

The Language of the Election

and Watergate Years

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BEFORE ENTERING upon my main topic, it may be worthwhile to record a few samples of what less indulgent critics would style "Crimes against the Language"—the customary crop of accidental misspellings, misusages of grammar, erroneous interpretations of our vaunted linguistic heritage.

There is, for instance, a *Newark Star-Ledger* editorial (March 24, 1973) which speaks of a judiciary concerned with "meeting out justice"; and the description vouchsafed by the Aerospace editor of *Los Angeles Times* (Oct. 23, 1972) of the SR-71 as a "thoroughly honest and docile airplane in normal traffic pattern flight," which makes one wonder how a dishonest plane would behave. Elsewhere, the spelling "tripulets" for "triplets" leads one to surmise that "quadruplets" might be reincarnated as "quadrupeds." The *Graffiti* editor characterizes the popular "You know—" as "words used by people who don't." Author Lawrence Schoonover offers the case of the labor leader who complains that certain politicians change their position all the time, "now here, now there, like Willie the Wisp"; along with that of the lady evangelist who asks: "Are you convicted that Jesus came to save you?" and when she gets an affirmative reply goes on to

add: "Just wonderful! Wish we were all convicted!" followed up by the sportscaster who asserts: "We will go over and over our shortcomings until we have perfected them." He bemoans the loss of distinction between initial *w* or *wh*, as in "wet" and "whet," or "wail" and "whale," and advocates the addition of Chinese-style classifiers of the "look-see" type, such as "wet-water" vs. "whet-sharpen," or "wail-be-moan" vs. "whale-fish." Columnist O'Brian remarks that "Godspell" is so clean that it has been renamed "Goshspell," and adds a case of words that fall into desuetude and oblivion, illustrated by the little girl who asks her father "Who was Rudy Vallee?" When he replies that he was somebody who used to sing through a megaphone, she goes on to inquire: "What's a megaphone?"

Columnist James Kilpatrick reports that in papers prepared by applicants for grants to professional journalists one applicant came up with "similiar," "knowingly," "in-laid," and "effecting" for "affecting," a second with "comperability," "numberous," and "Louisana," a third with "elegible," "jockeying," "supercede," "thru," and "franchize."

It is not too often that we hear a complaint about the misuse of a slang form, but

Mike Royko protests against the general use of "clout" in the sense of having the power to strike a stout blow in a given cause ("He's got lots of clout"), and claims not only that the expression originated in Chicago, but also that it has strayed from its primitive use, which he equates with political pull, or even the wielder thereof. Examples: "My tax bill is only \$1.50. I got clout in the assessor's office." "Who's clouting for you?" "My clout wrote to the mayor." I have sought confirmation in vain in the various dictionaries, including those of slang; but Royko is a native speaker of Chicagoese, and I feel inclined to accept his authority.

Before leaving the topic of English usage, I have a poser of my own. It was stressed in the press and on TV that the midwife's profession should be pronounced "midwif(f)ery," with a short second *i*, following a purely British usage, unrecognized by any major American dictionary. How then should we pronounce "housewifery," for which even the British Oxford prefers the pronunciation that is normal to us? With a full rather than a half wife?

Crimes against foreign languages come into play as well; but these are of the oft-repeated type, such as pronouncing Paola, Kansas, like "Payola," or Conigliaro's name as koh-nig-lee-AH-roh instead of koh-nee-LYAH-roh, or feminizing French *employé*, *fiancé* into employee, fiancee in spelling, and *Canadiens* into *Canadiennes* in pronunciation. At any rate, the majority come under the heading of advertising. But one that is particularly striking, going with AMGOT and CON EDISON in producing abbreviations that arouse laughter abroad is the recently abbreviated COCU for Consultation on Church Union, an organization that aims at promoting unity among Protestant denominations totaling twenty million members. Did no member of the board know any French?

In retaliation, the French government has launched a crusade to purge French of recent popular additions from the tongue of the Anglo-Americans. Among terms singled out for extinction are "flashback," "one-man show," "hit parade," "features," "zoning," "jumbo jet," "show business," "scoop," "space craft," "kitchenette," "know-how." Their replacements are *rétrospectif*, *spectacle solo*, *palmarès* (literally "honor list"), *variés*, *zonage*, *gros-porteur* (literally "big carrier"), *industrie de spectacle*, *exclusivité*, *aéronef* (literally "airship"; would not *astronef* have served the purpose better?), *cuisinette*, *savoir-faire*. If I may be permitted one observation on *savoir-faire*, which has to do with personality, likability, diplomacy, getting along with people: this had previously been borrowed from French by English, and altogether lacks the mechanical-industrial connotations of "know-how." It will confuse French speakers rather than help them.

