

BLISS INSTITUTE

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SEMANTOGRAPHY AND THE ILLITERACY PROBLEM IN AUSTRALIA NEW GUINEA.

Semantography Series No. 175 (see also S.S. No. 23, 24, 34, 95, etc.)

When I came to Australia and learned that the Natives of New Guinea speak in more than 100 different languages I felt that the Australian Minister for the External Territories and his officers would be greatly interested in my work, and the more so, because New Guinea is an UN Trusteeship Territory which Australia holds in trust and which may be taken away from her. Indeed, year after year, commissions of the United Nations Trusteeship Council tour the territories and they are not happy with the slow progress notably in Education. Consequently, there are hostile powers in the U.N.O. led by Russia, which time and again attack Australia. The Australian delegates point to the tremendous difficulties in the diversity of languages.

I decided first to find the people who would support my approach to the Minister. Here below is the story of my various approaches.

1. APPROACH TO THE AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL FOR PACIFIC ADMINISTRATION.

The Director
School for Pacific Administration
Middle Head

3rd August, 1949.

Dear Sir,

Through a recent broadcast I learned of the existence of your school and I beg to inform you that I have just completed work on a subject, which might be of the greatest interest for your school and for your students. However, my subject is a very unusual one, and therefore I hope that you will not mind, if I use an unusual opening.

During the last centuries men have appeared who have pioneered unusual ideas - a ship without sails, a car without a horse, etc. They have been the object of ridicule by the simple people and the object of attack by the learned men, who proved conclusively that the idea is impossible and crazy. We know the result. If Edison would have written a letter saying, that he has invented a box which can talk, the conclusion would be obvious: a crank. However, he was able to demonstrate the workability of his box. His phonograph creaked and croaked, but it talked.

I find myself in the position of a pioneer with an unusual "outlandish, crackpot idea" make the same experience. Apparently times have not changed. If I send people the attached lines claiming that I have found a writing, which (metaphorically) "can talk in all languages", the obvious conclusion to some learned men is: a crank. However, there are a few learned men (blessed they may be) who say: "Let's see how it works." and they grant me one hour of their precious time - and become convinced, that there is a new idea of far-reaching consequence.

Now this letter is a bother no doubt. You are surely overburdened with your school work. On the other hand, I presume that you are interested in new ideas in education, which can be put into practical use in your particular field: the Pacific. In New Guinea alone, there are more than 100 languages. People from adjacent villages in some areas can't understand each other, and tribal warfare goes on. The administration of the mandates are attacked by other nations. Everyone, including Australia, knows that education is the answer. But how can the language barrier be bridged? Should primers and textbooks be printed in hundreds of different languages, to be used by a few thousands natives only. This is almost an impossible task. On the other hand, as the investigations of the Colonial Office in Africa have proved: Natives do not take to improved modes of living, even of agriculture, without the stimulus of literacy.

Well, I immodestly claim that I have invented a simple picture language, to which the natives will take easily, simply because it shows the outline of real things. They can use it all over the Pacific, and the administrators can use it too. And one primer can be used all over the Pacific.

As said before, I can prove that my system works, if you only give me the time, I propose therefore that you announce a lecture and invite your students; and if you are apprehensive at first, call for a small lecture in camera to be given by me, before a few selected people. If you want at first not to take the responsibility let a few students be the convenors of the lecture. I have been for 25 years a honorary lecturer. I can talk.

The world is fast becoming smaller. Warning signs on the highways of the world written in native languages, are taken down and replaced by international ideograms, readable in any language. We have already international ideograms, in almost all walks of life. This new writing is bound to come.

I have indicated to you, that not all learned men which I have approached acted like the few I mentioned. The others simply refused to look at the matter, just as some learned men some decades ago, refused to look into the microscope, because such things as microbes "do not exist, are impossible."

Having just finished my research work, I have not yet approached the outside world. Realising that I can approach people outside Australia only by writing or printing, I prefer to approach first the people, to whom I can talk and whose counter-arguments I can answer on the spot. Therefore this letter to you, with the proposal of a lecture.

I regret very much the inconvenience I cause, but as you are the Director of the School for Pacific Administration I have no choice. I am sorry for causing you the trouble but at the end of this letter, you will have to make up your mind whether to throw this letter into the dustbin or agree to look into the matter.

With all the other pioneers, I am convinced that the idea is bound to come, and as said before, other learned men are of the same opinion. Consequently with regard to the history of the idea this letter to the Director of the School for Pacific Administration is a historic event (even if only on a very small scale) and your answer will be one too. It would be embarrassing, if learned men in other countries would later on accept the idea rejected by the Australian School for Pacific Administration. And if you refuse to look into the matter, and tell me to go to other addresses, it would amount to a rejection without investigation, to a condemnation without a trial.

You and we all, are immersed in an avalanche of work. Strong words are sometimes needed to make us look up. Excuse this letter and believe me, I am a likeable fellow who can give an entertaining lecture and who likes to crack a joke. From student days I believe that the men who direct our education are really interested in new ideas in education. The terrifying realisation that some men are not interested at all, has caused a psychological breakdown within me. And as you are a teacher, you are a psychologist. And "tous comprendent c'est tous pardonner."

Thanking you for giving me the time to read this letter, and awaiting your decision, I remain

Sincerely Yours,
C.K. Bliss.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

31st August, 1949.

I have read your letter of August 3, 1949 addressed to the Director of the School for Pacific Administration, and I would further like to discuss the matter with you.

Could you please ring me on Friday next to discuss a suitable appointment time, what I would like to do is to arrange for you to meet two or three members of the staff at this school.

Yours faithfully,
W.S. Arthur.
Registrar.

Mr. W.S. Arthur
Registrar
School for Pacific Administration
Masman.

8th September, 1949

Dear Mr. Arthur,

Referring to your letter and your telephone conversation, I repeat that I shall be at your school Wednesday the 14th September at 3.30 pm. I am looking forward to the pleasure to meet your friends.

I informed you over the telephone that Professor Carleton Washburne has given me a hearing and has then written a statement, the first sentence of which runs:

"A brief examination of the 100 Symbol Elements idea of Mr. C.K. Bliss shows it to be ingenious."

I shall bring with me the statement and shall tell you also about Prof. Washburne's suggestions.

It has given me great pleasure that you have given me an invitation for a talk, even before an authority like Prof. Washburne has announced his opinion. During the last seven years, plodding on with my research, I have suffered sometimes from learned men, who simply refuse to look into the matter, declaring it "Nonsense" outright. Your act which shows freedom from prejudice and willingness to investigate any new idea in education, has therefore warmed the cockles of my heart. I intend to mention your name in the preface of my book. Negotiations are already under way with publishers of Great Britain, and I shall approach you with regard to the final wording of the preface in time.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

I prepared some lecture notes. Here below are the introductory passages. Afterwards I showed symbols in response to the queries posed by teachers, and in conjunction with newspapers articles on the language problems in the territories.

