

# The Society of Editors (NSW)

Newsletter

P.O. Box 567, Neutral Bay Junction, 2089

## MEETING OCTOBER 22, 1986 Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre

**Speakers:** Christopher Koch (author of *The Doubleman*), Beatrice Davis (editor of *Year of Living Dangerously*) and Thomas Shapcott will speak on the editing of fiction in Australia today at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 6.30 p.m. on October 22. \$12 for meeting with meal; \$3 for meeting sans meal, but with wine and eats. RSVP to RITA or JEREMY 888 3655 by October 20.

### LAST MEETING

For the occasion of our last meeting the *eminence grise* of Sydney subversive bookselling, Bob Gould, chalked up another of his apparently rare but ever memorable visits to the northern shores of Sydney — this time on a more peaceful mission than that of storming Admiralty House, which, if we may believe him, had been the occasion of his last visit to those parts.

Ever since the publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the demise of the novel has been announced with great regularity. Yet it has continued to thrive and proliferate. Just as the novel to end all novels remains to be written, Bob assured us that the media revolution to end all reading has yet to be plotted.

While minor slumps in book sales had followed the introduction of television, and later of colour television, both depressions had been shortlived. Bob had no doubt that the current popularity of video would have no more drastic effect. He was convinced that the two medias could happily coexist, and that, if anything, cross-fertilisation would take place. Pending the outcome of this latest challenge to the book trade, Bob runs an unusual but successful combination of businesses: a bookshop (carrying second-hand, new and remaindered books) cum video library. The secret of his success, he said, was this diversity, and the vast range of his stock, from Mills % Boon to scholarly text books, and from soft porn (Bob spoke out strongly against censorship) to the complete works of Fellini. He estimated that his video library contains about 90 percent of all video releases in Australia.

Having set our minds at rest on the score of video's threat to reading and the book trade, however, Bob's optimism gave way to some serious misgivings about

the effect the Australian dollar's current struggle might have on book prices. Bob did not rule out the possibility that publishers' attempts to economise might affect the budget for editing.

But editors are a resilient breed, with a strong instinct for self-preservation. A snap marketing poll conducted by Bob yielded the information that the level of penetration of video recorders among assembled editors was circa 15 per cent, compared to a national average of circa 65 per cent. This would seem to point unmistakably to a shrewd policy on the part of the editors, who refuse to play into the hands of those who feed them not.

### EDITING FICTION

More fiction is being published in Australia than ever before. But how healthy is the industry? Not everybody is rejoicing. In the *National Times* of 612 June last, Philippa Hawker recorded a choir of unhappy voices. Their criticism spared no-one, from authors all the way down to readers. 'One recurring theme', Hawker found, though 'is the urgent need to improve editing skills'.

Author Rodney Hall bemoans that for most Australian writers editorial consultation involves showing your work to family and friends. According to McQueen: 'Creative editing requires a range of experience very few Australian editors have had.'

The problem is a simple shortage of experienced editors, exacerbated by the absence of training and low pay. Financial constraints on publishers often mean that costs are cut at the editing stage. Sometimes this is done reluctantly, sometimes out of ignorance.

Editor and publisher Hilary McPhee told a Writers' Week seminar that there was still extraordinarily little recognition by management of the complex role good editors play in the development of books. She is talking not of the mechanical skills of copy editing but of the creative skills that encourage a writer to locate the best ways of realising his or her intentions.

Humphrey McQueen has suggested that the Australia Council should set up a scheme to employ experienced writers as editors for other

authors with whom they have some rapport. Tom Shapcott says the Board would be very interested in funding such a scheme if more money were available. The board does, however, make publishing subsidies, which now include grants for editing.

It is not often that fiction editing becomes the subject of public debate, and it is a good occasion to take a somewhat closer look at the practice and ethics of it.

Despite the present media attention to Australian books and writing, editing is rarely mentioned, its very existence probably suspected by few.

While there is no particular reason that this should change, it is interesting to speculate why it should be so. An important factor is no doubt reticence on the part of the writer. In 'The Philosophy of Composition' (which purports to be a truthful account of the gestation of 'The Raven'), Edgar Allan Poe writes of what he calls 'authorial vanity':

Most writers prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of divine frenzy – an ecstatic intuition – and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes... at the cautious rejections and selections – at the painful erasures and interpolations – in a word at the wheels and pinions – the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrio*.