1972 WAS A PRESIDENTIAL election year; 1973 may be described as the Year of Watergate, even though Watergate's events began while the campaign was still in progress.

Sideshows in weasel wording, before, during, and after both facts are exemplified by Governor Reagan's creation of "Teddy-care" for the all-comprehensive Medicare-Medicaid program proposed by Senator Edward Kennedy; a similar coinage of "Educare" for a program designed to extend the blessings of higher education to retirees; "Demogrant" to describe McGovern's proposal of one thousand dollars a year to every man, woman and child in the United States; Vice-President Agnew's "radiclib," merging radical and liberal, and his earlier alliterative description of Mayor Lindsay, then beset by presidential ambitions, as the "fumbling flugelmann of Fun City." In the 1973 New York primar-

ies, a slogan about "making waves" if he got elected may or may not have been instrumental in carrying candidate Goldin to the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer of that same city.

More specific to the campaign was McGovern's slogan about "taxing the same way money made by money and money made by man," outstripped only by his "Come home, America!" and his radio-TV description as "McGovern—Democrat—for the people." Some had the effrontery to inquire "What people?" in view of Democratic primary principles which included the winner-take-all of California and the proportional representation on the various delegations by sex and color (but not by ethnic groups), invoked against Daley's duly elected Illinois delegation. McGovern's long-haired yippee followers, whom the Republicans had called "creeps," were described as sensitive to that appellation, and were rebaptized "non-delegates." "Chairperson" and "chairpeople" were created at the 1972 Democratic convention to replace an insufficient "chairman" and an awkward "chairwoman." It was my own suggestion that these new terms be further abbreviated into "C.P." (or "SEEPEE") on the analogy of "M.C." ("EMCEE") and the older "C.B." ("SEABEE"), with the further possibility, through functional change, of turning "C.P." into a verb ("to C.P. a meeting").

The two candidates shared certain linguistic formations. "Nixonomics," coined by the Democrats, was extended to "McGovernomics" by the *New York Times* financial editor, while columnist Peter Lisagor in his May 16, 1972, column offered "Nixon Watchers," "Nixonology," and even worked his way back to "Lyndonology." McGovern was given personal credit for having playfully told some pro-Muskie hecklers "Hush, you Muskies!," while one of his followers seemingly created

the fake slogan "Trusk Mustie!," "Govern for McPresident!" and "The cities are not unMcGovernable" may have come from either friend or foe. Vice-President Agnew came in for a few cracks: "an Agnewesque game of golf" is attributed to Muskie, while James Reston of the *New York Times* is the source of "Agnewsticism," a new Washington cult to the effect that the truth is safer in the hands of the politicians than in those of the news media, and that the administration is always right, especially when it's wrong.

On the Republican side, the President himself is credited with "governess government" and the "Spirit of Apollo," replacing the earlier Spirits of Camp David and Glasboro, along with the later modest, yet ambitious "Generation of Peace." "Southern Strategy" may have originated with John Mitchell. Then there was the "economic game plan," probably coined by Nixon, who is an inveterate football fan, and the "open-mouth policy," deplored by his opponents, which soon gave way to Phases One, Two, Three, Three and a Half, and Four, still deplored by his opponents. Less jocular were descriptions of Nixon's personal entourage as the "German Mafia" (but President Kennedy had previously been charged with having an "Irish Mafia"), and "All the King's Krauts." There was a Jewish joke about good chicken soup being renamed "Nixon Soup," because "it's all perfectly clear."

Washington Post cartoonist Herbert Block (Herblock), who is not a Nixon admirer, offered in his book *The State of the Union* a term, "the New Prolitics," which has to do with changes in word-meanings insinuated into the public consciousness by public relations ("PR") men and by slick PR television techniques. "Whiter than the White House" is offered to the advertising world. Other innovations, according to Herblock, are the "preventive event"

(widespread heralding of a forthcoming but delayed presidential activity); the "non-event" (such as the Vice-President telling the President and his cabinet what a wonderful job they are doing); the "world-shaking event" (moon landing, reshuffling of departments, China-Russia visits, wage-price freezes); the "misspoke ploy" (an occasional slip of the presidential tongue). Typical of the Herblock technique is a cartoon in which Nixon addresses a press conference and makes two things perfectly clear: 1. the country is in fine shape, and 2. Congress is to blame for the mess we're in.

