



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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WITH this issue, and contrary even to our own expectations, we begin the sixth year of THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN. If we had had a five-year plan, this would be the time to report on it. And a dismal report it would be.

Indeed, we have to begin our sixth year with a couple of the most sickening documents: *we* have ever seen. We found them quoted, and appropriately, although not sufficiently, derided, in an editorial in *The Tulsa Tribune*.

Some of the notions that these educationists sanctimoniously put forth and earnestly adopt from each other are so preposterous and so vile that no sound mind could accept them. In that fact, and in a well-known Proverbial hypothesis about one possible cause of unsoundness in the mind, we find what little hope-we can still hold, not only for our schools, but for our freedoms, which depend on the informed discretion of the people. Dryden puts the proverb thus:

For those whom God to ruin has designed,
He fits for fate, and first destroys their mind.

Well, maybe God *has* destroyed their minds. That would explain much. And maybe He will bring them to ruin. But when? Can we afford to wait much longer?

Nox quondam, nox futura?

Students do not read, write and do arithmetic as well as they used to because they can get along quite nicely without these skills. . . . Americans are finding that they need to rely less and less on “basic skills” to find out what they want to know and what they want to do. Our basic skills are declining precisely because we need them less.

[Peter Wagschal, Futurist, University of Massachusetts]

YEAH. And that’s not all! Just you take a good look at the standard American dogs and cats. They live pretty damn well, tolling not, neither spinning, and they’ve never even *heard* of stuff like reading, writing, and arithmetic. They “do quite nicely without those skills,” and so do tropical fish and baboons. And so, too, did black slaves and Russian serfs, and all those marvelously skillful and industrious ancestors of us all who gathered nuts and roots and killed small rodents with sticks. They all knew everything they needed to know.

We would probably never have heard of Peter Wagschal, or of his neatou Ouija Board Studies Program, if it hadn’t been for one Larry Zenke, a pretty neatou guy himself. Zenke is Superintendent of Schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where men are still men. Did he quail when the national achievement test scores, which used to be quite good in that prosperous and orderly city, hit new lows last fall? Nosirree. When taxpayers grumbled, did he ignominiously promise to do better? And when the *Tulsa Tribune* started shooting off its editorial mouth about “fads” and “anti-academic garbage,” did Zenke tiptoe away into the piloting of experiential remediation enhancement parameters?

No way. Not in Oklahoma. In the finest frontier fashion, he stood up tall in the middle of Main Street at high noon and told the unruly rabble that maybe they’d like to talk it over, before doing anything hasty, with his pal, Pete (The Persuader) Wagschal, who somehow just happened to drift into town. True grit.

Then, having (by proxy) brought light to the benighted fuddy-duddies of Tulsa, Zenke, who obviously knows more than he lets on, laid a little groundwork for the defense of next year’s test scores: “Wagschal even suggests that 50 years from now we could be the smartest, most knowledgeable society that has ever existed, *and yet be largely illiterate.*”

The italics are Zenke’s, not ours, and we’re grateful for them. We have often wondered what kind of an idea it would take to make a school superintendent excited about the life of the intellect.

And a dandy idea it is, especially for all those much misunderstood “educators,” saddled (for now) with the thankless (and difficult) task of teaching what no one will need to know when the bright age dawns. All that burnout and stress! And for what? For nothing more than an arcane and elitist social grace no more necessary in a truly “knowledgeable society” than the ability to play polo, or the lute.

And how, you ask, will people who are “largely illiterate” come to amass all that knowledge? Well, don’t you worry, bless your heart. Someone will probably be quite willing to tell them what to know, even if it means all the trouble and expense of attaching loudspeakers to every lamp-post in America.

The teachers, then, will be liberated to do what the teacher academies train them to do. Zenke foretells:

Teachers, for example, will no longer be disseminators of cognitive information—machines will do that. Teachers will be program developers and/or facilitators of group membership, helping students develop interaction skills. Some educators, of course, will be found too rigid to survive this metamorphosis, but those who do will find excitement and fulfillment in their new “teaching roles.”

And that will be just dandy too. Happy, happy, the teachers of tomorrow, at long last fulfilled and excited! Freed forever from the stern constraints of the tiny smatterings of mere information still incongruously expected of teachers, the facilitator-trainees of the future won’t have to take any of those dull and irrelevant “subjects” that now impede their growth as *professionals* and their group membership development. They’ll be able to spend *all* their time in the enhancement of their interaction skills, so that they can go forth and facilitate the same for little children. (Those cunning tots, of course, *do* have to be *educated*, you know, so that they will sit quietly in organized groups when it’s time to hear some knowledge from the loudspeaker.) And the training program for superintendents of schools will be even more exciting and fulfilling. There’s just no counting the skills that *they* can get along nicely without.

Which is it you’ve lost, Tulsans, your spirit or your minds? Could it be both? Do you lie awake in the still watches of the night worrying about those godless communists who are panting to nationalize oil? Do you fear that bleeding hearts will take away the guns by which you fancy that you won and may yet preserve your liberty? Pooh, Tulsans, pooh.

The most dangerous threat to your liberty, the one that has by far the best chance of turning you all into docile clods, is right there in Tulsa. Think, dammit! Do you imagine that foreign enemies of this nation could devise for your children a more hideous and revolting destiny than the one so blithely envisioned—and as an *exoneration*, no less—by the superintendent of schools? Do you yawn and turn to the sports section, citizens of Tulsa, when the man whom you have hired to oversee the growth of understanding and judgment in your children airily tells you that in a palmier day they will have no need of the literacy that alone can give those powers? Do you shrug when he tells you that the children will be spared the burden of whatever “cognitive information” they don’t actually need, which must obviously, since the children will have no powers of judgment, be chosen by someone like Zenke? Do you, like Zenke, dream of the day when no one will be able to *read* our Constitution, but it won’t matter, because the machines provided by the government schools will tell us all we really need to know about it? Can you think of something to say to those teachers, and superintendents, who are *not* excited and fulfilled with leading young minds into the ways of understanding and thoughtful discretion, and who are *unrigid* enough, flaccid and limp enough, not only to survive but to hail as liberation their metamorphosis into developers and facilitators? Does it not occur to you that the inculcation of “interaction skills” for the purpose of “group development” is exactly the opposite of an education, by which a mind can find its way *out* of group-think and the pet promulgations of collectivisms? And in short, Tulsans, what are those strange black boxes we see on *your* lamp-posts? What soothing message have they recited, even as you slept? How is it, O Pioneers, that you are not mad as hell?

Oklahoma is much changed, but the descendants of the settlers still like to watch the hawk making

lazy circles in the sky. Their bird-lore, however, is not what it was. In fact, there's hardly a damn one of them that can tell a hawk from a vulture nowadays.

Quatily [higher] Ecudation in NJ

EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVE: To help the growth and commonwealth of an organization into a successful unit by continuing my psycholocial and sociological expertise to satisfy existing needs, and to identify and meet emerging situations within an institution, company or community. Familiar with counseling, mental health, social services, group therapy with adults and youths; and, can organize, coordinate and supervise career activities. Also, have the ability to prepare budget and financial reports along with light typing skills.

HERE at Glassboro State, we are your good old simple country folk, into the eternal verities, as you might say, a cabbage-patch of A Number One American Heartland plunked right down smack-dab in the middle of what they call the Great Northeastern Corridor. The trains don't stop here any more.

We are neither new-falutin' nor high-fangled. In fact, many would say it's just the other way around. We're satisfied with excellence. We refer to it often. We even keep making up *new* plans for excellence even more excellent than our last new plans for excellence. As our very own, and highly respected by a number of curriculum facilitators hereabouts, Curriculum Development Council so cogently puts it, in its list of Basic Concepts About A Well-Functioning Individual: "The present can be altered and the future directed without explanation of the negative past." Now you put that all together it spells quatily ecudation with no bones about it. And that's the name of our game. Even the union says so.

So you can Imagine our chagrin when the above, or something like it, happens. Not to put too fine a point on it, the case may be summed up thus:

We take in this young lady with plenty of potential to maximize, and we spend four full years giving her nothing but an unmitigated

quatily ecudation. We teach her all about the growth into a unit, and even the commonwealth into a unit, of an organization, and not through any dilettantish satisfying of non-existing needs, you will notice. That's exactly the way *we* do it, you know, and it has made us what we are today. And we taught her all about situations, which are *the* most important things to be able to identify for any person who contemplates a career activity in the professional ecudation sphere, which may be perceived as being a multi-faceted arena of one situation after another, especially the emerging kind, which, pray notice, this graduate *does* know how to identify. And meet. And just look at all the good stuff we've made her *familiar* with. Furthermore, while she probably doesn't want to boast of it, you can bet your horse and dog that she is not only familiar with mental health, for instance, but that she even *appreciates* it. And what, you may ask, about those career activities? Can she really organize and coordinate them, and even supervise them? Well, come on. That's exactly what *we* do all the time, and, to turn once again to the words of Basic Concepts About A Well-Functioning Individual, "Human behavior is strongly influenced by its present environment." (And some people—can you believe it?—say that we should actually spend *less* money in the pursuit of such findings, which are the very cornerstones of all educationistic theory!) And on top of all that, we even have courses and experiential workshops in the writing of resumé!

So how do you figure it? Here this young woman, who has obviously learned exactly as we teach, who clearly has enough skills to make her at least a dean—if not an associate vice-president—around here, applies for a job as nothing more than Counselor/Special Services, a job she could indubitably do in her sleep—wouldn't you say?—at some two-bit community college where they wouldn't even *recognize* a situation if it emerged, never mind identify and meet it, and where they are obviously not the least *bit* familiar with mental health, and those bozos, even after *reading* exactly what you see above, have the unmitigated gall *to turn her down!*

Well, someday they'll be sorry. At GSC the apple never falls far from the whole barrel, and we often hire our own graduates. She could easily make it as our vice-president for Community College Program/Relation/Evaluation.

Teratology

SOMETIMES it is possible to figure out what some superintendent of schools is trying to say. However, when that happens, he usually has said either something that is too obvious to need saying, or something that he would very probably not have said if only he had been able to understand exactly what he was saying.

Here's a diverting example from the superintendent of schools in St. Clair Shores, Michigan. We know only his initials, G. E. M. (really!), which adorn each page of his recent report to the board, wherein* we find:

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT NEEDS

We agree that to plan best on where long range goals would project the district, a careful review of current status needs to be given. The base formed from this assessment and examination can be used to launch successfully that which needs to be initiated.

So. He may mean, of course, that planners should take account of facts. Wow. He may just as well, on the other hand, be saying that you can hardly expect any concrete plans for the future from someone who doesn't know what the hell is going on in the present.

And sometimes, as in another GEM from the same document, you can not figure out what a superintendent of schools is trying to say:

STUDENT RIGHTS/RESPONSIBILITIES

One constant and over-riding concern of all district personnel is the rights of our students. Aside from this, it shall no longer be implied because along with rights for the students, efforts shall be obviated in their inculcation as to responsibilities and obligations they have also. A board document of due process shall be prepared and which shall contain as well, Rights, Responsibilities.

* We are practicing the trickier i-e and e-i words, in the hope that someone around here will learn how to spell "hierarchy."

Something or other seems to be missing from the list of the responsibilities of the superintendent of schools in St. Clair Shores, but it won't be mentioned in that forthcoming "board document" on *student* responsibilities. Nor is anyone likely to grant students, therein, the right to have their schools administered and education directed by people who know how to make sense.

The Arrogance of Humanis

David Ehrenfeld

Oxford University Press, Galaxy paperback, \$5.95

THIS is an alarming book, but strangely consoling as well. It is alarming because it demonstrates, with concrete and repellent evidence, that the half-baked and pseudo-scientific tinkerers who run our schools have lots of brothers and sisters who run almost everything else. It is consoling because it suggests that the rejection of the tinkerers' silly (and often vile) premises is an idea whose time may yet come.

The "humanism" of the title is not the incoherently construed "secular humanism" denounced by half-baked and (now) pseudo-scientific religionists clothed in soft raiment. It is itself a kind of religion, although one whose articles of belief *are* susceptible to the tests of evidence and reason, which they fail. They fail too—this is one of Ehrenfeld's most compelling demonstrations—the simple test of "decent feelings" informed by thoughtfulness.

This is a flagrant and disruptive book, and thus hard to find. Persevere. Things will get better if you read it.

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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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The Affective Functionary Action

WE GREET with bounded enthusiasm judge Wm. Overton’s decision in the Arkansas creationism case. “The evidence,” he said, “is overwhelming that both the purpose and effect of Act 590 is the advancement of religion in the public schools.” He spoke also of the inappropriateness of such advancement by the “organs of government, of which the most conspicuous and influential are the public schools.”

Two cheers for that. We do need to be reminded as often as possible that the public schools *are* organs of government. We’re reserving the third cheer for a judge who will someday decide that any advocacy of received dogma is inappropriate to organs of government.

It was not because the Founding Fathers were enemies of religion that they saw fit to prohibit the establishment of religion. It was rather because any established sect or persuasion would constitute a privileged faction against which all others would be at some disadvantage in the “free practice” of religion. Religious factions differ in then, beliefs, and when government is forbidden to favor any one faction, it is in effect warned that what the people believe, and how they come to believe it, is none of a government’s damned business. The “we” who held certain truths to be self-evident were “we, the people,” *not* a government, but the makers of a government that was to be a creature of the people who made it.

It was supremely fortunate for us that those who gave us the Bill of Rights were not government functionaries bestowing gifts upon the people, but people themselves, requiring of government and its functionaries certain guarantees as conditions necessary to the consent of the governed. No long-established government like ours as it now is, operated by a self-perpetuating corps of functionaries little troubled by transient elected

officials, would voluntarily forbid itself the power to influence not only the beliefs of the people but everything else that might sway the consent of the people.

Jefferson held that the functionaries of any government would, if they could, “command the liberty of their constituents.” Had he been able to read the future, he might also have warned us that those functionaries would seek to modify the behavior of their constituents, to instill in them officially sanctioned civic and personal attitudes, to facilitate their group membership through training in interaction skills, and to afford them packets of materials and role-playing strategies to help them out with the clarification of their values.

All those things *are* done by a faction of government functionaries, deciding among themselves what their constituents need to know, what they don’t need to know, how they should feel, and what they should believe. We have surrendered the full benefit of the First Amendment by permitting what was to have been our creature to become both teacher and preacher. We think those Creationists ought to inquire diligently, find the right case, and go back to court-not to seek special favor, but only equal treatment before the law. Even the ACLU might help, if their aim is to expel the government from *all* precincts of that Affective Domain.

The Same Old Witchcraft

District Literacy Definition

(From somewhere either in or near Minneapolis.)

The literate person is one who has acquired the skills of reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening, problem solving, acquiring and using information, and judgment making. Further, the literate person is one who has developed a feeling of self worth and importance; respect for and appreciation and understanding of other people and cultures; and a desire for learning. The literate person is one who continues to seek knowledge, to increase personal skills and the quality of relationships with others, and to fulfill individual potential.

THE TRUTH, at last, can be told. That Aristotle fellow was, in fact, *not* a literate man. He never developed positive feelings about barbarians. Indeed, the more he came to learn about them, the less he appreciated them.

