

the Chinese tradition of essential humanism.

As vehicles to convey and impart ideas, all forms of literature and art contain messages. But the question is whether it is justified to promote one kind of message while striking down all other messages? What should be the criteria? Who have the right to set the criteria? And of course the final question is this: Is life enriched or deprived as a result of either total mind control or a reversion to intellectual primitivism? These are questions that blind enthusiasts, zealous social activists and one-track-minded ideologues will do well to ponder as human beings.

Reviewed by TA-LING LEE

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### *A Lexicon of Lingoes*

**The New Language of Politics: A Dictionary of Catchwords, Slogans, and Political Usage**, revised and enlarged, by William Safire, *New York: Collier Books, 1972. 782 pp. \$4.25 (paper).*

THE APPEARANCE of the earlier edition of this book in 1968 was widely and deservedly hailed. The author is that rare combination, an expert practitioner of politics and an accomplished linguistic researcher. The current revision and enlargement bring the topic up-to-date, with the addition of numerous entries that have developed in the course of the four Nixon years. There has not been too much revision of the older entries, but the measure of the enlargement appears from the number of pages (528 in the older, 782 in the new version). Taking a random sample, under the letter M, which had 66 entries in 1968, we now find 72, with seven additions (*Machismo*, *Man of the People*, *Metroamerican*, *Mickey Mouse*,

*Middle America*, *Morkrumbo*, *Mr. Nice Guy*), one deletion (*Magnolia Talk*), and the former *Military Metaphors* transformed into *Military Metehors*, obviously a misprint. In language, as in population, births far outstrip deaths.

As before, Safire gives fairly complete information on all his entries, including histories of the terms defined where it is possible to trace them. For the limited section of the vocabulary with which he deals, he is far more thorough and satisfactory than our most comprehensive dictionaries, which makes his work a reference necessity for the linguistic researcher.

The language of politics has many ramifications, and its boundaries are hard to define. Are the vocabularies of Women's Lib, that of black, youthful, and other demonstrations, that of the military, that of labor relations part of the political language, as those movements and institutions are part of the political scene? If so, why do *sexism* and *racism* draw only passing reference? We miss *Ms.* and *sex object*; the newfangled distinction between *racial* and *ethnic minority groups*; the *Mayday*, *Amerika* and *to trash* of the student demonstrators, along with their special use of *moratorium*; the widespread use of *pig* in various human connections; the "Never again!" of the Jewish and the "One!" of the Italian Defense Leagues; the *Greening* of America and the *greenbacking* of countries that support our policies; other semi-military terms ranging from the President's *sufficiency* to replace our older *superiority* in the matter of weapons to the *body count*, *kill ratio* and *to waste* of the Vietnam war; the definition of *full employment* as set forth in an earlier period by the Johnson Administration and as now revised by the Nixon Administration.

Coming closer to the specifically political scene, we miss *mystique* (as in "the Kennedy mystique"; though *myth* appears); *syndrome* (as when Nixon was erroneously charged with suffering from a "loser syndrome"); the doctrine of *consumerism* (Ralph Nader *et al.*). The earlier

*incomes policy* is fully defined, but *phase* (as in "Phase Two of the Fight Against Inflation") fails to appear. *Game plan* is there, but *ping-pong diplomacy* is not. We have a discussion of *priorities*, but not of the burning issue of *bussing* to achieve racial balance in the schools. *Power to the people* is fully described, but not the recent use of numerals (the *Chicago Seven*, the *Harlem Four*, the *Harrisburg Seven*) to describe group prosecutions, which is so reminiscent of Communist usages (the *Four Revolutionary Virtues*, the *Five Choices for a True Communist*). Many of Vice-President Agnew's linguistic creations are in (*effete snobs*, for instance), but not Muskie's *Agnewesque Game of Golf*. The old *Irish Mafia* of the Kennedy Administration is still in, but what has been described as Nixon's *German Mafia* has not yet made the grade. We look in vain for some of the choice creations of the bureaucratic mind (*federally impacted area*, *urbanologist*, *memcon*, *noform*).

One innovation of the new edition is the inclusion of a six-page section on "Bibliography and Research," in which the author describes in detail the lexicographic methodology by which information is gathered for a book of this kind and a choice made among the possible entries by the democratic process of counting repetitions of the same expression or form in a large number of selected sources. This reminds one of Gallup and similar polls, which are

exposed to the risk of consulting people who are not altogether representative of the electorate. It gives us such widely known and repeated entries as *workfare*, *silent majority*, *Middle America*, *winding down the war*, *benign neglect*, *Southern strategy*, *limousine liberals*, *Nixonomics*; but also items that are far less familiar to the general public: *machismo*, *brass-collar Democrat*, *lift of a driving dream*, *quadriad*, *psephology*.

But all this is largely idle carping, based on a reviewer's individual preferences. The main thing about Safire's output is its proven value as a source of information and an indispensable reference work, with items that cover the country's entire political history, research that is painstaking and accurate, and a language that is clear and easy to understand. Even when he is forced to resort to guesswork, the author is plausible. I had a telephone call some time ago from a magazine that wanted to know the origin of the expression *low profile*. None of my abundant works of reference gave it, and I had to admit I was stumped. Safire, after describing its current political use, states: "This figure of speech probably has a military origin; in tank warfare, a vehicle with a low profile is less readily identified through binoculars and presents less of a target for artillery."

This makes sense. So, generally speaking, does Safire.

Reviewed by MARIO PEI