Even Nixon's foreign policy of rapprochement with China and Russia did not escape criticism. Starting with the tour of a Chinese Ping-Pong team in the United States, it was at once noted that the President no longer referred to "Red China," or even "Mainland China," but to the "People's Republic of China." As the plot thickened, critics began to talk of "Ping-Pong" or "Chow Mein Diplomacy," forgetting that the first term had been heralded in 1901 by a *Punch* cartoon which showed Britannia and China playing Ping-Pong over a table labeled "diplomacy." Full accord with the People's Republic of China was retarded by the question of what to do with the Republic of China we had sponsored in Taiwan. Our "Two-China Policy" was quickly satirized into a "One and a half-China Policy" (this antedates Phase Three and a Half of the economic game plan by a full year). But the UN General Assembly, with or without our connivance, soon ended that.

OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE since the beginning of 1973 was the Watergate incident, still unresolved as I write. To be sure, it had occurred in 1972, but at that time few took notice of it. Its first name was the "Watergate caper," a sort of political prank

played upon the opposition, much in the same fashion as one football team kidnapping the ram which is the mascot of the opposing team on the eve of the game. McGovern tried to make it an issue during the final phases of the presidential campaign, but to no avail. Then press, TV, the Senate, and the judge who tried the men caught at Watergate converged their efforts to bring it into the public consciousness. The public shrugged, both here and abroad. Politics, after all, is politics, and dirty politics is an ancient and time-honored phenomenon. "So what else is new?" was the comment of an Italian newspaper. "We have a bigger bugging and wire-tapping scandal of our own." East of the Iron Curtain, where government "controls" are part of everyday life, there wasn't even a ripple. Many Americans wondered why, in a society that tolerates attempts by subversives to paralyze the life of the nation's capital, burn and bomb government and university buildings, break into government offices, pilfer and destroy government documents, so much attention should be devoted to what seemed at first an episode of nonviolent lawlessness committed by individuals.

It was only after the administration made the monumental blunder of calling off Phase Two of the economic program, causing prices to rise to unprecedented heights and the dollar to fall to unprecedented depths, that the people really became Watergate conscious, very possibly by reflex action. What had been a caper worthy of schoolboys now became, in the words of columnist Joseph Alsop, the "Watergate horror" (he used the term five times in a single column). Others picked up the new expression, to the point where even Clare Booth Luce used it in a *New York Times* article of June 3, 1973, which was a strong defense of the administration. Alsop later retreated from his extreme position, and spoke instead of the "Watergate obses-

sion," while Ernest Cuneo called it the "Watergate joggle." But Representative H. Runnel of New Mexico came out with the statement that henceforth tourists to Washington would be interested in three things: the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the "Tomb of the Unknown Burglar." As for popular consciousness, *Parade* for June 17, 1973, informs us that American youths have turned "Watergate" into a verb and integrated it into their lexicons, using such phrases as "Don't Watergate me!" ("Don't compromise or involve me!"), "Don't Watergate my cigarette lighter!" ("Don't swipe it!"), "Are you pulling a Watergate on me?" ("Are you trying to involve me in something illegal?"). Obviously, "Watergate" as a part of the language is here to stay.

It is not for me, especially at this point, while both Senate and Grand Jury investigations are in progress, to pass judgment on what columnist Carl Rowan calls "the most sinister political crimes in the nation's history," forgetting that the Warren white-wash to the contrary notwithstanding, there still remains unsolved the mystery of President Kennedy's assassination and who may have been involved in it over and above the Communist-trained man who fired the fatal shots (Leo Janos, a former Johnson aid, in the July 1973 *Atlantic Monthly* describes Lyndon Johnson's strong suspicions on that score). If President Nixon was reluctant to believe in the involvement of some of his closest associates, it is true that President Truman also described the Alger Hiss case as a "red herring" before the full facts came out.

The purely linguistic outcroppings of Watergate are numerous. When some of those involved stated that they were not going to be scapegoats for the higher-ups, they were humorously described by one columnist as unwilling to "scape their goats." Senator Adlai Stevenson said that we had

