilities?

Since this language is neither accurate nor clear, and unless the writer can adduce evidence of his ignorance and incapacity, we have to conclude that he desired *not* to be true and intelligible. Since his language, garbled, verbose, and pretentious, is neither powerful nor pleasant, we must conclude that he wrote not in earnestness but out of deceitfulness or affectation, and that he has no sense of rhythm and order. That about covers it.

But wait. Surely this poor chap is just a cipher, just another bland and mediocre functionary conscientiously doing his job and performing a piddling task, a task of little importance, in which he has no interest, and which will almost certainly have no consequences. Thousands of other decent twits, plug in modules so like each other that only their mothers can tell them apart, are doing exactly the same kind of meaningless work in exactly the same thoughtless fashion in every "educational" institution in the land. Can we, or even Ruskin, indict all those decent folk for nothing less than turpitude?

Yes.

Consider, first, those empty but perennial tasks that bring forth the kind of language we see in our sample, which regular readers will find perfectly typical of the lingo used by school people. Those tasks are not *entirely* without consequences; nor are those who perform them without a special kind of interest in them.

It is fairly safe to say of any elaborate "study" like the one that provided our example, that *not one student* will grow in knowledge or understanding because of it. But it *does* serve to justify places on the payroll for lots of people who might otherwise be driven into a calling less lofty, and more demanding, than that of "educator." Now that is a consequence dear to *somebody's* interest.

It is also dear in another sense. It is largely because of such people doing such work that it now costs more than four thousand dollars a year

to keep a child in the public schools of Boston, where—and this is the usual pattern in government schools—administrators multiply as students disappear. You could *educate* each child for a small fraction of that cost, but you would thus destroy not only a tremendous government jobs program, but a long-nurtured market for the surplus production of the graduate schools of education.

Anyone who *knowingly* takes money for performing trivial tasks in such a cause must be venal. Venality is not well served by such virtues as earnestness and the desire to be true. For those who know what they are doing, therefore, the charge of turpitude seems fair.

But, in the entire educationistic apparatus, how many of those can there be? Fifty? A hundred? What of those innumerable others, who know *not* what they do? Might they not be accounted no more than innocent dupes?

No.

Dupes they are, but guilty dupes. They acquiesce in their own dupery, profit from that acquiescence, and help to visit that dupery on others.

Dupery is accomplished through language. There is no other way. It is entirely through the language that they promulgate that our educationists have “taught” countless thousands that trick of automatic thoughtlessness without which no one—*no one*—would ever speak of possessing an expectancy of being able.

Educationists are noted for their humaneness. How they *do* love children! They reject, as authoritarian and oppressive, such ways of teaching and learning as “rote and recitation.” Those two terrible Rs can only lead to a most terrible third: Regurgitation. Regurgitation does not enhance self-esteem. It is not creative. That sounds so lofty, and humane. But he who holds it as a principle must be careful not to think about the difference between *thinking* and *knowing*, the one in which to consider what we might *mean* by “creative,” and the other out of which we can put the appropriate endings on the dative. Nor can he inquire into the worth of an analogy that equates a deliberate demonstration of knowledge with an involuntary ejection of the noxious and intolerable.

With their usual logic, the educationists deem rote learning oppressive where it serves best, and,

where it is an impediment to thoughtfulness, cherish it. How, after all, did our author come to speak of the cloudy work environment and the preposterous possession of an expectancy of being able? What led him to call deans practicing deans, and responsibilities, role responsibilities? Rote and recitation. They *all* write like that, all our pedagogical preachers of creativity and self-expression.

And where the work of thinking is done by rote and recitation, we *do* get regurgitation. How could we better describe our sample and educationistic writing in general than as an involuntary ejection of that which is noxious and intolerable?

So, to the charge of turpitude, we must even against the dupes add the charge of uncleanness. They vomit industriously where others gather to find nourishment.

Come in, Gschmrub!