Though Poe wrote this before editing had become widespread practice, it is clear that he would consider it part of the 'wheels and pinions' and keep it well out of the footlights. Nor is it in the interest of the publisher to allow the general public backstage. Not only are there the author's sensibilities to respect, but literary publishing has its own integrity, and must not be seen to be meddling unduly with a creative talent; or worse, to present an elaborate sham: an author dressed in editor's garb. Editing readily conjures up visions of a reluctant industry concerned with marketing strategies, target audiences, product packaging and other phenomena alien to serious art (Why is this? – ED.). And this is probably the main reason for the silence that surrounds fiction editing: it is a controversial practice – much more so than Philippa Hawker's article would lead one to believe.

The consensus of Hawker's informants appears to be that all would be well if only there were more and better editors in Australia. But is that necessarily so? The assumption begs a number of questions about what it is that editors can and should do, and how they go about it.

To 'encourage a writer to locate the best ways of realising his or her intentions' is a description of the task that probably few would quarrel with. To start with a very practical consideration, however, Humphrey McQueen mentions the need for 'some rapport' between author and editor. In virtually all cases, the editor is chosen and paid by the publisher. How does this affect the delicate balance of loyalties in the working relationship with the author?

Ray Coffey mentions the need for more challenge to the author. But how much challenge can 'authorial vanity' take? The author's attitude to the process of editing largely determines the result. Hilary McPhee mentions the need for fiction editors to possess 'creative skills'. While many writers are unhappy to submit their work to an editor to begin with, even more feel that a line must be drawn somewhere or their artistic integrity becomes at risk. Apart from copyediting and making sure that no factual mistakes occur, for example in continuity – physically, psychologically, of plot – should a fiction editor be concerned with such subtle creative devices as tone viewpoint, imagery, structural design, or would that be encroaching upon the proper realm of the artist?

Humphrey McQueen's scheme to 'employ experienced writers as editors for other authors' has some precedents in literary history, the best-known of which is probably Ezra Pound's severe cut to *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. But most cases concern writers who actually *were* editors as well (as indeed Pound was). Is there indeed an acute shortage of capable fiction editors in Australia, and would this shortage be solved by McQueen's scheme?

Elsewhere in her article Philippa Hawker quotes Brian Johns (Penguin) as asserting that 'we should be publishing authors and, and it's a body of work you're looking at, you'll have to publish unevenly...It's a balancing act, and we're always fallible when standards are involved'. Are Australian publishers, as McQueen suggests, trigger-happy in their pursuit of new talent, or is there a case here for American-style editing? And if so, is that the solution, or is there a limit to what even the most capable and experienced editor can, or should, do?

## **NAME CHANGE**

### **Committee endorses Society of Editors (NSW)**

There have been some developments on this front. Our referendum on the name change has shown a clear preference for Society of Editors (NSW). The committee now endorses this change, to be produced in accordance with current Australian style; that is, the stops will be omitted in 'NSW'.

This name change, however, requires a formal vote which will be put at our next meeting. Notice is hereby

given, in accordance with the constitution. Since the last time the motion for change of name was put, it failed due to lack of a quorum, this next meeting, as custom provides, will be the decision making meeting, quorum or no quorum.

Our Life Member, Bruce Champion, has had some thoughts on the name change, and has written to the Committee. His letter follows:

### **Bruce's letter to the Committee**

I am not opposed to consideration of a name change but I would like to suggest that the committee proceed in a different manner.

To change Article 1 of the constitution (Name), Articles 10 and 14 state that one third of the membership should vote at a general meeting. Clearly the newsletter statement "We need 60 people to vote on this issue" is unconstitutional: the membership is about 220 and there is no provision in the constitution to allow postal voting as the sole criterion.

However, allowing for some latitude in approach on the grounds perhaps of excessive difficulty in satisfying the constitution, a more democratic approach would surely be to invite suggestions for a new name in the newsletter. It seems a trifle presumptuous of the committee to tell members they must choose between two names, one suggested by the President and the other emanating from The Society of Editors - even allowing for the 'NO' vote option.

If we choose Society of Editors (NSW) we will eventually become a satellite of the Victorian Group which has precedence in the use of this name. The other name makes a useful descriptive addition but does nothing to improve the status of The Editors.