Franz Kafka wasn't literate either, you know. Like so many other illiterate "writers"—who can count them?—he was never able to develop any positive feelings of self-worth and importance. Hemingway was always shooting off his mouth and never became a good listener. Eliot made some positively anti-democratic judgments, and Mark Twain made some really dumb ones. Even Norman Mailer is said to be utterly illiterate in the quality of his relationships with others.

But don't worry about it. Our schools are doing everything they can to assure that we will be less and less troubled by such pseudo-literates.

The true literates are in the sphere—or is it the arena?—of education. In that sphere, or field, it is almost impossible to find anyone who hasn't developed impregnable feelings of self-worth and importance. So unreservedly do they respect and appreciate other cultures that they never fall into the error of finding anything respectable or appreciable in their own. The quality of their relationships with others is amazing; they never, never disagree or contend, and they always hail enthusiastically each other's bold innovative thrusts and experiential programs of excellence. And what could be stronger testimony to their fulfillment of individual potential than the fact that they have somehow persuaded the rest of us to *pay* them for all the stuff they do?

Now all of that, as you can discover from the handy District Literacy Definition shown above, is the real heart and guts of true literacy, pure and undefiled. What little it seems not to include—reading and writing and the acquisition of mere information, for example—will simply have to be re-understood in the context of the more important aspects, which may also be perceived as being facets, or else parameters, of district literacy.

Reading and writing are, of course, quite useful. How else, after all, will our children grow up to understand the labels on medicine bottles and write letters of application for jobs and increase personal skills in the solution of Rubik's Cube? Indeed, the promised day of universal mass education through non-print electro-multi-media

and relationship-quality encounter sessions may not come as quickly as many of us would like. And even then it will probably be useful if the masses can figure out the wall posters. So we will have to teach some reading and writing into the foreseeable future. However, reading and writing can be overdone, as the examples above must prove. People can sometimes, even in schools, become *addicted* to reading and writing, using them as crutches. Reading addicts especially often become—well, we had better say it right out—they become *critical*. You show us a student who would rather read some book than fulfill individual potential through creative interaction with representatives of other cultures and age groups, and we will show you someone who will always have difficulty with increasing the quality of relationships with others.

You laymen would better appreciate the true meaning of literacy if you could only see hyperkinetic reading behavior for what it really is—yet another of the countless hitherto unidentified learning disabilities. This should be perfectly clear to anyone who takes the trouble to consider what effects hyperkinetic reading behavior must have on *true* literacy as defined above:

- ❖ Because he is often exposed, and without appropriate professional guidance, to diverse and conflicting opinions, and the all-too-often cunningly persuasive rhetoric of people who really have nothing more to express than some ideas of their *own*, the hyperkinetic reader often lags behind his classmates in Judgment Making. He is all too apt to say, either to himself, thus exacerbating his disability, or aloud, thus disrupting a whole class and spoiling a perfectly good lesson plan: "Well, maybe, but on the other hand" And just think what *that* can do to the quality of relationships with others!

- ❖ The hyperkinetic reader not infrequently abuses the Acquiring and Using of Information in unprogrammed acquisition (and inevitable misuse) of information not conducive to the Respect and Appreciation of Other People and Cultures but only to the *Understanding* of the same. That will just not do.

❖ Hyperkinetic readers almost invariably read works that do not appear on the school district's list of suggested readings, so that they often find themselves perplexed and troubled by materials written at much too high a grade level. Reading, after all, is supposed to be loads of fun. When it becomes a struggle, and especially when it causes negative feelings of doubt and questioning, the hapless reader may fail to develop that Feeling of Self Worth and Importance appropriate to literacy.

❖ And these people who always have their noses stuck in books usually won't even Listen!

Among the great successes of our schools is the fact that they have always been able to prevent serious and widespread outbreaks of hyperkinetic reading behavior syndrome. This is a remarkable feat, since most young children, even when they first *come* to school, already exhibit morbid curiosity behavior and persistent questioning behavior, dangerous precursors that must be replaced quickly with group interaction skills and self-awareness enhancement. (Children who are properly preoccupied with themselves and with some presumed distinctions between individual whims and collective whims hardly ever fall into hyperkinetic reading behavior syndrome.) Although a few intractable cases can still be found, we realistically expect, and before long, to eradicate this crippling disability and usher in the age of *true* literacy.

Our only problem, as usual, is with the public, where outdated and narrow-minded misconceptions about *true* literacy can still be found. We must *educate* the public. Again. It's time for *every* literacy district to promulgate a District Literacy Definition. That'll teach 'em.

And a few words from Emerson

Well, most men have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief, and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion. This conformity makes them not false in a few particulars, authors of a few lies, but false in all particulars. Their every truth is not quite true. Their two is not the real two, their four is not the real four; so that every word they say chagrins us and we know not where to begin to set them right.

The Molinari Module

Linguistics has become a magic word in language instruction of today. Vigorous activity during the past 25 years has stretched linguistics beyond the esoteric enclaves of graduate departments of modern language departments and brought it cascading down through the high school and elementary grades. There is, indeed, a curriculum and instruction revolution underway.

BEHIND every Great Movement, every collective convulsion of the human mind, there is usually A Book, *the* book, the fount and origin of ideas and inspiration. Suicidal melancholiacs slept their last sleep with *Werther* under their pillows. Fervid supermen conned amid the carnage the cryptic *Mein Kampf*. Our land once swarmed with door-to-door drummers who had memorized *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Even American educationists are People of a Book; every day in every way they practice and exemplify the lofty principles and noble aspirations so piquantly and imperishably expressed in that classical paradigm of practical pedagogy, *The Little Engine That Could*.

The passage quoted above is intended to demonstrate the "Uniqueness" of a proposed "module" to be named "Linguistics in Language Arts Teaching." The proposer is one L. Molinari, a *professional* of educationism here at Glassboro; and if you think that vague references to supposedly widespread and general practice make a dubious demonstration of *uniqueness*, it must be because you are not a professional of educationism. Or even a Little Engine. You have to think you can, think you can. You have to find that magic word and stretch it until it cascades beyond those esoteric enclaves where the big engines hog all the glory, vainly dreaming that mere scholarly concentration and the routine collection of mere facts can some how take the place of esteeming yourself, and of trying oh so hard.

It is an interesting (albeit *mere*) linguistic fact that the Little Engineers love the word "module." What, after all, is the Little Engine itself but a module, a teeny-weeny module plugged in to take the place of a big and strong module? And it serves just its well, thus demonstrating that

desirable behavioral objectives can be achieved without regard to special powers and skills. Now *that* is both democratic and humanistic, and it would be really swell if only Amtrak could learn the trick of it.

A module, of course, is better than a course. Although this module proposal makes, for some reason or other, no mention of the fact, the teacher-trainees who end up in the module will first have taken a *course* in linguistics as taught in an esoteric enclave, *i. e.*, as mere subject matter insufficiently *related* to the needs of a *professional*. It is only when they get to the module that the trainees will actually “become familiar with linguistic concepts as they relate to elementary language arts instruction.” We can’t reasonably expect teacher-trainees who’ve had nothing more than a course in linguistics to “develop an understanding of the nature of linguistic science,” or to “be able to identify the components of those models known as Structural Grammar and Transformational-Generative Grammar,” or even “to be able to name the elements that constitute a language.” For stuff like that, a course won’t do. It takes a module.

In fact, the lucky teacher-trainees who pass through this module will even be able to “define the linguistic definition of grammar”! Those esoteric enclavists just don’t have the kind of mind that it takes to establish and achieve the behavioral objective of definition definition. For that you need a *professional*, one who is nonesoteric enough to point out that “the content of this module is important because it deal with material that is vital to elementary language arts curriculum.” It can only be an awareness of definition definition that can produce the strange and subtle distinction implied in the assertion that, at least in this case, content *deals with* material. Now *that’s* linguistic. That’s a level of language art that you probably won’t find very often in esoteric enclaves, where they can’t even teach their students to name elements or identify components.

This marvelous module is a recent emanation from the depths of Glassboro’s POD-EPIC program of superior excellence in teacher-training, and we are heartened to see it. We’ve been worried about those people. Since the board of trustees, about fifteen months ago, urged them to start putting out papers and articles about

their excellence, the POD-EPICists have fallen strangely silent.

It’s good to know that they’re still around, and that the spirit of the Little Engine still stirs them.

We urge them on. We think they can, we think they can. And we’re sure they will. They, of all, know best that no engine is too little to pull a great big bandwagon.

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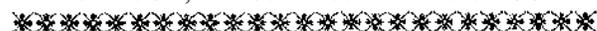
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*Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune,
whose words do jarre; nor his reason in frame,
whose sentence is preposterous.*



**The Underground
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WE NEVER advocate violence, but we still sympathize with the man who wrote us about his tribulations as a school board member in New Jersey. He was impelled to seek that office after a Parents’ Night visit to the local high school, at which the head of the English department displayed a poster that promised “New Horizons in Education.”

But that, he came to learn, was the least of problems. He was finally driven to suggest, at a mass meeting of educationistic functionaries in Trenton, that schools in New Jersey could be immensely and immediately improved by the detonation in the meeting room of a very large and powerful bomb.

The discovery that could lead an otherwise law-abiding citizen to dream such a desperate dream is simply this: American educationism is protected and preserved as a government

enterprise over which there is no civilian control worth a damn.

In this issue we bring you the story of one school board member who took his stewardship seriously and actually thought he could change something. But as you read it, please try not to go thinking about big bombs, OK?

Respeak In Monmouth

I am pleased to inform you that the Basic Skills Center is henceforth, to be known as the Center for Developmental Education. Dr. Andreach, Coordinator of the Basic Skill Center will be known as Coordinator of Developmental Education. Increasingly, colleges are dropping the basic skills connotation that goes with the kind of center we have established and are looking to the developmental aspects since they have more of a positive connotation than do basic skills.

WE keep watching for harbingers of 1984. The job is a cinch. Our maps bristle with pins, and we have often discovered readings as high as 9.7 on the logograph recorder. All the outlying stations report the same thing, and all the instruments agree. Just before the end, we will try to send out one last signal; but, should something go wrong, you may have to do that for us. We suggest: “The lights in the sky are stars.”

We once brought you the news that literacy had become “a feeling of self worth and importance, and respect for an appreciation and understanding of other people and cultures.” Just a few days ago, we heard from a mole at the Department of Education, soon to be retreaded as the Ministry of Truth. The DOE, we were told, no longer harbors any of those “change-agents,” who had come to be looked on, by uninformed but noisy critics who proved impervious to re-education, as intrusive social manipulators. The change-agents, having passed through a larval stage as facilitators, have now emerged as linkers. Linkers, along with programs for linker-training and linkage enhancement will soon hatch out in every teacher academy in America.

Now we have the announcement quoted above. It is the work, the *deed*, one might better say, of one Samuel H. Magill, who is currently known as

the president of Monmouth College in West Long Branch, New Jersey. We would like to admire his brass, for he says right out a shabby truth that most educationists would rather not tell. We suspect, however, that it was not out of brass but simply out of thoughtlessness that he gave away such an important trade secret. His use of commas is not characteristic of a cunning contriver, and his notion that connotations can be “dropped” at will is more likely a result of ignorance than of arrogance.

Nevertheless, he achieves the intended goal. Respeak takes its power from the fact that most people are not inclined to discriminate between what something *does* or *is* and what it is *known as*. Any educationistic enterprise can instantly win favor and support by giving its centers and coordinators, or anything else, fresh new outfits of the latest designer fashions in sheep’s clothing. And the educationistic establishment takes from its own Respeak a double advantage. It can go on forever inculcating whatever combination of meager skills and pop notions it chooses to call “literacy,” and it can thus assure itself an endless supply of those very people who are not inclined to discriminate between what something *does* or *is* and what it is *known as*.

It’s a neat racket, and it would be horrible enough if it were operated by a pack of hard-eyed villains who knew exactly what they were doing. The truth, however, is even more horrible.

There *are*, of course, some villains. There are agency spawned educrats and grant-hustlers who really *do* profit from “increased spending.” There are book and gadget boosters who make big bucks from innovative thrusts. And there are even some supreme villains, ideological rather than venal, who want to fashion society to suit their ideologies. But those are just a few of the big kids playing hardball. Samuel H. Magill is not in that game.

The Magills of educationism, in all their thousands, are not villains. They are just modules, plugged into openings here and there. Any one will do. It’s the *function of a component* that is needed, not the judgment of a mind. It doesn’t matter whether Magill understands what he says. It matters only that he who is currently known as the president says it. It is the greatest triumph of our schools that they fit their victims to become their agents.

“All machines,” wrote Thoreau, “have their friction. But when the friction comes to have its machine, let us not have such a machine any longer.”

An Enemy of the People Revisited

SOME READERS will remember Robert W. Geweke, the rogue elephant of the Kettle Moraine School Board. Two years ago we mentioned briefly the obstreperous and anti-social behavior with which Geweke, a retired Justice Department attorney, no less, outraged some parents and *all* educationists in an otherwise placid suburb of Milwaukee.

Geweke discovered, and announced, that many of the teachers in the district were unable to write conventionally correct English. He displayed the evidence. He was not applauded. Here’s what we said in March 1980:

Parents and teachers, especially teachers, are accusing him of trying to ruin the lives of innocent children by discrediting their high school, thus making it unlikely that they will be accepted at the colleges of their choice...

Perhaps out of devotion to their *professionalism*, or perhaps for other reasons, the teachers were even keener than the parents in defense of the persecuted children.

The Geweke Affair did, in fact, begin with revelations that were to be officially characterized as unfair criticism of helpless children, who “were only doing their best in preparing the yearbook.”*

It is an intriguing fact that higher standards of performance are expected of every baton-twirling squad in America than of any of the numberless publications that ooze forth from the organs of the schools. There is far greater attention to detailed accuracy in the enhancing of intercultural awareness through folk-dances of many lands, and more devotion to the marriage of substance and style in the Family Living Course’s mock wedding, than you can ever hope to detect in either the seventh-grade newsletter or the superintendent’s annual message. But Geweke, sheltered from the stern realities of educationism

by his years of service in the comparatively benign and ethical atmosphere of Washington, had no way of knowing that. He was actually *surprised* as he leafed through the high school yearbook for 1979.

He found there exactly what most of us would have expected. Although the basketball team was “loosing” a few strong seniors (and cross-country exactly ditto), all was not lost. The coaches, filled with “strength, spirit, and determinism,” will still, unlike the undeterministic yearbook advisors, give “infinite wisdom.” The football team had shown commendable “impudence,” and the success of the track team proved that “our ability and talent is unlimitless.”

(It was probably while trying to figure out the meaning of “unlimitless” that Geweke began to totter amok.)

He found the usual creative spelling. “Humourus” and “humerous,” but no “humorous.” He found “confrence” and “rhythims,” and forms like “its” and “it’s,” “girls,” “girl’s,” and “girl” used indiscriminately, as though chosen at random. All routine stuff—the stuff that, even if noticed, would not be deemed worthy of comment in your standard American high school. After all, it’s not as though the “boy’s” basketball team had lost nine in a row because of a coach’s lack of determinism.

But Geweke did comment. How’s that for impudence? When other board members joined him in expressions of dismay, the local teachers’ union sprang to the defense of the helpless children, and of quality education, in a stern letter. Any more of that stuff, the board was warned, and the union would “institute legal proceedings against them.” One of the district’s administrators, asked what he intended to do about the “yearbook fiasco,” replied that he “couldn’t care less,” and that anyway the yearbook was none of the board’s business.

