



Bob
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Dehiring those word manufacturers

When I use a word, it means
just what I choose it to mean
— neither more nor less.

— Humpty Dumpty,
Alice Through the Looking-Glass

A news story came my way the other day which declared that a Plymouth business firm had established new "outplacement services."

The story explained: "Outplacement is the dehiring process of a single employee or hundreds of employees," according to the vice president of the firm.

"Outplacement" and "dehiring" being two words I could not find in my dictionary, I outplaced them from the story and frivolously suggested that the newspaper dehire employees who allow such nonsense to creep into their news stories.

The same day, coincidentally, I read about two suicides. The newspaper articles about the deaths noted that the men involved had been despondent about the loss of their jobs. I wondered if they realized that they, after all, had only been dehired.

While the idea of providing counseling and job-seeking tips to employees who are temporarily or permanently laid off is excellent, the creation of such words as "outplacement" and "dehiring" is deplorable.

For many, the trauma of losing a job of long-standing is profoundly disturbing, enervating and demeaning. To refer to the act of separating a person from that which he might see as his, or her, means of survival and indication of self-worth in terms of "outplacement" and "dehiring" is dehumanizing and, perhaps, worse.

Realized or not, it is an attempt to absolve the company or person doing the firing or laying off from any sense of guilt, personal responsibility or involvement. It may also be an attempt to obviate uneasiness caused by treating employees as parts of a process or a system, as objects which have worth only as they relate to the end product. This a self-defeating course of action which has plagued businesses generally and recently seems particularly troublesome recently to the American automobile industry.

There is a tendency in certain fields to manufacture words, not to increase communication or understanding, but to fit the desires and the purposes of the manufacturer.

"Outplacement" and "dehiring" are merely the result of ingenious searching for words that supposedly will make "fired," or the less harsh "terminated," or "laid off" sound less meaningful, therefore less of a problem to the former employees who are burdened with the problem.

The manufacturers of words can be found in all areas of activity but they abound in bureaucracies, especially those of big government. The conjurers usually insist that they want to make things perfectly clear. But they know deep down in the blackness of their mistrust for the public that the thing they are trying desperately to avoid is clarity of thinking or perception about what they are doing or not doing.

What they want is to confuse the listener with misleading sounds and symbols, "buzz words" and clap-trap so that they sound as if they are important or capable or at least competent. The words are used to try to make questionable or asinine ideas, projects and actions appear to be worthy of accolades. What we end up with is hocus-pocus words like "pacification" to mean wholesale killing and maiming of people and "defoliate" to disguise the arson of a country. We get governmental leaders who use such phrases as "stonewalling" to glorify the hoodwinking of a nation of people and "at that point in time," a nonsensical collection of syllables, to try to add some sense of dramatic importance or dignity to evasive and self-serving actions.

The result can be a whole government of manipulators who think that they can use manufactured words to allow or excuse the most outrageous of chicaneries. A favorite example is that of Ron Ziegler, the press secretary to Nixon, who excused a year's worth of lies about Watergate with one condescending sentence: "All previous statements are inoperative."

I suppose he is even today running around some Disneyland of an enterprise proclaiming that Richard Nixon and the 40 or so power plunderers who were dumped with him were merely "victims of a downturn in efficacy government which effectuated an outplacement of several key personnel."

Their criminal convictions and jail sentences, I suppose, could be considered part of the dehiring process.

There is a general tendency to manufacture words, not to increase communication or understanding, but to fit the desires and the purposes of the manufacturer.

On being a wandering Jew

Many give their lives to God, Marya gives her life to the synagogue.

Her particular synagogue is on the Greek Island of Rhodes. A 300-year-old edifice with stately columns and magnificent crystal chandeliers, it's membership today is just seven families and the chandelier's prisms are undusted and dim.

Marya is prominent among them. From April to October she lives on Rhodes, the place of her birth, caring for the synagogue and welcoming the tourists who are its lifeblood.

On a recent cruise of Turkish and Greek Isles, husband Jack and I came to Rhodes on a Friday, the day to welcome the Jewish Sabbath.

It was then we met Marya.

We had walked down the winding side road where the synagogue stands, directed by the local people. We wanted to see it for ourselves, a place where three centuries of Jews had worshipped.

It was the Friday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, another reason it seemed compelling to investigate.

The New Year holiday we had spent aboard the cruise ship where we attended a moving service along with nearly 40 others celebrants from Germany, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, France and other far flung lands where Jews live.

WITH JUST a few holy books, a bottle of sancti-



Shirlee
Iden

fied wine, a loaf of bread and the will to identify, we had brought Rosh Hashanah to the Stella Stellaris.

That service was held in the ship's reading room. Now we were prepared to see what a real Greek synagogue would be like.

Marya showed us all there was to see. Communicating was difficult because we speak no Greek and she had command of only a few words in English.

"You got the number in Dachau," Jack asked, indicating the tattoo on her arm.

"Somehow, without many words, she told us that once 2,000 Jews lived in that island city and worshipped in the synagogue.

When the Nazis overran Europe, they came to Rhodes and deported every single Jew they could find, dispersing them to the Dachaus, Auschwitzes and Buchenwalds for extermination.

Almost none survived and few returned after the war, but Marya was one.

After all, it was her birthplace, and the synagogue was where her family had worshipped for generations in their distinct Sephardic (Eastern) manner.

She raised three daughters and each one went off to Israel. In the winter months, when no tourists come and so there is no possibility of a minyan (quorum) to make services possible, she goes to her daughters in Israel.

WHEN spring comes back to Rhodes, so does Marya.

She sees that the building is clean, offers postcard pictures of the synagogue, and accepts donations for the upkeep of the antique building.

