

The Underground GRAMMARIAN

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The Grossest of National Products

Books will speak plain when counsellors blanch. · Francis Bacon

THERE was a time when it was very easy to teach children just about everything they needed to know about sex. It is, after all, and especially for any *practical* purposes, a subject far more alluring than complicated. All a canny parent had to do was to buy one of those fusty but fascinating "marriage manuals" and hide it under the hankies. In two or three trices at the most, the nearest child would learn all about spermatozoa and fallopian tubes and even how to spell those things.

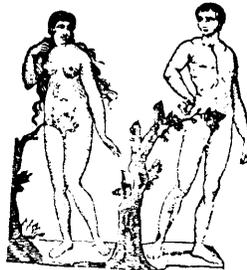
Well, you can try that if you please, but it probably won't work anymore. Unless your hanky drawer is big enough for a film-strip projector and a four-color chart on do-it-yourself childbirth as an experiential awareness-enhancement module, you'd better send your kids to the real sex pros down at your local schoolhouse. Those people have regular in-service, sometimes as often as once a month, so they're really up on the sex thing. What's more, they know, far better than any parent can, that most of their students have a perfectly natural fear of the unknown, and are easily embarrassed and confused by any public discussion of books.

Functional illiteracy is not the bugbear you probably think it. Indeed, it is the grossest of our gross national products and one of the most consequential, if all too little understood, of those mysterious leading economic indicators. Just look at what it's done for the sex edu-

cation industry in New Jersey, where they've decided to sex-educate every child every year for twelve years. If it weren't for New Jersey's outstanding production of functional illiterates, there'd be no market at all for sex education. The kids would just get books and read them. And poof! A whole industry disappears.

As it is, though, just think of all those jobs! Think of the co-ordinators and the facilitators and the secretaries! Think of the audio-visual devices and the teaching aids (really nifty little models) and the handsome kits of learning materials. We're talking big bucks here, and if you think we're going to let anybody come in with a couple of lousy books and queer this sweet deal, then you don't know a thing about New Jersey, a truly enlightened state with casinos and everything.

Besides, we're not just going to teach the plumbing. We're going to teach about values and attitudes and other humanistic stuff. You can't get that sort of thing out of books! Unless you can read, that is. Well, our kids, thank goodness, don't have to. They can get all the values and attitudes they need from a twenty-six-year-old divorcée who has just moved in with the real cool unemployed assistant welder who sold his motorcycle to pay for her abortion. Now *that* is experiential problem-solving in a real-life-situation and none of that *Madame Bovary* la-di-da. And, anyway, if we teach sex in school, we'll soon be saved by widespread functional celibacy.



The Medium is the Message

HERE at Glassboro we *do not* use the hideous and mendacious cant of the politicians, whose aim is always, as Orwell told us, to defend the indefensible. We're above that sort of thing. We see no need whatsoever to defend the indefensible.

Consider, for example, the utterly undeceptive prose of Mel Moyer, identified in the fall newsletter of Educational and Career services for Adults as "a humanistic psychology professor" who oh so freely shares self in his "perceptions of teaching non-traditional students":

An interesting faction of the non-traditional student is the clergy of various faiths who are on campus. These people are so casual and open to what's going on around them, contrary to what many people might think. For instance, experiences in Humanistic Psychology include touching exercises and sitting on the floor, relating self to environment of people, etc. I find that members of the clergy are very open about self and comfortable in the touching experiences. They do not get nearly as uptight with group massage as the younger students, for instance. I also find that they are active listeners and comfortable with their sexuality and value systems.

Now what could be clearer than that? Why that prose is so far from mendacity that it wouldn't deceive an unremediated freshman or even an experiential continuum co-ordinator. It is the work, as Moyer himself puts it, of one who is "trusting enough to share self and be open to relating to others via improved communication techniques." A touching experience.

"They are," says Moyer of those non-traditional students, "interested in knowing what my role is as an instructor." Yes. How true that must be. We're interested in his role too, but we're ready to assume that Moyer, in whatever his role may be, will do everything he can to overcome the stubborn and antihumanistic reluctance of "the younger students" to share selves freely with that faction of casual clergymen via group massage. After all, where are those kids going to learn their improved communication techniques if not right here at GSC where *spes mundi* (and every other day of the week, by gosh, except Friday, of course, when most of the *spes* is in the parking lots) is good old-fashioned *eruditio*?

"Two of my courses," Moyer unuptightly tells one and all, "emphasize intraspective (self) and interpersonal (self relating to others)." Now that is not the devious and cunning linguistic trickery of a skillful wordmonger who wants to defend the indefensible. It is the simple language

of one who just wants to communicate it via the most improved techniques.

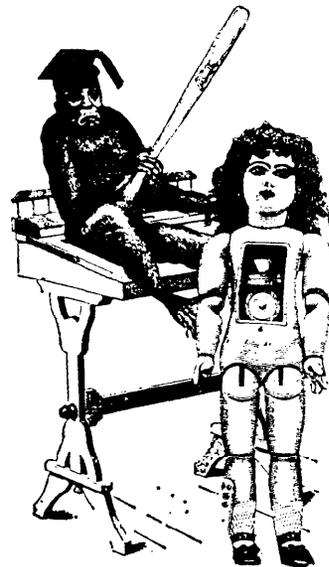
And a good thing too, because even in Moyer's classes, where all *sorts* of communications are exchanged, some people still need a lot of relating:

Two nuns in my (psychology and Human Relations) graduate class have shared with me their feelings about this class. The class stresses improved communication techniques and so forth.