Nevertheless, out of the other side of its mouth, the district’s administration *did* instruct all its teachers to start correcting their students’ mistakes in “spelling and English usage.” And that bold, innovative thrust might actually have done some good some day if it hadn’t been for the fact that a surprising (to Geweke) number of the teachers proved to have problems of their own with spelling and usage.

* We are quoting, here and throughout, from Geweke’s own account in *Wisconsin School News*, August 1980.

As the yearbook fiasco was fading, and the board taking comfort from the thought of all that new correcting,

The district's curriculum director presented to the board's curriculum committee fifteen new course proposals [that] originated with and were prepared by the teachers. Thirteen of these proposals were returned to the teachers for correction of errors in spelling and English usage.

Now Geweke and his colleagues discovered that the children really *were* innocent and helpless, and that their trifling transgressions seemed almost cute by contrast with the real thing. And worse was to come.

Some teachers, outraged by the board's picayune preoccupation with "mechanical errors"—"Write curriculum unites," for instance—refused to correct their proposals. "It's demoralizing," said one teacher, when a member of the school board "flaunts a slight problem."

However, within a few months, driven, no doubt, by their determinism, teachers, and even some administrators, *did* send the board a bundle of new proposals and thrusts. Geweke *et al.* found themselves custodians of a priceless collection. Here are random samples:

It fits in the view that it prepares the student to do the work. - Fasinating, dabate, vacum, and stratigies. - Also we should try to avoid fragmentation ... by attempting to incorporate too many suggestions which the board might have. - Complition, excelleration, liaison, pitance. - Preview and developing written materials supplement filmstrips informational. - Too much is expected by the school board in regards to the context and standards of the yearbook; their desires are too great for the students to pay. - In order to keep continuity throughout the yearbook it necessitates using only a very few people.

And one proposer, in an inadvertent blurt of truth, urged the adoption of "minimal standards." Another thought it would be a good idea to "develop a strategy to convince the school board to support quality composition."

Quality composition. Well, let's be realistic. You can never achieve quality composition when

a meddlesome and officious board member keeps nagging about some little mechanical errors. Even the helpless *teachers* can't pay such desires. So it soon became obvious to the Quality Composition Party that the only way to bring quality composition to the Kettle Moraine School District was, first, to put out some guidelines reminding everybody that children learn best when they correct their own mistakes, and that "there is no correlation between spelling and success in adult careers" anyway; and next, to get that Geweke the hell off the school board.

The first was a cinch—just a little more paperwork. The teachers themselves provided living proof that there really isn't any correlation between spelling and success in at least one "adult" career. The second was a little bit harder. It took a vigorous coalition made up mostly of teachers and those parents who didn't want any college admissions officers to get the wrong idea. It took one of those letter-writing and telephoning campaigns that a teachers' union just loves to organize, although letter-writing, in this case, may have been not too urgently encouraged. And it took exactly what has been assured by more than half a century of mindless educationism—a benighted populace, ignorant and apathetic.

Given all those things, it wasn't too difficult to get up a special recall election and remove Robert W. Geweke from the school board. Today, there is peace in the Kettle Moraine School District. The board is behaving very nicely, and supporting quality composition. The superintendent, who damn near got *fired* in the bad old days has ordered all teachers and administrators to submit whatever they may have to write to the scrutiny of a "non-professional employee," someone who *hasn't* gone through a teacher academy and is therefore more likely not only to spell correctly but even to *want* to spell correctly. And isn't the latest yearbook just the cutest thing?

Teratology

The Following announcement is reprinted from *Penn State Intercom*, February 11, 1982. We understand everything about it, mostly, except the fact that the 1982 prize has already been handed out. Well, what the hell. It's not likely that anyone will top this:

Dr. James Canelos, research associate in the Office of the Dean of the College of Engineering, has received the 1982 Young Researcher Award from the Research and Theory Division of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology. The award, which carries a prize of \$500, recognizes Dr. Canelos' manuscript, "The Instructional Effectiveness of Three Content-Independent Imagery Learning Strategies on Different Learning Outcomes When Learners Received Visualized Instruction of Varying Stimulus Complexity," as the best report of a research project in 1982.

And, again from Monmouth College, a passage from Karen Abramski, who is known as coordinator of what is known as cooperative education. It seems to be about the orbital propensities of fractional learning hypotheses, which are not known as anything in particular:

The student must complete a statement of three to four learning hypotheses (the number required would revolve around the quality and context of each *individual procedure*) which are jointly reviewed and agreed upon...

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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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Maximum Brain Dysfunction

EVERYBODY is in a whole lot of trouble. People all over America are losing their car keys and even forgetting their own telephone numbers, to say nothing of their zip codes. A man we know put an empty shredded wheat box in the refrigerator, and a lady in Tacoma asked her husband to pick up a tune of canna fish on his way home. Three out of four diners in the fanciest restaurants move their lips while figuring out fifteen percent of \$48.83, and some of them will find that they *have* left home without it.

So what, you say? Ha! So you obviously don't know the first damned thing about minimal brain dysfunction, that's what. *We do* know the first damned thing about that dreaded disorder, and a supremely damnable thing it is: there are *at least* ninety-nine separate and distinct symptoms of minimal brain dysfunction! *You* are probably suffering from about thirty of them right now. And here's yet another damned thing: minimal brain dysfunction is itself only *one* of a whole host of "learning disabilities" that educationistic psychologists have somehow managed to discover in the last fifty years or more. And the damnedest thing of all is that when we ask those educationists why their victims are so ignorant and thoughtless, they say that they'll try to puzzle it out if we'll just give them more money, and we give them more money, and they hire each other as consultants, and the consultants duly discover yet another, hitherto unsuspected, learning disability.

So we were recently appalled, but hardly surprised, by a fat bundle of guidelines called "Michigan Special Education Rules." It is only in *theory* a separation of goats from sheep; *in practice* it is a charter of perpetual employment for goatherds. Its covert assumptions make the Doctrine of Innate Depravity look like the sentimental dream of some bleeding-heart liberal, for the Doctrine of Universal Impairment has no counterpart of the Operation of Grace. It looks instead to the Implementation of Grants.

The Michigan Rules include: "R 340.1706 Determination of emotionally impaired." Stubborn neurotics that we are, we just couldn't resist the risk of self-knowledge that offers itself in any list of symptoms. Sure enough, the very

first symptom of “emotionally impaired” was: *Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships within the school environment.*

A double whammy! That is *precisely* the environment within which every member of our staff has plenty of trouble with those very relationships. Furthermore, since literacy has recently been discovered—within the school environment—to *include* lots of that interpersonal relation stuff, we had to find ourselves illiterate too!

Reeling with the shock of recognition, we managed to puzzle out, by lip-movement and subvocalization, the second symptom: *Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances*, presumably still “within the school environment,” although whether that is a “normal circumstance” is worth some thought.

A mystery. What *types* of behavior and feelings *are* there? Which circumstances are normal? Is it normal or not, under this very circumstance, to feel, as we in fact do, a feeling, if not a type of feeling, remarkably like another symptom of “emotionally impaired” in Michigan? *General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.*

So. When it’s three o’clock in the morning of the dark night of the soul, don’t go near the guidance office. There will be no waiting around for Godot in the hallways, no hesitation at the turning of the stair.

And the thought of all that “school environment” where all the little Donnies and Maries are all agog about Be All That You Can Be Week, and where “to be or not to be” is definitely *not* the question, brings on the fourth symptom of “emotionally impaired”: *Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with school or personal problems.*

Right. Absolutely right. Bellyache and vertigo. And fear. Fear and trembling. The simple truth must out: We are emotionally impaired in Michigan. A classic case.

Who shall stand when the Impairment Inspector appeareth? Who shall abide the day of the Disability Determinator’s coming? Not we, surely; and, whether out of some inappropriate feeling or this pervasive mood of depression, we’re beginning to have some dark suspicions about you. We can see you, sitting there in some *appropriate* type of behavior, smugly

congratulating yourself on all your swell interpersonal relations, and wallowing in your pervasive mood of jollity, without even a touch of heartburn. Well, just you read this little codicil to the Four Symptoms:

The term “emotionally impaired” also includes persons who, in addition to the above characteristics, exhibit maladaptive behaviors related to schizophrenia, autism, or similar disorders. The term “emotionally impaired” does not include persons who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined that such persons are emotionally impaired.

Well, at least you don’t have to worry about being found emotionally impaired just because you’re socially maladjusted, unless you *are* found emotionally impaired because of certain maladaptive behaviors that have brought you into your social maladjustment. When just about all of us are normally impaired, your sanctimonious unimpairment is about as maladaptive as you can get. And forget about trying to convince us that those behaviors of yours are not related to schizophrenia or autism. Big deal. What about those “similar disorders”? Do you have any idea how many of them there *are*? All in all, you’re damn lucky to be living in a country that still has to put up with all sorts of deviants. In some countries, those maladaptive behaviors related to similar disorders could get you shipped off to live in some very cold place where you’ll probably end up eating your shoes.

It will not surprise regular readers that all this determining is done by members of the Affective Functionary Faction, government agents who keep watch over how people feel. In Michigan:

The emotionally impaired shall be determined through manifestation of behavioral problems primarily in the affective domain, which adversely affect the person’s education to the extent that the person cannot profit from regular learning experiences. . . .

The wonderful thing about that Affective Domain, and what makes it both the Lotus Land and the Happy Hunting Ground of educationists and other pseudo-scientists, is that there is no Bureau of Weights and Measures in that fair land. To weigh,

to count, and thus to find wanting, are the appropriate, normal, and profitably adaptive behaviors of those whose greasy thumbs are on the scale.

Cardinal Richelieu, who was a member of an Affective Functionary Faction in his time, knew how to determine maladaptive behaviors too. “If you give me six sentences written by the most innocent of men,” he said, “I will find something in them with which to hang him.” What can it mean for our times that a wily conniver of the bad old days suddenly sounds so refreshingly honest?

They Also Serve Who Only Look for Work

THIS isn’t going to be easy, so try to pay attention. We are about to quote from a poopsheet (what a splendid term!) called *Bulletin on Public Relations and Development for Colleges and Universities*. The *Bulletin* is quoting, with approbation, Ivan E. Frick, president of Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois. Frick will be quoting, also with approbation, Cohen and March, who must be members of the educationistic-administrative mutual approbation complex. Here we go:

Presidential leadership is always needed to get a college of any size to move and that task is seldom easy. Cohen and March did a study of leadership among college presidents and developed a theory . . . they called “organized anarchy.” They said:

An organization is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which there might be answers, and decision makers looking for work.

There is considerable truth in this. An example is when one prepares a case statement for a capital drive. Establishing the case is not a simple process; its path is not linear, that is a straight line from one agreement to the next one. The process is always filled with a tremendous amount of ambiguity.

It is kind of Frick to explain the meaning of “linear,” although his explanation does leave us to wonder whether that path from one agreement to the next might perhaps be a crooked line. But a *crooked* line is still a line, and so Frick must be saying that there is no line of *any* kind that leads from one agreement to the next. That would certainly make sense, allowing for a tremendous amount of ambiguity, of course, to anyone who has ever noticed the doings of educationistic administrators, but it’s unusual for a college president to put it in writing.

And it’s kind of Frick—ah, what a teacher he must have been before he was dragged from the classroom into the thankless prominence of presidency—to provide us an honest-to-goodness *example* to help us understand that “considerable truth” in Cohen and March. We do have to confess that the really heavy thinkers, like Heidegger and Cohen and Hegel and March, are way over our heads. If it weren’t for Frick’s illuminating example, we would probably *never* have been able to understand why solutions would *want* to go looking for issues that might already have perfectly good answers of their own, unless they (the solutions) wanted, most uncharitably, and, one might well say in this context, quite contrary to accepted principles of academic collegiality, to replace them (the answers) with themselves (the solutions), thus leaving them (the answers) nothing more than disembodied shades flitting through the gloomy nether world of decision situations, looking for whatever issues the solutions might have spurned, because they (the issues) were *not* the kind to which there might be answers, the very kind for which they (the solutions) are looking. We wouldn’t even have been able to figure out whether those issues for which solutions are looking are the very issues that are themselves looking, along with feelings, for decision situations. But now, thanks to Frick, everything is perfectly clear. Only a *bona fide* college president, by gosh, could have detected and revealed that much considerable truth.

Ivan Frick is not the only college president quoted by the *Bulletin on etc. etc.* (You can get your own copy, if you like, from Gonser Gerber Tinker Stuhr [whatever that, or they, may be], 105 W. Madison, Chicago 60602.) We also get to hear from Dan C. Johnson, of Mount St. Clare College in Clinton, Iowa. He tells us that “there are few, if

any, institutional activities which cannot be enhanced by presidential presence.”

Yeah, sure. The enhancing presidential presence. Let us be thankful that classroom teaching is at the bottom of any administrator’s list of “Institutional activities” and thus the least likely to be enhanced by the presidential presence.

Missing Linker?

SPEAKING of decision makers looking for work, we suspect that we have discovered a genuine linker, one of those erstwhile change-agents turned ex-facilitators about whom we warned you. He is Terry McHenry, whose title would make a Byzantine emperor’s favorite eunuch sob with envy. McHenry is Assistant Superintendent for Business Services for the County Office of Education in Santa Clara County, California.

Right at the top of its front page, the “Superintendent’s Bulletin” admits that McHenry has completed “the extensive nine-month Sloan Program offered by the Stanford School of Business.” (For educationists, anything that can be knocked off with a little inservicing is *intensive*; if it takes a little more time, and a lot more money, they call it *extensive*.) Now, McHenry “has taken on the added responsibility of coordinating all planning,” and “he will be using the techniques learned at Stanford and applying it [*sic*] to marketing and managing the various services districts require.”

Well. Of course. We do have some grasp of planning coordination, which involves *not* mere planning, but the far subtler arts of planning to plan, and planning *whether* to plan. That might be what Cohen and March should have meant by “issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired.” But the rest of it is murky. What does one *do* when he manages a “service districts require”? Does he order paper towels according to those techniques learned at Stanford? Is it appropriate for the employee who *manages* services, whatever that might mean, to *market* them as well? And to what, exactly, is this mysterious responsibility added? In short, what does this man do for a living?

Fortunately, we need not speculate. McHenry describes his labors in the cause of the life of the mind:

Districts are our clients. Under the new planning program, we will hopefully do a better job of determining what the needs are in the field and, given, how we can meet those district needs.

This will be a lot more than just asking a simple question of do you want a certain kind of service, which is what they (the districts) have been asked before. It is a matter of what is the potential, and, what is the possibility of getting resources for it—either from the County Office or from some other source. We will be looking at the whole scenario.

We are going to start doing an overall look. The first year is not going to be extensive, but we have to find out what the attitudes are out there for the need and provision of services. It will be much more than a needs assessment.

Aha! The whole scenario. The potential. The resources *for* the potential. More, much more, than a mere needs assessment. But gently! Nothing extensive. The needs in the field will keep. First you have to *start* to find out those *attitudes* out there, the attitudes *for* need and provision. (Could there be any *against*?) Not an easy job. Might take years. *None* of them extensive.

So what did we tell you? The man must be a linker!