We’re gravely worried about our dauntless flagship, the reconverted Bulgarian trawler *Gschmrub*, now unreported for a year. We last heard from the flagship in October of 1980, when we reported, in “Gschmrubbers Appraised to be Good,” that a really swell committee of our nifty board of trustees had, in fact, appraised the Gschmrubbers to be good.

What a relief that was. We *had* fretted a bit. And what a delight it was to find this great idea in the committee’s report:

The EPIC program is now developed to the point that systematic descriptions of it, papers, small research studies, evaluations and the like should be routinely appearing . . .

We just can’t begin to tell how keen we were to bring our readers news of all those neat descriptions, papers, studies, evaluations, and even the like. But so far—nothing. Maybe next year. Or maybe not.

Teratological Corner

ALL we know about the person who wrote what follows, in a memorandum “To All Personnel” at Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts, is that he, maybe she, is known as “Dean Moore.” Dean of what, who can guess? We imagined at

first that the prose was caused by the bomb scare, but not so. The memorandum was penned after three days of thoughtful reflection:

Our bomb scare of Monday, April 27, 1981 had a couple of incidents that occurred [*sic*] that may or may not have been related, but causes us to be concerned about other happenings of the same day that have happened in the past and could happen in the future unless we all take steps to eliminate such possible happenings.

What a pity it that we don't have space for the rest of the memo, from which you might discover the nature of the happenings that happened to happen. You'll just have to write to Dean Moore.

We must hurry on to bring you a few words from one Dwight A. Dundore, Chairman of the Long Range Planning Committee at Montgomery County Community College in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania:

As has been determined by the Long Range Planning Ad Hoc Committee, we urgently need an all-encompassing action plan for operation which accurately describes the present situation at the College and expresses its judgement [*sic*] for the future. It should be a dynamic and evolving document and plan which changes as educational, social and economic factors change.

A plan! An *action* plan! An action plan for *operation*! A document dynamic, ever evolving, ever changing! An eternal task! An eternal Long Range Planning Committee! Thus mighty empires rise! You'd better believe it.

The people who operate our schools are always admitting, inadvertently, that they don't know what to do, or how, or why, and always promising to puzzle out, at our expense, how to puzzle such things out, unless something changes, in which case they're quite ready to start over.

*Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune,
whose words do jarre;
nor his reason in frame,
whose sentence is preposterous.*



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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Third from the Left

As bad actors cannot sing alone, but only in a large company, so some men cannot walk alone. Man, if you are worth anything, you must walk alone, and talk to yourself, and not hide in the chorus. Learn to bear mockery, look about you, examine yourself, that you may get to know who you are.

EPICETUS, who is said to have said those words, was not in the school business. He was in the philosophy business, a daunting enterprise, for which we are less likely to feel love than respect. And even our respect is ordinarily tinged with tolerance, for we are pretty certain that philosophy can neither butter bread nor cut ice.

David R. Byrne *is* in the school business, a notably less daunting enterprise that butters the bread of millions and, surely in Byrne's case, also cuts some ice. For Byrne is a dean, *the* dean, in fact, of the entire College of Education at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. We have read some of his words in *Page One*, NMSU's newsletter. They made us think of Epictetus.

In September, Byrne handed out some awards to four faculty members whom he distinguished as "exemplars of those in the academic life within a professional school." What a puzzling reservation. Does "academic" have, in a "Professional" school, some special meaning? Can we expect, next year, that the Principle of Equal Opportunity will bring forth a new round of awards for worthy exemplars of some *other* than academic life within that *professional* school? There are, to be sure, many such to be found in any teacher academy, but we're a little surprised to hear one of their deans admit it. Well, he may have imagined that he was saying something else.

And we cannot begin to guess *what* he imagines, when he tells us: "Over the years, much excellence among faculty has gone unrecognized."

It's a weird universe, indeed, where *much* excellence, presumably a portion of excellence itself, is *among* the faculty, as the fox is among the hens. Where has the *rest* of excellence been skulking over the years? It's no wonder that mere much excellence could not manage to go *recognized*.