LECTURE NOTES

before a part of the staff of the Australian School for Pacific Administration, Mosman, given on the 14th April, 49.

Thanks to Mr. Arthur Washburne Statement.

Why do missionaries and administrators go out into the wilderness, although there is an easier and better life here in Sydney? Why do girls follow Florence Nightingale and become nurses, although there are easier and better jobs in Sydney?

Because they all feel that there is a job to be done, that there are people in need and that there are people who must go out to help them.

I am a chemist and consequently I became soon an agnostic. But in this work I had to face the formulation of my symbols for the meaning of the Creator, Nature, etc. I perused the most modern books on biology, paleontology, astronomy, nuclear physics for an answer about the Why of the Universe. There was no answer. Ignoramus! Now the most modern scientists Einstein, Millican, Jean, Eddington have to admit that there is a supreme order and purpose in the Universe. Jullian Huxley calls the force "mental", whereas physicists and mathematician simply calls it Creator.

When the evolutionary mind force in the universe choose the cells of my mind as the unfortunate vessel for the planting of a new idea, it left me no will of my own. I say "unfortunate" only because I was forced against my will, to slave for this new idea almost day and night, in my consciousness and subconscious, weekdays and Sundays - to complete the work. It took me seven hard years.

Now I want that young people should take over. My mind craves to fulfill its destiny, the destiny of every bit of my mind matter in the universe - to attract, to pass on, before passing out. A group of young people should take over my work should improve it, transform it, discard it for a better system of their own. THE JOB before it is too late.

You now know about the hostility against Australia in the UNO with regard to the trusteeship.

You know too about the results of the experiments of the mass education in Africa (See Language in Society by MM Lewis.)

And now let us start with a newspaper in Rabaul.

I then received a letter from Mr. Arthur, which I unfortunately can't find in my files. Should it turn up, I shall paste the text into the open space below. But a part of this letter is reprinted in S.S. No. 6 and this part runs: "We feel that a system of ideogrammic writing would have uses for such things as public notices, and that it could be used among peoples speaking a variety of vernaculars."

As far as I can remember the letter goes on to say that the school itself cannot make any move (which was very disappointing to me) and that they doubt that abstract notions could be symbolised.

Mr. W.S. Arthur
Registrar of the
School for Pacific Administration
Sydney.

28th September, 1949.

Dear Mr. Arthur,

Kindly take my sincerest thanks for your elaborate letter. I tender ^{my} thanks to the staff for their sympathetic understanding.

I realise that you cannot take any steps, and therefore I have arranged a meeting with Mr. E.J. Hallstrom, the well-known Sydney philanthropist, who is greatly interested in the welfare of the Pacific Territories. I ask your kind co-operation, should Mr. Hallstrom turn to you for your opinion. A test could do no harm.

I shall also approach the Minister for External Territories. Certainly the opinion of a world authority like Prof. Carelton Washburne, who declared my system "ingenious" would help the Minister to take it into serious consideration.

As I foresaw it, such a subject so novel and vast cannot be treated in one hour, and there are many counterarguments which come up in the hearer's mind.

I have lived in China for 6 years amidst Chinese people and I have studied Chinese script and its development through the centuries. And the fact that such a cumbersome writing can easily be learned by children (where there are schools) have convinced me that my simplified ideographic script would be a simple matter to learn.

The Secretary of the High Commissioner of India in Australia has been much impressed, has forwarded a detailed proposal of mine to the Government of India.

I would be happy to show you a film which I have made in Shanghai. All over the world, children when they get a penny, turn it into a [&]ndy. In China however, (where there are schools) there are thousands of street libraries and children sit and read their fairy tales in that cumbersome Chinese script.

To answer the arguments of your staff, kindly, the following pages of my work.

- Pages 69 - 71 about Chinese script
- " 171 - 174 about feelings, emotions and passions
- " 609 - 610 about the poem by William Wordsworth

I would much be obliged to you and the staff if they would read these pages and revise their opinion, in view of the fact that only 100 symbol elements are used over and over again to express the loftiest ideas.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

But no acknowledgement came of my letter, nor the material sent. After waiting half a year I wrote again.

Dear Mr. Arthur

16th April, 1950.

I sincerely hope that this letter will find you in good health and good spirit. Some months have passed since I have been in your schools and in the meantime I have made some progress with my Semantography. The three volumes have been acquired by the Public Library, and Mr. Metcalfe, the Principal Librarian has, in recognition of the work I have done, written a ^{on} letter recommending the acquisition to all the university and public libraries throughout the world. I am now preparing an approach to these bodies.

In India the Principal Scientific Officer of UNESCO has undertaken to interest the Ministry of Education in making a try in one of the Adult Education Centres. Three of the largest American Typewriter Manufacturers are now studying my proposal for the Typewriter, and two have sent me preliminary contracts. Professors and Institutions in Great Britain have expressed interest.

I have not approached any educational institution in Australia so far, realising that once I am recognised abroad, recognition will be easier here.

You have been kind enough to comply with my request and you have given me a kind testimonial in your letter of September 21, No. 9/49/422. However, doubt is expressed here with regard to abstract notions. I have therefore sent you with my letter of Sept. 28th some papers, showing that the symbolisation of even abstract poems, like that of Wordsworth is simple. And I have asked that you colleagues may be kind enough to revise their opinions. In fact I have had no time in which to show them how abstract notions can be easily symbolised. I have not received any answer of this letter. Surely you are all busy enough and have no time to spare.

Now naturally I collect any good words in favour of my work, and I have issued a few leaflets of which I submit two to you. You will find there the relevant passage and the notice, that my proofs concerning abstracts have been submitted.

In the meantime other very favourable testimonials have come in and I prepare now a printed leaflet, instead of the duplicated ones.

Somehow I had a feeling that you might not want your name should be mentioned in connection with this matter. Consequently I have made up the text as attached. In the meantime the Society of Australian Inventors (Patron Prof. Oliphant) have given

me a testimonial through their Honorary Secretary, and I printed the testimonial with the name of the Secretary. Furthermore the General Secretary of the National Roads and Motorists Association (N.R.M.A.) of NSW has been authorised by the executive body to give me a favourable testimonial. In my new printed leaflet I will therefore mention the name of the General Secretary of the Association.

Now you have given much of your time to organise my informative talk in your schools and you have written a number of letter etc. I feel that I should mention your name. You are in good company as you can see from the attached leaflet. I have in mind the following text.

THE AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL FOR PACIFIC ADMINISTRATION, Sydney, After a demonstration before a group of teachers, the Registrar Mr. Wilfred S. Arthur wrote:

"We feel that a system of ideogrammic writing would have uses for such things a public notices, and that it could be used among peoples speaking a variety of vernaculars."

I hope that you agree with this text. In this case--in order not to trouble you with letter writing - I shall use it if I do not receive any answer from you until the 23rd April.

