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Publisher.....A. Sandy Harbinson
Advertising Mgr....Linda R. Harbinson
Editor.....Darren MacDonald
Advertising Rep.....Cheryl Kostecki
Admin. Asst.....Gayle Fournier



Greenpeace campaign is in itself misleading

In last week's Arthur Black column, our rotund columnist complained about the spread of sanitized and useless words into our language. The politically correct movement, in their own well-intentioned but fascistic way, are helping along a new kind of censorship, one that seems more suited to the old USSR than modern North America.

But there is another kind of language battle going on right now, and it's just as disturbing as the one Black talked about.

Most every group fighting for a cause these days have turned to public relations consultants to help them fight their cause. Gone are the days of long-haired radicals with placards promoting their cause. Today, these groups have media consultants who devise publicity strategies designed to put the best possible face on their point of view, while basically smearing the other side. And the way they do this is through the use of misleading language.

Look at the abortion issue. Nobody wants to be on a side that's pro-abortion, but if you're pro-choice, then anybody can support that—this is a democracy after all. As for the other side, being anti-abortion sounds too negative, but if you're pro-life, who could oppose that?

And then we have groups like Greenpeace. Talk about you're idealistic hippies, up until now, I've always viewed them as well-intentioned wearers of jeans and t-shirts, riding around in unseaworthy boats trying to save whales. But no more, and a press release they sent me last week drives home that point.

As most people know, that group has been campaigning in favour of proposed Ministry of Environment regulations banning chlorine-based pulp production.

The news release's headline warns people to beware of the "pro-pollution" lobby. Greenpeace's Gordon Perks is quoted as saying that "science has shown that the byproducts of chlorine bleaching are extremely harmful . . . the (pulp and paper) industry covered up more than 100 scientific reports when they told council there is no science to support a ban."

These few sentences contain some very manipulative language. First of all, calling the industry's campaign against the proposed regulations a pro-pollution movement is misleading in itself. Just because the industry is against the proposed regulations doesn't mean it's pro-pollution.

And when it says the effects of chlorine-based bleaching are harmful, at what levels are they harmful? Every mill in Ontario produces pulp with chlorinated organic discharges at less than 2.5 kg/tonne of bleached pulp—what does "science" say about bleaching at that level?

When they accuse the industry of a "cover-up", what are they talking about? Unless I'm mistaken, everyone has access to scientific studies, and I don't think that anyone's burned these reports. Again, they're using misleading language.

And still on that topic, what reports are they talking about? Who produced them? When? What were the studies attempting to determine? Are there positive studies that contradict the negative ones?

Greenpeace's track record is less than sparkling. They claim victory for ending the seal hunt in Newfoundland, but, as far as I know, they haven't launched a campaign to find jobs for the seal hunters. Nor have they launched a campaign in support of unemployed fishermen who have seen the cod stocks in part damaged by the increased seal population. And the seals themselves were in no danger of extinction, they were just cute. And thank God cows aren't cute, or we'd have to find another ugly animal to eat.

So, what do you think Greenpeace will do to help pulp and paper workers who might lose their jobs if the new regulations are imposed? I'd like to see a press release on that.

Darren MacDonald



The new english invasion

"I was grooving to this Rap CD on my Walkman last night down by the Video Store when suddenly this Yuppie blindsides me and rips a big hole in my GoreTex—bummer."

What—aside from an undisguised whiff on air-headedness on the part of the speaker—is wrong with the preceding sentence?

Answer: not a thing. Except if you'd said it to John George Diefenbaker when he was alive, he'd probably have sic'ed the Mounties on you as a suspected extraterrestrial. When Dief the Chief died, the world had not yet seen Rap, CD's, Walkmans or Video Stores. Yuppies still hadn't been invented and neither had Gore Tex.

And Diefenbaker died in 1979.

We've got a lot of English additions that would make old John George shake his wattles in confusion. He wouldn't know what to make of AIDS, or Insider Trading. Or sunblock or Poop and Scoop laws either.

Nuclear winter . . . Infotainment . . . Pay per view . . . Mid life crisis . . . might as well be speaking Martian to anyone who checked out in the 1970's.

That's the wonderful thing about the English language: it's always changing, never still. It is forever taking on new words and phrases, custom-fitting them for our ears.