Please don’t laugh at a linker. Without linkers there couldn’t be any county superintendents, who can hardly be expected to superintend the *district* superintendents all by themselves. And *those* superintendents need linkers, both to link with the county linkers and to look at the whole scenario in superintending the attitudes for need and provision among the principals and *their* linkers. And *all of* those people need offices, and secretaries, and Mr. Coffee machines. Quality education doesn’t come cheap, y’know.

Kollege Kredit Kourse No. 6291

[Proposed for Recreation Majors and Masters in Recreation and Leisure Services at Central Missouri State U., Warrensburg.]

Designed to acquaint the practitioner/student in recreation and related fields with the philosophical foundations of leisure counseling. The student will explore concepts, theories, and techniques in leisure counseling with emphasis on facilitation.

Teratology

HERE is a blurb from a brochure promoting a ‘Celebrate Literacy’ workshop sponsored by the River Falls Area Reading, Council in Hudson, Wisconsin. It explains a lot:

Dr. Robert A. Pavlik is chairman of the Reading Department at Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is also a language consultant for the Scott, Foresman Publishing Company. In his capacity as a language consultant, he inservices authors and editors on how to write textbooks for minimum student comprehension.

And here is an assessment of the conditions that prevail at the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California. The assessor is Chancellor Robert L. Sinsheimer:

The absence of a functional structure coupled with stress on being different that encouraged each faculty member to pull his or her own way effectively locked the campus into a state of dynamic immobility.

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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 Proud Walkers

When I hear the hypercritical quarreling about grammar and style, the position of the particles etc., etc., stretching or contracting every speaker to certain rules, . . . I see they forget that the first requisite and rule is that expression shall be vital and natural, as much as the voice of a brute, or an interjection: first of all, mother tongue; and last of all, artificial or father tongue. Essentially, your truest poetical sentence is as free and lawless as a lamb’s bleat. The grammarian is often one who can neither cry nor laugh, yet thinks he can express human emotions. So the posture-masters tell you how you shall walk, . . . but so the beautiful walkers are not made.

THOSE are Thoreau’s words, and we wish that we had read them years ago, instead of just last week. It has taken us years to reach an understanding that Thoreau could have given us in less than a minute. No matter how hard you try to be thoughtful, ignorance must set you to reinventing the wheel.

We once did fuss a bit over “particles, etc., etc.,” but even then we held that the splitting of infinitives, for instance, was, like the celibacy of the clergy, a matter of discipline rather than doctrine. We have not been deaf to the lamb’s bleat. “It is often true,” we have said, “that the language of the unschooled [so unlike the language of the schoolers] is clear, accurate, powerful, and even beautiful, for those merits do not depend on tricks of grammar.” And we have often lacerated the inane or mendacious language of the schoolers who can not achieve any one of those merits even when they *have* achieved the “basic minimum competency” thought suitable to their kind.

So we are far less chastened than encouraged and enlightened by Thoreau's words. He has given us the key, the *mot* so *juste* that we suddenly remember that *juste* is a word that goes with *justice*. How better can we understand the affected and improbable language of the educationist than as the unwittingly ludicrous display of the smug posture-master?

But Thoreau gives even us more. The proper work of the wise is surprisingly often nothing more than providing the rest of us with exactly the right words. So it is that new ways of understanding come forth, for *understanding* is the making of statements, and statements about statements. In one happy phrase, Thoreau has made the fine and unexpected distinction between Mother Tongue, a concept so familiar that we usually don't stop to think about what we might take it to mean, and the unfamiliar Farther Tongue, which has always been lurking in the possibilities of language. Thinking, after all, is nothing more than rummaging about in the possibilities of language. And the thinker is one who regularly answers the question that ordinarily puts an end to thought: What more can I say?

Accordingly, we have gone rummaging through back issues looking for examples through which we might understand that "artificial or father tongue." It was easy. We quickly found these three:

The findings suggest that psychosexuality constructs of agency/communion can be meaningfully operationalized to reflect the degree of psychosexuality integration, with different modes of manifestations and different correlates of interpersonal behavior associated with various levels on the integration continuum.

The multiple issues raised suggests that a particular type of *structure* and *composition*...is required. Thus, the accomplishment of the aforementioned aims require that the meeting be from a more *comprehensive perspective*.

Linguistics has become a magic word in language instruction of today. Vigorous activity...has stretched linguistics beyond...esoteric enclaves...and brought it cascading down through the high school and elementary grades.

The first of those passages is the prissy pirouette of the practiced posture-master. Ah, what skills. How prettily he prances from the operationalization of constructs to the reflection of *the* degree of integration, and gracefully glides on into modes of manifestation and correlates associated with levels on the continuum. Ah, how smart he must be. And how *professional*. How proud of him his mother must be, although probably *not*, we'd be willing to wager, nearly as proud of him as he is of himself. The attribute that always leaks out of such writing is that supposed virtue that educationists have chosen, ignoring logic in the service of sentimentality, as both a requisite to education *and* its best reward—Self-esteem.

The voice of that passage, however, is not just the voice of self-esteem. It is the voice of a *man* full of self-esteem. It is the pompous voice of self-awarded authority, the voice of command, the mighty voice from "above," in which no decent human should speak. It is Father Tongue.

The second passage is an example of failed Father Tongue. Close, but no cigar. The writer is evidently an apprentice posture-master. He does want to strut with the proud walkers, but he keeps on stumbling because he hasn't learned to tie his shoelaces. He is Huxley's snotty little seminarian, who dresses up in the bishop's flashy regalia. His grammatical gaucheries would be inconsequential if his language were "vital and natural," but in the context of that pretentious jargon, they are laughable calamities.

The third writer's just a little boy who thinks it would be *really neat* to grow up to be a posture-master some day. So far, he has neither the words nor the tune, but he is quite as eager to be a proud walker as Tom Sawyer is to be a highwayman, who will hold his victims for "ransom," as it says "in the books," even though he has never felt the need to stop and reckon what that *means*.

Our habitual scrutiny of language has confirmed us in sexism. Men and women are different, essentially and (we hope) ineradicably. Men don't grow up. Pure seriousness seizes only a few of them, and only from time to time. They pretend to be something. They pretend to be sages or soldiers, or anything in between. Even the most witless and inept can find some system, made *by* men and *for* men, that will pay him for pretending to be a superintendent of schools, or a language

arts facilitator, or something. And the score is kept in those sad games not by what one gets done, but by how one plays, which means, among other things, doing one's "work" exclusively in Father Tongue.

The crusty Dr. Johnson, in one of his most outrageous wisecracks, opined that listening to a woman preaching a sermon would be like watching a dog walking on its hind legs. We would be astonished *not* that she might do it well, but that she does it *at all*. Tsk, we used to think. That is *not* a nice thing to say. We were wrong. In fact, *nice* is exactly what it is—look it up, if you must—for it makes a fine and subtle distinction.

Johnson knew the difference between Father Tongue and Mother Tongue. He knew what he meant by "preaching," an exercise in the artificial language used by *men* for saying exactly what they are supposed to say. Misogynist though he was, Johnson knew that no woman, uncompelled, would ever *do* such a thing.

Yes, we do know that there are dippy women who *want* to speak Father Tongue, who understand no more than most men how pitiable a display they make of their captivity, for it *is* captivity, not liberation. A man who speaks Mother Tongue can make his own place. A woman who speaks Father Tongue might fill a vacancy in the ranks of the proud walkers. And she'd better have good, strong hind legs.

Sheer Doctoral Competence

High Order Acquisition Testimony to High-standard Endeavor where Seminars Plumb Assists

Awesomeness Partially Comprehended in Texas

YES, it's true. Only in Texas could it happen, and only Nolan Estes could have brought it off. It was Estes, as superintendent of schools in Dallas, who put an end to busing. With a single flap of his nimble tongue, he sent the children to school in motorized attendance modules. So we just *knew* that if there was any educationist who might partially comprehend the awesomeness of superintending, it would *have* to be good ol' Nolan.

He *says* so himself, in a real fine article we found in *Texas School Business*. (You won't find

a sprightlier journal of thrusts from out on the cutting edge of the fast lane than good ol' *TSB*.) Estes' article, co-authored by one L. D. Haskew, who doesn't seem to have made any difference, is called "The Cooperative Superintendency Program," but maybe that's a typo. It's really about some great superintendency program that Estes is running at the University of Texas, where he has become a "Professor" and *also* an "Education Administrator," or maybe just a plain "Professor Education Administrator." From the way it's printed, it's hard to tell. Anyway, it's a swell job for an experienced flapper of tongue. Consider this:

Doctoral courses in Educational Administration focus on high-level superintending attainments (e. g. planmaking as well as upon intellectual development (e. g. organization strategy for Instruction) and sheer doctoral competence (e. g. research design, rational thinking). Seminars, called "Leadership Clinics," plumb the technological assists to constructive leaderly superintending. Dissertation design and publication are high-standard endeavors which also focus on a chosen facet of superintending's broad concerns. Flexibility in the hourly schedules for TEA work-assignment performance enhances competence-development by course engagements. The Fellows emerge with a University of Texas Ph.D. degree as testimony to high order professional and scholarly acquisitions.

How's that for sheer doctoral competence in high-standard endeavor?

It is entertaining, of course, to think of plumbing the assists and enhancing that "competence-development" by "course engagements." And we could provide you a titter by prowling through the piece and telling you that the elements abound with training, that performances will be factored into competencies, that far upness must escalate, and that there should be plenty of relational constructiveness with workmates. It might be fun to hear that when Estes and Haskew *say* "Artifacts from administrative/developmental performance," they don't mean, as one who knows both the meaning of "artifact" and the nature of educationistic labors might suppose, dried up ball-points, æroplanes folded from memos, and paperclips

malformed into projectiles. E. and H. mean, however, “newspaper clippings, citations or awards, pointed [?] letters of commendation, employee evaluation sheets.” Or we might consider superintending itself, myriad in its demands, they say, and test whether we *too*—so naive that we can’t even understand why people who *want* a Leadership Clinic don’t just go and *have* one, instead of setting up a seminar and then *calling* it a Leadership Clinic—test whether *we* can hope to comprehend partially the awesomeness of superintending.

But this, unlike the esoteric *TSB*, is a humble little journal of simple ideas. It’s as much as we can do to handle the easy stuff. Hyphens, for instance. Hyphens, in fact, can tell us all we need to know about sheer doctoral competence (*e.g.* rational thinking) in Texas.

These sheer “doctors” of educationism have as much trouble with little things as with big (*e.g.* rational thinking). They are *holistic*, and can not waste attention on mere details, unless, of course, they have to do with expense allowances and fringe benefits. You must have noticed, in the cited passage, that the “high-level attainments” and “high-standard endeavors” suggest the tastes and habits of some environment other than *Academe*. “Now this here’s your easy-clean high-standard chopper-dicer.” But, more to the point, we are led to wonder about the “acquisitions” at the end of the paragraph. How come they’re only “high order” instead of “high-order”? Is there, in fact, some significant (and intended) distinction between “high level” and “high-level,” a distinction that the authors judiciously chose *not* to make in the case of “high order”? Is that absent hyphen simply a typo, which the authors, had they noticed it, would have taken pains to “correct” in the interests of clarity and precision, or out of mere sheer doctoral competence?

And what distinction do the hyphens clarify in “competence-development” and “work-assignment performance”? Is it the same in both cases? The former can only mean *the development of competence*, and that is what it would mean without the hyphen. But if the latter means *the assignment of work*, then the “fellows” must be those who *perform* the *assignment* of the work rather than the work itself. So what the hell is it with these hyphens?

If you pay close attention to the sheer doctoral scribbles of educationists, and if you assume that unusual practice must serve some principle, you will understand why nothing can be done about schools. The people who manage them won’t even pay attention to their own utterances, and they serve no coherent principles. See what principle you can derive from these forms, all from Estes and Haskew:

a post in top-management
 elements-of-activity arc set up
 majority-choice is the exception
 clinical-setting acquisition
 positionally-prominent individuals
 research and/or literature-synthesis

There. Now, if your work-assignment performance has been high-level, you will be smarting from office-insolence and in danger of mind-o’erthrowment.

The Lady with the Lump

I can stand out the war with any man.

Nightingale Clobbered! Sings no More

Intentionality of Consciousness
 Reported in Family Ecosystem

JUST when we thought we had it all figured out, just as we had *definitely* concluded that women would never indulge themselves in the ludicrous linguistic posturing so natural to men, we got some bad news from Akron. It came in these very words, and we are afraid that they may have been written by a *woman*:

Assumptions from theories of ecology and phenomenology provide an ecological-phenomenological perspective. The ecological-phenomenological perspective provides the framework for graduate education to prepare family health nurses to assist families in sustaining that quality of life which enables them to survive and prevail. From an

ecological-phenomenological* perspective the faculty views families within a macro-ecosystem, a meta-ecosystem, and a micro-ecosystem; and perceives the phenomena of the family ecosystem in terms of the intentionality of consciousness of enfamilied selves as reported by family members.

And there's more, lots more. And it's all the same, of course, except when it's worse. That "intentionality," for example, is later defined—well, not defined, but at least *viewed*—"viewed as those motives and goals that lead to expansions of consciousness." And consciousness "is viewed as five domains of living: valuing, thinking, feeling, acting, and intuiting."

Now you might suspect that when intentionality does lead to expansion of consciousness, it might, at least, open up a couple of new domains, loafing about and wool-gathering, perhaps, but no. It turns out that "expansion of consciousness is viewed as a dialectical process which encompasses thesis of being, antithesis of doing and synthesis of becoming."

Heavy.

If all this puts you in mind of one of those real intellectual institution places where they figure the ontological is-ness of It All, it's only because you've forgotten—and who can blame you?—the key word in the cited passage: "nurse."

Yes, this is all about how they "teach" nurses something or other at the College of Nursing at the University of Akron.

Florence Nightingale said that she could stand the war, and she did. She also said:

No *man*, not even a doctor, ever gives any other definition of what a nurse should be than this—"devoted and obedient." This definition would do just as well for a porter. It might even do for a horse.

Somehow, we don't think it cheers her to know that the *women* who are defining the nurse are so docile and obedient that they even want to talk like men, which no self-respecting horse would dream of.

* This is the kind of spacing you have to expect if you use 'words' of 27 characters.

Summer Reading

The Leipzig Connection

by Paolo Lionni and Lance J. Klass

Heron Books, Inc.

P.O. Box 563, Portland, OR 97207

WE HAVE given the publisher's address because you are going to have trouble finding this book. You can order it for a measly \$3.75 plus postage, and we wish you would. It's important.

The Leipzig Connection is an account of the birth and the earliest outrages and fiascos of what is now the profitable practice of "educational psychology," of which "service" only certain agencies of government seem to feel any need. And how *that* came to be so, you will also discover.

Its title makes the book sound like a thriller, and in a way it is. There isn't a drop of blood shed, but of that kind of violence that nuts commit daily against millions of minds, there's plenty.

[Ed. Note: We know from the mail that many of you have read our assistant circulation manager's recent *The Graves of Academe*. You may remember the profit *he* took from a single passage in *Leipzig*.]

HAVING just read "Sheer Doctoral Competence," you may be curious (as you had better be) about the great American superintending scam. Where *do* those guys come from? How come so many of them keep turning up again and again, all over the country, like itinerant mountebanks? Is some sinister syndicate sending us all these silly superintendents?

Yes.