Actually I would like a better text, in which I would mention that you were instrumental in arranging a talk and discussion about this idea, with regard to the use among aborigines of Australian Pacific Territories. But I am still reluctant, whether you would like the prominence. I have found in all countries that initiative and new ideas are often frowned upon by superiors, and you too have superiors.

But you have shown already that you are actively interested in new educational ideas, and therefore you don't mind and would perhaps like the last text. Perhaps you would be kind enough to suggest the text you like best. In this case, please write. I would be happy to oblige. Perhaps you would even add some words to the testimonial.

However, if no letter arrives before the 23rd April the above outlined text will get set by the printers.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Of course there was no answer again.

Miss Wedgewood
Teacher at the
Australian School for
Pacific Administration
Middle Head, Mosman.
Dear Miss Wedgewood,

9th August, 1950.

A year has passed since I have given my lecture before you and your teacher colleagues. Unfortunately I did not know your name until today, and therefore I could not write to you directly. And I don't know whether Mr. Arthur is still in Sydney.

I enclose herewith a brochure about the history of modern picto-ideography, and I am happy to point out the favourable comment which my work has received (besides from the teachers from your school) also from Bertrand Russell, Lancelot Hogben, Carelton Washburne, John Metcalfe, James Hemming and others.

Now that my work has received the sanction of world authorities I fervently hope that some cooperation can be established. I vividly remember that you have been instrumental to point out and to suggest variations in my symbols, with regard to wells, water holes etc. (You remember I tried to depict the words: "stagnant water breeds mosquitoes") I had the impression that you really liked the idea.

As far as I am concerned, I do not seek any post or emolument. On the contrary, I am in the retiring age, and the sooner the better that this idea is taken care of by others. You know the natives, you know their customs, you know best what they would understand. You could make this new idea a practical reality. You and your teacher colleagues.

Hoping to hear from you and with best regards to your colleagues.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Dear Mr. Arthur,

9th August, 1950.

Haven't received an answer from two of my letters, I don't really know whether you are still in Sydney.

In any case, I am sending herewith, a brochure about the history of modern pictography and testimonial. Since you have kindly given me the opportunity to demonstrate my work before a group of teachers, world authorities like Bertrand Russell, Lancelot Hogben, Carelton Washburne, James Hemming and others have joined in favourable comment.

I think with gratitude of your enlightened action, and I hope to have one day the opportunity to return your kindness.

Meanwhile I remain with best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

What happened? Why no answer, of course, so I wrote again.

Dear Miss Wedgewood,

5th May, 1951.

It is a bitter experience for a man not to get his letter answered. However, I presume that you have been too busy then. Now here is an invitation to my university lecture. In view of the fact, that my work is attracting great interest and attention in the United States and Great Britain and elsewhere, I hope that you will be kind enough to increase your interest. I beg you to come.

At my demonstration at the School for Pacific Administration I had little opportunity to show many aspects of my work. This time I shall use slides, and you will hear many things I had not the time to talk about then.

Some of your friends might be interested in my work too, so I enclose a few invitations and thank you in anticipation for distributing them.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Dear Mr. Arthur,

5th May, 1951.

I was very sorry that you could not find the time to answer my previous letter, but I understand that you had some more pressing matters to attend to. Meanwhile my work is attracting great interest and attention in the United States and Great Britain, and now, I am giving my first lecture at Sydney University. May be you could find the time to come. I enclose an invitation and a few more, for some of the people that you know, and who might be interested.

This time I shall use slides and shall show many more aspects of my work, which I had not the time to show at the demonstration, which you have kindly arranged, and for which I shall be grateful to you.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

The Director
Australian School for Pacific Administration
Middle Head Mosman.

5th May, 1951.

Dear Sir,

I beg to invite you to my University lecture, on a subject, which will surely find your attention. It may be a medium to bring universal literacy in an unheard of sense to the peoples in the backward areas of the world.

I had the honour to give a demonstration before a few members of the staff at your school one and a half years ago. Meanwhile I have received great praise from leading authorities on this subject.

Please distribute the enclosed invitations to your staff, and place one on the notice board. Hoping that you will give me the honour of your presence, I remain with thanks in anticipation

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Dr. Reid,
c/o The Australian School
for Pacific Administration
Middle Head, Mosman.

5th May, 1951.

Dear Sir,

I believe that Mr. Hunt, Deputy Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission has furnished you with some material about my work. He was very much taken with it, and considered it as a medium to overcome illiteracy in a new and truly universal way.

Now, here is an opportunity to get an overall impression about my work. I enclose a few invitation for you and your friends to my University Lecture, and hope that you will give me the honour of your presence. Great men and great educators have found words of great praise for my work.

Hoping that you will come, I remain with thanks in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

At last one answer.

Dear Mr. Bliss

10th May, 1951.

Thank you for your note. I am very sorry that I have been discourteous as to have failed to answer your previous letter.

I am having the notice of your lecture pinned up in the Common Rooms of the staff and the students here. I am afraid however, that it is not very likely that any of the men here will be able to get to it. Geography is against them, for it takes over one and a half hours to get from here to the University by public transport, and that means most of the working afternoon to reach the Wallace Theatre by 4p.m. However some of those who make a special study of linguistics may be able to attend. I am afraid that it will not be possible for me to do so, for I have a very heavy teaching programme this year owing to the illness of one of our staff.

Yours sincerely,
C. H. Wedgewood.

Nearly two years have passed since I approached the School for Pacific Administration. The result was Nil, a bitter disappointment, but one which I saw repeated in every school that I approached. Meanwhile I was busy on other people interested in New Guinea.

II. APPROACH TO THE EDITOR OF THE "PACIFIC ISLAND MONTHLY"

Mr. Robson,

Editor of the "Pacific Island Monthly,"

247 George Street,

SYDNEY.

21 st September, 1950.

Dear Mr. Robson.

My friend Mr. Sydney Tomholt, late of the Sydney Morning Herald, and now a film critic of the A.B.C. suggested some time ago that I should see you, because you would be very much interested in my work. Unfortunately my factory gives me very little time to come to the city during office hours, and when I did come to your office you were out. This was in July and now I am writing to you, seeing little prospect of finding time to pay another visit.

Before I tell you what it is all about, I wish to say, as ^{an} introduction, that my work has already found great interest from the members of the Pacific Research Council of the South Pacific Commission, and the Deputy Secretary General Brigadier Hunt told me that the study of my work will be taken up during the coming year.

The Ministry of Education, Government of India, is interested and the principal officer of UNESCO in New Delhi is pursuing the matter with the government.

The Under Secretary to the Minister for External Territories is informed about it, and the Daily Telegraph carried a short item on it some time ago, mentioning that Minister Spender will be shown what I have worked out.

These introductions should be sufficient to give my work serious consideration. I have started off with the above paragraphs, because newspaper editors have a habit of using wastepaper baskets when a thing doesn't look promising in the very first minute. And now to my work.