Having hinted at a supposed reality more difficult to grasp than the curvature of space, Byrne concludes on a different level with the arresting assertion that "the quality of the faculty does impact the student product." Don't laugh. What seems to the rest of us a firm grasp on the obvious is, to educationists, an amazing "finding" that their "studies have [finally] shown," and that may even justify some lucrative, bold, innovative thrust.

But we do not bring you the words of Byrne only to suggest that little excellence goes unrecognized among them, or something like whatever that might mean. His language, in fact, is neither sillier nor more repellent than the language of thousands of others of his kind. Almost any dean of any teacher academy could have recited—and probably *has* recited—the same lines. And so could any curriculum facilitator, principal, superintendent, or professor of education. The mighty, sprawling factory of American educationism, where there is perpetual preachment of "the worth of the individual," and no end of prating about *self*, self-perceiving, and self-esteeming, is owned and operated by one massive chorus that has learned all its lines, a collective company of those not skillful or talented enough to sing alone.

It will surely have occurred to you that if Byrne had been able to speak *for himself*, to speak his mind rather than recite as he has been recited unto, he could have avoided both pomposity and absurdity (and might have stated at the same time at least *one* probable fact) with: "Many faculty members have done excellent work, but I haven't praised them for it." Leave aside our suspicion that a dean who approves of impacting the student product is likely to be a questionable judge of excellence. Forget, if you can, that the teachers' union at NMSU is surely loud in its protestations that *all* the teachers do excellent work *all the time*. Consider only the fact that the sentence we propose, or any other reasonable version of it, calls for *no great skill* in the art of composition. It

is *easy* to construct. Any fool, even a basically, minimally competent fool, could do it. It's *natural*. Any ordinary human person, speaking to other human persons, *would* do it. And it is *ethical*, for it expresses respect without soliciting approval, authority without implying power, and responsibility without begging exculpation. So why didn't Byrne do it?

We can answer that question in two ways, although the first is academic, or perhaps "academic within the professional school." *If* Byrne's words were the result of deliberate calculation, then he *intended* to solicit approval, to imply his power, and to disclaim responsibility. However, while he does achieve those effects, he almost certainly did not intend them. We can not reasonably assume that much attentive thoughtfulness in one who can permit himself to proclaim that the quality of the faculty does impact the student product.

The second answer, therefore, is the better: Byrne did the only thing he *could* do, or knew *how* to do. He recited the lines appointed to be recited in those circumstances. Ills recitation has the "virtue" of distinguishing him in no way or degree whatsoever from any *other* member of the chorus. It is thus, in a curiously perverse way, *itself* an "exemplar" of "excellence"—"within the professional school," of course.

If you can learn the lines and when to recite them—any teacher academy will show you how—and if you can "internalize the learning" so thoroughly that you never forget or depart from the text, you will have a potent incantation against the demon of elitism, who is always tempting you to sing alone, a sure defense against the assaults of self-knowledge, which has never in the whole history of humanity been known to enhance *anybody's* self-esteem, and a good job in the school business. Even deanhood, maybe. The company takes care of its own.

Where Epictetus tells us to walk alone if we are to be worth anything, the company of educationism tells us that, of *course*, we're worth something. Have we not been invited to sing in the chorus, just like everyone else? Where he tells us to talk to ourselves, a work of value only to those who know when talk makes sense and when it doesn't, the educationists promise that basic minimum competence will positively impact the student product, and urge us to join in public

recitations of egalitarian slogans about quality education and enhanced awareness of interpersonal perceptions. Where Epictetus tells us to examine ourselves that we may know who we are, the educationists tell us to esteem ourselves and feel good.