And you can read the sordid details in Jerome Cramer's "One Step Ahead of the Sheriff," which appeared in *Washington Monthly*, March 1982. It's worth a trip, even quite a long trip, to the library.

*Of the Making of many Books,
there is no End.*

*Much Study is a Weariness
of the Flesh;
and he that increaseth Knowledge
increaseth Vexation.*

Notes from Central Control

DO NOT be fooled by the Assistant Circulation Manager's grandiose title. He is a mere figurehead. The real power is in the hands of Central Control. She sends you, along with best wishes for a peaceful and temperate summer, the admonitions and requests that follow:

The mail people neither know nor care what they are doing. Issues sent to long-time readers come back marked "No such street" or "Unknown." P.O. employees see no cause for complaint in that. So what can I tell ya? These things happen. And they *have* delivered eighty-three million deodorant samples to occupants without a hitch. So, if an issue seems inordinately late, don't hesitate to write. Should *your* letter come back stamped "No such state in the Union," just wait. We'll eventually find you by telephone. And if you *do* move, please tell us promptly.

We still refuse to fill out forms or send invoices. We throw purchase orders and form letters into the wastebasket.

It sometimes happens that a faithful reader retires, or is laid off, or, for some other reason finds it necessary to save every dollar. When we *know* that—which is probably all too rarely—we simply add one more name to our Grace and Favour List. Retired English teachers, whatever their circumstances, can subscribe for one half of the usual price. We believe, but do not insist, that school administrators and supernumeraries should make up the difference. Or just retire.

We are glad to send gift subscriptions, along with appropriate greetings. Unless you instruct otherwise, a renewal notice will eventually go to the recipient rather than to you.

Almost every example we use in THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN is sent to us by our readers, sometimes anonymously, and sometimes by people who ask us *not* to reveal their names. Some ask that we conceal or alter the identity of the perpetrator. The latter we won't do, for we believe everyone accountable for his words, which are also his thoughts and

deeds. But we *never* reveal our sources. In fact, once we've decided to use a piece, we destroy all covering letters and envelopes. And then we can't remember.

And so, Goodbye until September.

The Underground Grammarian
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R. Mitchell, Assistant Circulation Mgr.
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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

Volume Six, Number Six . . . September 1982

Education Going to Pot

IN the shifty phantasmagoria of educationism, it is hard to guess what the words mean. Take your best shot at an old favorite: *individualized*. Good. Now check your guess with reference to a few items in *The Illinois Primer of Individualized Education Programs*:

"Student [!] will stay oil potty chair and perform needed function at least once a day."

"Student will regulate bowel movements and independently toilet self with success by the end of the year."

"Upon entering lavatory student will grasp underpants in order to pull them down—90 percent criteria level."

We would've thought that if there were *one* thing, *one lousy thing*, that those officious meddlers could *not* seek to control under the rubric of *individualizing* and "uniqueness of the

individual,” it would be...surely...Oh, the hell with it.

You can read all about it in “The Law of Regularity,” by Jack Frymier, in *The Educational Forum*, XLIV:2, put Out at Ohio State U., Columbus.

The Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat

FOR some reason, we have not convinced the rapidly multiplying proponents of the back-to-basics-with-the-Bible “education” movement that we are *not* on their side. What’s wrong with us that we haven’t figured out how to offend those usually truculent and combative enthusiasts? We have had no trouble in offending their mirror-image counterparts, the silly educationists, who hold *exactly the same* thematic belief—that knowledge and reason are not enough, and who “educate” by *exactly the same* method the modification of behavior through persuasion addressed to the sentiments. The details don’t matter where the principle is rotten.

One of those “Christian” school newsletters recently reprinted portions of a piece called “The Answering of Kautski,” in which we considered similarities in educationism and bolshevism. We quoted Lenin’s famous line about “teaching” the children and planting a seed that will never be uprooted. We also quoted (and the reprint did include) a much less familiar Leninism, saying that most people are not capable of thought, and all they need is to “learn the words.”

The readers of the newsletter were presumably confirmed in righteousness by an essay linking what schools do to what Lenin said. It did not occur to them, apparently, that Luther, to whom Reason was just “the Devil’s whore,” also said as much, and, in so saying, echoed whole choirs of orthodox theologians.

There is only *one* Education, and it has only *one* goal: the freedom of the mind. Anything that needs an adjective, be it civics education, or socialist education, or Christian education, or whatever-you-like education, is *not* education, and it has some *different* goal. The very existence of modified “educations” is testimony to the fact that their proponents cannot bring about *what they want* in a mind that is free. An “education” that

cannot do its work in a free mind, and so must “teach” by homily and precept in the service of *these* feelings and attitudes and beliefs rather than *those*, is pure and unmistakable tyranny. And it is exactly the kind of tyranny, “tyranny over the mind of man,” to which Thomas Jefferson swore “eternal enmity” on—on what?—on “the altar of God.”

Jefferson was not a bolshevik. He wrote to a nephew:

Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

No bolshevik can say the equivalent in *his* system of belief: Question boldly even the existence of the dialectical process and the withering away of the state. Jefferson’s admonition ought to raise provocative questions for those who like to claim that the Republic was founded on *their* “religious” principles, but it doesn’t. Bolsheviks are not the only ones who never think of asking certain questions.

Reason is not the Devil’s whore. It is the whore’s Devil. To those who have sold their minds for some comfortable sentiments and comforting beliefs, Reason is The Adversary to be hated and feared, the bringer of doubt and difficult questions, the sly disturber of The Peace. To children who are led into whoredom, it matters not at all *which* sentiments and beliefs they are given in return for the freedom of their minds. Whatever the fee, they cannot judge its worth.

Sometimes it seems that every illusion that cripples the mind is taught in schools. The silly notion that if one ideological faction is wrong the other must be right is planted in our minds by the *belief* that true/false tests have something to do with education. We imagine some real difference between Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, government educationists and church educationists. They are all alike. Their prosperity depends on our believing that beliefs and sentiments, *theirs*, of course, are somehow *finer, nobler, more virtuous or humane* than mere Reason.

Half past twelve is coming on, and neither the church cat nor the dog in the manger has slept a wink. Should we do something, or should we hope

that they'll eat each other up? Will burglars steal *this* pair away? Will the "Christian" newsletter reprint all this?

Instruments of Precision

*Their two is not the real two,
their four is not the real four.*

Prof Prods Pol!

Emerson Elucidated!

WE HAVE long hoped to find a good, concrete example, with numbers, of what Emerson must have had in mind when he said, speaking of those whose minds have been replaced by the orthodox slogans of some faction, that even their numbers are not the real thing. It is a puzzling statement, for Emerson could hardly have meant that they were so bad at computation that they always came up with *wrong* numbers. He could only have meant that even when they said something that the rest of us would take to have a specific meaning, they did not exactly say *that*.

We can find plenty of that, of course, not only in Academe, but even out there in The World, which may be no better a place after all. The big Twos and Fours, which we *hear* as "The People's Democratic Republic of Whatever," or "Quality Education," always turn out to mean *not* what we might have thought. Our obtuseness may require a dose of *Reeducation*, or, as some apologist for life adjustment remediation enhancement schooling will name it sooner or later, "People's Democratic Quality Reeducation." *Arbeit macht frei*.

But such examples seemed not quite right. We wanted numbers. Now, thanks to *three* alert readers, all on the mailing list for a newsletter sent out by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, we have them. Some professor (of *what*, you guess) wrote Moynihan, who happens to be a professional politician, some helpful hints for the art of gogy, either peda- or dema-. Here are the excerpts quoted in the newsletter:

[Your] material had a readability level of 10.8-11.2. This means that it would be considered readable to people who had at least a tenth grade reading level. In order to broaden the "target audience" of your newsletter and to make your message more accessible to more voters, I might

suggest that such material be written at a lower level of readability.

Moynihan must be an extraordinarily patient man. Or maybe he's just so busy trying to rustle up "increased funding for quality education" that he can hardly take time off to study the work of the mind as done by the quality educationists who will get to spend the increased funding. Here is Moynihan's reply:

This is how technique traps us. The intended meaning is that I should write at an eighth grade level, or something such. But the professor has said I should lower the readability level of what I write. Surely that means to make it less readable! It seems to me the professor was not clear.

Why Moynihan calls that stuff an example that shows how we are trapped by technique is hard to fathom. Can he believe that "the professor" is just *too good* at something, in command of *too much* technique, or a master of a skill *too technical* to assure mere accuracy? If so, it would not be surprising. It has long been an article of our folklore that too much knowledge or skill, or especially consummate expertise, is a bad thing. It dehumanizes those who achieve it, and makes difficult their commerce with just plain folks, in whom good old common sense has *not* been obliterated by mere book-learning or fancy notions. This popular delusion flourishes now more than ever, for we are all infected with it in the schools, where educationists have elevated it from folklore to Article of Belief. It enhances their self-esteem and lightens their labors by providing theoretical justification for deciding that appreciation, or even simple awareness, is more to be prized than knowledge, and relating (to self and others), more than skill, in which *minimum* competence will be quite enough.

It is possible, of course, that Moynihan shares the delusion, and for all the same reasons. The chosen goals (and probably the inner needs) of politicians are not in any important way different from those of the educationist. But if this politician *really* thinks that that educationist just got "trapped" by his devotion to the stern demands of "technique," then the republic stands in greater peril than we thought. Let's hope that Moynihan was just trying to be polite.

We are not polite. We can say that “the professor” is a boob and a charlatan, and a mealy-mouth too, with his hokey “material,” and his just-between-us-realists-no-offense-intended quotation marks on “target audience,” and that pussy-footing “I might suggest” when he is in the act of suggesting. That sort of thing is usually just an involuntary verbal twitch, pitiable but disconcerting. (Technique does *not* trap us; ignorance of technique traps us.) But that cliquish use of the word “material” is—well—*material*.

Educationists just don’t *feel* right, and feeling is accounted a way of *knowing* in their world, about books. A book is the work of a mind, doing its work in the way that *a* mind deems best. That’s dangerous. Is the work of some mere *individual* mind likely to serve the alms of collectively accepted compromises, which are known in the schools as “standards”? Any mind that would audaciously put *itself* forth to work *all alone* is surely a bad example for the students, and probably, if not downright anti-social, at least a little off-center, self-indulgent, elitist. Such a mind might easily bore somebody, since only a very few people can possibly feel an interest in highly specialized subjects. And then there’s the problem of self-esteem, a frail flower, easily bruised by the unfamiliar, by arcane references, snooty allusions, and, especially, by prose that is simply *not* written at the right grade level. It’s just good pedagogy, therefore, to stay away from such stuff, and use instead, if film-strips and rap sessions *must* be supplemented, “texts,” selected, or prepared, or adapted, by real *professionals*. Those texts are called “reading material.” They are the academic equivalent of the “listening material” that fills waiting-rooms, and the “eating material” that you can buy in thousands of convenient eating resource centers along the roads.

Those marvelous numbers that “the professor” has derived do, in fact, measure something, but not what they pretend to measure. A score of 10.8 means: If this stuff were being considered for a place on our list of approved reading material, we would have to point out that it is only after almost eleven years of our *professional* tutelage that the average student will be able to achieve scores that indicate basic minimum competence in filling in blanks and checking the appropriate squares on a standardized reading material comprehension

assessment instrument, which *is* “standardized” because we design it to go with the stuff that we use as reading material suitable for students who have had almost eleven years of our tutelage.

If you sniff a whiff of madness in such notions of “measurement,” you must have been reading not simply with comprehension but with understanding. Something important depends on making some clear distinction between the two. Educationists seem to have made, in their practice, a distinction like this: Comprehension is what is shown by the ability to make or recognize more or less accurate rephrasings of what you have just read; Understanding is an inner feeling by virtue of which we can correctly “relate to” people and ideas. Some such distinction must inform their belief that knowledge just isn’t enough, and may not even be needed at all, for the accomplishment of the *higher* goals of education, which lie in the realm of attitudes and feelings.

We won’t quarrel with that definition of *comprehension*. We will quarrel instead with the educationists’ apparent notion that comprehension *is the point* of reading. It is not. Only in some very special cases is comprehension the point of reading—in things like recipes and “reading material.” The point of reading is *understanding*, and comprehension is to understanding as getting wet is to swimming. You must do the one before you can hope to do the other, but you don’t do the other simply because you do the one.

Comprehension permits us to answer the question: What does it say? Understanding permits us to begin answering an endless series of questions starting with: What can we say *about* it?

The difference can be demonstrated by Emerson’s sentence, with which this all began: “Their two is not the real two, their four is not the real four.” What score “the professor” would give it, we don’t know. But we do know that those “professors” presume that the syllable is the quantum of comprehension, and that short words are by nature easier to comprehend than long words—“sloth,” for instance, easier than “laziness.” The same applies to sentences; the shorter, the easier. Emerson’s sentence is made of fourteen words and probably *is* a bit long for reading material, but it is made of two almost identical sentences joined by a comma, and uses only seven *different* words, each of them a common monosyllable. So its “readability” score

ought to be very low. Somewhere in the middle of first grade, any child ought to be able to “comprehend” it. And then?

The professor’s reading is not the real reading. His readability—and this misled Moynihan to the *right* conclusion—is not the real readability. It is an essential attribute of “reading material” that it be appropriately comprehensible at a certain grade level, which makes it, at *any* grade level, agonizingly unreadable. That could account for a few other things.

And furthermore...

A WEIRD consequence of teaching reading as though its point were comprehension is bafflement in an encounter with metaphor, a bafflement so extreme that it can cause a blindness to metaphor, in which the “reader” doesn’t even notice that he hasn’t been able to “comprehend” something. When “students” of literature are asked about a metaphor, they will often admit, while affirming that they *did* “do the reading,” that they hadn’t “stopped to think” about that.

They are hardly to blame. They have been taught not to read but to *do* a reading, to eyeball along to the end of a text, hesitating briefly, if at all, to make some surmise as to the meaning of an unfamiliar word, one they haven’t “had.” Since many of them are not too good at phonetics, that can often be an astonishingly wild surmise. There is no good reason to stop and think about anything. That will just cut your reading speed, and speed is almost as much the sign of a good reader as comprehension. Besides, there can be no point in bothering to puzzle something out until, and *unless*, it shows up among the comprehension questions down at the bottom of the reading material. There is even *less* reason to figure the hard stuff out if the questions turn out to be what they call “thought” questions. “Thought” questions usually start with something like: How would you feel if...

Then those “readers” grow up and turn into “the professors.”

We once did a piece on a superintendent in Tulsa who replied to public critics by citing a “futurist,” Peter Wagschal, in whose view we really don’t have much need of literacy anyway.

From that, the superintendent did some ghastly futurizing of his own. Here’s how we described his response to the taxpayers:

In the finest frontier fashion, he stood up tall in the middle of Main Street at high noon and told the rabble that maybe they’d like to talk it over ...with...Pete (The Persuader) Wagschal, who somehow happened to drift into town. True grit.

A reader sent a copy to Wagschal. He replied, explaining that *he* could hardly be blamed for the fact that someone had *believed* what he had written. But he must have had at least some inkling that that was a less than perfect exculpation. So he went on to close with a clincher. Never in his life he said, had he ever *been* in Tulsa!

Over the Rainbow Way up High

WE are *definitely* not in Kansas anymore. We noticed this weird fact only recently, when an itinerant nostrum peddler was accused of some pretty sharp practice and wound up defending himself before a federal grand jury. He testified that what he had done was strictly A-OK, and that he knew this because he had discussed it all in a face-to-face meeting with Jesus. When asked how he *knew* that it was Jesus, he replied that he had recognized him from his picture.