If we are to go through the commotion of a name change we ought to choose a name that both looks to the future and moves us up the professional status scale. I would suggest The Australian Society of Book Editors (NSW); the Victorians could then be The Australian Society of Book Editors (Vic) if they wished and other state groups would probably emerge in Qld, SA, WA, and Tasmania.

I am familiar with our mailing list and 95% of our members are book editors. We have always welcomed as members art and production staff and editors of journals but generally magazine and industrial editors have not chosen to join The Editors.

I suggest that the committee open the subject for debate in the newsletter and ask members to submit names which could eventually be voted on over

perhaps two issues of the newsletter. Then a general meeting could be convened to conform a name that appears to have majority support or alternatively to vote between two or three names if postal voting has not achieved a clear result. Such a procedure could probably be interpreted as a fair and honest attempt to satisfy the constitution.

Yours sincerely,  
BRUCE CHAMPION

### **Reply by the President**

Bruce's first point on membership is erroneous. The membership at the time the motion was first put was 180. People who had not paid for two months were deleted from the membership list, in accordance with article 6 of the Constitution. As I write, the membership list is 192, and growing. I do not think the number of *financial* members has ever been 220, although the mailing list has at times been as large as 240. Non-financial members, however, are not entitled to vote.

Bruce's second point ignores the fact that new names were called for, and many suggested. The preferred choice, Society of Editors (NSW), was a result of this call for suggested names. It was suggested, I might add, by many more sources than the Victorian Society of Editors (which, as their newsletter points out, will vote to change their name to Society of Editors (Vic) at their next AGM). I do not think we will ever become a satellite of our colleagues in Melbourne. The Melburnians drink more at their meetings than we do.

I have always advocated a national union of editors' societies. I would not like to limit this merely to book editors, who do not constitute, I point out, 95% of our membership. A proportion of 7:3 book editors to others is most likely. In my own work I do not edit only books, so I cannot feel comfortable with a society name limiting me to this area. There is, as pointed out in another issue of the Newsletter, a Society of Editors (Tas). It may be that, in time, we can all form a Federal association to make legitimate the term 'Australian', but to claim we are an Australian society though restricted to NSW, at this stage smacks of 'States rights'.

With regard to Bruce's last paragraph, I feel that we have opened the subject for debate, and that there has been a fair and honest attempt not only to satisfy the Constitution, but to ascertain members' views. Majority support has been expressed for Society of Editors (NSW), clearly and conclusively (and that was not, I'd like to state here, my own preference).

I appreciate very much Bruce's continued interest and involvement with our Society, but his desire to oppose the name change because of some Melbourne-Sydney rivalry does not win support from me, the current Committee, or our membership. But, Bruce, remember, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

## ADVICE FROM TASMANIA

The Society of Editors (Tas) recently wrote to Committee member Juliet Richters to give information for a projected course to be conducted by NSW Institute of Technology. We publish this letter for the education of members.

Adrian asked me to send you a list of books that might be useful for your editing course. I have listed most of the books that I look at (however infrequently) but bear in mind that many of them had to be ordered from their country of origin and that would make them impractical for students. I've listed them anyway because the institution that takes on your course might be persuaded to stock its library.

I don't know how comprehensive your course is going to be. If it is only about copyediting then several of these books will be irrelevant. I have included them because in my experience here it is a rare editor who only copyedits (I know of only one person in that boring if luxurious position).

Expensive but interesting reference books about the 'the whole process' are:

M. Lee, *Bookmaking*, 2nd edn, Bowker, New York, 1979.

*Words Into Type*, 3rd edn, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1974.

They're both American so sections on copyright, for example, are irrelevant to us.

I don't think you can beat a good style manual for help with copyediting. They usually also explain what happens to documents after they leave editors and that knowledge in editors can make a production manager's life easier. The two obvious suggestions are the AGPS and Chicago manuals. I find style manuals absorbing reading, but most people don't, and in fact have to be taught how to use them.

Judith Butcher's *Copyediting* (CUP, Cambridge, 1981) is like another good style manual. The trouble with it and with style manuals is that they assume editors won't have much to do in the way of surgery, rewriting

or major rearrangement. It all seems rather genteel, as though you just have to mark those hyphens at the ends of lines that the typesetter should keep in. It's one of the areas where practical work is really the only way of conveying the sort of work that the editor of unprofessional writer's documents will have to do.