We attended Sabbath services later that night, and though our large ship and others were in port, Jack was only the 11th man. There must be many Friday nights when services are not possible.

People of every faith carry their religions with them in their hearts and minds, I've always thought.

It's not ever the edifice, like that imposing and deceiving synagogue that give prayer and ritual meaning. It's the people and their faith.

How many who went to concentration camps like Marya, could not even stand 10 together without fear for their lives? Yet they lived and died as Jews.

Sometimes traveling far away brings the things that are closest to you into sharper focus.

What does government interference mean?

The government is interfering too much in our lives. We should get rid of Social Security and go back to the days when old people had to retire on their savings.

And speaking of savings, let's jettison the Federal Insurance Deposit Corp. Who needs to have his money insured? If my bank fails, it is only fair that I lose all my money as they did in the Depression. Why should we have to put up with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration? I know it helps to keep our food cleaner and safer. I know one of its researchers kept the drug, thalidomide, off the market so American women didn't have deformed babies as German women did. But I am willing to take my chances.

Laws to make mining companies restore the earth after they take out what they wanted are boring. I love slag heaps. Let's have more of them.

BY NOW I EXPECT you have guessed I'm putting you on. It is my little way of saying it does no good to keep talking about "stopping government interference" unless you say what kind of interference. It's too general a statement to rally round.

So if you object to the fact that your family paid to the feds 30 percent of your income while 17 large firms paid nothing in 1976, say so. You might find an army of like-minded people as ready as you to fight over the issue that with income in the billions



Sherry
Kahan

Exxon paid a U.S. tax rate of 7.4 percent in 1977 while Mobil's effective tax rate was 2.5 percent.

If you don't like Chippewa Indians using gill nets, speak up. If you don't want the draft, or want more spent on defense, speak out. You may find many people behind you, and then it's possible to take effective action.

Only the other day Thomas Murphy, retiring board chairman for General Motors Corp., said the government should stay out of the marketplace. What did he mean?

Should the government stop recalling cars and asking for cleaner emissions? Should companies be allowed to fill our skies with smoke and our rivers

with gunk, our land with toxic wastes? For some reason you don't hear Chrysler asking for an end to government intervention.

IT IS IMPORTANT to remember right about here that much government intervention follows laws voted on by our selected representatives and senators.

But to say the feds are perfect is certainly nonsense. They can drive all of us crazy with the waste of our money. They set interest rates that don't help the average person at all. They can red tape us to death. Too often their taxmen go after the average income person, and settle out of court generously with big money. A lot more things happen that make us angry.

But the point is that talking against government interference is ridiculous unless you say what specifically is bothering you.

The words have become one of those meaningless buzz phrases. The feds can be friend or foe, depending on the point of view. Complainers should tell us which government interference is objectionable, so we can decide whether we object too.

The term interference may mean taxes to one person, while to another it involves the high cost of financing a car and a third thinks of a road cut through a wilderness or something else entirely.

A little plain speaking would be appreciated.

Superfan copes with football fever

I've never cared for fanatics. It doesn't matter what their particular brand of obsession is.

It could be a teen turned Jesus freak, who pins passers-by back to the wall to preach on the ways to heaven. Or a LaLeche mother, who wants everyone to breastfeed their kids to about age 10.

I don't mind vegetarians — until they frown and moan when they catch someone with a hamburger.

BUT AS I flicked on the tube last weekend and the knot in my stomach tightened another notch, I realized that there is another kind of fanatic. This type doesn't preach or lecture in a know-it-all tone of voice.

This one sits hours on end in front of a TV, oblivious to everyone around him. The only reality is a



Darlene
Stinson

bunch of burly players with an odd-shaped ball.

As my Team stalked onto the field last weekend, I suddenly realized I had become one. Taking a cue from Alcoholics Anonymous, I publicly admit that I've somehow evolved into a full-fledged football nut.

It's a startling metamorphosis — akin to the sud-

den transformation of a Franz Kafka character into a giant bug.

I've always been lousy at anything athletic. I've never given a hoot about watching anyone with more athletic talents than I.

But for some unknown reason, I discovered the world-wide impact of field goals and TDs three seasons ago.

MY AUTUMNS now are now full of football. There's little time left to paint the house or socialize with friends or even talk on the phone.

Most people check for social conflicts when friends call up to invite them over. I check the TV Guide and my season tickets.

Saturday afternoons are the best. My emotions rise and fall, as college players bash their way across a white-striped field toward a metal crossbar. I've somehow acquired the ability for simultaneous concentration on TV and radio games.

On Sunday and Monday nights, it's televised professional games. And in really good weeks, there's special broadcasts of Thursday night football.

I can't help but feel that I'm viewed somewhat as an oddity.

Years of male domination (from the playing aspect, at least) has spawned more male football nuts than female.

Many of my female friends stare disinterestedly and quickly change the subject when I bring up Green Bay's winning touchdown or the zany plays of the Seattle Seahawks.

Some men seem to resent my intrusion into their weekend game. They quiz me on the finer details of the sport and smile condescendingly when I can't name the Irish quarterback of 1955.

I'VE LEARNED that being a fanatic isn't all fun and games either.

During the early stages of my obsession, a loss by My Team meant a weekend of dismal skies and depression.

I've learned to handle the agony of defeat by now. I have three teams — one college and two pro. When one loses, I simply dive into the next game.

But there's still only a single Team Enemy No. 1. I find myself muttering nasty slogans against those loathsome creatures as I stop at a red light or pay for my groceries in a store.

I've learned some degree of sympathy for those fanatics who stop me on the street. Their preaching seems to signify the personal importance of their obsessions.

It's kind of like me and that odd-shaped ball.



Gridiron fans come in all shapes and sizes. The shades of autumn spell football fever for millions of fans.