

BLISS AND THE "SYMBOL SEEKERS" OF
ICOGRADA

The Story started in 1964
These stencils are typed in 1972
A shameful story with a shameful ending in shameful symbols.

The correspondence and attached papers are contained in a heavy file which is still heavy on my heart and mind, though nearly 6 years have passed since the story started. Icograda is an abbreviation of the "International Council of Graphic Design Associations." To tell the truth beforehand, this is (let us call it) a "Council" of a few self-elected designers who assembled themselves in order to gain some prominence among designers and the designer's market. Commercial and industrial designers are doing a thriving business in our world of the mass media, the glossy magazines which are usually full with advertisements designed by designers, and a few articles between the ads. As it is with advertisements today, the products least needed are designed most and advertised to the utmost limits of human gullibility who believe in what the Germans have phrased: "Schwarz auf Weiss" meaning: here is the truth in black on white. Fortunately there is another German adage which runs "Er luegt wie gedruckt" - "He lies like printed". I have devised a better saying which goes

"Only God can make a tree
And only man can pulp it
for printing lies on it".

I refer especially to the shameful advertisements accompanied by shameful products of designers advertising in the most alluring words and pictures how to ruin the nations with nicotine and alcohol, with dangerous cosmetics, with glossy pictures of glossy girls sitting on glossy lethal guns which can cruise "comfortably" at 120 miles an hour and can kill equally "comfortably" the driver, his passengers, and the innocent people in the oncoming cars. The terrible truth is that all the killings, suffered by soldiers and not military people in all the world wars and other wars in this century EQUAL KILLINGS BY CARS IN THE LAST 4 YEARS. And all the maimings in all the wars of this century EQUAL THE MAIMINGS BY CARS IN THE LAST 9 MONTHS, according to official statistics by the United Nations and I maintain that

THE COMMERCIAL DESIGNERS ARE ACCESSORIES IN THIS MASS MURDER. THEY PUT THEIR DRAWING ABILITIES TO THE TASK OF SNARING AND LURING THE UNWARY READER INTO SMOKING LETHAL NICOTINE, DRINKING LETHAL ALCOHOL AND BUYING LETHAL CARS.

So let us begin at the begin, the story of the "Symbol Seekers" of Icograda. The actual title would better be "The Symbol Seekers for Money", or even better "Give us money and we will evolve symbols" or to be more elaborate "First money, let us say half a million dollars for a start, and then we shall buckle down to the task of designing a symbol language." The result - after 6 years - is so dismal that every boy and girl could understand the dismal failure, and dismal incompetence, and dismal inability of these dismal designers to design symbols. You too will see it by just looking at the 24 symbols (not more) at the end of this dismal issue.

The story begins in 1963 when those self-elected men formed Icograda and called an International "Congress" on Graphic Design to be held in Zuerich Switzerland from September 8-12 1964. At this "congress" it was decided to hold a students competition on symbols for an international symbol language. Mr. Peter Kneebone a teacher on some college in London was appointed project chairman of the Students Project No. 1 titled

"DESIGNING AN INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL LANGUAGE"

But of course money was needed, and much money at that. Half a million dollars over a period of 5 years was estimated for covering the initial expenses. Where to get that half a million dollars? From national and international organisations, first and foremost the governments of all the countries united in the United Nations Organisation. And here are the first details of the Press Release 1965/2

Icograda Student Project 1

AN INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL LANGUAGE

In 1966 we may be one step nearer to solving one of the key international

travel problems - the communication of basic information.

ICOGRADA, the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (formed in London in April 1963) is the international body representing 28 graphic design organisations in 19 countries and one international organisation.

At the First ICOGRADA Congress of Graphic Design at Zurich in September, 1964, Student Project 1 was formally presented by its chairman, Peter Kneebone, FSIA. Its theme is

An International Symbol Language

The rules and regulations have now been sent to about 650 graphic design schools through the world.

The problem posed is that of designing a single, coherent vocabulary of symbols to cover the information outside the scope of the international road signs. With the contraction of the world, in terms of increased ease of scale of international travel, it is essential that simple, objective pieces of information be communicated between different peoples in a quite unequivocal, immediate and non-linguistic way. This is the function of the graphic designer.

