

the decisions which affect their lives. They elect and pay politicians to make them, reserving under the prevailing constitutional system the right to turn out the office-holders if what they do becomes too upsetting.

Politicians do not, any more than voters, make their decisions on the basis of media-supplied information; but it can sway them through its possible effect on their electoral chances. Bearing in mind the *Belgrano* affair (and, more recently, the way both sides of the Westland Helicopter Company battle worked through the media), it is clear that politicians, with electoral and other considerations in mind, will use whatever influence they can muster, including administrative authority, to shape information before (and even after) a story reaches the media professionals. It seems

obvious enough that the attitude of the professionals to a given politician and/or his party, plus the other special interests of journalists themselves, will help to determine what form the information takes and how it is expressed by the time it reaches the public. The relationship between an enlightened democracy and Jeffersonian “free expression” for journalists is neither so clear-cut nor so clean as our Fourth Estate likes to pretend. On the contrary it can be obscure, not to say positively dirty—for the special interests of journalists are like those of any other exclusive group in one important respect: they will not always coincide with the public interest. I mean to discuss the implications for this for media freedom in further pieces on censorship and the ethics of journalism.

From an Urban Bestiary

1. House Mouse

The picture on the box the trap came in
is a travesty. Your fur is a beautiful grey,
eyes polished jet and whiskers amazingly long.
You are the only wild life we have seen this year
and we have slaughtered you.

2. White Fly

You are so numerous you have no singular.
When we put out the tomato plants in a polythene bag
we hoped we'd seen the last of you.
You beat against the clear plastic
like a perpetual motion confetti.

3. Bull

Even from the car we can see
you are bad-tempered,
as if you're fed up at being got at
for treating cows as sexual objects.
Cheer up, old bull. Think of the Ministry's stud bulls,
Artificial inseminators, making love to sexless objects.

4. Blue Bottle

What is so disgusting about your bulky bustle
is that you may not be insignificantly squashed
like a mite.

5. Go Go Lion

Our local strip-tease artist's lion
brought the reporters in
when it peeped over the wall at a neighbour hanging washing.
Gentle as a kitten the owner protested, but they never are.
Also, she has a python for her act.

Robert Crozier

LANGUAGE

Acoustical Excitation

Truth, Beauty & Bafflegab—By D. J. ENRIGHT



THERE'S A LOT OF amusement, instruction and alarm to be had from *Newspeak*,¹ albeit the title is something of a misnomer. Orwell's "Newspeak" entailed a reduction of vocabulary, as an aid to a reduction of thought, whereas Jonathon Green's version illustrates an extension of vocabulary pointing to an

increase of thought, or knowledge, or supposition, whether admirable or otherwise. The hectoring and deceit in evidence at least cancel out ideologically. Green includes expressions that are ironic or subversive in tendency—something not found in the official language of Oceania—as well as the unexceptionable jargon of trades and professions. Thus *boom corridor*: supersonic flight path—and *accelerated history*: testing aircraft components through ageing by artificial stress.

Outside the admonitory slogans of Soviet Russia and China, the closest this book comes to Orwell is in its nastier euphemisms. *ABC warfare* is not ructions in the primary classroom but Atomic, Biological and Chemical weaponry. (Nor is *absolute dud* a term to be seen on school reports; it indicates the absence of one—a nuclear weapon that fails to explode on target.) *Accidental delivery* isn't having someone else's groceries left on your doorstep, but the shelling of one's own troops. *Anticipatory retaliation* is double-think or "bafflegab" for surprise attack; and *BAMBI* stands for Ballistic Missile Boost Intercept, an orbiting satellite intended to destroy hostile ground installations. In Argentina *a chat with Susan* denotes a session of torture by electricity (how does it go in Spanish, one wonders, and why?), though *happy talk* (US) is the style of news broadcasting in which "all topics, however grave or disturbing, are given a jokey, light-hearted veneer", much the same as *infotainment*, a mixture lower on information than on entertainment.

First Australians is not a value-free way of referring to convicts but means the Aborigines. *Bent spear* is US emergency code for an incident involving a nuclear device, less serious than an *accident* (q.v., but I couldn't find it). *Heavy textiles* are not overcoats but mailbags sewn by hand in

Her Majesty's prisons, whereas *knitting* (Royal Navy) means girls or girl-friends. In espionage circles *biographic leverage* implies the use of personal indiscretions for blackmail purposes—*ladies*, it seems, initiate the seduction but *sisters* actually sleep with the *target*; both belong to the *sanctifying* or blackmailing team—while *family jewels* (via its slang use: male genitals) is CIA talk for an embarrassing secret that had best remain secret. *Slimwear*, a fashion term, is here a fetishist mag genteelism for rubber garments.

SEX is a sickeningly rich field, with homosexuality apparently a growth area. Assuming that homosexuals are still a minority, one gets the impression that there are almost as many terms for them as there are of them. Many of the entries under this general head are not fit to explicate in a respectable magazine, and we may hope that they are more honoured in the breach than the observance. (Not perhaps the happiest way of putting it.) *Dollar-an-inch-man* explains itself (*big Dick*, however, is a gambling expression for the point 10 in dice), as perhaps do *golden shower* and *three-way girl*—though the latter shouldn't be confused with *three-eye league*, a "hypothetical club" comprising politicians who have visited the homelands of the US's "major minorities", Israel, Ireland, and Italy. *Coffee-queen* is a homosexual prostitute who obliges for food or drink. And among pimps *blow* is "to lose a whore from your string of girls"—thank you for that "your"—while *bottom woman*, more respectable than she sounds, is the most reliable or efficient member of the string. *Alimony drone* is nice for a divorced woman who declines to remarry solely to continue milking her ex-husband. *Boylesk* seems somewhat contrived as burlesque/striptease featuring male performers, and should be distinguished from *butter-boy*, a young and ingenuous police constable in whose mouth the commodity would not melt.

The author seems to have a marked predilection for the Foreign Legion and its lingo, much of which comes from Arabic, like *bouzbir* (brothel) and *baraka* (luck)—though *ravio* (anything obtained illegally) could be a corruption of the French "*rabio*", something extra to a soldier's ration. *Coup-de-bambon*, defined as "a sudden physical or mental collapse with no apparent cause", may be a misprint for "*coup de bambou*": sunstroke, and hence, with "*avoir*", to go mad. *Abstauben*, we are told, is used by the Foreign Legion to denote anything acquired by irregular means; it would

¹ *Newspeak: A Dictionary of Jargon*. By JONATHAN GREEN. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £5.95.