We are all aware that New Guinea and the Pacific Territories are of the utmost importance to Australia. We are also painfully aware of the fact that hostile Governments are attacking Australia in the United Nations Organisation because of our "failure" to develop the territories, and to educate the natives.

Consequently, one of the main points of Minister Spender's plan is an educational Programme, and especially the establishment of universal literacy.

It may seem unrelated off hand, that the development of the territory must go hand in hand with teaching the natives how to read and write. However, British scientists of the Colonial Office have found in Africa that natives, engulfed in all sorts of superstitions, will not take to any improvements in agriculture, hygiene etc. without the stimulus of literacy.

However, the difficulties of establishing universal literacy in New Guinea are almost as unsurmountable as the mountain ridges of New Guinea, which separate effectively the natives in more than one hundred completely different linguistic groups.

If the New Guinea educational authorities would print primers in more than one hundred different languages, those different primers would tend even more to "differentiate the differences." The Current Affairs Bulletin about New Guinea of the Commonwealth Office of Education says "even adjacent villages might have entirely different languages and cultures; even if they have the same language and culture, there may...a more ^{or} less permanent state of hostilities exist between them. Authority has to be extended in many places almost village by village.....by finding some means of communication in so many separate cases."

Now, what I have invented, and what might prove an ideal means of communication is a picto-ideography (to use a highbrow word) or a picture writing, (to use a lowbrow word).

The aspect of this idea is fascinating and unheard of. A Government notice, a police warning, an advice by the Agricultural or Health Department, written, typed, or printed in my picture language can be read in any language spoken in New Guinea or the Islands or for that, in English, French, Dutch or any other language spoken on earth.

As you know, newspapers in Rabaul are printed in pidgeon English and the local white residents are reading it and learning it. Now my book opens up the idea of one primer which could be used for all the different linguistic tribes and even for the whole of Asia. Australia could thus become the teacher of Asia by using a new mode of communication between peoples of the East and West.

If you come to think of it, this idea has already been partially realised with mathematical symbols. $1 + 2 = 3$ can be read in any language. Moreover the peoples of the Pacific area are already accustomed to picto-ideography, by the fact that the Chinese of different parts of China or outside China who may speak different dialects can read the same newspaper or book, and a man from Canton can write a letter to a man in Peking although they both couldn't understand each other in speech.

However, Chinese characters are very complicated and cumbersome, whereas my picture writing is of extreme simplicity. Mr. John Metcalfe, Principal Librarian of the Library of New South Wales was interviewed about my work over the Macquarie Network.

Among the questions asked, was this one: "Do you think that Mr. Bliss's pictographs could be further simplified?" To this Mr. Metcalfe answered "I don't think that this is possible." In fact any child and surely also natives would grasp the meaning of the symbols almost immediately, because they show the outline of the real thing. Believe it or not, even missionaries of different denominations would not be able to make serious objection to the representation of religious meanings and writings.

Now If we teach the natives this picture writing, we could fulfill the demand of Minister Spender, the establishment of universal literacy. But there is another advantage so far unheard of, an advantage which would silence hostile Governments namely the advantage that natives would be able to communicate with other natives who may speak a totally different language.

Now if you have followed so far, I suppose you will be interested "what the heck does this picture writing look like?" I propose therefore the following line of action.

(1) You write me a letter and ask me for samples. I shall also send you a Brochure which contains words of great praise by Bertrand Russell, Lancelot Hogben, Carelton Washburne, John Metcalfe, James Hemming and others. Even teachers of the Australian School for Pacific Administration think that my writing could be of use, and the Anthropologist, F.D. McCarthy of the Australian Museum, Sydney, wrote that it will help.....tremendously in New Guinea.

(2) After studying what I have sent you, I hope that you will invite to me a personal discussion. I shall only be too glad to oblige. I wish to say that I do not seek money or emolument. Eight years^{ago} I became the victim of this fascinating idea and I can't help slaving for it till the end of my days.

I am writing to you such a long letter for I am hoping that you will give me your active support. I remain, awaiting your reaction,

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

25th September, 1950.

I am indeed most interested in the system of communication which you are seeking to establish, as briefly outlined in your letter of the 21st instant. Already I have read with interest various references to this thing, and especially I remember the article in the Daily Telegraph. To appreciate the value of your system, one need go no further than New Guinea, with its scores of different languages. Only recently, discussing the matter of education and training in Papua and New Guinea with a number of the experts I pointed out that they would get simply nowhere unless they establish some vehicle by which the natives may be brought from illiteracy to literacy.

I am leaving for New Guinea on October 3 and I do not think that I will have the opportunity to get further information before my departure; but I think that I have gripped the idea, I shall discuss it in detail with my friend Groves, Director of Education in Papua-New Guinea.

I shall be glad if you will get in communication with me when I return (early in November) and it may be that then I will be in a position to assist you with some direct information.

In the meantime of course I shall be glad to have any printed matter that is available.

Yours faithfully,
R.W. Robson

I went up to his office to find out how many sets of pamphlets I should bring him. He wasn't there, so I left a note.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

28th September, 1950

Your note received. Please do not trouble to prepare a package of your literature. I have neither the facilities nor inclination to carry it around New Guinea. I am travelling by air. All I want is one pamphlet or some proper material so that I can read a description of your work; I shall not be in Sydney until Monday.

In haste,
R.W.R.

I then prepared a small file of papers and out in front a message for the missionaries and teachers of New Guinea.

ALL WHO HAVE THE NATIVE EDUCATION AT HEART
& Friends,

1st October, 1950

Thanks to Mr. RW Robson I can send you my greetings and I hope that you will be interested in a try-out of this modern "picture writing" which has found great praise by Bertrand Russell, Lancelot Hogben, Carelton Washburne and others. (see brochure.) I propose the following line of action.

(1) Anyone who is interested to form a working group should send me his or her name address and profession. I shall send you all a duplicated sheet, containing the names, addresses, etc, of all the members of this working group, so that you may know each other.

(2) At the same time, I shall send you the first lesson (which Mr. Robson has in the form of a filmstrip. Each of you should gather some children (white and native) and/or adults, and teach them the first symbols, then let them form sentences.

(3) Then each one will report his or her experiences to me, which I shall put on a duplicated sheet, for all members. Accordingly I shall alter the first lesson if necessary and send you the second lesson to be dealt with in a similar way.

(4) If we thus have worked out ten lessons, I shall put these into a small primer for you which you will all receive. If we achieve success then Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne will not withhold active support.

All this should be an exciting adventure and a great pioneering work, because the primer worked out by you, will be usable in Africa, Asia, and anywhere in the world. AND THE WHOLE WORLD, THROUGH PAPERS AND MAGAZINES, WILL TAKE NOTICE OF YOUR WORK.

Mr. Robson will show you 5 pages of my extensive work which covers over 700 pages in 3 volumes. And now I am waiting in hope and eagerness for your response.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Dear Mr. Robson,

1st October, 1950.