International road signs are increasingly accepted. But this still leaves a large area of basic information so far only partly considered in different ways in different parts of the world.

The purpose of this project is twofold. It is not only to give students practical experience of problem solving and communication on an international level, but also to make a positive professional contribution to the solution of a vital international problem.

What needs to be conveyed is a) information (or identification), b) direction, c) instruction, (or warning). Participants have been asked to prepare finished designs for a first list of 24 subjects covering all three of these categories.

Entrance	Telephone
Exit	Post Office
No Smoking	Police
Do not touch	Doctor
Danger	Hospital
W.C. (Men)	Chemist
W.C. (Women)	Information Bureau
Fire Alarm	Exchange Bureau
Petrol	Hotel
Airport	Museum
Harbour	Historical Monument
Railway Station	A directional arrow.

Designs must be both in black and white and in colour and both for small-size use (e.g., brochures) and large-size use (e.g. on exterior walls).

Entries will be assessed in April 1966. the following internationally distinguished designers have agreed to act as assessors:

Abram Games (Great Britain)
Joseph Muller-Brockmann (Switzerland)
Ivan Picelj (Yugoslavia)
Paul Rand (U.S.A.)

Some of the principal international organisations concerned with travel have also been invited to be represented on the panel of assessors.

The results will be announced in July 1966 at the Second ICOGRADA International Congress on Graphic Design which will be held from July 11-16th in Bled, Yugoslavia, when the ICOGRADA Student Scholarships will be awarded.

It is intended that the project should then go into its second phase - study and development by all interested international bodies, with eventual adoption and use as the end result. As the first results should provide the basis for a visually co-ordinated vocabulary it is also intended that the initial list of 24 subjects should be extended to include other related items.

At a time when limited, graphically unrelated and thematically overlapping signs systems are being developed, this project assumes importance. It is probably the first time that an attempt has been made to carry out research of this kind on a completely international dispassionate and professional level.

The results should be exciting and far-reaching.

FULL DETAILS AND ENTRY FORMS are available from the ICOGRADA Secretariat, Herengracht 567, AMSTERDAM C, Netherlands.

The final date of submission of entries is April 4th, 1966.

Participation in ICOGRADA Student Project 1 is open to bona-fide, whole-time students or teams of students who are enrolled at an art or design school.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS for ICOGRADA "Commission on International signs and symbols".

It is almost impossible to determine at this stage exactly what money will be needed for the Commission to do its job properly. On the basis of work carried out by other similar organisations, it is however fair to assume that at least the following sums would be needed, even if the work of the Commission over the first year or two is kept to the barest necessities and is concentrated mainly

on planning, programming, collecting, preparing of an initial analysis and establishing a working basis with other international bodies:

FIRST & SECOND YEAR: \$30,000 - \$50,000

THIRD YEAR: \$100,000 - rising to \$300,000 in the FIFTH YEAR.

Much will depend of course, on the rate of progress desired, the calibre of the people concerned and how much voluntary work can be obtained.

So you see, only 24 symbols are wanted for a WHOLE LANGUAGE OF SYMBOLS. The most idiotic symbol wanted is the last one No. 24 "a directional arrow". What can you make out of this demand? The arrow is already an established international symbol. What should poor students think of this demand? I know, because some of them here in Australia who knew of my work came to see me seeking wisdom and guidance.

But the most remarkable fact is that ^{neither} Mr. Kneebone, nor the other bosses of Icoграда have thought of the possibility that they themselves, who are accomplished designers and experienced in symbols for industrial and commercial firms, could indulge for themselves in the task of devising symbols for a WHOLE SYMBOL LANGUAGE. Today 6 years later, none of them has done anything about it. Though, after all, some scraps of paper and a pencil is needed.

So let us have a look at the statement made by Mr. Kneebone at the UIC conference on pictograms held in Paris of the 1st June 1965. The UIC is the "Union Internationale des Chemin de fer" or in English "The International Union of Railways". This statement tells also of the various attempts made by various people and organisations. Here it is.

S Y M B O L S

Statement made on behalf of ICOGRADA by Peter Kneebone at the UIC conference on pictogrammes/Paris/1.6.65

We wish, unreservedly, to congratulate the UIC on their contribution to the solution of the problem of international visual communication. Their work has proved a most important step forward. Coming myself from a railway family, this gives me particular pleasure.