We can’t tell you what happened then, but we can sure tell you what *didn’t* happen, because if it *had* the papers would have been full of it for a week. So here’s what didn’t happen: The jurors did not fall down on the floor gasping and choking with laughter. The lawyers did not rush whooping from the room, holding their pocket handkerchiefs before their streaming eyes. In fact, the only normal human thing that happened there was that some nut said something stupendously funny. But everything *else* was weird.

And only a few weeks later, the same mountebank, still at large, staged a nuptial extravaganza in which a thousand or so of his female followers were more or less married up with a like number of his male ditto. All agog to discover more evidence toward an Over the Rainbow Hypothesis, we tuned it in on the TV. Sure enough. They were all Munchkins.

Then along came Phyllis Schlafly. She has not yet admitted to being Glenda the Good, but who else would go floating around the country in such a big bubble? And she does admit that she intends to do a whole lot of Good.

We read about all the Good she plans to bestow on us in a *New York Times* account of a big “Over the Rainbow Celebration” she threw in Washington (Thirty-five bucks a head, and *no* Tupperware selling!) She took the occasion to announce that she was even going to do Good in the schools, which was kind of a thrill for us, because we do need all the help we can get, even if it comes in a bubble.

Phyllis—gosh, we hope she won’t mind if we call her that; it’s just that we feel we know her, oh *so* well—Phyllis kicked off a campaign to stock all the schools and libraries with *pro*-family books, presumably to replace the *anti*-family books, by “such writers as Hemingway, Steinbeck, Hawthorne, and Twain,” which are being rooted *out* of schools and libraries by her “Eagle Forum” squads. (We don’t know what that is; we’re guessing that it must be something like the Lullaby League.)

Now we’ve actually read those writers, and even lots of others “such as” them, but we never have been able to figure which ones, and in which books, and exactly to what degree, are *pro*-, or *anti*-, family, or neither, or *both*. Those writers are slippery rascals, who portray lovely families and rotten families, and people who do well, or ill, because of the one, or in spite of the other, or both, or neither, or *vice versa*, if you know what we mean by that. And what’s a Mother to do?

So it seemed just peachy that Glenda the Good was willing to take on the hard task of making judgments about books. But then we started to notice something fishy about her powers of judgment.

She said that sex education, which we have ridiculed for reasons that still seem cogent, was “a principal cause of teenage pregnancy.” If we had to rely on that line of argument, even educationists would be able to laugh at us.

She said that her “greatest contribution” was “making sure that eighteen-year-old girls won’t be drafted,” and that she just couldn’t imagine “a greater gift.” Well, we had no trouble at all imagining not just one but lots of greater gifts for eighteen-year-old girls, starting with the power of

reason. But just as we began to suspect that Phyllis might be a bit below her grade level in creative fantasy as an alternative mode of cognition, she proved us wrong. It turned out that she *could* imagine a greater gift, and not just for the girls, but for all of us. “The atomic bomb,” she proclaimed, “is a marvelous gift that was given to our country by a wise God.”

We can’t tell you what happened next, but we *can* tell you what didn’t happen next. The party-goers did not fall down on the floor gasping and choking with laughter. Jerry Falwell (a reverend) and Jesse Helms (an honorable) did not rush whooping from the room, holding their pocket handkerchiefs before their streaming eyes. In fact, the only normal human thing that happened there was that some nut said something stupendously funny. But everything *else* was weird.

So it is in the merry old land of Oz: no brains, but lots of diplomas. Honor and reverence, schooled in the “appreciation” of everyone’s Right to his opinion, which is as good as anyone else’s, have learned to “relate to” Unreason. Logic and fantasy are just alternate modes of cognition, although the one is difficult and so “elitist,” while the other is immediately possible for all and “democratic”; the one sets limits and encourages “authoritarianism,” while the other knows no boundaries and releases “creativity.” Feeling, attitude, belief, awareness, are just as much sources of “knowledge” as disciplined study, but disciplined study is far more likely than the others, which are “humanistic,” to bring “mere knowledge” for nothing more than “its own sake.” Rationality is cold, a sly and clever stunt performed with tricky language; the babbling gush of sincerity is a warm and welcome way of self-expression, which requires not critical scrutiny, but tolerance for other “values” and “points of view.”

We don’t see any hope of getting back to Kansas. But if, someday, some teacher tells the students that it’s time to learn American history by role-playing the constitutional convention while appreciating fife music, and the students all fall down on the floor gasping and choking with laughter, then we’ll be heading for home.



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

Volume Six, Number Seven . . . October 1982

Children of Perez

WE were sitting around minding our own business, thinking of bilingual education and the perpetual preservation of absolutely everyone's cultural heritage, however loathsome, when the *New York Times* suddenly told us about Demetrio Perez, Jr., a Cuban émigré who has become a City Commissioner in Miami.

Perez is mad as hell because Martin Bregman, who produced *Serpico*, intends to make a movie about a Cuban émigré who makes it big in Miami as a drug peddler. From one side of his mouth, Perez says that this will “reflect badly” on Cubans, but the other side is not interested in Cubanity; *it* says that the movie would be dandy if the drug peddler were a *communist* Cuban. (Perez would also settle for a Jewish drug peddler, since he makes no objection to the fact that there are many such in the same movie.) And furthermore, Perez didn't like *Serpico* either. He says that “it tried to affect the credibility of the New York City Police Department.” Accordingly, he has drawn up a draft resolution that would keep Bregman from filming his movie in sun-drenched Miami.

This is what we wonder: Does the political philosophy of Demetrio Perez, Jr., flow from the values inherent in a “cultural heritage” that our *own* government is busily doing all that it can to *preserve* in the schools, or is the man just some kind of a fool who has not *thought* about what he said? We had better hope the latter; the former promises the death of the Republic.

In either case, we'd like to send a message to Perez. Here it is:

Remember always, Perez, that it was from *that* land to *this* that you fled, whatever your reasons. And that you found this land worth fleeing to tells us something about *that* cultural heritage and *this* one. Few flee from this to that, Perez. Few flee *into* societies built on long ages of obedience to traditional orthodoxy and humble respect for

authority, societies where *some* factions are *not* subject to being “badly reflected” upon, where no one would even *try*—for it is the very *trying*, successful or not, that you have condemned—to fool around with the credibility of the police, and where movie-makers do exactly as they are told by City Commissioners.

In the cultural heritage that you chose not to leave behind at the border, it has indeed always been true that some people are protected, and by law as well as by custom, not only from injury but even offense. So it is that you seek for *some* people, policemen and non-communist Cubans, special protection, which must place special restrictions on *all other* people. That arrangement is abhorrent to *our* cultural heritage, in which “it is our Right, it is our Duty” to oppose with measures far sterner than offense *any* who would institute it among us.

And that means *you*.

The founders of this Republic, one of whom wrote the words you didn't recognize, were not ignorant of the political theories implicit in *your* cultural heritage. They knew them well, all too well. And they despised them and rejected them utterly. And they gave us, confirmed us *in*, a heritage that flows not, like yours, from Canossa, but from Runnymede. And that was damned lucky for you, Perez.

You are probably not vicious, but only ignorant, to propose *for us* the very political principles by which *one* gang of tyrants came to oust another in Cuba. The perpetual recurrence of usurpation and counter-usurpation does seem embedded in that cultural heritage of yours, doesn't it? And if it is not embedded in *ours*, if we have not suffered the bloody grand right-and-left of princes, priests, and proles panting after privilege, there must be a reason. You could come to know and understand that reason, Perez, and you should. It is your Duty.

We welcome *you* to this land, but you can't bring Cuba, neither your Cuba nor anyone else's. Now that you are *one of us*, and by choice, it is *our* cultural heritage, in which the preservation of a movie-maker's *Right* is a city commissioner's *Duty*, that you must struggle to defend.

Frankly, Perez, we do not expect you to understand this message. But we hope you'll try, if only for the sake of your children, and *their* children. For the day may well come, through the

sheer force of numbers combined with the corrosive labors of our sycophantic educationists, when *your* cultural heritage will outweigh ours. In that happy day, *your* dreams will be fulfilled. No one will try to “affect the credibility” of the police. Movie-makers will obey city commissioners.

And in that day, Perez, to what new land will your children flee?

Camera Obscura

My photographs establish the iconic, dramatic and psychological roles of contemporary high fashion photography. In other words, my intent is to identify the signifier, while eliminating the signified, simultaneously creating an independent “work.”

Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.

WITTGENSTEIN probably had something much subtler in mind when he came up with that famous line, but the only translation we can manage just now is: If you don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, maybe you ought to keep your trap shut.

Not bad for a logical positivist, eh? But there is another and far zippier school of, well, not exactly “thought,” but of something, surely, in which the counterpart of W’s Proposition Seven reads: You got to I-DEN--tify the Signifier, E-LIM--inate the Signified, don’t mess with Mr. Inbetween.

In schools, this persuasion has provided us Intrapersonal Appreciation through Holistic Writing, a form of Primal Screed Therapy in which the student lets it all hang out and the teacher pronounces it all peachy. In art, it has brought us what is so insignificantly expressed (which is *the* way to do it) in the passage above: that nouvelle vague of Gaga, Son of Dada.

That utterance is the “work” (and we joyfully endorse the iconic role of her quotation marks) of one Vikky Alexander, a photographer, some of whose “works” were among those to be seen last May at Johnson State College in Johnson, Vermont. One of our agents was there, of course, and sent in copies of the artists’ statements of—well, of *something*, no doubt, but of what, it’s

hard to say. Mostly they identified the signifiers as practiced eliminators of the signified.

The most practiced is probably a certain James Welling. He is serious. He doesn’t even put quotation marks around “work.” He doesn’t *do* works anyway. He seeks productions. Here is part of a production he found:

My work challenges the photographic ethos wherein the camera witnesses mundane details of appearance. I seek a photographic production which evokes as much as it reveals, and which resists the intelligence as long as possible. To shear the photograph of representational references produces an image of multivalent significances.

That, at least, settles an old controversy in one special case. One picture that resists the intelligence is worth forty-eight words that do likewise. So art *does* instruct and delight after all!

And furthermore

HERE’s another thought-provoking, but intelligence-resisting example of Artspeak, always anxious for to shine in the high esthetic line. This is from a drama review, the deed of a David E. James, in a recent *Artweek*:

The need to introduce explicit political commentary into the reflexive systems of postmodern performance has been very powerful for the past few years. Yet when this extreme form of content is incorporated into a structure of formal relations, there is a constant danger that it itself will be reduced to the mere form of a content. In similar fashion, the authentic “expressiveness” of recent neoexpressionisms, with whatever social commentary this may be thought to imply, tends to seep away—contextualized by the marketing and critical systems of the art world and leaving the radical impulse beached on its own self-consciousness as recycling, an ironic reinstallation of a mode whose possibilities of expressing anything other than its own situation in art history have disappeared.

Those who talk like that have influence; while we know that they speak nonsense, we know not

with exactly what *sense to* contradict them. After all, we can hardly take an *opposing* stand when a man asserts that an extreme form of content can be reduced to the *mere* form of a content. That is not *false* or *wrong*, but simply unintelligible. There is no *righting* it.

How can a human mind *rest* in such utterance? Nature, or nurture?

That you may brood the better on the puzzle, we send you the passage below, with its cheerful assumption as to “the mind’s endless endeavor.”

SO FAR from verbal language being a “compromise for a language of intuition”—a thin, but better-than-nothing substitute for real experience—language, well used, is a *completion* and does what the intuitions of sensation by themselves cannot do. Words are the meeting points at which regions of experience which can never combine in sensation or intuition, come together. They are the occasion and the means of that growth which is the mind’s endless endeavor to order itself. That is why we have language. It is no mere signalling system. It is the instrument of all our distinctively human development, of everything in which we go beyond the other animals. I. A. Richards—*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*

[ED. NOTE: This is a half-size edition. We had to keep it small so that we could send you the enclosed supplement without incurring the 85 percent surcharge levied on any portion of the second ounce.]

Page Five

An Occasional Supplement to The Underground Grammarian

Guarding the Guardians of the Guards

WE have been hearing both from and about groups of citizens who have organized themselves as guardians of education and monitors of texts and techniques. Those who have written to us have praised our efforts, claiming a common cause and expecting that we will praise, and promote, their efforts. We will not. They are decent and well-meaning people disturbed about

the obvious disorders of education, no doubt, but their understanding of “education” is as thoughtless and self-serving as that of the self-styled professionals of education who brought those disorders upon us.

These guardians of education, while they differ in some ways, all seem proponents of the back-to-basics frenzy, in which we find no merit. We champion mastery, and we mean mastery, not minimum competence, in language and number not because it is the goal of education but because it is absurd to imagine an educated person who lacks it. Having that mastery, we can make of knowledge the raw material of thoughtfulness and judgment. Lacking it, we can make of knowledge nothing more than the substance of training and the content of indoctrination.

The back-to-basics enthusiasts, who never fail to note the paramount importance of being able to read want-ads and to write letters of application, treat the skills of number and language as subdivisions of vocational training to be imparted and done with, as though reading a micrometer and reading a paragraph were acts of the same nature. In one sense, literacy is a trivial skill, easily acquired and neither more nor less valuable than those darlings of the schools, the “life skills,” things like shoe tying and crossing at the corner. In another sense it is an endless and demanding enterprise that is also the ground of our knowledge and understanding, but an enterprise little likely to entice the minds of those taught literacy as a life skill.

All unwittingly, therefore, the guardians preach the same degradation of literacy that the educationists have so long practiced, and, strange as it might seem at first, for the same reason. The greatest mischief done in the schools is the attempt to inculcate certain presumed “values,” but the guardians understand that less than perfectly. They fancy that the mischief lies not in the inculcation of values but in the inculcation of the educationists’ values rather than the guardians’ values. All would be well, they imagine, if only the school would foster the “right” values. And that is why they must make of literacy a “basic” life skill rather than a way of life. If you want to foster in children certain values and preclude others, you must take care that they do not develop an appetite for knowledge and the skill to make of it the raw

material of thoughtfulness and judgment. Jefferson's words are an assertion of faith, not fact; fact may be "self-evident," but "truth" is not. If it were, earth would be fair, and all men glad and wise.

There is a momentous difference between coming to believe what we have often been told and deciding, as Jefferson did, out of knowledge and thoughtful judgment, to "hold" something true. The former is a kind of slavery and easy to achieve; the latter is difficult, for it requires knowledge and governed intellect, in other words, an education, but it is freedom.

Freedom is, to be sure, frightening. There is no telling what values free people will choose to hold. Decent and well-meaning guardians of values were horrified by the monstrous principles of the Declaration of Independence. It is, of course, out of fear that the guardians preach the inculcation of values, fear of knowledge and thought.

Most of the guardians urge things like the study of history and economics "emphasizing the benefits of the free enterprise system." We wholeheartedly share the guardians' devotion to the free enterprise system, but they obviously don't share our equal devotion to the study of history and economics, which will inevitably bring the knowledge of some facts, events, and ideas that are not at all conducive to our wholehearted devotion to the free enterprise system. When we study history from a certain point of view, we do not study history. If our students some day discover, as in fact they will, that we were sometimes mistaken in our knowledge of history, they will probably forgive us. But if they discover as in fact they do, that we have misrepresented or omitted knowledge in the service of some values, they will learn to distrust both us and those values, as indeed they should—and apparently do.