Here is a compact abstract, weighing only $3\frac{1}{2}$ oz. You may leave it with the person most interested in the idea of a correspondence working group, to work out a small primer of 10 lessons (see letter).

I enclose also a symbol letter to Mr. Groves. I believe that he has already received the brochure, Telegraph article, and filmstrip through Brigadier F. Hunt Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Research Council. I hope that he will write to me.

The abstract contains the brochure, the telegraph article, the filmstrip, (first lesson) and five pages of my work: (1) from the chapter references to the illiterate farmer (2) traveller written communication (3 and 4) Bible and Lord's Prayer, which should interest the missionaries and (5) poetry to show that even highly abstract notions can be depicted.

I hope that you will show this to anyone whom you think interested enough in a new "vehicle" (to use your own words) for the education of the natives, and then at the end of your journey leave it or send it to the person most interested. Please try to induce people to get in touch with me and to work out a small primer.

And Now: BON VOYAGE, GOOD LUCK for all your endeavours, many thanks for your kind help and SAFE HOMECOMING

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

And then the long wait began. Month after month passed and no news from Mr. Robson. At last I wrote.

Dear Mr. Robson,

5th May, 1951.

Some time ago you took fleeting interest in my work, and even took some material about it to New Guinea. Unfortunately you did not find it worthwhile to invite me to a talk and to tell me about your experiences.

Meanwhile the Minister for External Affairs Mr. Percy Spender, has examined Semantography and found that "it might be very useful in the territory Papua, New Guinea." I expect that his measures will eventually have practical results.

Now there is a good opportunity to see my work in all its aspects. The University of Sydney is sponsoring a lecture, and I include an invitation. Come and find out whether Earl Russell is right when he wrote that any material assistance given to my work means "performing an important service to mankind".

You are a publisher, and therefore I send you my new leaflet No. 16. Would you be interested in a small primer for children and for natives? Would you implement Earl Russell words?

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss

What happened? : Mr. Robson did show my work to educators in New Guinea. And they, being the "competent men", convinced Mr. Robson (who before was very much interested in my idea, as expressed in his first letter).

Memo for Mr. C. K. Bliss

8th May, 1951.

Sorry I can't help you in propaganda for your system. I examined it closely with relation to the education problem in New Guinea and formed the opinion it would be almost as easy to teach those natives simple English or Pidgin as to instill your cryptograms into their primitive minds. I agree with all the experts that a universal language is humanity's greatest need today, but I don't think that your system is the answer. That is only my opinion and I may be wrong. But I am not prepared to advocate the system in my publications.

Yours sincerely
C. K. Bliss.

Isn't it amazing that a grown-up man thinks that it would be as easy to teach the native English as to teach them my Picture Writing. But other educators I met think the same.

Consequently they teach the natives English with the result that English is not spoken in the territory by the natives at all. They go on speaking their Pidgin English, and the white people learn it from them. Even the government officials print their papers and notices in Pidgin English.

III. APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

The south pacific commission consists of representatives of Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States. From Sydney papers I learned that the Research Council will meet in Sydney in August to discuss problems of the Pacific area, including educational problems. I went to the first meeting at Sydney University and had the good fortune (or so I believed) to meet a man who is not an educator, Brigadier Hunt, Secretary General. He was much impressed with my demonstration, and requested me to supply him with 20 complete sets of my papers.

Brigadier F.L. Hunt,
Deputy Secretary General
Research Council of the
South Pacific Commission

14th August, 1950.

Dear Brigadier Hunt,

Here are 20 sets containing (1) the letter, (2) the brochure, (3) the filmstrip sample (which you wanted to be included) and (4) a newspaper article which appeared in the Daily Telegraph.

To meet you was a delightful experience. Thank you for your enlightened action (see above). If all men would be like you, the world would be a better place to live in.

I remain with renewed thanks and gratitude,
(Note to the reader: the set refers to S.S.No.24,6,23,7) Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

He gave me a list of names of all participants, and reading this list my hopes rose high. Among the names were

Mr. H.E. Maude, Member for Social Development and permanently residing in Sydney. I hoped to have a personal walk with him. (see my letters to him here below.)

Mr. W.C. Groves Director General of Education of Papua New Guinea. (see letters below.)

Professor Elkin of Sydney University and the Pacific Science Association. My unhappy affair with this man is mirrored in S.S. No. 113, and the issues concerning road safety (No. 138, 144) as Elkin was Chairman of the road warning symbols committee in Sydney. He ignored my plea, my letter, and of course he would not hear of or see my symbols for road safety. And he is a Minister of the Church of England.

Professor Crocker of the Australian National University (see my correspondence in S.S. No. 173.)

And what happened to the 20 complete sets for the Research Council? Why - the garbage bin of course, what else? After waiting for more than half a year I wrote to Mr. Hunt.

Brigadier F.L. Hunt
Deputy Secretary General
Research Council of the
South Pacific Commission,
Pentagon Building
Anse Vate,
Noumea.

NEW CALEDONIA

2nd March, 1951.

Dear Sir,

A number of months have passed since I made your acquaintance in August 1950. You will remember that I was delighted about your quickened interest in my picture writing for the natives of the Pacific, and I was very glad that you agreed to distribute particulars to all members of the commission.

Meanwhile my work is under consideration at Unesco in Paris and the Department of External Territories in Canberra. However it may take some time until something really emerges. I believe, indeed I fear, that little or nothing has been done about my work within the members of South Pacific Commission. Not one of them has written.

I approach you now with a request that you surely can fulfill. I realise that you would be very glad if the South Pacific Commission could do something about my work. But this surely can be done, namely you can order the book for your reference library. Surely your librarian has some funds for just that purpose. Kindly glance over the attached letters which tell their own story.

I remain with thanks in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

And what happened? Why nothing. No answer.

Meanwhile I wrote to Mr. Maude of the Research Council.

H. E. Maude, Esq.

Member for Social Development

South Pacific Commission

13 Levick Street,

CREMORNE, N. S.W.

Dear Mr. Maude,

18th November, 1950.

Mr. R. Webb has informed me that you will be back by this time, and therefore I write to you. You may know already what Semantography represents, because Mr. Castle, Manager of the Audio-Visual Aids Division of Trans Pacific Film Service, contractor of the Commonwealth Office of Education, has approached you some time ago.

Furthermore Brigadier F.L. Hunt, Deputy Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission, has found Semantography so interesting that he has requested me to deliver to him 20 sets of particulars to be distributed to all members. You should have therefore received a set of particulars, but if not, I enclose a set herewith.

You will realise that the establishment of universal literacy in the Pacific and new Guinea is quite impossible with the ordinary means of orthodox phonetic alphabet. Semantography offers not only a picture writing independent of any language and dialect, but it has the unheard of advantage that people who speak different languages could be able to communicate with each other, without knowing one word of the other's language.