We, ICOGRADA, are especially glad to have been invited here to consider the position with you at this moment, representing, as we do, the graphic designers of 18 countries. If you need to solve a medical problem you have to call in the doctors.

A crucial point has, in the last few years, been reached in the development of public utility symbols. There has been a kind of symbol explosion. On the one hand bodies such as yourselves wish to develop valid symbol vocabularies. On the other hand the international need, through a dramatic increase in travel, has called for this.

Before we go further however, we feel very strongly that the problem should be seen as a whole and that machinery should be set up for co-ordinated research and development on a completely international, objective and professional level, with the collaboration of all interests. For the sake of the public - whether American, French, Japanese or Tanzanian - it is most important that this be treated as an international graphic research operation.

The International Chamber of Commerce, with whom I discussed the matter yesterday, wish to be associated with this proposal.

This is essentially long term work. Having progressed so far, it would be very unfortunate if sign systems, only partially international representing only some sectors of use and graphically open to further analysis and development, were to become unchangeable and, indeed, multiply.

Apart from the UIC system, the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Committee produced extremely interesting work in this field. The intention is to improve and develop this work for the 1968 Olympics. In part the work overlaps that of the UIC.

Already it has emerged that some UIC symbols are not international (e.g. Buffet), that the use of letterforms or words is internationally invalid and visually confusing (e.g. WC and Information) and that the conflict between non-figurative diagrams and figurative pictogrammes has not been resolved.

Several stages of development are known to exist.

The international road signs are now widely accepted and provide invaluable experience.

The 1964 Olympics and 1965 UIC systems are now part of a very firm groundwork.

In Autumn 1965 the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier is carrying out its first public tests in the use of selected symbols. This is the result of research into existing systems, done with the co-operation of organisations all over the world. We should congratulate this body on the extent and energy of its work.

In April 1966 the ICOGRADA Student Project - An International Symbol Language - is to be assessed in Belgrade. The purpose is, of course, not only that of involving graphic students throughout the world in an educational project.

It is also to make an imaginative professional contribution to international research. The International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier, the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Touring and Automobile Association are associated with us in this, as well as national bodies such as the British Council of Industrial Design. The results of the project will, later in 1966, be analysed and developed in collaboration with all interested bodies and in relation to all other research.

In 1967 the Montreal World Fair is being held. Already the Canadian designers responsible for co-ordinating graphic work at the Fair have approached ICOGRADA to see whether we can, in some way, integrate our efforts in the field of pictogrammes.

In 1968 the winter and summer Olympic Games are being held, with all that this implies in terms of visual symbols.

We wish to submit these proposals to you:

1. Existing and projected symbol programmes should, for a period of at least three years, be considered as experimental research directed towards a fully integrated, rational and international system.
2. This result cannot be achieved arbitrarily. It must be based on a total design analysis involving graphic research, social and psychological study and a historical examination of the basis of visual communication.
3. There should be complete co-operation and co-ordination between all interested parties - the user organisations (e.g. UIC) and the integrating and analytical organisations (e.g. ICOGRADA, professionally, and the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier, administratively).
4. To this end, a Study Team should be formed with representation from the principal interested parties and including the maximum expertise in the field of communication. Already the International Chamber of Commerce have offered to collaborate with us in arranging such a meeting.
5. The Study Team should meet first in Autumn 1965, after reactions to the UIC scheme have been analysed and during the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier tests: secondly in Autumn 1966, after the ICOGRADA project and Biennial International Design Congress and prior to the World Fair: thirdly in Autumn 1967 after the opening of the World Fair and prior to the Olympics: fourthly in 1968 to finalise plans for a fully co-ordinated international system.
6. The machinery for continuous research and development throughout this time should be consolidated this year on the basis of the work being already done by ICOGRADA on the one hand and the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier on the other. It is further suggested that, if funds can be obtained, research in depth should be subsidised at one of the major graphic schools.

NB 1. UIC - Union International des Chemins de Fer
(14 Rue Jean Rey, Paris 15e).