If our values are grounded, as we usually imagine they are, in evidence and reason, then those who can see the evidence and who know the ways of reason are likely to adopt them. However, if we find ourselves tampering with the evidence and tempering the power of language, the medium of reason, then perhaps we ought to re-evaluate our values. Should that prove unacceptable, we should at least be able to see that our interest would be best served not by asking the state to

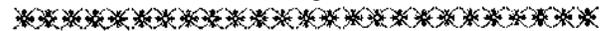
promulgate our values but by forbidding the state to promulgate any values at all. If the state can espouse some value that we love in spite of evidence and reason, it can, with equal justice, espouse others that we do not love.

The guardians do differ in one important way from the educationists. The guardians have lost their nerve, while the educationists still have plenty. The guardians, although they often wave the flag, do not truly hold the most basic value of a free society: the belief that, given the choice, knowing and thoughtful people will choose to continue in a free society. Those who do hold that value must guard against the guardians. But not in the classroom.



The Underground GRAMMARIAN

Volume Six, Number Eight . . . November 1982



Sayings Brief and Dark

In accordance with their textbooks, they are always in motion; but as for dwelling upon an argument or a question, and quietly asking and answering in turn, they can no more do so than they can fly. . . . If you ask any of them a question, he will produce, as from a quiver, sayings brief and dark, and shoot them at you; and if you inquire the reason of what he has said, you will be hit with some other new-jangled word, and you will make no way with any of them. Their great care is, not to allow of any settled principle either in their arguments or in their minds, . . . for they are at war with the stationary, and do what they can to drive it out everywhere.

NO, that is *not* an extract from a report of a convention of curriculum facilitators, or a tale told out of school by someone who escaped from a teacher academy with all of his faculties intact. It is—and we always find this sort of thing

refreshing—a passage from Plato, who never even heard of educationists, and who never had to. He knew the archetype, the ideal, of which our bold, innovative thrusters are just local and ephemeral appearances—just *our* bad luck.

The speaker is a certain Theodorus, and he is talking not about educationists but about some Ephesians who have adopted the notion that knowledge is perception and, therefore, as mutable and diverse as the world and different for every perceiver. And it is because they deny the possibility of permanent and universally pertinent principle, or of any “truth” that might be supposed to exist whether anyone perceives it or not, that they are said to be “at war with the stationary.”

We don’t know much philosophy around here, but we sure do know a neat idea when we see one, and *that* is one neat idea. It means, among hosts of other neat things, that we are OK, that we don’t *have* to know much philosophy around here. We can perceive just as well as the next monthly. And when you come to think of it, or even when you *don’t* come to think of it, you can easily perceive it as a really *democratic* idea, the very idea we need to prove the worth of rap sessions in which eight-year-olds can decide all about abortion and alternative lifestyles and which passenger to throw out of an overloaded lifeboat.*

* They actually do this in the schools. It’s called the Lifeboat Game, which proves that school has its lighter side. The dull labors of math and grammar are offset by playful interludes of childlike chatter as to who shall live and who shall die.

The game provides a *dramatis personae* clearly differentiated by “socially significant” attributes: age, sex, ethos, calling, and other such contingencies by virtue of which a person is also a local and temporal manifestation. This is *not* one of the contexts in which educationists choose to warble paeans to “the uniqueness and absolute worth of the individual.” (Inconsistency troubles them not at all; they are at war with the stationary.) In this case, the verdict must be relevant,” conducive to “the greatest good for the greatest number,” and the exclusive focus on accepted notions of “social usefulness” assures that a decision *will* be made. Another *kind* of inquiry—whether it is better to *do* or to *suffer* an injustice, for instance, or whether the *common good* is more to be prized than the *good*—would preclude decision and spoil the game, sending all the players back to the tedium of math and grammar. Schoolteachers, in any case, are usually kept ignorant even of the *possibility* of such inquiries, but

Theodorus, however, took no harm greater than exasperation from his visit to Ephesus. He was not obliged by law to spend twelve years among the practitioners of quality philosophy. Nor did he enroll in an Ephesian equivalent of a teacher academy, so that he might experience slogans and incantations relevant to outcomes-based instruction modalities and enhancement facilitation.

We, on the other hand, cannot go home. Athens is fallen, and Ephesians peddle tacky souvenirs among the ruins. There is no dwelling upon argument, but only the rap session, no quietly asking and answering in turn, but only privileged self-expression in the recitation of the latest notions.

We are led into these melancholy reflections by a sad and exasperated letter from a faithful reader. He is in the school business, but is obviously still a thoughtful person.

He was filling out yet another of those countless and mind-numbing forms that educationists, given sufficient funding, of course, dearly love to cook up and send around. (They call that “research,” and the “answers”—usually nothing more than choices checked off by bored and angry people justifiably thirsty for revenge—they call “data.”) The poor man, who is not an educationist, but a teacher, the lowest rank there is in the school business, read these words of wisdom from his betters:

As the individual staff member considers a program of self-improvement, attention should be given to the ability to impart knowledge.

they *have* been told all about self-worth and how to enhance it.

The children who “play” the game usually decide to dump an old clergyman, a man who is supposed to be prepared for that sort of thing—being fed to sharks by a committee of children, that is. A busy young country-western singer will be preserved. She has many long years ahead of her in which to maximize her potential and serve the greatest good by entertaining the greatest number. And *she* is supposed to be prepared for *that* sort of thing—being elevated to wealth and power by a *very large* committee of children.

What a pity that Himmler and Goebbels and all that crowd are dead. They’d make really neat resource persons for the Lifeboat Game. Well, there’s still Rudy Hess, and we might even find Mengele.

Something must have snapped in his mind. We'll never know exactly what caused it. Maybe it was that lofty Passive Imperative: "Attention Should Be Given." Maybe it was the realization that he, a mere *individual* staff member, couldn't even *identify* those of his colleagues who might be of the *other* kind. In any case, he did what you are *never* supposed to do in the school business. He looked at one of those sayings, brief and dark, and actually *thought* about it. Should that sort of anti-social behavior become common in our schools, there would be an end to educationism, which depends absolutely, like any other cult, upon the credulousness of its adherents, and which, like any other cult, fosters credulousness by giving catechism the name of "education."

The brief, dark saying that caught our correspondent's mind was that pious and oft-intoned mantra: "The Ability to Impart Knowledge." How he thought about that, we can't tell you *in detail*, but *in principle* we can tell you, because the principles are stationary. He dwelt upon the question; he did not appreciate it or interact with it. He asked and answered in turn; he did not rap. He inquired the *reason* of what was said; he did not relate to the reasons for saying it.

He put questions like these: Does knowledge *need* imparting, whatever that is, or would *telling* be enough? When knowledge is told by stones and stars, who is the teacher, and in what statements can we describe the knowable properties of his "abilities"? If the imparting of knowledge is the telling of what is so, who can *lack* that ability, except the insane, the imbecilic, the comatose, the irretrievably deluded, or the pathologically mendacious? If, however, that imparting of knowledge is something *other* than the telling of what is so, what, exactly, are its properties? Can we consider the "ability" to do it, or judge whether it *ought* to be done, without knowledge of its nature? Is knowledge not that which needs beholding rather than assertion, and is the habit of diligent inquiry not the parent of *beholding*? As to the worth of teachers, and especially teachers of teachers, ought we not to judge of their habits and ways of inquiry instead of their self-proclaimed and utterly unintelligible "ability to impart knowledge"?

Still, as at least one man we know will surely testify, you *can* learn a thing or two—well, not

from, exactly, but *because* of those people. Maybe that's the secret of a *good* teacher academy, a place where the students, sitting still and thinking, could just *observe* the educationists leaping from tree to tree in their natural habitat.

To be to Some chewed Books Tasted Are Swallowed to digested, and Others be, and Some be Few

NEVER spoken truer were words. And out are to quickly some spat be. Unfortunately, however, the natural good sense which instructs even very small children to spew noxious substances clean across the room is suppressed in the schools as anti-social and little conducive to the self-esteem of the teachers. The wretched little tykes, once the iron door of the schoolhouse clangs shut behind them, are required *by law* to swallow everything fed them by the bold, innovative thrusters who make up the ever-changing menu. Peanut butter guacamole yesterday, potato chips in aspic tomorrow, but never a smidgen of jam today.

Nevertheless, however improbable and nauseous their concoctions, it is usually possible to figure out what it is that they either imagine or pretend that they will accomplish. But now, in an unbook called *Expressways*, a sixth-grade "reading" text, we have a disgusting mess of unidentifiable substance whose supposed purpose we cannot even begin to guess.

It pretends to be an exercise in "correcting word order," and begins by asserting that "word order affects the meaning of a sentence," as some precocious (and thus, as you will see, disruptive) children will have noticed even before they reached the sixth grade. The exercise asks the students to do something about some supposedly garbled sentences. Some of them actually *are* garbled:

magician a Merlin was

Arthur enchanted an stone of pulled out sword of

Not quite as much fun as a barrel of monkeys, perhaps, but close. Even the dullest students should be able, as instructed, to "rewrite each

group of words to make a clear and sensible sentence.” But *why*, dammit? *Why*?

Is this what those educationists mean by “problem-solving”? Do they imagine, or pretend, that a garbled sentence is a “problem” for which all readers must be prepared lest they fail to comprehend deliberate distortions? Is it some “life-skill” enhancement intended to insure that the students will still be able to check the right boxes on comprehension tests when all the printers have gone mad? Are students, in fact, likely to *write* such garbled sentences?

To make a bad thing worse, the concocters of this silliness can’t even *garble* skillfully. Having vouchsafed that “word order affects the meaning of a sentence,” and having asked that students assemble “clear and sensible sentences” from “groups of words” that could never occur naturally, these reading experts proceed to dream up “problems” of this kind:

the knights made out of marble sat at a round table

persons in distress rescued the knights

some knights went in search of holy objects on quests

Try now to imagine the plight of those unlucky sixth graders—there are plenty of them—who can see, as anyone but a reading expert might, that those “groups of words” *are* “clear and sensible.” If there is anything at all “wrong” about them, it is only that they will not win approval from the teacher, who can easily discover, by looking it up in the handy teacher’s guide that comes with *Expressways*, that *those* clear and sensible sentences are not *the* clear and sensible sentences that the reading experts had in mind, not the “correct” solutions to “problems” that would never have existed in the first place if it weren’t for the fact that the reading experts always need tricky new gimmicks to put in their unbooks.

The exercise pretends to ask a question about grammar, the system of principles by which we all, sixth-grade children included, can and do form any of an infinite number of possible sentences, including the three supposed “problems” cited above. But in fact, it asks a question to be answered out of that minimal kind of reading that

is really nothing more than the reception of communication. And, probably for the remediation of those obstinate students who persist in suspecting that it is by form, not content, that a sentence is a sentence, there is a postscript to all this absurdity. It’s called “Interaction”:

Make up your own scrambled sentences about how Merlin could help you. Have a classmate unscramble your sentences.

It’s not enough, you see, although it *is* required, that educationists commit nonsense. They are, as they are always saying, such giving and sharing people. And when *they* commit nonsense, *everyone* commits nonsense.

**Lazy over brown the jumped
dog fox the quick?**

The Steaming Bird

This course is divided into two component parts: college coursework and laboratory. The college student is referred to as a Teacher Assistant whose principle [*sic*] task is to assist classroom teachers so as to gain insights into the many functions of the secondary school. Some suggested experiences for the Teacher Assistant are as follows:

EVERY once in a while, usually right around Turkey Time we like to bestow the prestigious order of the Steaming Bird upon an especially distinguished member of Glassboro’s celebrated, Division of *Professional Studies*. But it’s hard to choose. So many of them are so distinguished as to be utterly beyond our powers to distinguish.

No matter. Our trade union tells us that *all* faculty members deserve to be equally distinguished in every way, and with like egalitarian selectivity, we just reach into our file of Equally Excellent Examples of *Professional Educationism* and come up with a winner. And sometimes we just throw them up the staircase.

This year, our deliberations have led to the selection of one Miriam Spear, the author of the

cited passage, and, we guess, a *professional* in the provision of experience's that lead to the gaining of insights. (It is never easy for nonprofessionals to figure out exactly what it is that they *do* over there; mere "teaching," which many amateurs might more or less recognize, they seldom propose.) She is surely describing some "course," but we can't tell you its name; she doesn't give it. We are glad to see, though, that it is made up not merely of parts, which even the bluntest amateur might manage to achieve, but of the ever so much more state-of-the-art "component parts."

After that colon, there follows a long list of chores, which the "college student" (the *very kind* we have, by golly!) will surely be persuaded to look upon as "laboratory." Language does the trick. If you simply call a student a student, you can never be a distinguished educationist. A mere student will probably notice in just a few weeks that the supervision of corridors, buses, and cafeterias is an utterly mindless and unenlightening drudgery as well as a nasty kind of involuntary servitude. And, unless he has been properly re-oriented out of the amateurish notion that teaching and learning are works of the *mind*, he might actually decide to become a student of something rather than a teacher-trainee, thus diminishing the cost-effectiveness of the whole Division! However, if the same student is grandly "referred to as a Teaching Assistant" he may imagine that such dismal duties are really "experiences" leading to "insights." He may come to believe, as well, that pushing the buttons of audio-visual gadgets and running off dittos of "learning materials" are really *scientific* enterprises, meticulously designed and scrupulously conducted, in that *laboratory* component part of this neat course in professional insight-gaining.

As to the other "component part," here called "college coursework," Miriam Spear is silent, but not strangely silent. Of the twenty two entries that follow the colon, all but the last are either house-keeping chores, obscure generalizations like "Assist Department Chairman," or "Work with a club or other activity groups," or weird stuff like "Shadow Study."^{*} Insights into

* Some of the entries are sentences, some not; some of the latter are capitalized like titles, some are not. Such inconsistencies are remarkably frequent in

functions, the many, many functions. The last entry says: "To be of service to the school in exchange for a learning experience." Well, with a laboratory like *that*, who needs any college coursework component part?

Educationists are pleased to imagine that experience is learning. Since they "read" only approximately, they suppose that Poor Richard was *commending* experience in the celebrated adage, rather than revealing it the teacher of last resort and the fool's last chance. Experience by itself can teach only knacks, which may indeed save a fool, but will hardly make him wise, or even a teacher. It is thoughtful, orderly discourse *about* experience that leads to understanding. Lacking that, we can't even be sure of learning the *knacks* that experience can teach.

You can test that for yourself by contemplating the cited passage. In spite of what you think, Spear has been a *professional* for a long time, and that is not her first try at prose.

And furthermore...

WE had fewer testy responses than expected to "The Children of Perez." Two readers wrote to say that such matters were beyond the scope (and they may have meant beyond the understanding as well) of this journal.

But the dangerous doctrines of a Perez, and the ideology out of which they flow, are protected from critical analysis in our schools, which think it good to persuade all the children into an indiscriminating "appreciation" of all known cultural heritages and "alternative lifestyles," without consideration of their implicit principles or lack of them. We approach that time when the educationists' already traditional neglect of "mere facts" like the provisions of our Constitution will be justified anew by the fact—which they *won't* call "mere"—that somebody might be offended by those provisions. As Perez now *is*.