Those of us who were victims of 1960s education sometimes have difficulty explaining to authors over 35 the reasons for our changes, because we don't share their vocabulary of grammar. (In my job every change has to be explained to authors — commercial editors might have it easier.) It's straightforward enough to explain why something's ambiguous or unclear for other reasons, but it is helpful to know the name for a dangling participle is a dangling participle. For this purpose I find these two books helpful: *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, 2nd edn, OUP, Oxford, 1983.

Jane Waipole, *The Writer's Grammar Guide*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1980.

But any good basic grammar guides will do.

To save arguments with each other and our typesetter we use the Collins Gem *Dictionary of Spelling and Word Division*, (1968) and *Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers* (39th edn, OUP, Oxford, 1983). Hart has useful information about foreign words and phrases amongst other fine points of OUP style.

Most books for writers are good for editors too, for example: Gowers, *The Complete Plain Words*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978.

Barzun and Graf, *The Modern Researcher*, 4th edn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1985.

Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd edn, Macmillan, New York, 1979.

There are too many in this category to mention and your team will probably know of lots.

Books about layout and design:

*Typing for Publication*, AGPS, Canberra, 1984.

W. Gray, *Tips on Type*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1983, (Hideous, but has good ideas).

R. McLean, *Typography*, Thames & Hudson, London 1980, (This book is particularly dear to me — it is written with clarity, humour and sense by a typographer-designer who cares about words)

James Hartley, *Designing Instructional Text*, Nichols, New York, 1978

John Ryder, *The Case for Legibility*, Bodley, London, 1979

Ruari McLean and Jan White (US designer) have both produced books on magazine design. McLean's is

dated (published in the 1960s) and I haven't seen Jan White's yet, but it may be useful.

Several people have talked at seminars about 'current research' showing this or that, usually that sans serif type is or isn't hard to read as body type. I haven't been able to establish where this current research appears, but two people who would know are Dr Nicholas Flower (Head of the Production Unit at Deakin — I'm unsure of his proper title and address) and Peter Temple, lecturer in journalism at RMIT. I've been given a feeling that all sorts of interesting studies are being done on subjects like comprehension and written up in US journals I have no access to. The Bell telephone company, for example, has done studies of things like how the nod rate rises in readers in accordance with the number of abstract nouns they have to process.

The Society of Indexers would probably have a reference list for their field, and I think the Society of Editors in Melbourne have their course proposal just about ready (I saw a draft a few months ago) so it might be worth contacting them to see whether it includes a book list (if your group can bring itself to consult Victorians).

Another suggestion is a subscription to *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* (also, shudder, Victorian) which gives a lively sense of the publishing business and the magazine *Graphics* (published by Graphics Press, Zurich) which can be ordered from better newsagents.

I haven't seen any of Jan White's books, but I have been told that they provide useful starting points. I attended a seminar he gave in Melbourne recently, and he certainly talks effectively about his subject. He's another designer with an editor inside, and he was touring Oz giving seminars for the Society of Business Communicators. His CV included these books:

*Editing by Design, Designing for Magazines, Mastering Charts and Graphics and Using Charts and Graphs* (all R.R. Bowker), *Graphic Idea Notebook* (Watson-Guptill), *On Graphics: Tips for Editors* (Ragan Communications) and *18 Ready-to-Use Grids* (National Composition Association).

Stop press: I've just received another book by Jacques Barzun called *On Writing, Editing, and Publishing* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986). It's a delightful collection of essays written between the 1940s and 1980s, and most of which are reasonably contentious and could be useful discussion starters. When I say 'contentious' I mean Barzun is opinionated in a useful way.

## SUMMARY

How books are made:

M. Lee *Bookmaking*, 2nd edn, Bowker, New York, 1979

*Words Into Type*, 3rd edn, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1974

Copyediting:

?*Style Manual*, ?4dn, AGPS, Canberra, ?1987

*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982

Judith Butcher, *Copyediting*, CUP, Cambridge, 1981  
Collins Gem *Dictionary of Spelling and Word Division*, Collins, London, 1968

*Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers*, 39th edn, OUP Oxford 1983

Grammar/Reasons why sentences are faulty:

*Fowler's Modern English Usage*, 2nd edn, OUP, Oxford, 1983

Jane Walpole, *The Writer's Grammar Guide*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1980

Writing/Editing:

Gowers, *The Complete Plain Words*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978