2. Also representing ICOGRADA at the conference were Roger Excoffon and Rene le Texier, respectively President and Vice-President of the French Syndicat National des Graphistes Publicitaires. M. Excoffon spoke in support of the above statement, underlining our criticism. End of Report

The following meanings were shown from the UIC symbols:

Information	Reservation	Station Restaurant	Refreshments	Telephone
Porter Call Box	Baggage Lockers	Car-Sleeper-Express	Money Exchange	Lost & Found Department
Drinking Water	Baggage Counter	Baggage Storage	Telegram Service	Post Office

Needless to say that some of these symbols already used in Europe are not so "self-explanatory" as the designers thought they will be, and have given anguished travellers anguished time to find out through anguished enquiries what some of the symbols really mean. Why so?

BECAUSE THE DESIGNERS HELD TO THE IDIOTIC CONTENTION THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT UNDERNEATH THE SYMBOLS THE WORDS IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGES IN ORDER TO TELL THE PEOPLE WHAT THE SYMBOLS REALLY MEAN. This would tell Germans in their German cars and railway stations the meanings of the symbols, and thus they would recognise the symbols in French or British or Italian cars and railway stations and thus would enable them to learn also the French, and English and Italian words for the same meaning.

BUT WHY HAVE THE ICOGRADA MEN AND THE OTHER DESIGNERS ALL AROUND THE WORLD HELD TO THE IDIOTIC DOGMA THAT NO WORDS SHOULD BE PRINTED UNDERNEATH THE SYMBOLS????

The answer to this question is one word: MONEY If the word is printed underneath a symbol then the symbol will be understood, no matter how badly it is designed. But then designers would not get millions of dollars for research into symbols which could be instantly understood without a word underneath.

This is a fallacious belief and a dastardly designed dogma by the money seeking designers determined to fool the whole world, and especially the men in the Ministries of Transport. And the idiots in the Ministry of Transport of Great

Britain fell into their trap and erected one and a half million road warning signs without an explanatory word underneath. After a number of years large segments of British Motorists were questioned as to the meaning of the symbols, and a great many of them could not explain what some symbols mean, though they saw them daily on the roads, and though UNDERSTANDING THE WARNING SYMBOLS IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.

The British magazine of laughter PUNCH made cruel fun of this idiocy, and the editors gave me permission to reprint the story which you will find in S.S.306. For instance two half circular patches resembling a brassiere laying on the ground thus  were interpreted as SOPHIA LOREN AHEAD. Friends in Great Britain did send me some other hilarious interpretations of some of the symbols being told among British motorists. To be sure, the same idiocy happened on the roads of the U.S.A. giving the American humour magazine MAD an idea to do a similar article on this utter symbol madness on American roads. Again, I have not the money to photograph and print the article in MAD, but at present I am working on the new standards of road symbols for American roads, and there I shall show the latest madness of American designers and road safety officials in S.S. 367.

Well, in due course Icoграда sent out begging letters to organisations and to the governments of all countries united in the United Nations Organisation. Herebelow is their Exposé and their begging for money. To make the appeal more impressive the Icoграда men constituted the "Commission on International Signs and Symbols". The word Commission has various meanings as for instance the order to a painter and designer to do some work, or the bonus received for some work done, but when it comes to the meaning of a body of men, a Commission, the word has an impressive meaning in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It usually means A ROYAL COMMISSION. So here is the not-so-royal exposé of the Icoграда men seeking money in return for seeking symbols.

EXPOSE

October 1965

ICOGRADA COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

At the 1964 ICOGRADA international Graphic Design Congress in Zurich the first ICOGRADA Student Project was announced. Its theme was the designing of an international symbol language. The subjects given were a significant selection of the public information signs not covered by the international road signs. The principal aims of ICOGRADA are to raise internationally the standards of graphic design and professional practice by all practical means, to facilitate the collection and exchange of information on professional, educational and technical matters, to assist the interchange of personnel between countries and to act as an international forum for the co-operation and exchange of views between designers and organisations in allied and other fields. In this context the solving of the problems relating to international signs and symbols appeared to be one of ICOGRADA's most urgent tasks.

As a result partly of the world-wide development of the Student Project and partly of the publication, during the last year, of certain actual or projected sign systems, it became very apparent that serious international collaboration was urgently needed to solve effectively the important and complex problem of international signs and symbols. The situation at present is one of confusion and insufficient research.