Epictetus did not have a good job. The only tenure he ever had was the melancholy tenure of slavery, although in his case the slavery was involuntary. It cheers us to remember him, and we hope it will cheer you too. Let's be grateful that those who hide in the chorus recite an inhuman language concocted itself of just such modules and components as those it celebrates. Mere time will blow them away like smoke. No one will remember them. No one will turn for counsel or consolation the pages of their pre-planning needs assessment task force findings, of their studies based on perceptions centered around aspects of enhancements, of their Ed. D. screeds on the clarification of humanistic values via the adoption of nonsexist terminology in badminton rule-books. Beside the road where they now strut in smug solidarity, they will let fall, among their litterings, not one bauble bright enough with goodness, truth, or beauty to catch the eye of the idlest stroller to come. And when deans of teacher academies and professors of methods and materials have piloted the last parameters and trouble the land no more, when educationism is remembered, if at all, as one of the other fads that swept over the country, along with est and the pet rock, in an age of a general and growing loss of faith in phrenology and the power of positive thinking, when only the most specialized historians of popular culture will know the difference between a packet of learning materials and an orgone box, in those days, Epictetus will still be around, walking alone, talking to himself just loud enough for those who would be worth anything.

Tongues of Ice

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled . . .

JOACHIM of Floris turns out to have been right after all, except for what is probably nothing more

than a trivial error in orthography. The Age of the Father gave way to the Age of the Son, which has by now succumbed entirely before the prancing parameters of the Age of the Wholly Gauche. And that creepy sound you hear, that whooping whoosh as of a rushing mighty windbag, signals the escaping gases of the new dispensation. Where once a few spoke a language that everyone could understand, whole multitudes now recite a lingo that no one can understand.

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men is made up of the abbots and provincials of various Roman Catholic religious orders. On February 10, 1981, a day that they might have spent in prayer, the members of its national board met in Milwaukee for an "evaluation of CMSM structures based on the self-studies." Sounds familiar? And that's not all. A certain Sr. Mary Littell—how did *she* get into the act?—was "engaged as facilitator for the day." Here's how she did it, as reported to the assembled worthies in August. (Yes, even there we have a mole):

To facilitate the process, Sr. Mary utilized the Hoover Grid which begins with the recognition of purpose and values, leading to goals, objectives and finally to implementation. The first and most important step is at the myth level where the renewal of ideals, hopes, dreams and traditions takes place. It is the level of identity and purpose for being.

The advantage of this process is that it puts all the elements of an organization not into a flow chart which is static but into the flow of the organization which is constantly changing and dynamic. In the course of the process the board defined the following elements for evaluation:

The tasks of the board membership and the religious communities through them (the major superiors) is one of (1) animating (through clear identification); (2) facilitating (through acting out the goals and objectives); and (3) impacting (through actions on various levels of CMSM).

So now abideth animating, facilitating, and impacting, these three; but the greatest of these is impacting.

You will probably want to practice these virtues. No problem. To animate, just come up with identifications. Be sure they're *clear*, of course. (See above for clues on clarity.) In no time at all, you'll be animating all over to beat the band

and ready to facilitate through acting out goals and objectives. Cinchy. And then—on to impacting! Just remember the one, simple secret of impacting. *Action!* Action on *levels*. *Various* levels.

And if you run into any trouble, don't come to us. Go and consult the nearest Hoover Grid. We don't exactly know what that is, of course, but we're willing to bet the renewal of ideals, hopes, dreams, and traditions at the myth level against a wrinkled old Values Perception/Assessment Inventory/Questionnaire that you can find one at your local teacher-training academy.

We know Educanto when we see it, and this report is full of it. It bristles with "linkage," "resourcing" (with "input" from "resource persons"), "networking," "sharing," "cross-cultural communications," and even offers its own bold, innovative thrust in "ad hococracy," which is defined as "creation of task forces for proper resourcing." So where is the Inquisition, now that we need it?

Even the punctuation is typical of a writer who just can't be bothered with the *meaning* of what he writes. There is a difference between "the Hoover Grid which begins with the recognition of purpose" and "the Hoover Grid, which begins with the recognition of purpose." The first, which is what the writer has given us, implies the horrifying existence of *other* Hoover Grids beginning with *other* recognitions. The same confused inattentiveness causes "the myth level where renewal takes place," to be distinguished from the other myth levels; "a flow chart which is static"; and "the flow of the organization which is constantly changing." In *that* one we don't know whether to be confused about the *flow* or the *organization*. Or both. Or neither.