These women are very inquisitive about what the main point of the lecture is. They freely share self and actively listen to others. They are not defensive.

Well, that's discouraging, isn't it. Two nuns, to be sure, do not a faction make, but you would think that such freely self-sharing active listeners, after sitting on the floor relating self to environment of people, and having heard about improved communication and so forth, would at least know "what the main point of the lecture is." They obviously **need some more massage.**

Behavior Modification



in the Classroom Situation



The Ballons Nodule

Citizens out in the real world, usually but not always parents of schoolchildren, write to us complaining about the bozos who run the schools. The complainers often send evidence, which we are delighted to have, of course, but all too many of them go on to whine about their supposed helplessness and frustration. That puzzles us. We thought *every* American would know what to do with evidence of official malfeasance, even when, as in the case of the schools, the presumed protectors of the public interest are themselves the miscreants.

We have, for instance, a letter from an irate father in Wisconsin. Although he was relieved to learn that his son had *not* in fact been put into a nodule, he found that his tolerance of typos did not extend to big black caps:

A handout (of material, of course) was given to my son in his kindergarten class. It was a picture of a clown holding a bunch of ballons. I knew right away that they were ballons because the instructions on the top of the page said, "Color the Ballons." I had intended to send the original, but I can't bear to part with such a treasure.

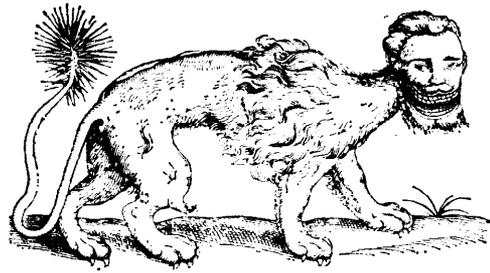
And he asks, with this and other similar matters in mind, "What the hell should I do!!!!" (That's right: 4 !'s.)

Another irate parent sends *Update*, the newsletter of the Keystone Central School District in Lock Haven, PA, where the molders of young minds say:

All incoming seventh grade students will be tested during the first two weeks of school in mathematics and english. The purpose of this testing is to find out at what competency level the students are functioning. This will allow the teachers to pinpoint specific weaknesses a student may have and help him to improve it during the year. In order to determine the progress a student may have made during the year, they will be tested again in June.

OK. Here's what you do. Do *not* bother going to the schools. The people who make policy there are ignorant or negligent or both. How do you think such things happen in the first place? Besides, the school people lose nothing when you complain and gain nothing when you approve; they get your money either way.

But *do* go to your local newspaper. With any luck at all, you'll find there a gnarled editor who once learned to diagram sentences, or a smartass young reporter fresh from the minimum competence circus. Newspapers don't get tax money, and juicy stories about ignorant educationists are happily popular just now. So strike while the irony is hot, or shut up and color your ballons. ♪



Teratology

[What follows is from a snappy little brochure from the Department of Communication at the University of Hawaii.]

"Communication is seen as a central and distinctive field in the study of human behavior and as *the* fundamental social process. ... An eclectic field, communication has roots that include, among others, extensions from psychology, social psychology, sociology, and political science. 'Communicologists' have attempted to cull the various perspectives to *synthesize* salient concepts into an *integrated* framework. Although their backgrounds and training are various and the orientations and foci are *diverse*, this community of scholars, researchers, and educators has established a distinct field of communication research with a multi-theoretical delineation of parameters and general orientations. The field continues to evolve; the diversity of theoretical approaches, methods of inquiry, and practices has produced a rich, multi-faceted identity."

[And this is from the letter that came with an article submitted for publication to the "North Carolina Association of Educators Bulletin." The author, alas, we don't know.]

"Please find enclosed a fundamental quasipanacca in the form of two concepts. If implemented with creativity, consistency and fortitude, the objectional qualities and quantities present presently within our public schools will be abated greatly.

"Nevertheless, the firm acceptance and establishment of this efficacious technique will provide predictably the necessary self-evident factors for a fully developed successfully implemental probability of the matter enclosed. Good luck and great success."



Brief Notes

WE are always amazed to discover that we have gotten out yet another issue of *THE UNDERGROUND GRAMMARIAN*. And just now, nothing seems less likely than the *next* issue. Nevertheless, we have now come to the end of Volume Four, and the end is not in sight. We can't even see the beginning of the end. The wicked have not ceased from troubling, and we'll just have to keep going.

Our task will be lightened somewhat by our new (*circa* 1935) letterpress with its automatic paper feeding system. And *your* task may be lightened, too, since we have dumped into the melting pot the eight point Caslon that we used in inset quotations and footnotes and replaced it with the nine point that you are reading now. It's a bit easier to set, too.

We have also discovered, with this issue, *the* permanent format. Really. Those who have been muttering for four years about the difficulty of binding and filing can now make plans.

Once again we remind all readers that we *always* give permission to copy or reprint and circulate any part or all of this journal. In fact, we *encourage* disruptive behavior. You don't even have to ask.

However, we must also remind one and all that we routinely throw out purchase orders, forms to be filled out, and statist questionnaires about the disadvantages and deficiencies that we most prize in our employees. We and our readers make up a voluntary association of *individuals*.

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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.*

And now, for all our faithful readers, we wish
A SEASON OF FESTIVALS,
and send you, from the
National Education Association
and its junior affiliate,
The Department of Education,



the Basic Minimum Christmas Tree!