To provide an international instrument for the co-ordination and solution of this problem, the Executive Board of ICOGRADA decided to establish an ICOGRADA 'Commission on International Signs and Symbols' under the chairmanship of Peter Kneebone M.A., F.S.I.A.

The problem is fundamentally a graphic one which has, so far, been largely tackled by administrative committees without, at the planning and policy levels, professional graphic design advice. The result is often unclear, contradictory, confusing systems, practically always of a very poor graphic standard. In most cases they are a mixture of various categories of signs. Some are synonymic, some homonymic, some polysemic. Pictograms are mixed with diagrams. In other words the systems are visually and mentally confusing. Moreover all the relevant international user bodies are frequently not consulted at the outset.

The purpose of ^{the} ICOGRADA Commission is to act as a dispassionate, professional, co-ordinating and advisory body. It will endeavour to establish regional and/or specialist working groups whose function will be to collect, analyse and research in depth, over a period of years, all types of signs and symbols which are used at present, or are intended to be used, internationally. The Commission will collaborate with all organisations concerned with symbols to ensure co-operation and research on the broadcast international and professional plane. This is essential if symbols are to do efficiently the job for which they are intended.

Through its advice and co-ordination, the Commission will endeavour to prevent duplication and ensure that official organisations concerned with international signs and symbols will be able to carry out their work with full

knowledge of what is happening in this field in other parts of the world. All official signs and symbols suggested for international use could then be established with the assistance of professional expert designers rather than only by administrators, and be based on valid principles and a coherent vocabulary.

We realise that it will present a major task just to investigate, collect and analyse the many different systems at present in use, or in a preliminary stage, and to keep the various interested parties informed of what is happening in this field so that their efforts can be co-ordinated.

As a non-profit making organisation, working at present on a very limited budget and exclusively with voluntary labour, ICOGRADA obviously cannot afford to carry out this work expediently and efficiently without help, both in kind and in services, from outside sources.

ICOGRADA is therefore appealing to enlightened foundations, organisations, corporations and individuals for funds or grants to be made available, for administration by ICOGRADA, for the following purposes:

- a) Official facilities, full-time secretarial assistance, duplicating facilities, postage and general administrative expenses.
- b) Out-of-pocket expenses for travel and meetings of working groups and committee members.
- c) Printing and publications of information, questionnaires, reports, etc. and the dissemination of information in general, including the publishing and despatch of a monthly or two-monthly News Letter.
- d) Nominal honoraria to various professional members of working groups who could be expected to give some of their advice and time freely, but who should be reimbursed for their expenses and some of their work, where it relates to strictly professional aspects such as research, designing, etc.
- e) Funds which would make it possible to organise some international conferences, when representatives of the various organisations concerned could meet to discuss the various problems and findings and recommend and agree internationally, to ratify and carry through decisions taken by majority vote.
- f) funds for the eventual establishment of regional "International signs and symbols" centres in Europe, Africa, India, the Far East and Central America, where duplicate sets of the material collected would be available, and whose functions would also be to keep the central office informed of any local activities in the field.
- g) Funds for the eventual establishment of an international research centre and/or grants for research work to be carried out at selected Universities or Graphic Design Schools.

Although the proposed scheme seems ambitious, without concerted action, we cannot hope to succeed in disentangling the mess in which we find ourselves today, with so many badly conceived signs and symbols being used, created or added almost monthly.

Because of the complexity of the problems involved, it must be considered a long term project. Therefore, it is proposed to develop the work over at least two five-year periods.

Even forgetting for the moment the recent symbol systems of uneven merit, devised for railways (by U.I.C.), markings for shipping containers (by E.P.F. and I.S.O.) cargo markings and dangerous goods code (by I.M.C.O. and U.N.), there are many others which will need to be sorted out, created or brought up to date. To mention just a few which come to mind:

Signs and symbols for

aircraft equipment, school books and manuals, meteorology, maps, astronomy, mathematics, computers, industrial and commercial machinery, man-made fibres, washing instructions, monetary systems, etc.

On all these, and many more, exchange of information, thorough research and much experimental work and agreement are needed, if we are ever to succeed in overcoming the language barriers and to help people everywhere to understand each other better, to find their way about and to protect themselves from daily dangers and mishaps which are due only to the fact that visual information is either not given or not conveyed with sufficient clarity.