But if *we* are confused, it is because we are paying attention. This kind of language, devised to give the tone of sophisticated substance to the obvious, the empty, and the banal, is always a dreary and disorderly exercise of robot-like *inattentiveness*. The writer's *mind* has no stake in it; he just wants to get out a report that *sounds* like a report. The report is exactly one of those "vain repetitions" of the heathen; it neither provides clear knowledge nor fosters finer understanding, except, of course, in the very few who will actually pay attention. And what *they* will understand will not be what the writer would have

had in mind, if he *had* had anything in mind. Somewhere in the dark labyrinth of doctrinal elaboration, there must be a technical name for this nasty perversion of language and intellect. It's probably something like *Impactio*.

Well, we know in part, and we prophesy in part, and in part we babble, with the tongues neither of men nor of angels, reciting what we have often heard, as blind mouths speak to stopped ears, as no one speaks to no one.

Awareness Grows in Cincinnati!

WE'VE been reading this really neat sheet from Cincinnati. The public school system out there gladly subsidizes the life of the mind by setting its leading intellectuals up in a Department of Curriculum and Instruction, where they need never be troubled by the sight of an actual student. This leaves them free to think deep thoughts about new ways to share out the taxpayers' money, and to put out "The News from Planning and Development," an esoteric journal of difficult ideas suitable for great minds. Most of it, naturally, is way over our head. It's heavy stuff, all about on-going interaction and models whose components are modules. Well, shoot, *we* can't even figure out how to devise the guidelines with which to pilot our parameters, which is, according to TNFP&D for July 1981, very *de rigeur* for something or other.

Even the easy parts are hard to grasp. Here's a piece of "Writing Improvement Project Funded":

The purpose of the training will be to make teachers aware of the substantial body of existing research concerning the teaching of writing, enable them to develop and implement a range of instructional material and writing activities for improving their students' composition skills, and provide them opportunities to practice these strategies in a classroom setting.

Subtle. And *professional*. *Real* professional. An ignorant amateur—someone like *you*, no doubt—would want those teachers to *know* what has been discovered in that "substantial body of existing research." (The body of *nonexisting* research is, of course, *insubstantial*, and thus slightly less likely to be funded.) The *professionals* know better. In the first place, as any fool can see, it doesn't

matter what that “research” may or may not have come up with, since it obviously hasn’t done the least damn bit of good. That’s why these teachers don’t know it *now*. Teacher academies have better things to do.

And that brings us to the second place: This is *school* business, and school business trafficks in stuff much more important than mere knowledge. *Anybody* can find some knowledge, even without so much as a facilitator, to say nothing of a whole department of planning and development. Sometimes, even without *funding*. *And* knowledge without *awareness* is dangerously anti-humanistic; it may even lead to conclusions that suggest that it is madness to imagine that we need yet *more* “instructional material and writing activities” concocted by a workshop full of teacher academy graduates who have yet to be made *aware* of all that “research.”

After things like awareness, development and implementation, and the practice of strategies, *professionals* prize most those collective exercises which, like cold baths for monks, dampen the anarchic flames of individualism. Now that the time has come for a few of Cincinnati’s certified teacher academy graduates to try to learn how to write English, the *professionals* have provided that

teachers will participate in the composing process itself. They will write compositions and critique their writings the same way as their students would do the activities in their English classes. The rationale for this approach is that teachers must experience the writing process before they can successfully teach the process to their students. In other words, teachers of writing must write themselves.

Ah, the great Composing Process Itself! Always, like the wild dance of the quark, always going on *somewhere*. How wonderful to *participate* in it. Lucky, lucky teachers, to *experience* it. Such *awareness*. And lucky, too, that they will “do the activities” just as their students will do them, in the warm nest of participatory democracy, where any opinion (or awareness) is as good as any other, and where self-esteem runs no risk of injury in the hands of elitist authoritarianism armed with mere knowledge.

