

'unt den ve vill make dem shpan '.

In the glory days of baseball star Yogi Berra, the Yankee dugout was often littered with fractured phrases.

When the loudspeaker announced one day that only 9 000 were in attendance for a game against the last place club, Yogi philosophised: 'If fans don't want to come out and see the games, you can't stop them'.

He is supposed to have said of his favourite steakhouse near Yankee Stadium: 'You'd have to go a long way to find a restaurant this close'.

Charles Laughton once proudly announced in the Gresham Hotel bar that he had come to Dublin to do a one-man show. 'That's grand', said the barman, 'Who's in it?' Touring Ireland this past summer, I heard the story of a grizzled old farmer in County Armagh who was anxiously awaiting his brother's return from America after an absence of 42 years.

'I'm not sure I'll recognise him after all this time', the farmer worried out loud to his cronies at the Crossroads Pub, 'but he'll know me all right'.

'How will he know you?' the publican took the bait.

'Well, I haven't been away'.

Then there was the young Irish missionary, back from his first three-year tour in Africa, making an emotional appeal in his home parish in Tipperary, 'For shoes for the footless children of Swaziland'.

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## TWO PILES OF TRIPE TO THE 'ANENT' ADDICTS

*A.B. HUGHES*

In England there is an annual competition to discover the best example of gibberish or gobbledegook.

The contest is run by the Plain English Campaign in conjunction with the National Consumer Council and the prize for the winner is a parcel of the best Lancashire tripe.

If I were to win this competition by any chance I would welcome the prize and eat it hot with onions and white sauce. It's

delicious.

But the Plain English people have no intention of providing the winner of their contest with a tasty supper. The tripe is intended as a deadly insult. They mean it to hurt.

The winning entry last year was the reply sent by an official of British Rail to a passenger who had complained about the absence of a restaurant car on a certain train. The letter seems to me a model of evasion. Just as you think the words are beginning to make sense they slide off into the mist of nonsense.

Here in part is what the official wrote:

'While I can readily appreciate your frustration at the loss of breakfast since in the circumstances which you describe it is unfortunately true that in many cases where a catering vehicle becomes defective and both stores and equipment need to be transferred into a replacement car can only be done during the train's journey.'

Magnificent, isn't it? More than 50 words churned out and the passenger has been told nothing except perhaps that replacements must be done while in motion. But it improves as it goes on.

'We are very conscious of the need to reduce instances of failure and provide the advertised service to a minimum and each case is recorded and the reasons closely scrutinised in an effort to avoid a repetition.'

Well, at least the passenger who had to go without breakfast has the satisfaction of knowing that the case is recorded and the reason for failure minutely examined - with a microscope, probably, so that even the smallest flaw in the argument would be exposed.

Certainly that letter earned its helping of the ripest tripe Lancashire can produce.

But that outstanding example of loqorhoea can surely be matched in this country. Our masters of long-winded phrases should not be beaten by British Rail.

Cannot a Plain English Campaign be started here? It would only require a few letters to the press and an enticing example or two from real life to set the ball rolling.

A friend who has to read letters from official sources tells me that a word much in vogue with some public servants is 'anent'.

Oh yes, it exists. I looked it up. It simply means 'concerning'. It has almost gone out of use (or 'utilisation' as the Government would say), but some officials enjoy peppering their letters with 'hereanent' and 'thereanent'. 'Whereanent' will be along any minute now.

Another phrase much beloved by politicians is 'in this regard'. You can tack it on to the end of almost any sentence or shove it in to start. It sounds well and doesn't do any harm.

And hereanent I must inform readers that I have utilised all my space and have no further comment in this regard.

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'NEWSPEAK'

CONTRACTOR: AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME I DON'T HAVE THE NUMBERS. IF I DO A PIGGY-BACK ON THE X CONTRACT, I'LL HAVE TO GO IN ON A SLIGHTLY HIGHER SELLING PRICE, BUT HOPEFULLY, THERE WILL BE NO HICCUPS.

CLIENT: BASICALLY, THIS SOUNDS LIKE FAIR COMMENT TO ME.

TRANSLATION

CONTRACTOR: I HAVEN'T WORKED OUT A PRICE YET, BUT IT WILL BE MORE THAN THE CONTRACT ON WHICH IT IS BASED. HOWEVER I DON'T ENVISAGE ANY PROBLEMS.

CLIENT: O.K.

J.H.U.