This work will also result in the development of better, more suitable visual aid equipment and material, than are available today.

That there is a great and urgent need to tackle and solve this important problem is apparent from the fact that during the last two years people in all parts of the world and without the advice of professional visual communication experts or a central co-ordinating organisation, representing the interests and endeavours of all parties concerned.

ICOGRADA which, at present, represents 28 of the world's leading Graphic Design associations in 19 countries, is the logical body to undertake this task. Its work in connection with the solving of the problems of International signs and symbols, has already received the support of such important bodies as: I.C.C. (The International Chamber of Commerce) Paris

ICSID (The International Council of Societies of Industrial Design) Brussels

O.T.A. (The World Touring and Automobile Organisation) London

U.I.A. (The International Union of Architects) Paris

The International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier, New York.

The United National Organisation and UNESCO, who were approached by ICOGRADA and asked for their support and financial assistance, have stated that they have no funds available for this purpose and that UNO could not help in this matter beyond the resolution which was passed in the U.N. General Assembly on March 19th 1964 relating to "Facilitating Communication" as part of the International Co-operation Year Programme, which apparently was intended to act purely as a "catalyst".

ICOGRADA is therefore appealing to foundations, organisations, corporations and enlightened individuals for financial support.

If, because of ICOGRADA's work, the life of only a few people each year can be saved or made simpler, if through the creation of an international symbol language and the establishment of clearer, more meaningful signs and symbols the present language barriers can be broken even to some extent, all those who have contributed their work and financial support to the solving of this complex problem will have made a major contribution to the better understanding between peoples everywhere.

Peter Kneebone, M.A. F.S.I.A.,

Chairman, ICOGRADA Commission on International signs and symbols,

37 Ennerdale Road, KEW, Richmond, Surrey.

End of Report

In due course one begging letter of Icograda reached the Australian Government. As it referred to Australia as being a Member of the United Nations, the letter was sent to the Secretary of the Australian Association for the United Nations, who was also the Secretary of the International Co-operation Year 1965 which intended to promote symbols. See my S.S. 228, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234 and 235. This impressive array testifies how seriously I took the idea of the United Nations becoming the promoters of international symbols. These issues also testify what a great fool I have been of thinking that they mean it. These issues prove that a number of busybodies, mainly women, and foremost the arch woman Margaret Mead have used the idea of symbols for their own self-aggrandisement - without being able to evolve one single symbol by their own imagination. Incredible but true!

As I had bothered the President and Secretary of the Australian Association for the United Nations with my symbols for International Co-operation Year 1965, the Icograda men got the answer that an Australian had already accomplished the task of evolving a complete symbol language - not just 24 symbols only. I was duly informed of the existence of Icograda, and hope in my foolish heart sprang up again. Immediately I sent off the following letter:

The Secretary General,

Sydney 27 Nov 65

ICOGRADA

International Council of Graphic Design Associations

Herengracht 567 Amsterdam-C Netherlands.

Dear Sir,

The Honorary Secretary of the International Co-operation Year Committee of Australia has sent me your Press Release of April/May 1965 concerning your Icograda Student Project 1: namely AN INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL LANGUAGE. This information lists 24 meanings like ENTRANCE, EXIT, NO SMOKING, etc. etc., for which students should submit symbol designs. It states further that only whole-time students who are enrolled at an art or design school can participate in this competition.

This letter may then come to you as a shock, because I have worked on this idea since 1942, and have published in 1949 three large volumes on my symbol language which I call SEMANTOGRAPHY (from Greek a meaningful writing). I believe that the University of Utrecht or Leyden has ordered one set more than 10 years ago. Other sets are to be found in great public and university libraries of all 5 continents. This first edition is now out of print, but within the next month, the second enlarged edition will come on the market, and I shall be pleased if your council would acquire one copy.

The abovementioned Honorary Secretary has submitted my work to the United Nations and eminent scholars have praised it in a number of testimonials. The fact is that my 100 pictorial basic symbol elements can be used in combination to form any meaning needed in international travel, communication, commerce, industry, and even science. In the large chapters of my books I show the application of my symbols to most fields of human endeavour, and anyone who looks through the 882 pages of the second edition must become convinced that the problem has at last been solved: an international symbol language for mankind, or as I term it: ONE WRITING FOR ONE WORLD.