The blind, you see, *can* lead the blind, provided only that they all wander together in a dense mass. Only those few way out on the edges will fall into the ditch.

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*Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune
whose words do jarre;
nor his reason in frame
whose sentence is preposterous.*



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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Let Something You Dismay

We sent a junior member of our staff to Racine to take part in a conference about illiteracy in the schools. Conferers convened from all parts of the country, and from every branch of the service engaged in the Great War against Illiteracy. Some of them were, in fact, against illiteracy. Others were in favor of the war.

The latter, we suppose, hoped to go home armed with new inputs and feedbacks out of which to cobble some new grant proposals for new monies to pilot some new programs much, much better than the old new programs. And they probably did. Our man, however, came home suggesting that we might do better printing comic books.

On the first evening, in a brief but disquieting keynote address, Clifton Fadiman sounded what our man thought would surely prove the dominant theme of the conference. That turned out, alas, not to be so; but Mr. Fadiman’s hypothesis *has*

become, even more alas, the dominant theme of *our* conferences in the two and a half years or more that have passed since that evening.

Fadiman suggested that maybe there *is* some new thing under the sun. While education had never been a triumphant and thematic force in any time or place, he reminded those who might have been listening, neither had it ever been generally despised and rejected. Even those who *had* no education either wished for some or at least acknowledged, however grumpily, that it was probably all right for *somebody* to have some. Education has traditionally been held a Good Thing rather than a Bad Thing. And, leaving aside the occasional crackpot, no one seems to have taken the view that there shouldn't *be* any such thing as education.

But now, Fadiman had come to suspect, an enemy had appeared on the field, an enemy heavily armed, cunning and determined, an Attila of Ignorance ushering in the decline and fall of the always shaky empire of the mind.

That hypothesis, which Mr. Fadiman may not have expressed quite so luridly, seemed to us both provocative and plausible, however expressed. It seemed a possible explanation for the prevalence of some general conditions and attitudes in the schools, often supposed to have something to do with education, which are utterly unlike anything we have seen in the past. We find in students, teachers, and especially in the devisers of doctrine and makers of policy, automatic ideas and habits of mind as unprecedented as they are astonishing. They are ideas and habits so unlikely, even perverse, that they could hardly have just *come about* in the natural course of events. It does seem reasonable, therefore, to guess that they were *brought about*.

Consider ignorance. Ignorance, even in the schools, is neither unprecedented nor astonishing, and certainly no cause for the wringing of hands. It is depressing, of course, when those few students who fancy that they have heard of the Laws of Motion also presume that they have something to do with football. And the heart sinks when no one in a class of college seniors can describe Fascism, locate Viet Nam, name a *third* poet to rank with Robert Frost and Rod McKuan, list the Protestant Reformation and the Napoleonic Wars in chronological order, or even recognize certain words such as "heirarchy," "epigram," or

"clamor." But all that, however late in the day, could be fixed.

However, the fixing is unlikely when those who don't know, and don't know that they don't know, also can't for the life of them imagine why they *should* know anything unrelated to their "needs," which turn out to be conveniently small. It is as though an ordinary, natural human propensity, the desire to know and even to understand, has been eradicated in them. It is not out of *that* desire that they come seeking "education," which is just the name of a process that causes diplomas. What idea of "education" do they have, and where did they get it?

We do know the answer to the second part of that question. They got it in school. That's where they've been all these years. And please don't tell us that they got it from their parents and peers, or from that wonderfully convenient culprit, "society." Where do you think their parents and peers got it? How do you suppose "society" came to be what it is? Who taught us that awareness is better (and easier) than knowledge, and that appreciation is better (and easier) than understanding? And who equates literacy with basic minimum competence, and rapping with thoughtful inquiry? Who says that schools are better than ever and proves it by counting diplomas?

Fadiman was right. There *is* an enemy of education, an enemy bristling with methods and materials, and even activities kits, sweeping all before it with programmatic thrusts and film-strip projectors.