passed from the New Deal to the Fair Deal, and now to "The Deal" pure and simple. Irving Janis described the participants in the affair as victims of "Groupthink," elaborating this concept about a cohesive group that fosters the shared illusion of invulnerability and tends to minimize the risks of an enterprise with further examples from the Bay of Pigs episode, and even the Vietnam war, which everyone, from President Johnson down, encouraged everyone else to think we were going to win. Don Bacon stated that the Nixon campaign aides who monitored the activities of McGovern and Shriver styled themselves the "Response Mechanism," while their opponents called them the "Attack Group." The men delegated to break into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist were called the "Plumbers," seeking to repair real or fancied security leaks (in this connection, E. Howard Hunt, who wrote some whodunits and had them published under a *nom-de-plume*, later had them reissued under his own name, which Jack O'Brian styled his "nom de plumber." In the course of the Senate hearings, the statement "when the going gets tough, the tough get going" was attributed to John Mitchell. "Caught with their trousers at half-mast" was the colorful expression coined by Carl Rowan for some of the accused, while Vice President Agnew described the Senate hearings as a "political beauty contest," with "Perry-Masonish features." Walter Cronkite, describing the missing witness Segretti, stated that his name meant "secrets" in Italian, which was an error (*segreti* is the term for "secrets," and the single or double *t* gives the two words different pronunciations and derivations). There appeared in a memo circulated by the Office of Information a recommended shift from "the President" to "President Nixon" when referring to Mr. Nixon (possibly because the first term was

reminiscent of the "Campaign to reelect the President").

The display of mingled glee and sanctimoniousness on the part of those who do not like Nixon continues and will continue, even though a Gallup Poll conducted in June, 1973, and reported by CBS-TV, indicated that if the election had been held again at that time, approximately the same percentage of voters would have preferred Nixon to McGovern and, by lesser majorities, even to Humphrey and Muskie. This percentage changed in an August poll to indicate a very slight edge for McGovern over Nixon, but since the poll coincided with the Great Beef Shortage and a further drastic rise in food prices, and the question "Why?" is never asked in these polls, one may wonder whether the drop in the President's popularity was due to Watergate or to dissatisfaction with economic happenings that reflected the sale of our vast grain surpluses to the U.S.S.R. What remained unchanged was the overwhelming percentage of people who said Nixon should neither resign nor be impeached.

The Senate hearings brought out other interesting linguistic points. There was the coming into vogue of the expression "at this point in time." There was the learned discussion of the term "misprision of justice," referring to a cover-up, if any ("misprision" is an archaic legal term that goes back to the sixteenth century in the sense of "scorn," "contempt," retaining the older French meanings, which have been modified in modern French, where *méprendre* is "to make a mistake," and *méprise* a misunderstanding).

The learned Senators and witnesses took some liberties with English pronunciation and syntax, as when, on July 29, Senator Baker used "vestigial" for "vestigial," and Senator Ervin used "rout" for "route," while Ehrlichman on July 30, referring to two stories circulated by Deane, stated that

"neither one of them are true." This apart from the Chairman's statements that Watergate is a greater tragedy than the Civil War, and that failure to submit the tapes means the end of the Republic; or Senator Inouye's audible "What a liar!" which brought the retort from Attorney White that the Senator was a Jap. For this there was a precedent in Vice-President Agnew's description of one of his friends as a "fat Jap" and brings up the question whether the mere abbreviation of a national designation should be considered derogatory or insulting. Lastly, there is President Nixon's reference to people who want to "wallow in Watergate," and Evans and Novak's description of the "Watergate atrocities" (August 10), which goes Alsop's "Watergate horror" one better.

NEXT TO POLITICS in weasel-word interest is the 1972-1973 language of advertising. Among the dozens of striking items is the continued use of "save," something you are said to do when you buy an item that is either on special "sale" or which one firm supposedly sells at a lower price than its competitors. This usage even led to a TV satire, where a giddy wife comes home with a three hundred dollar fur stole and explains to her distraught husband that she bought it with money she had "saved" by buying three separate household appliances, each for one hundred dollars less than granny had paid for them. Hand-in-hand goes the "WE-O!" of a food chain, followed by "How—prices have changed!" But they don't tell you in which direction they have changed. Perhaps "WE-O!" should be replaced by "We know!" Then there is that thirteenth month of the year, "January," coined by a firm that offers you in January what might be offered in June; but what's the advantage? "Inscrutably delicious" is the way a Chinese restaurant ad-

vertises its cuisine, overlooking the double meaning of the first word.

As a linguist, I particularly detest two things: the mishandling of foreign languages for advertising purposes, and the use of phony accents, both native and foreign. Why should Chef Boiardi (boh-YAR-dee) come out as boy-ar-DEE, or Gino be spelt Jenó? Why "Cotto Salami" for what should be "Salame Cotto"? Why should Jean-Pierre Aumont mispronounce his own language and say ZEE-zah-nee for zee-zah-NEE? Why should a *sangria* said to be made in Spain be spelled "Sant'gria," as though it were the name of a female saint, when the word comes from *sangre*, "blood"? Then there is that ad that tells you that man is what he eats. This, of course, is not true, and may even be offensive (you eat pork chops, therefore you are a pig?); but in German, where the saying originated, it happens to be a pun on words (*Mann ist was er isst*, with *ist* ["is"] and *isst* ["eats"] pronounced exactly alike); but this is altogether lost in English. Aumont's French accent is authentic, save for his deliberately misplaced accent on one word; so is the Spanish accent of the characters who advertise a Spanish dry sherry. But what shall we say of the German accent of Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria as he proclaims the beer-fest that made Munich famous?