You are the member for Social Development and this falls in your sphere. I request therefore that you invite me for a talk in order to acquaint yourself with my work. If you could make it any day after 5.00. p.m., I would not have to leave my job. Awaiting your reply, I remain,

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

There was no answer, naturally, so I wrote again half a year later.

Dear Mr. Maude,

5th May, 1951.

The Minister for External Territories has studied my work and expressed the opinion that it "might be very useful in the territory of Papua New Guinea."

You have not had an opportunity to see my work and to learn about all its aspects. I am sending you therefore an invitation from the Sydney University Extension Board, and hope that you will give me the honour of your presence. Great men in England and in the United States have found words of great praise for my work, and I hope that you too will become convinced that it will be a new medium for the peoples in the backward areas of the world.

Hoping that you will come, I remain

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Back came a meaningless letter,

Dear Mr. Bliss,

29th May, 1951.

I found your letter of the 5th May on my table when I returned from New Zealand this week-end, and I am writing to say how sorry I am that I was unable to attend your meeting on the 15th May owing to my absence from Australia.

However, I hear that you had a good attendance and much attention was shown.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

Not a word that he Mr. Maud should see for himself how my work could help in his sphere.

Nevertheless I achieved something. A girl, employed with Mr. Maude was delegated to hear about Semantography. She invited me to her home where I met her father. He in turn wrote a letter to Dr. Clunies Ross, Chairman of the C.S.I.R.O. (see S.S. No. 180) the result of all this was nought, as could have been expected.

IV. APPROACH TO THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA.

There was no use any more in approaching lesser people. I had to go to the top. I searched the utterances of the Prime Minister for active support. In October 1950 I read and heard about his speech at the centenary celebrations of Sydney University. I found the following passage.

"Learning has even today a constant battle against illiteracy and if I may say without being controversial, I scarcely ever pull a switch without realising how many instruments illiteracy has at its command, and how few are the true friends of learning."

Throughout the years I have tried to find the meaning of this. Illiteracy and the friends of learning - this is easy to understand. But what is that "certain switch" that he mentioned? Is it an electrical switch, or the switch of a gun?????

Nevertheless the Prime Minister deplored illiteracy and this was good enough for me. And so I set out for Canberra in February 1951. I went to the Department for External Territories and had the good fortune to find a secretary good enough to listen to me.

He also invited two officers of his department, and I used ^{all} my oratory, all my arguments and all my enthusiasm and fervour to impress them. I showed them the 3 books and I told them that I was going to deposit them that very day in the National Library at Canberra. I was happy to see that I had stimulated interest because I received the following answer.

Dear Sir,

14th February, 1951.

During your recent discussion with officers of the Research branch of this Department you intimated that you would leave a copy of your book on Semantography with the Australian National Library at Canberra, which would thus make the work available for examination by persons or departments interested. But the library has no record of having received a copy of your book and I would be glad to have your advice whether the book, which you stated would be forwarded to the National Library, has been sent yet.

Yours faithfully,
J.R. Halligan,
(SECRETARY)

The Secretary
Department of External
Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.

16th February, 1951.

Re: Semantography, your letter A.F. 840/1/1 of February 14th.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your enquiry, whether the books on Semantography are deposited with the National Library; I did so the very same day after my visit to you. Meanwhile I received the official receipt of the National Library No. 24555, dated 9th February. The fact that incoming books are not immediately registered in the catalogue in any library, may account for the fact, that they could not be found immediately.

Your interest is inspiring to me, but to avoid disappointment on your part, I wish to say the following. These three books contain a complete scientific theory on ^{the} meaning of Symbols and Semantics. Consequently there are many chapters full of scientific stuff. For instance in dealing with meanings related to space and time, I had to use modern theory, the space time continuum, the quantum theory, etc., etc. To explain and justify the symbols for "conscious", I had to write lengthy chapters on the meaning of Soul and Mind, God and Creator, showing that the most modern scientific theory points to the existence of a Supreme Being, which we call God, and which accounts for the miraculous working of the electrons and chromosomes. At the same time I had to give an exposition of the modern theories of psychology. In lengthy explanations I proved then, that my symbols could satisfy the scientists, the churchmen and at the same time, should be understandable to the simple and religious people.

Consequently my work shows an array of bewildering scientific chapters and thousands of symbol drawings, and - at a first glance - the idea that simple people should grasp all this, seems utterly ridiculous. But I have written these books for the scientists only. Please compare it with a large work on Mathematics. You will find a few chapters on the simple operations of Addition and Subtraction, which children and simple people can grasp, but all the other chapters are dealing with complicated mathematical methods and theories.

From this point of view, I wish to point out the few chapters which may be applicable to the problems with which you deal.

- p. 108 Symbol writing for the Farmer (especially the illiterate ones.)
- p. 131 Universal Grammar, explained for simple people.
- p. 153ff. These chapters deal with the senses (seeing, hearing etc.)
- p. 280ff. Life and the Individual (symbols for these meanings)
- p. 327 Animals and Pests around the Farmhouse.
- p. 597 The Bible in Semantography, the Lord's Prayer, etc.

A few months ago Professor G. Patrick Meredith of the University of Leeds, and an Authority on Visual Education, has written a review of nearly two thousand words about my work in the noted British Educational Journal, THE NEW ERA (November 1950). It is possible that the National Library will have this journal.

Professor Meredith follows in the vein of my book and speaks most scientifically about Plato and Aristotle, about Bishop Wilkins and Lancelot Hogben, all in conjunction with my work. But there are a few sentences that deal with the simple application. He says:

"If he (C.K. Bliss) could persuade the Colonial Office to carry out a limited experiment with a number of illiterate peoples to show that Semantography works, the report on this experiment would carry more weight than all his brilliant arguments."

In the meantime I have received a few letter which might interest you. Professor Joseph A. Lauwerys, Head of the Institute of Education, University of London has written a letter to the Director General of UNESCO, Dr. James Torres Bodet, drawing his attention to Semantography.

Similarly Professor Carelton Washburne, world-wide authority on Education and Prof. of Education, Brooklyn College New York, informed me, that he had a personal discussion with Dr. John W. Taylor, the new Deputy Director General of UNESCO, also about Semantography.

It might take a long time until something materialises. On the other hand, a few competent experiments might draw attention of the whole world to this new Medium of universal communication. At present I cannot find the money to even have a small primer printed, and this has prompted Earl Russell to say that men who would help Semantography financially "would be performing an important service for Mankind". The Sydney University Extension Board has decided to sponsor a lecture on Semantography I believe Professor Crocker too is interested, and I shall follow your advice and contact Dr. Cappell.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

The Secretary
Department of External Territories
CANBERRA.

10th March, 1951.

Dear Sir,

It was my intention not to bother you with another letter until your department had thought about my idea of a picture-writing for natives and made its decision. However, I received a letter of which you should know, and of which, in any case I want to inform you. It might be necessary to recall a few points of interest.