But Fadiman was also wrong, or at least incomprehensive. Yes, the enemy is on field, running amok, but it has in fact won no battles, for the simple reason that there haven't yet *been* any battles. Those trampled crops and smoldering ruins, those disquietingly undersized corpses rotting in the streets, are neither the results of warfare nor the victories of a disciplined army. They are pillage and rapine, random depredations committed *en passant* by a mindless and leaderless rabble made up of people who may have heard of things like epistemology and logical fallacies and even the scientific method but can't for the life of them figure out why they should have to understand such things. But there can be no battles until the *other* army appears on the field.

But don't bother to listen for the neighing of its steeds just yet. Those who could, someday, consider beginning to prepare for battle all live in secure citadels. (They never did care much for the country folk, anyway.) They will think their duty done if they can just manage to prevent under-employed professors of educationism from seizing all the required courses. All they care to know of tactics is how to fake student outcomes and behavioral objectives so that they can sneak their own proposals through curriculum committees dominated by fifth-columnists, and past elementary school administrators retreaded as academic vice-presidents. The day of battle is far off.

A Little Heavy Thinking
from Gerald W. Brown
Professor of Education
California State University

How can we justify eight years of study of a foreign language when the foreign travel of the student may (probably ten years later) be in an entirely different sphere?

How can we justify intensive study of a foreign language when our "track record" in achieving fluency is so poor?

How can we justify the study of foreign language when such a large percentage of our population never meets up with a native speaker? Not only does the student get no practice, but also he acquires no motivation.

Some attention should be given to [the] claim that the failure to study a foreign language is [a] detriment to international understanding. Although such a statement would be difficult to demonstrate one way or the other, it is difficult to see how a knowledge of French would help understanding of the international situation in China, Japan, etc.

In my own sphere the people who are multilingual do not stand out as having a significant international understanding nor as educated men. I admit that monolingualism may be bad for business, and business may very well provide opportunities for their employees to learn, in a commercial language school, the specific language they need at the specific time they need it. Three essentials of language study come

together at that point: (1) an able learner, (2) motivation to study, and (3) a ready opportunity to put the study into practice.

As for teaching every student in our schools and colleges a second language, how are we doing with English?

The Leaning Tower of Babel

HERE at Glassboro State, we have no language requirements. Nor do we have any *foreign* language requirements. This may seem strange to someone out in the world, but most of us think it a very good and proper thing. In fact, to suggest the possibility of a language requirement around here is like asking for a bacon sandwich at a bar mitzvah in Brooklyn.

There are—let's face it—certain subjects that are just not suitable for study in the schools, and one of them is foreign language. The study of any foreign language is an egregiously unhumanistic enterprise in which even *good* students can actually make an indubitable *error*! That's humiliating and undemocratic. The students who make many errors will suffer regular and irretrievable diminutions of self-esteem, and those who make only a few will stand in danger of becoming elitists. Those are risks that we cannot and *will* not take, especially with all those earnest young people who truly love children and, resisting the lure of the lucrative but inhumane careers that they might have found in commerce and technology, have come to us to be made into *professionals* of schoolteaching.

And fortunately, while we do still *permit* the study of a few foreign languages here, we find that most of our incipient schoolteachers don't even *need* to be advised to choose Puppetry Workshop or the History of Jazz rather than French or German as what we call "humanities electives." *They* know a humanity when they see one.

There's nothing humane about irregular verbs, and an obsession with foreign language is even more dehumanizing for the teachers than for the students. The teachers are supposed to *know* the irregular verbs. And the case endings—all of them. And the use of the imperfect subjunctive. And thousands of un-American idioms. You can be pretty damn sure that any teacher who is actually an *expert* in some foreign language has

put more effort into rote learning than into relating to self and others, and will almost certainly be more interested in the mere facts of a narrow discipline of dubious relevance than in the *true* goals of education: appreciation, awareness, global and/or environmental consciousness, and rap sessions on death and Gay Rights. We are not the least bit interested in turning out *that* sort of teacher, thank you.