Barzun and Graf, *The Modern Researcher*, 4th edn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1985

Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd edn, Macmillan, New York, 1979

Layout:

*Typing for publication*, AGPS, Canberra, 1984

W. Gray, *Tips on Type*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1983

R. McLean, *Typography*, Thames & Hudson, London 1980

James Hartley, *Designing Instructional Text*, Nichols, New York, 1978

John Ryder, *The Case for Legibility*, Bodley, London, 1979

Magazine:

*Australian Bookseller and Publisher Graphics*

*Heard but not seen - books by Jan White:*

*Editing by Design, Designing for Magazines, Mastering Charts and Graphics and Using Charts and Graphs* (all R.R. Bowker), *Graphic Idea Notebook* (Watson-Guptill), *On Graphics: Tips for Editors* (Ragan Communications) and *18 Ready-to-Use Grids* (National Compositions Association).

## PRESIDENT SPEAKS!

Jeremy Fisher recently gave a talk to the St George-Sutherland section of the Fellowship of Australian Writers. The topic was editing and writers' roles in that process. It was a very informative and fruitful meeting for both speaker and audience. The Freelance Register was recommended as a means of obtaining manuscript evaluation services, so members should be prepared for the occasional call from a budding writer.

## CHRISTMAS DINNER

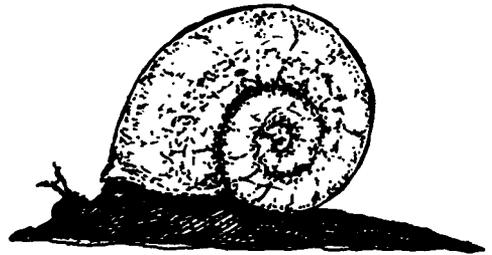
The Rangoon Restaurant, 646 King Street, Newtown (phone: 51 3020). November 28th, from 7p.m. Cost — a mere \$20, including wine, beer or orange juice etc. Vegans will be well looked after at the Rangoon, but meat eaters need not despair. The *ohno kaukswe*, *ametha sibyon hin* or *chet-tha hin* should satisfy. Fill in the form in this newsletter or mail your acceptance and money to The Treasurer, PO Box 567, Neutral Bay Junction, 2089.

## THANKS

This newsletter was typeset by the redoubtable Rita Wood on a Compugraphic 7600 kindly loaned by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Copy was prepared in a very traditional mode by Jeremy Fisher who is facing an increasing number of accusations that he is monopolizing the Society's communications. He states in his defence, however, that anybody who shows the slightest indication that they would like the job will get it. The newsletter has been printed by Posh Instant Printing, North Ryde. Joan Jorgensen has catered for us throughout the year.

## EXCITING FORUM

The Library Society will be conducting a symposium 'New Directions in Australian Publishing' (why, why, why do we ignore New Zealanders — has anybody read *The Quiet Earth* by Craig Harrison, Hodder & Stoughton, the film of which was such a cult hit recently? It is kilometres superior to recent Oz fiction) at the Tattersall Club, 157 Elizabeth Street, Sydney on October 18, 1986. Laurie Muller, Sylvia Hale, Pat Woolley, Ian Templeman, Richard Walsh, Diana Gribble, and Ric Sissons will hold forth. Cost is \$25 (\$16 if you're a member of the Library Society). Respond to Rosemary Block, Executive Director, The Library Society, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney, 2000 (telephone: 02 230 1500).



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President, Jeremy Fisher, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 8883655  
*Committee*  
Sue Butler, Weldon-Hardie, 9295677  
Adriaan van der Weel, freelance, 3273658  
Maureen Colman, freelance, 6602302  
Heather Dalton, freelance, 9224620  
Ruth Matheson, Prentice-Hall, 9391333  
Julia Cain, McGraw-Hill, 4064288  
Juliet Richters, Family Planning Assoc., 2110244  
Margaret Olds, TAFE, 9205787



CHRISTMAS PARTY

Oh boy, yes, put me down for the Burmese Banquet at the Rangoon Restaurant, 646 King Street, Newtown, on November 28, 1986, from 7 pm. \$20 per head only!

Also put down the following people:

I enclose a cheque for \$            being full payment.

(Send to: The Editors (a Society), Box 567, NEUTRAL BAY JUNCTION, 2089.)