When Earl Russell studied my work on July 1950 in Sydney, and issued his most favourable statement (see brochure No. 6 in your possession) the Daily Telegraph brought out an article (also in your possession). I received then a letter of invitation from Mr. Castle, Manager of the Audio-Visual Aids Division, the Trans Pacific Film Service, Contractor to the Commonwealth Office of Education for the making of educational film strips.

Mr. Castle wanted an option for the exclusive use of my picture-writing for educational film strips to be used in native education. He said that he would like to approach Minister Spender about this idea. Naturally, I consented, and devised the filmstrip for the first lesson, which is in your possession.

A month later in August, 1950, the Sydney papers brought articles about the conference of the Pacific Research Council of the South Pacific Commission. Mr. Castle contacted Mr. Maude, and I had the opportunity to show my work to Mr. Hunt, Deputy Secretary General. He was so much taken with the idea that he ordered twenty sets of film strip, pamphlet, etc., (same as in your possession) which he personally distributed to all members of the Research Council. In this way, the Director of Education of New Guinea, got a set too. However, I had not and did not seek an opportunity to speak with him.

Later on, Mr. R.P. Ford, Research Officer of the Liberal Party, took an interest in my work as a possible medium to implement Minister Spender's point of the establishment of Universal Literacy among the natives.

Mr. Castle told me later on that he spoke with Mr. John Howse, who I believe is the Parliamentary Secretary.

When a new and unusual idea is to be introduced, many approaches have to be made and many without result. For instance nothing has been forthcoming from the members of the South Pacific Commission. Likewise Mr. Castle approached Mr. Howse, with no result. And other approaches led nowhere.

I was therefore, extremely grateful to Mr. Archer, Mr. Willoughby, Mr. Rose and Mr. Lattin for listening to me, and taking the idea of picture-writing into consideration.

I have now received a letter from Mr. R.P. Ford, in which he informed me that he has succeeded in contacting Minister Spender, and that Minister Spender has requested a report from the Director of Education at Port Moresby. Although I am glad about this, I am troubled about your reaction, because it might look to you that I went over your head. For this reason, I have stated the facts as they occurred prior to my visit to you. I feel sure that this incident will not hinder, but on the contrary, will advance your study of the matter.

In my foregoing letter, I referred to Professor Meredith, who gave the advice in his review to contact the Colonial Office. I feel sure that your Department after studying the matter, might forward a report to the Colonial Office, which is also interested in a new medium for native communication.

I regret that this letter has grown so lengthy, but I feel sure that you will understand that I have worked for eight and a half years on this idea, having spent my earnings and my savings on it, and am doing everything now that I can to make this a practical reality for the benefit of mankind. I have now spent a considerable sum on the title page of a Children's Primer, which I enclose, and which I hope you and the other gentlemen will find interesting. What I need now, is that someone should be forthcoming with money for publication.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

And then the inevitable answer came.

Dear Sir,

18th June, 1951

I would refer to your letters of 16th February and 10th March 1951, and desire to inform you that an exhaustive examination has been made of your system of Semantography in relation to its possible use in the territory of Papua and New Guinea.

As you are aware, in the territory of Papua and New Guinea there are a multiplicity of vernacular languages which constitute a barrier to economic and social development. The problem of breaking down this barrier has two aspects, the need for a lingua franca - both written and spoken - which will facilitate communication amongst indigenous groups and between these groups and the Administration; and the need to preserve and develop the valuable elements in native culture. Whilst the former need can be met by such languages as "Pidgin", "Police Motu," and English and to the extent of written communication possibly by your system of Semantography the second need can only be adequately met by preserving and developing vernacular languages. The task of the Educator in Papua and New Guinea is therefore twofold; to gradually extend the use of a common means of expression both written and oral, and to develop vernacular languages, although small vernacular groups may have to be absorbed by larger related groups. In the Australian Territories the common medium of expression will be English and the policy will be of a bilingual education.

To introduce such a system as semantography it would be necessary to teach it in either English or the vernacular and this would constitute a complexity in the educational procedure. While the advantage of the relative simplicity of semantography is fully appreciated it is considered that this would be outweighed by the disadvantage inherent in its teaching and the fact that it would constitute a lingua franca only as far as the written word is concerned. Consequently, in view of the educational policy in Papua and New Guinea, it is considered that a practical need does not exist at the moment in the Territory for your system of Semantography.

On the question of the use for Semantography at the international level it is suggested that an approach might be made to U.N.E.S.C.O.

You mentioned the possibility of carrying out an experiment with New Australian children in Canberra to show the practicability of Semantography. The Commonwealth Office of Education, whose central office is in Sydney, may be interested.

Yours faithfully,
J.E. Willoughby.
FOR SECRETARY.

The end of this letter follows the usual pattern. Go to someone else. I have approached UNESCO and the Commonwealth Office of Education many times - with negative result. See S.S. No. 167, and 168 and others.

V. APPROACH TO THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION IN PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA.

W.C. Groves. Esq.,
Director of Education
Port Moresby, New Guinea.
Dear Sir,

13th March, 1951.

I have been informed that the Minister for External Affairs Mr. P.C. Spender has expressed the view that the Picture Writing known under the name of Semantography "might be very useful in the territory of Papua and New Guinea," and that he has requested a report from you.

Professor Patrick Meredith, an author and authority on Visual Education, University of Leeds, has recently published a 2000 word review about Semantography in the noted British Educational Journal THE NEW ERA (November 1950). He classes his review as next to an eulogy and writes:

"If he (Bliss) could persuade the Colonial Office to carry out a limited experiment with a number of illiterate people to show that Semantography works, the report on this experiment would carry more weight than all his brilliant arguments."

One day the Colonial Office will learn about Semantography and will carry out the tests suggested. All previous experiments carried out by me show that the tests will be successful. Indeed, no argument, but only the experiment will decide.

Bertrand Russell, Lancelot Hogben, Carelton Washburne and other scientists are in favour of Semantography. The anthropologist F.D. McCarthy mentions expressively New Guinea where Semantography "will help tremendously to overcome the very difficult problems of disseminating information to peoples of diverse language." Professor Joseph A. Lauwerys, Head of the Institute of Education, University of London, has written a personal letter to the Director General of UNESCO, and there are other instances favourable to Semantography. The Department for External Territories in Canberra is now studying this idea.

This idea can help you tremendously, your experiments may become known all over the whole world, and may find application in all the backward areas of the world.

As for me, this idea has become an obsession and a curse for the last 8½ years. The sooner it is taken out of my hands the better for me.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Bliss.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

29th May, 1951.

In acknowledgement of your letter of 13th March, 1951, I must apologise for the long delay. I passed your letter and the attached leaflet to the Chief Inspector for Schools to examine, and he has only just now returned them to me.

Your system of ideography has much to recommend it, and in certain fields such as the teaching of English to New Australians, I should expect it to be very useful indeed. I am not nearly so sanguine about its potential usefulness in our own work in Papua and New Guinea. As this verdict will disappoint you I had better explain my reasons.