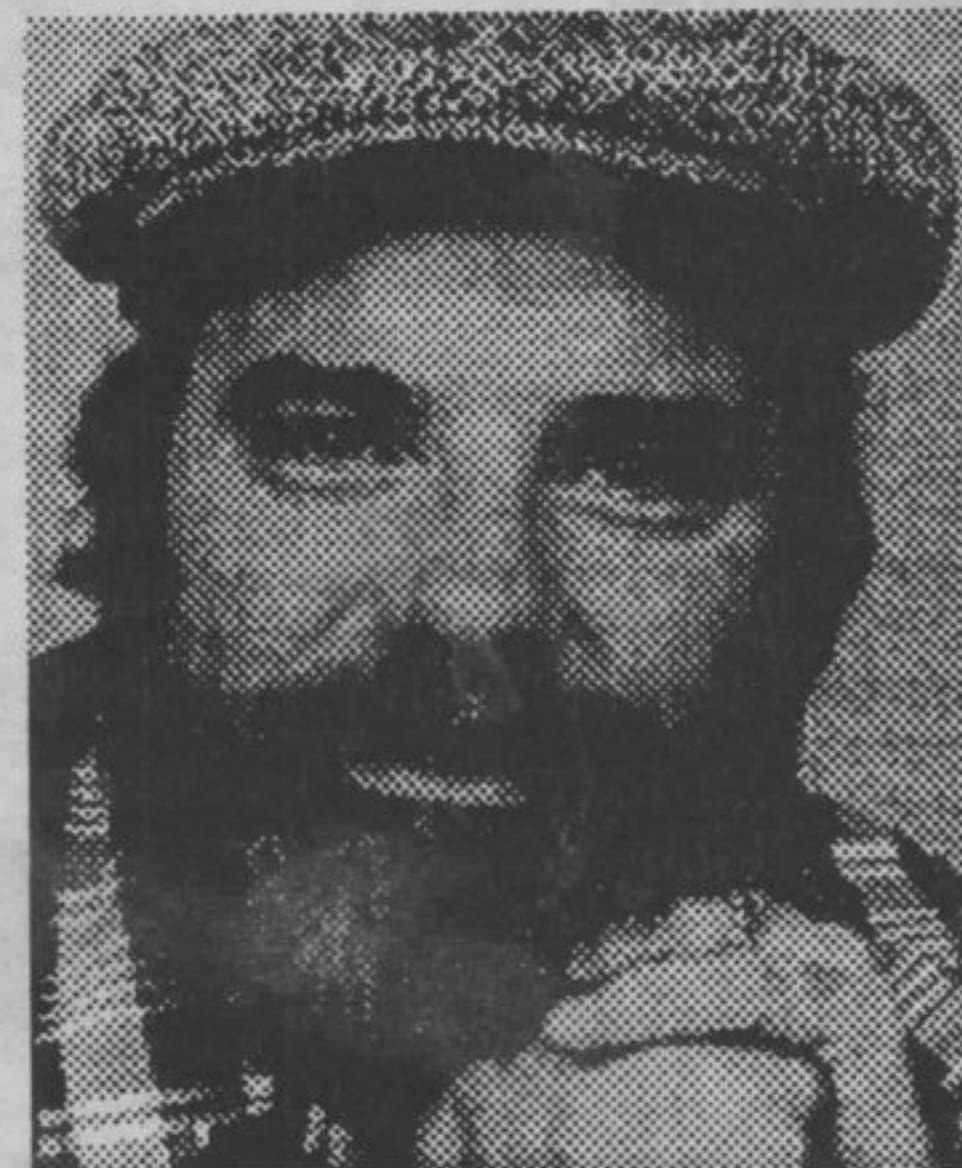
But language is a two-way street. A lot of old words and phrases get discarded to make room for the new. Our grandfathers grew up in a world of spats and spitoons, speakeasies and spliced mainbraces.

Today, there's not one kid in a thousand who could explain any of those terms.

Remember the cliché 'lock, stock and barrel', meaning everything connected with some object or process? Don't try it out on anyone under thirty. They'll have no idea what you're talking about. Try 'the whole nine yards' instead—as in "Yeah, I bought the deluxe model . . . air conditioning, power windows, tinted glass . . . the whole nine

yards."

English is so doggone powerful it invades other languages at will. The French speak of leaving 'le camping car' at 'un parking' at the airport to clamber aboard 'le jumbojet'. Germans, who call their employer 'der Boss' often spend their leisure hours dressed in running shorts and sneakers, engaged in 'das Joggen'. Italians seem more attracted to 'il bodybuilding'.



Arthur Black

A lot of languages borrow from English. Sometimes I wish we'd return the favour. Foreign tongues have a lot of words and expressions our language just can't match.

Such as? Well, such as the French expression *esprit d'escalier*. It translates as "the spirit of the staircase." It refers to the clever retort you could have made to the smartass at the party—except you didn't think of it until you

were on your way home—virtually going 'up the staircase'.

The Germans have an expression that we could dearly use. You know those annoyingly narrow-minded technocrats who never foresee the consequences of their work? The agriculturalists who pushed DDT because it increased crop yield? The government economic flacks who advocate nuclear power because it's 'efficient'? The Germans have a word for them. They call them *Fachidiots*.

Let me conclude by introducing you to a brand new word—not even six months old. Remember U.S. President George Bush's disastrous trip to Japan last year during which he upchucked on the Japanese Prime Minister? It's given the Japanese a new word; *Bushusuru*. They use it to describe the curious custom of Japanese businessmen power drinkers who get stinking drunk as fast as they can. Then they stagger down the nearest alley . . . And *Bushusuru* all over the place.