Worst of all are the phony native accents that offend the ear: the toothless pseudo-New Englander who advertises an otherwise excellent bread; the phony Italian-American of Jimmy Durante or, worse yet, Rocky Graziano; the phony western tones of Johnny Cash with his concluding "like they say"; and what about the low-pitched, apologetic girl who identifies herself as "the voice of your friendly transmission," and bemoans your neglect of her needs for greasing and repairs?

Of course, the criticism does not apply

where the intention to spoof is obvious, as in *Hee Haw's* Tennessee portrayal, or those Alka Seltzer Jewish gems that have become proverbial ("Do yourself a favor!"; "Try it! You'll like it!"; "I can't believe I ate that whole thing!"; "Not a little bit of everything; everything!"). What can be done with the human voice and its tones in the way of arousing a favorable impression for the product is demonstrated by the girl who is told by her mother to do a little dusting of the furniture with a polish before the guests arrive: "Lemon Pledge?!?!"

This could go on and on. The Committee for the Rejection of Obnoxious Commercials (CROC) has seen fit to offer a CROC award for the year's worst commercials. Their suggestions include Mr. Whipple and his Charmin, Pristene's stimulating discussion of deodorant sprays between a mother and daughter, "Whisk's "Ring Around the Collar!"; Playtex's Cross Your Heart bra. But there are many, many other candidates one could mention ("Fly me!"; "Sorry, Charlie!"; "Bullish on America"; "It's the real thing!"; the "Uncola").

Commercialism in advertising is, of course, a bane of our capitalistic society. But it is spreading to Communist countries. The label of a Chinese wine designed for export to the English-speaking market says in part: "Nutritious and roborant; promoting the brain and recovering the memory; strengthening the organs and systems of generations"; further on, it is described as good for "general weakness, untimely senility, kidney trouble, neurasthenia, sores, dizziness, anemia, poor memory, involuntary perspirations, insomnia, pale faces, poor appetites." Can it be that once our Communist competitors get going they'll beat us at our own game?

CLOSELY LINKED by a web of publicity to the world of advertising is the realm of stage and screen. Here we find creations

galore: the brand-new "Obie" award suggested for Off-Broadway (O.B.) productions (as though we didn't have enough of these mutual admiration society celebrations); Jack O'Brian's *stripteuse* for a female devotee of strip-teasing (with *strip-teur* for the male of the species, we presume?); such choice expressions as "Dingbat," "Meathead," and "Lovable Bigot" from TV's most popular program, *All in the Family*. There are, too, ancient bloopers of usage that are revived with ancient pictures, as when Charlton Heston, playing Moses in the 1956 *Ten Commandments*, is immortalized in the phrase "This is the road that I must trod!" New York's Philharmonic is said to be facing a "desperation gap" between intake and deficit spending. "One bean" is the expression for one hundred dollars introduced by the rock-and-roll industry (but this word, according to Wentworth and Flexner, has shifted its monetary symbolism from an archaic five dollar gold piece, or a British pound [1859] to one dollar [1941], and now again). "Money in the bank" is the graphic term used in Hollywood for such hardy perennials as *Sound of Music*, *Mary Poppins*, *Snow White* and *Bambi*, which are resurrected every eight or ten years.

There are also startling shifts in permissible vocabulary. John O'Connor reminds us in the *New York Times* that in 1960 WNBC censored the use of "WC" on the Jack Paar Show, while today we have *V. D. Blues*, with such songs as "Don't give a dose to the one you love most!" Young audiences, says a WCBS vice-president, have forced us into being more candid.

On the truly arty stage, we have progressed from the "Cult of the Absurd" of Ionesco to Beckett's *Breath*, which requires no actors and lasts 35 seconds, yet is described as a play. "As Close to Silence as a Man Can Get" comments reviewer A. Al-

varez. I would substitute "inanity," or even "insanity," for "silence."

PARI PASSU with stage and screen in creativeness goes journalism. Jack O'Brian in rapid succession not only contributes "smutacular," "jazzcotek," "pesterazzi" (the American version of the Italian *paparazzi*), "croupiess" for a female croupier, "she nonchalanted," "Rhonda Fleming flamored into the Casino Russe," "a rose is a rose is an itch" (this for a flower allergy), and a perhaps over-familiar "Dickiebert" for Richard Burton; he also suggests *S-s-s-s-s-s* as the title for a King Cobra movie, and reminds us that it was commentator Paul Harvey who in 1961 devised the term "skyjacking" after being among the victims of the first such crime.