And furthermore, these people who indulge in foreign language study often pick up some uppity, anti-social notions about *language itself*. They start getting persnickety about what they are pleased to call “accuracy,” and they snootily pretend that they can’t understand what it means to experientially enhance some aspects of remediation implementation in the sphere of interpersonal communication, which tells you how little they really care about self-expression and creativity, a couple of our *other* true goals.

But there’s nothing to worry about. Our Division of *Professional* Studies—an *airborn* division at that—will see to it that there is never a foreign language requirement *here*. Why, just last year, when our little foreign language department proposed a few reading courses that just *might*, some day, be required by a couple of other little departments with no discernible future and thus little to lose, our *professionals*, who make the rules for the curriculum committee, thank goodness, nipped that little old foot in the door right in the little old bud. Those ivory tower foreign language teachers had neglected (heh heh) to list the expected *student outcomes* of foreign language reading courses! You see? The teachers themselves can’t find a good excuse for studying foreign languages.

However, while there is no danger of an eruption of foreign language study at Glassboro, trouble looms elsewhere in Academe. We have heard reports of schools, and some of them *public* schools, once again offering courses in *Latin*! And of students actually *taking* them instead of alternative lifestyle education or the poetry of rock and roll. And, even worse, along comes a certain Cynthia Parsons, suggesting (we guess), in the *Christian Science Monitor*, that *teachers* should study foreign languages as part of their training! Can you believe it? How long do you suppose our teacher academy, or any other, could survive such a bizarre requirement? Hell, if our

teacher trainees were *that* kind of people, the kind who memorize and fuss about trivial details, they wouldn’t make very good teachers, now would they? And many of them probably wouldn’t even *have* to become teachers!

We haven’t actually *read* Cynthia Parsons’ essay, of course, and we’re not about to. We’ve heard it all before. Besides, we *have* read Gerald W. Brown’s cogent answer to Parsons, excerpts from which we have reprinted below for your edification.

That Brown is a man with plenty on the sphere. Notice how wisely he eschews any vain discussion of that tired old elitist notion that the study of foreign language has some sort of effect on the habits and discipline of the mind. He sticks to the *facts*. And it is a fact, by golly, that many of those kids suckered into foreign language study *could* find themselves, ten years later, if then, in that entirely different *sphere*. And for the hapless student of Latin, it could take even *longer*.

By the same logic—and it’s high time that we started paying it more than lip service—we’ve been wasting a lot of time, time that could be devoted to career education, on stuff like physics and trigonometry. We have, to be sure, seen to it that very few students will actually *take* such courses, but their mere existence is a continuous drain on energies and funds that could better be spent in truly *humanistic* enterprises. How many of our students, after all, will *ever* end up, never mind in ten years, in physics spheres or trigonometry spheres?

And any who *do* can always, as Brown correctly points out in the case of those few who *choose* to learn some foreign language purely for personal profit, learn all the physics or trigonometry they please, along with any *other* narrow specialization that suits them, at one of those *commercial* schools. The commercial schools do not share our high standards. They’ll teach *anything*, anything at all, without the least concern for its social utility or its potential for creativity enhancement or even its suitability for mainstreaming. All *they* do is *teach*. They don’t even care about behavioral objectives.

And, as only a professor of education could, Brown explodes the old “international understanding” myth by discovering that a knowledge of French will *not* help you with the international *situation* in China. Or even Japan.

Professors of education know *all about* international understanding and the *right* way to foster it. They're the ones who *showed* us how to enhance intercultural multi-ethnic appreciation through folk-dances of many lands, and how to teach children to relate to the Eskimo experience by chewing blubber.

Brown makes many fine points, but his last is his best. What is it with you laymen? We've already *shown* you that we're not even teaching *English*, and here you are nagging us to teach some ridiculous *foreign* languages! And if, as Brown astutely reminds us, our poor track record in achieving fluency proves that it is pointless to teach a foreign language for eight years, what does our track record in *twelve* years of teaching English prove?

Brown is right. If you want your kids to learn narrow academic specializations, why don't you just send them to commercial schools? *Our* business is *quality* education.

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