## INFORMATION

We reprint the following article for members' elucidation. It is from the *New York Times*. Member Anne Sahlin thought they wouldn't mind if we showed some interest. I hope she's right!

**A**FTER three American servicemen had been killed while unloading and accidentally exploding a Pershing missile, an Army spokesman called the incident "an unplanned rapid ignition of solid fuel."

A major manufacturer of greeting cards refers to them as "social expression products."

A supermarket offered its customers "semiboneless ham," probably a relative of the "limited lifetime guarantee" promised by a recent television commercial.

These perversions of the language are brought to the attention of high school English teachers by the Quarterly Review of Doublespeak, a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Funny as some aberrations may seem, the council's Committee on Public Doublespeak is not in the business for fun. Its serious purpose is to remind English teachers and anyone else who wants to listen that the English language ought to be used to convey meaning rather than obscure it. By publicizing flagrant abuses, the committee hopes to enlist teachers in the fight against language pollution.

The committee members see themselves not as pedants, but as descendants of George Orwell. They annually give a George Orwell Award for a "distinguished contribution to honesty and clarity in public language." The latest recipients were Torben Vestergaard and Kim Schroder, authors of "The Language of Advertising." The committee also bestows a Doublespeak Award on flagrant doublespeakers. Most recently it went to the Central Intelligence Agency for language used in its Psychological Warfare Manual to teach the Nicaraguan rebels how to "neutralize" Nicaraguan officials. The manual has since been withdrawn.

Not all crimes committed against the English language are as sinister

as the "war is peace" way of speech in the totalitarian state of Orwell's "1984" or in the more current reference to a deadly missile as "Peacekeeper." Some linguistic sins are just born of trendy mindlessness.

Recently, for instance, while waiting in a Kentucky airport, I was startled by a sign on the door to the gate, "This door is alarmed." Similarly, a television commercial totts "the soup that eats like a meal." An airline vice president recently vowed, "We're going to grow the airline."

"Airlinespeak," the doublespeak committee points out, needs constant watching. A delay caused by "a change of equipment" really means, "This plane is broken and won't fly." And there is the redundant "process," as in "we are now starting the boarding process," a cousin to the "activity," as in "shower activity," so dear to the weather people.

These redundancies are intended to show that those who use them are experts, as in a Navy manual's description of a "frame-supported tension structure (FTS)" — a tent.

Trying to make less seem more makes a supermarket chain say that it is open "24 hours a day," while suggesting that customers "check local stores for exact hours." Is the idea catching on? A bank in Detroit said its "24-hour banker machines" would be open almost eight hours a day.

Often the aim is to cover up and deceive. "A negative cash-flow position" sounds better than no cash. The doublespeak people report that when an oil company discharged several hundred workers, it said: "We don't characterize it as a layoff. We're managing our staff resources."

When an Air Force missile flew out of control and crashed, the official version was that it merely "impacted with the ground prematurely."

Since Watergate, governmental and corporate lingo has tended to replace "right" and "wrong" with "ap-

propriate" and "inappropriate."

The educators show no mercy to their own. They cite a teacher's note informing parents that "There will be a modified English course offered for those children who achieve deficiency in English."

The College Board, explaining why women who get higher grades than men in high school and college nevertheless score lower on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, said, that "The underprediction of women's grades seems consistent and pervasive, but generally the bias is at a low level of magnitude." A boys' camp, reports the latest Doublespeak Quarterly, advertised that it was "deliberately designed with individual attention for the minimally exceptional."

The Committee on Doublespeak, while exposing a wide variety of wrongs done to the language, worries most about the Orwellian kind of abuses: A patient died because a nurse mistakenly put a wrong fluid in an intravenous feeding tube, and the coroner classified it as a "therapeutic misadventure."

What alarms these concerned English teachers most is governmental distortion of the language to deceive the public. "Just as the United States' invasion of Cambodia was called an 'incursion,'" the current Quarterly Review says, "so three years ago the Japanese Ministry of Education, in 'updating' history texts used in all Japanese schools, called the Japanese invasion of China in 1931 a mere 'advance.'"

The Committee on Doublespeak is trying to tell the nation's English teachers that language abuse can be dangerous to the national health. It would like teachers to show their pupils how to decode the absurdities and deceptions that pollute the language and the mind. They point out that horrible examples are all around us and that alert teachers can use them as a textbook.

By FRED M. HECHINGER