"Ganglord" is coined by an editor for the Costello of Kefauver Investigation fame; "blood doning" by WCBS News; "beautility" (combining beauty and utility in architecture) by Ada Huxtable; "dystopia" (the opposite of "utopia") by Lyman Sargent in *The Futurist* (he describes it as negative, pessimistic pictures of the future, mainly in science fiction); "paramedic" by Ann Landers for a male nurse. "The Emmigrants" is coined by Roger Ebert, who apparently can't make up his mind whether they are immigrants or emigrants (they can, of course, be both, from the standpoint of two different countries). Stanley Davis attributes to Mayor Lindsay an attempt to improve the Fun City image by calling muggings and police crime reports "Manhattan acupuncture." From Britain, Eric Partridge gives us "to stormy-petrel with éclat." I am not certain who created "comfortability," "approbate," and "momarchy" ("She ran her household as though it was a momarchy"). "Gazatka" sounds Russian, and is described as "a rough time." "Honcho" sounds Spanish, but where does it come from, and precisely what does it

mean? "Maven," a cross between a fan and a kibitzer, is said to come from Hebrew. And why "cold duck" for a type of wine?

THE SWIFT CHANGEABILITY in the language of youth was vividly brought out in a news item about a Pentagon language guidebook for returning POW's, designed to bring them up to date on all they had missed during the years of their captivity, which, after all, did not average more than five. Yet the introduction to the guidebook says: "During your long absence, the language of the youth has changed in somewhat the same way as the language you used differed from that of your parents during your younger years."

I have not been fortunate enough to view a copy of the guidebook, but abundant samples are forthcoming from other sources. Jon Horn, in his *New York Times* article *Glomming the Apple* (the "Big Apple" is an old slang nickname for New York), offers such gems as "bagel babies" (Jewish girls); "glom" (to take in, digest; earlier it was a noun and meant "hand"); "grotty" (gritty, seamy; at an earlier period, it was occasionally used as a term of admiration); "hang tough" (to persevere); "punched out" (mugged, beaten up); "taken off" (robbed); "The Scene" (where it's at; but this goes back to at least 1957). In response to a request for information from columnists Helen and Sue Bottel, the following changes were volunteered by young readers: "groovy" to "gravy baby"; "right on" to "right there" or "left arm"; "out of sight" to "out of state"; "scram" to "make like a banana and split." Additional contributions: "crunchy" for "great"; "tuff tootie" for "too bad!"; "baddest" for "the best." Favorite interjections for various occasions range from "Oh, peanut butter!," "Fudgecycle!," and "Son of a Pickle" (or "Son of a Biscuit") to "oof," "doof," and "skidoop." "Peanuts!" is said to have re-

placed the old "Wow!"; the imported "poco loco" describes a dumb action, and "cootie" means "derrière," as in "Get your cootie off the table!"

Daniel Yankelovitch, a social researcher, gives a list of counterculture aversions (words that get them up tight) that includes "professional," "system," "planning," "organization," "technology," "mechanization," "institutions," "determination," "programming," "achievement." It figures.

On the drug addiction scene, Carl Rowan gives the following names of barbiturates: "downers," "goofballs," "red devils," "yellow jackets," "blue angels," "Christmas trees" (the last four refer, specifically, to seconal, nembutal, amythal, and tuinal). "Sunshine" and "sopors" are presented elsewhere; the first is described as a "superior" type of LSD, the latter as non-barbiturate sleeping pills. For cocaine, we have the following alternatives: "snow," "flake," "girl," "her lady," "happy trails," "nose-candy," "star-spangled powder," "gift of the sun god," "heaven-leaf," "rich man's drug."

As Eve said to her despondent spouse as they left the Garden of Eden: "Adam, we are living in an age of transition!" Yet Socrates, in the fifth century B.C., complained of the children of his day, who loved luxury, showed contempt for authority and disrespect for their elders, chattered incessantly, ate too much, and tyrannized their teachers. So why complain?