A universal language, whether spoken or written, must be based on a common stock of ideas shared by people whose speech is different, but whose cultures are in the same degree related. Thus Esperanto uses root-words drawn from the principal European languages. Hogben's Interglossa is constructed with Greek words, which are familiar to all who are acquainted with scientific terminology. Wilkin's Universal Language was based on a logical analysis of the categories of Western European philosophy and science. Isotype like your Semantography, employs pictorial symbols which will be instantly recognisable by Slavs, Scandinavians, Americans and Armenians.

The difficulty in using your system with the primitive people like the great masses in Papua and New Guinea is that they will not recognise your symbols. Their culture differs widely from that in Western Europe, and notions that are perfectly familiar to us are strange to them, while the conventional symbols that they carve on houses and canoes, though full of meaning to the Native people, convey nothing to us. For instance, you express the idea happy by the outline of a heart and an arrow pointing upwards. To any European that would suggest "Sursum corda": to a Papuan it does not mean anything. He would not use that shape to represent a heart, nor does he regard that organ as the seat of emotions. In the Motu tongue "compassion" or "sympathy" is "bogahisi", literally "belly-pain". If you recall the James Lange of Emotion you will see that the Motu people agree with James.

The approach we are using in this territory may be old-fashioned, but it is well tried and effective. The pupil first becomes literate in the vernacular, using the Roman alphabet with phonetic values as accurate as possible without special type. He then learns English orally and is encouraged to speak simple English before he attempts to read and write. Reading and writing comes next, and in spite of the irregularities of English Spelling and the pitfalls of English idiom the pupils make rapid progress. The greatest difficulty is not teaching them to read and write. It is conveying to them conceptions and categories entirely new to Native tongue. I believe that it is just here that your Semantography would break down.

Yours faithfully,
W. Groves,
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION.

What answer could I give to this? The answer had been given hundreds of years before by Francis Bacon who is considered the father of the scientific method. He said that words can prove nothing. Only the experiment will bring enlightenment. I still maintain that a short experiment with children in Australia and New Guinea would prove that my picture work, because all my experiments with children have shown this. I once wrote a letter in Semantography to the children of the editor of the educational magazine THE NEW ERA IN SCHOOL AND HOME London, and the children learned the symbols so easily that they wrote back a perfectly understandable letter.

But experiments with new ideas - traditional educators abhor this.

VI APPROACH TO THE TWO MINISTERS FOR EXTERNAL TERRITORIES.

In order to reach the ear of the Minister directly I went to the party headquarters of the Liberal Party and explained my work to the Research Officer Mr. Ford. He was very much impressed and forwarded my material to the Minister Dr. Spender. I was happy when Mr. Ford sent me the following letter.

Minister for External Affairs and External Territories,
SYDNEY, 26th February, 1951.

Dear Mr. Ford,

I have examined the material which you have forwarded in your letter of 25th January, regarding the new form of picture writing constructed by Mr. C. K. Bliss.

It would appear that this system might be very useful in the territory of Papua and New Guinea. I am obtaining a report from the Director of Education at Port Moresby on the matter, and as soon as this is received, I shall write to you again.

Sincerely, yours,
Percy Spender.

Unfortunately, Mr Spender was soon relieved from his post and appointed Australian Ambassador to Washington. In his stead Mr. Hasluck was made Minister for External Affairs. When Mr. Ford approached him, his officers knew already about Semantography and I was not surprised when Mr. Ford sent me the following letter.

MINISTER FOR TERRITORIES
CANBERRA. A. C. T.

Dear Mr. Ford.

21st June 1951.

Further to the letter of the 26th February, written to you by my predecessor in office, Mr. P.C. Spender, I wish to inform you that the system of picture writing called "Semantography" devised by Mr. C.K. Bliss, has been examined to see whether it can be used by the Administration of New Guinea and Papua.

It is considered that within the limits of any form of picture writing the system invented by Mr. Bliss could be used as a means of communication between peoples speaking different language. The chief difficulty, as with any artificially contrived language is to have it accepted by national groups. This has been the main obstacle to the wider use of such languages as Esperanto, Ido, or Interlingua.

In the territories of Papua and New Guinea there are many native languages. The need for a lingua franca which will facilitate communication amongst indigenous groups and between these groups and the Administration is being met by "Pidgin" "Police Motu" "English" and conceivably could also be met in a limited way by a system such as Semantography. The need to preserve valuable elements of native culture can only be adequately met by preserving and developing native languages. The task of the educator in Papua and New Guinea is therefore twofold - to extend gradually the common means of expression, and to develop the native tongue. In the Australian territories the common medium of expression will be English and the policy will be one of bilingual education.

It is considered that there would be many difficulties in adopting the system of Semantography and it is not clear that there would be any significant advantages. Native languages have to be studied and teachers trained in them before any other system can be taught and it is the policy of the Administration to introduce English at a relatively early stage as "spoken language".

By the time that the pupil has advanced to the stage when a "written language" can be introduced it seems that on all counts preferable to adopt alphabetic writing rather than picture writing, although picture writing may have limited uses in elementary education and in adult literary campaigns and for simple communication. These aspects will be further explored.

So far as the territory of Papua and New Guinea is concerned Mr. Bliss could be advised that it is not considered that a practical need exists at present for such a system as Semantography. Regarding its possible use in the international sphere the best approach would seem to be to UNESCO and I understand that Mr. Bliss has already made this approach in an informal way.

Mr. Bliss made the suggestion that his system should be tried out on a group of New Australian children. The Commonwealth Office of Education would seem to be the appropriate body to consider such a suggestion.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Hasluck.

Minister for Territories.

In closing the story of this unhappy approach I wish to say that I feel sure that the result would have been the same in any other country. The last word have the "competent" educators, notably the "competent" linguists, and they have opposed improvement of language communication anywhere and everywhere in any language and in all languages. The case is hopeless - unless we realise that they and only they are the real obstacles towards universal understanding among the human race. One of my friends, a young man and still hopeful, Dr. Douglas N. Everingham, has from time to time written to the newspapers. Here is one of his letters to the editor which appeared in the Sydney Herald

PIDGIN ENGLISH

27th July 1953

Sir, - Melanesian pidgin was not "invented" and to eradicate it is about as easy as for Eire or India to ban English, or as it would have been for the Norman French to ban Anglo Saxon when the King's English was "invented". A more constructive suggestion according to philologists L. Hogben, Sir R. Paget, and others, is that of Mr. C.K. Bliss of Sydney. Give New Guinea technical, commercial and general educational primers printed in Semantography with English alphabet equivalents for the terms appearing for the first time or otherwise unfamiliar. Technical gaps in all primitive languages will close as the natives find the need for spoken equivalents of these semantically constructed, often explanatory, symbols. Kenmore.

DOUGLAS N. EVERINGHAM.