Such a concern is *not* "beyond our scope," whatever that may be. Nor is it beyond *anyone's* scope. And that brings us to "understanding."

educationistic writing. It is as though they can not help themselves, as though they so deeply hate ordered discipline and logical regularity that they can not bring themselves even to *seem* regular and disciplined, lest their prose admit principles they prefer to deny.

The search for understanding is *the* purpose of the critical examination of language. A scrupulous attention to mechanics and convention is only a paltry fussiness *unless* it reveals how and why those who seek admission to the greater mysteries will advance all the better through practice in the lesser. We want the schools to teach the skills of language *not* because that will make the students more genteel, but because it just might make them more thoughtful, and thus more likely to recognize and repudiate public displays of ignorance and unreason. Such displays, often further tainted by pandering mendacity, are the very substance of our politics and the chief agents of mindless factionalism. We are not going to wait until our Perezes dangle their participles. Their *words* are enough. To inquire into them is our right and duty.

A Brief Note from Central Control

We have to ask our readers' indulgence. This issue is late, and all issues from now until May will also be late. Several indispensable members of our staff, the typesetter, the printer, a few untitled gofers, and even the assistant circulation manager, were led away into ineptitude and disorder a couple of months ago. And it is only now, as October draws to a close, that they are beginning to drift back to work, more or less in their right minds.

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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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Jack and the Bomb or, the Giant's Jolly Christmas

WE really wanted, at this festive time of year, to don our gay apparel; but it turns out that you can't do that anymore without being mistaken for a consciousness-raising band of role-players cheerily relating to an alternative lifestyle. So we decided simply to wish for peace on earth to men of good will. That proved wrong too, so we changed it to *persons* of good will. And even *that* proved wrong, for it was sure to offend a substantial and much maligned minority which should be appreciated and related to rather than demeaned by exclusion from our prayers.

It was a certain Joanne Greenberg who reminded us, and just in time, that persons of *ill will* have feelings too, you know. And rights.

Greenberg seems to be, a bit to our surprise, we must admit, the author of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Really. It says so right here in this nifty brochure from West Publishing Company Inc., in Mineola, New York. It says, too, that Greenberg has written thirty *other* "instructional materials." This, her latest material, is not actually *called* a book in the brochure, but it is obviously meant to look like one, and it costs \$5.75, a bit steep for a material. But it surely is "instructional."

It's not easy to make children hate reading stories, but this Greenberg is a *professional*. Here's how she does it:

Jack and the Beanstalk, by Joanne Greenberg, provides a familiar framework which allows elementary students to practice decision making while learning the basic principles of our legal system relating to fairness and honesty. The suggested activities encourage students to explore their own opinions about fairness.

Doesn't that sound like fun? How many "opinions about fairness" do the cunning little tykes *have*? Are many *against* it? Will they be set right by a merry bout of decision making? Will the teachers' manual that comes with this material teach the *teachers* those "basic principles of our legal system relating to fairness and honesty"?

But this is more than a pre-pre-law material. It is "relevant and motivating reading matter":

The activities in each chapter not only motivate the students to think critically, view situations from various perspectives, and form conclusions, but also apply language art skills such as spelling, handwriting, and creative writing.

Just imagine. There you sit, reading a book, dwelling awhile in a world strangely truer than the world, and at the end of every chapter, along comes this meddlesome schoolteacher who makes you practice decision making and "learn" legal principles. You have just watched Huck hastily covering the dead face of his friend, and this busybody, whose own "opinions" are slogans left over from teacher-school courses in interpersonal relating and values clarification workshops, calls a rap-session to help *you* explore *your* opinions. Emma is stuffing her mouth with the poisonous powder, and some officious employee of the state, whose mouth drips the cant of life adjustment and behavior modification in the affective domain, "motivates" you to view situations from various perspectives," and then to "apply" spelling.

And when Jack lays his axe to the root of the beanstalk, will this Joanne Greenberg come barging in with her explorations and activities and maybe a neat ecological-awareness message from Smoky the Bear? Well, no. She comes up with something worse:

One major change has been made: the Giant is not killed in the end, to avoid a violent act which would have no bearing on the issues being examined.

These school people hate literature. It stands for everything that they stand against. A work of literature comes from one, solitary mind, not from the consensus of a collective. It is an unequivocal assertion that *this is so*. It abides, or it dies, but it

will not negotiate. It comes before us neither as a supplicant nor a defendant, but as a judge. It cares nothing for our favorite notions or our self-esteem. And it offends in us what most deserves offense—petulant sectarian touchiness, facile social supposition, and especially smug self-righteousness. Thus it is that the educationists' literature is not the real thing. They must abbreviate it, or amend it, or—and this is their usual practice—elucidate it, lest their students fail to appreciate correctly its relevance to "the issues being examined." And should the work at hand have nothing to do with the issues they *want* to examine, they must concoct an "instructional material" and call it *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Little children know, even blithering idiots know—except for one tribe—that the Giant *must die*. The story is about the Good and the Bad, which, in the outer world of the social order, must be always cutting deals. That sad necessity *is* sad; it is *not* to our credit. When we forget to be ashamed of that compromise, when we ordain it as a principle of the inner life of the mind, when we learn to flatter ourselves for the "liberality" out of which we tolerate the intolerable, and the "flexibility" with which we gladly bend to every gust of popular novelty, then we aren't even cutting any deals. We are simply capitulating.

Jack does not capitulate. Nor does he cut a deal by accepting, instead of justice, an "enhanced interpersonal relationship" with brutal greed. He does not "view the situation from various perspectives," but seizes what is truly his, not by "the basic principles of our legal system relating to fairness and honesty," whatever the murky notions intended by that awkward phrasing, but by the one deepest principle of Lawfulness itself. And it is Unlawfulness that dies with the Giant.

And Tyranny, too, dies with the Giant, for that is another of the many names of Unlawfulness. That is why children are not frightened by the death of a brutal monster. They *know* Tyranny when they see it, for they see it regularly. It is the continued *life* of the monster, watching and waiting, that frightens them.

Children are little, and cannot live by their own efforts. They need order and principle in the world, lest they perish, in one way or another. When they find their destinies in the hands of unruly and self-indulgent parents, and teachers so

unprincipled that they think it “humanistic” to “view” greed and force “from various perspectives” they recognize the Giant. While the Tyrant lives, how can they live? Must they always cut the same old deal, remake themselves after the Giant’s image and likeness, lest he sniff out foreign blood in *them*? Will no one save them? Who can stand, when even the grown-ups prissily reject a violent act which would have no bearing on the issues,” against strong tyranny?

Jack—that’s who.

“One cannot understand the least thing about modern civilization,” said George Bernanos, “if one does not first realize that it is a universal conspiracy to destroy the inner life.” Greenberg’s revision is surely one of those least things, although probably an involuntary ideological twitch rather than a deliberately conspiratorial deed. She is simply “staying in line,” which is the first and great commandment of all collectivisms. And the second is like unto it: Keep thy neighbor in line.

And if we send the Giant to the *head* of the line, maybe he’ll be nice to us.

All of which makes us wonder about...

THE BOMB

Primitiveness and civilization are degrees of the same thing. If civilization has an opposite, it is war. Of those two things, you can have either one, or the other. Not both.

Ursula Le Guin

Those of you who are worried about the Bomb, but still have faith—ah, faith—in the Great American Public School, will be happy to hear that the same people who have practiced (and practiced and practiced) on any social disorder you can think of, and, some that no one ever *would* have heard of if those folks hadn’t thought them up so that they get in even more practice in solving our problems for us, those same wonderful adjusters of our sadly unsocialized children are going to adjust them into yet another enhanced awareness. Why not? Who better than the meticulously educated *professionals* who gave

us Death Education to bring their formidable expertise to Megadeath Education?

The National Education Association (a union) has put out a “packet of materials” intended for junior high school children. They are, according to one Robert McLure of the NEA, the ones that have the most fear of the holocaust bomb.”

He must be some *professional*, that McLure. We would have guessed that *we* had the most to fear, or even that it couldn’t possibly matter a damn *who* had the most fear. McLure obviously knows better. In times like these, it is nice to find a *real expert* to tell us to tackle this Big Problem by finding the ones who have the *most fear* of its consequences, and then...

And then, what? Talk them out of their fear? Confirm them in it? Aside, from those, can there be any other effect of *knowledge* about the substance of our fears?

But maybe McLure is just propagandizing in that good old affective domain, since most of the *ad hoc* and pseudo-curricular “educations” of the last fifty years *have* been justified as “remediations” of some supposed *feelings* in the students. In that cause, the educationists found that “mere knowledge” was less useful than something else. But, it’s Christmas, so let’s try to be charitable. Let’s suppose that this time they really are going to stick to knowledge and, for once, forego all psychological and socio-political programming. What then? Will knowledge be able, as NEA promises, “to dispel [in teenagers] misconceptions about nuclear war and the buildup of nuclear arms”? Has that knowledge in fact dispelled misconceptions in those who have it, leaving them in perfect agreement? Does this teachers’ union have some *new* knowledge that *will* have that effect? Is it not the case that most of what we want to know in this matter is simply *not knowable*, and that “experts” differ not out of differing knowledges, but out of differing speculations and ideologies? So, if anything is to be dispelled in the students’ “conceptions,” knowledge wilt not suffice; the megadeath educationists will have to reach for something else.

Both the NEA and another group of school people, the, Educators for Social Responsibility, believe that Megadeath Education is a “social study,” a part of Civics Education. Defending it as such, the commissioner of education in Maine,

Harold Raynolds, Jr., quoted Jefferson to his purpose:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion; the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.

We are not convinced. In fact, the quotation is so irrelevant in this context that we have to suspect Raynolds either of poor reading skills, ignorance of what is done in the schools and to whom, or an attempt to deceive. If educationists suppose that they can inform the discretion of “the people,” in some matter where available knowledge is not enough to overcome the beliefs of factions, which is the case in social and political issues, as well as the religious, they are free, as citizens speaking to other citizens, to try. Indeed, Jefferson might say, thinking of the inherent kinship of *right* and *duty*, that they are *obliged* to try. But school children are not “the people.” They are a captive audience of minors required *by law* to associate with whatever potentially influential persons the state, or their parents, might choose, and to risk, long before they have powers out of which to inform their *own* discretion, whatever consequences may flow from that involuntary association. It is not as equals considering the words of equals, not as “the people,” that they sit before their teachers, but as lesser before greater. Schooling, utterly unlike education, which takes place in the inner life, can never be without some admixture of coercion.

Nor are those teachers “the people.” They are, mostly, a fiction. It is the aim of their training to make them compliant members of the faction to which their trainers already belong, sharing social and political beliefs and feelings. But, as paid agents of government, they also constitute an especially “privileged” faction in the strict sense of the word; for it is *by law* that the children are delivered into their influence. It can not have been the hope of Jefferson that the discretion of the people would be *officially* informed by the legally sanctioned power of public employees over the minds and the feelings of children.

Furthermore, these people who now propose to rap and role-play with our children about nuclear devastation do not have a good record. They are pliable faddists, continually neglecting the useful, little things that they actually might be able to do for the sake of “higher” goals. And as to what is “higher,” and how to discover it, they have no abiding principle. They can abhor nuclear destruction and play the Lifeboat Game in the same class, as though murder were some numerical value. They can “utilize visual learning materials” distinguishing circles of total destruction from circles of major destruction, but they applaud when Joanne Greenberg makes their tasks easier, and so much more conducive to the “higher” goal of socialization, by taking the sharp sting of justice out of *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

It is because they have no abiding principle, because they can find many reasons for doing what they want but never the Reason of their doing, that the educationists make everything trivial. Love, and marriage, and the care of children, are serious; family living education is a joke, although only the students have the good sense to laugh at it. Goodness, honor, duty, the perennial themes of literature, are serious; “adventures in appreciation” are silly. The study of history, which actually *would* be to the point in these times, is serious; social studies are silly. And now, having firmly convinced their students, especially the more thoughtful ones, that anything considered in school really *is* trivial, these people will consider the Bomb.

And the students will love peace exactly as much as they love wisdom.

The threat of nuclear war calls into question the deepest meanings of this life. What sort of creature are we? How have we come to this? How shall we live? Those considerations require not “awareness” but thoughtfulness, not a “program” but solemnity. Thoughtfulness and solemnity can exist in *only one place*: the inner life of mind. There is none of that allowed in the schools.

And Furthermore...

We are not utterly without tidings of comfort and joy. In response to last month’s Lifeboat Footnote, we had letters from some *true* teachers, the beleaguered few who still detest the detestable and just can’t relate well to the Giant. This one

came from Michael F. Drummey, Phillips Exeter, in New Hampshire:

I thought first of Sonia's response to Raskolnikov's question about who should be allowed to live—Luzhin or Marmeladov's wife:

But I can't know the Divine Providence...
And why do you ask what can't be answered?
What's the use of such foolish questions?
How could it happen that it should depend on
my decision...who made me a judge to decide
who is to live and who is to die?

Well, you can see how far we have come since the time when authors exalted silly ninnies like Sonia.

Then I thought about the lifeboat game some more, and it seemed to fit into modern education so well—the eliminating or sugaring over of everything that is difficult or frustrating. And what a fun thing to play a part in our own disaster movie.

But then I thought how this game is really good training—for administration—here is the ultimate test of the administrator: how to make people accept their own deaths without being peevish. “Certainly you can see our reasons for choosing you. Now just slip quietly over the side—and leave your sweater, would you?” And you in your burrow thought it was pointless.

* * * * *

Drummey's quotation couldn't be more apt for now. But no one will ever again be troubled by it when Joanne Greenberg becomes the author of *Crime and Punishment*. Under its new title, *Maladaption and Remediation*, it tells the story of a struggling young MBA candidate who can not interact positively with his financial aid facilitator, an elderly Samoan lady who collects old cigarette cases. When Raskolnikov shatters her self-esteem by *pretending* to bring her a cigarette case but giving her instead, cunningly disguised as a learning material, a tape recording of certain provocative passages from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the genial but relentless values clarifier, Porfiry, suspects him of ageism, sexism, and ethocentricity. The hapless lad, his consciousness raised by a rap-session with Svidrigailov, who represents an alternative lifestyle that Raskolnikov once demeaned, saying

that he wouldn't want his sister to marry one, flees for remediation to his girlfriend Sonia, a graduate student of humanistic psychology and guidance counseling who is working her way through school by conducting small seminars in interpersonal relating enhancement and Rolwing. It is at this point in the material that Sonia does not say what Drummey quotes above.

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tune whose words do jarre; nor his reason
in frame whose sentence is preposterous.***



Season's Admonitions

Make not the Lesser Grebe more less,
Dear friends, by laughing him to scorn.
Nor yet contempt of Sloth express,
Nor rue the day the Gnu was born,

No less than you, the Aardvaark needs
His innocence, presumed, unproved.
Like you, the vile Hyena pleads
That all his sins may be removed.

Like you the naughty Roach may need,
Some day, a friend to help him out.
What you demand, the Centipede
Deserves: the benefit of doubt.

Rejoice in Spiders; gladly treat
The Squid in style magnanimous;
And like a long-lost brother greet
The furtive duck-billed Platypus.

Lest, when at last they have their say,
On Christmas Eve as midnight tolls,
They speak the truth. And Christmas Day,
You find your stockings full of coals.

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