THE VOCABULARY of Women's Liberation has been pretty thoroughly explored. Most of the recent items are in the nature of puns and jokes. There is, for instance, the spurious report that while California and Iowa were considering nominating the ladybug as the official state insect, Women's Rights advocates insisted that it be renamed the "personbug." In this connection, Roderick

Nordel in the *Christian Science Monitor* offers a list of ingenious suggestions: "the League of Person Voters," "the Persons' Aid Society," "the Person Scouts of America," "the Persons of the American Revolution," "Old Person Time," "Person Machree," "the Person I Love," "a mail-person," "personfingers," and even an affectionate diminutive, "Perssy." The suggestion that "history" be reshaped into "herstory" runs into etymological difficulties, while Ann Landers reports a case of a waitress who met with reproof when she asked some middle-aged women tourists from England "What will you girls have?" on the rather flimsy ground that "girl" has a cheap connotation in England; "madam" was suggested as a replacement, but "What will you madams have?" runs into one of the American connotations of "madam."

On the more authentic side, we have the establishment of WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), an extremist feminist movement, plus the coining of "Nasties" for the Libbers by their avowed enemies, the "Pussycat League." "Daughter-of-a-Bitch" is suggested as the appropriate replacement for "S.O.B." when circumstances warrant, and "jockette" for lady jockey has also been reported, now that the item is available. The coining of matronymics used as family names, such as "Franchild," "Velmadaughter," and "Silverwoman" rounds out the current crop.

IN THE FIELD OF SEX, there is the Schulz book title *Snoopy, the Sensuous Dog*; "The Wonderful World of Flesh" used in connection with *Love American Style*; the highly scientific *Torschlusspanik* ("Closing Door Panic"), reported in *National Observer* as the label given by psychologists to the phenomenon of older men chasing younger women because time is running out on them. From Australia comes a cute "a

naughty" to betoken sex relations out of wedlock. Ann Landers is responsible for "sex as a contact sport," "dancing as the vertical expression of a horizontal idea," and the resurrected, but also reversed French saying "There are no frigid wives, just lousy lovers." Jack O'Brian contributes "Filth Estate" for pornography, "incumbent companion" for an actress' male partner without benefit of clergy, and informs us that director Bertolucci taught Marlon Brando the obscene vocabulary for *Last Tango in Paris* which Brando included in his "Syntax." James Bacon quotes Russ Meyer, King of the Nudies, to the effect that when it comes to giving a film a rating, "north and south pelvic movements rate an X—east and west an R".

More melancholy is the lexicon of homosexuality, which Mike Nichols defines as "once the love that dare not speak its name; now it won't shut up." Here we find "herosexual" and "hobosexual," "Mother" (the dominant partner), "Hildaboopsie," combining "Hilda," the homosexual term for horrible, with "boopsala," a Yiddish term of endearment; and "AC-DC" for a double homosexual. The use of butter in *Last Tango* has led European viewers to re-label it *The Butter Film*, and a Paris promoter wanted to use Maria Schneider's picture on butter packets, but was turned down.

THE BLACK LANGUAGE includes "dapping," the practice of slapping and grasping one another's hands in a complicated greeting symbolic of racial solidarity; "blackonomics," possibly on the analogy of "Nixonomics"; "tricknology," said to be what the whites practice on blacks; "blackthink," one whose thinking is oriented along black lines. "Blacula" is the black take-off on Dracula, but "blacksploitation" has been coined to describe films produced by whites

and designed to appeal to blacks and their money.

Roderick Nordell, with tongue in cheek, reports an interview with Rennie Fairweather, described as the author of *How to Be Nice to White People* (subtitle: *White on White*). Whites, he implies, may be offended by such terms as "Ruddy Rex," "Gray Eddie," and "Sallow Susie" or "Pale Joey." In addition, he points out that while "black" may be associated with some unpleasant connotations, "white," too, has its drawbacks: "white with fear," "white as a ghost," "pasty-faced," "white-livered," "showing the white feather," "waving the white flag," and, of course, "whitewash."

Not to be outdone, militant Indians have expanded "Uncle Tom" into "Uncle Tom-Tom," for an Indian who collaborates with Palefaces. They have also protested against the use of "Indian" or "Redskin" as the name of a team, bringing about the replacement of the Dartmouth Indians with "Big Green," and of the Massachusetts Redmen with "Minutemen." The Indian pictured on pennants and soft drink containers, according to the University of Massachusetts Student Senate, connotes a "false, distorted and racist picture of our Indian heritage." Perhaps so.

THE VOCABULARY of crime and illegality has had some recent additions; "cycle-jacking" for the stealing of bicycles; "drugola" as payola in drugs, usually made to disc jockeys; "whirligig" for police helicopter; "shorting the pot" for holding back the full assessment on the "pot," amassed from income from illicit activities; this is a "crime against crime," and is punishable by the customary "enforcers." From Britain comes a new term, "Granny Bashers," to describe teen-age London girls armed with knives who prey on old women.

THE FIELD OF labor relations has contrib-

uted the term "father-and-son union" for the closed-corporation, or even hereditary aspect that often prevails in some union organizations, precluding access to outsiders, particularly minority groups. Then there is the newly discovered "job alienation," where the worker gets tired of going through the same motions eight hours a day; the cure for this is said to be "job re-designing," permitting him to go through different motions. There is also "flexitime," where you come in when you like, and adjust your working day to suit yourself. This system is said to have been imported from Europe, and to have been used to good advantage by Lufthansa and Nestlé. You come in any time between 8 and 9:30 a.m., take a half hour lunch break somewhere between 12 and 1:30, and quit somewhere between 4 and 6. This may function well where the work is not coordinated, and one person's work does not hinge on another's. Cheating is presumably prevented by punching a time clock.

From the side of capital come an interesting noun and an equally interesting verb: the first is "oligopoly," a semi-monopoly conducted by a few leading firms in a given field (drugs and gasoline come to mind). How they get around anti-trust laws is their own business. The second is "to satisfice": here a big corporation allows small competitors to compete, so as to ward off government, consumer and competitor complaints, but at the same time show a substantial profit to its own shareholders. *The two seem to go hand in hand.* From engineering circles in Ohio we get an interesting expression with sexual overtones: "to go to bed with," meaning to agree to a contract.

The vocabulary of high finance is satirized in what is supposed to be a wife's complaint: "Our marriage started out as an equal partnership; now I'm a wholly-owned subsidiary."

THE LANGUAGE of science has brought us a recent creation, "neutercane," said to be intermediate between the hurricane and the frontal storm, and developing where the tropical and temperate climate zones meet. There is also the suggestion to replace our familiar "speedometer" (which goes back to 1904) with "tachometer," making the compound entirely Greek instead of a hybrid. "Tachometer," which first appeared in 1810, was originally used in connection with the velocity of machines of all kinds; an alternative "tachymeter," appearing in 1860, was at first used in connection with surveying instruments, later with speed, and Webster III equates it to "speedometer." "Odometer" (or "hodometer") measures distances only.

SCIENTIFIC and pseudo-scientific gobbledegook is criticized by Stanislav Andreski in his book *Social Science as Sorcery*. He speaks of "quantified trivialities," "pseudomathematical decorations," and the "hallucinogenic letter *n*" (for "need"), used as a symbol in formulas ("*n* Aff"—the urge to affiliate; "*n* Ach"—the urge to achieve; he adds "*n* Bam"—the urge to bamboozle). *How to Speak like an Educator without being Educated* is the contribution of Barbara Stover and Ilva Walker, who cite administrative circulars with phrases such as "Flexible ontological productivity will implement control group and experimental group"; or "adaptable and reciprocal nuclei will terminate in total modular exchange."

But Gobbledegook has numerous facets. To cite from the invocation of a minister who opened a legislative session: "Oh Lord, keep us from the sin of administrivia!" The law brings us "constitutional bricolage," the art of making do with the tools on hand (in this case, our somewhat outworn Constitution), through a system of interpretations. From the Pentagon come "managing assets" (the art of leading troops in an arti-

cial *Kriegsspiel*); "ticket punchers" (officers interested only in promotions based on one step at a time); the description of the POWs' return as "Operation Egress Recap"; the definition of "tunnel" as a "metaphorical subterranean connector system linking hypothetical ingress and egress channels," and of the "light at the end of the tunnel" as an "increased capability of luminescent egress visibility." There is also "cubic random numbers generators" for dice, but I will not swear to its military origin. From the general ranks of bureaucracy come "undefinitized," the definition of "ongoing" as "moving, no matter how slowly," an "affirmative action program" designed to make possible the hiring of more blacks, the abbreviation "S.O.B." not in its customary acceptance, but for "Superior Official Bureaucrat"; there is the distinction between "conference" (something you have to fly to to get results), "meeting" (something held in the home office), and "symposium" (either of the foregoing, but with no results); the distinction between "bureaucrat-lifers" and "bureaucrat-politicians"; "Siberia" (being exiled from a job you like to one you don't like). This from the U.S. Department of Labor: "The occupational incidence of the demand change is unlikely to coincide with the occupational profile of those registered at the employment office," which is translated by "The jobs may not fit the people." Business offers "personalized recreational eco-unit" for garden, "dINETTE unit" for table, "involuntarily leisured" for unemployed, "arrested increases in personal income" for wage freeze.

In view of all the foregoing, why should we doubt the statement made by Senior Editor Stuart Flexner of Random House Dictionary: "If Shakespeare were to materialize today in London or New York, he would be able to understand only five out of every nine words in our vocabulary."—