In this letter (first class) and in an airletter (second class, printed matter)

I am sending you a few issues of my SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES namely:

- S.S. No. 1. The first leaflet 100 SYMBOL ELEMENTS TO OVERCOME BABEL IN READING, etc.
8. Bertrand Russell's Testimony
18. A three colour leaflet for a Children's Primer
43. Leaflet for my lecture to the Geological Society of Sydney University
52. Leaflet of Prof. Reiser's lecture to the American Association for the Advancement of Science
62 Semantography, an article by W.A. Heeney
157. A leaflet on Semantography for Librarians
163. Detailed Catalog on the titles of all chapters of the books on Semantography
198. The Writing of To-morrow, 2 Articles from the Sun-Herald, Sydney (3 copies)
200. First pages from the new edition
244. The story of this pioneering work (from the new edition)

6. What scientists think of C.K. Bliss' Semantography

I feel sure that you will agree that my symbols are simple. They can be typed on an adjusted typewriter of ordinary size from which the capital letters are removed and replaced by symbol lines. Or the new IBM ball typewriter enables to insert a separate ball carrying nearly 100 of the most important symbols and symbol combinations. For instance, this symbol means a man , and this a woman . This symbol shows the outline of the upper skull, the brain: . Consequently, these two symbols   mean man thinks, and this combination  means a thinker.

In order to enable you to send this letter to another important person of your council, I enclose a copy of it, together with a few issues of S.S. No. 188 THE WRITING OF TOMORROW. I am ready to co-operate with you in any possible way.

Twenty three years ago when I started on this work, everyone (except eminent scholars) considered me a crazy crank. Now, the value of my work has been recognised, and as it is to be expected, other people try to work out their own symbols. If this trend is to continue, we would soon have a new Babel of Symbols. In order to enable an international body to keep some check on such acts of confusion which would defeat the very idea, I have copyrighted my symbols, and their derivations and deviations. I am an old man, and on the threshold of death. All the last 25 years I have spent my earnings and savings on this idea, and I never wanted to make a penny from it. I want to give it to mankind, but I want also that no new Babel should be created which would create the same confusion as we have now in all languages.

How your competition fits in this scheme, I cannot see. It is of course possible to invent a few pictorial symbols which show at a glance what is meant. But this may only bring a limited field of symbols, because such pictorial symbols cannot be combined to other meanings. Also, symbols which are commonplace in many countries, like the arrow symbol, have no meaning with people who have never been told that the arrow symbol is not a picture of a weapon, but a direction sign only.

As your aim is to promote an international symbol language, not only 24 meanings than my work is the answer.

Please let me know what more information I shall send you. I am prepared to send a mimeographed sheet, together with some of my printed issues, to the most important members of your council, so that they may be able to study my work. I am sorry, being unable to send you a copy of the new second edition gratis, as much money has been spent in printing and publishing it. The retail price is US\$12. For you, a 25% discount would be given. If you agree to buy this new book, please send me this amount or the equivalent in other currencies. Again I wish to state that I don't want to make a single penny from my work. But the expenses are terrific, and have brought me a number of times to sheer bankruptcy. My wife died in desperation, seeing no help forthcoming. I shall die soon, and I shall be glad to see that you are taking up my work.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I am,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss, B.Sc.

In due course I received the following answer from the "President" with a letterhead saying in print that it comes "from the President's Office". I shuddered in awe.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

December 8th, 1965.

Thank you for your letter of 27th November, 1965 which our Secretary-General has forwarded to me.

We were most interested in what you say and glad to hear from you. This especially, not only because like ourselves, you seem to be an enthusiast who is aware of the complexity of the problem, but also because I was under the impression that you were sent details about ICOGRADA and our "Student Project I" when we heard about you from the ICY Committee, and we wondered why we had no news from you.

We shall study your documentation as soon as it arrives, and I am passing

all your information to Mr. Peter Kneebone, who is both in charge of ICOGRADA "Student Project I" and Chairman of the recently established ICOGRADA "Commission on International Signs and Symbols", so that he can discuss matters with you.

Until we have had an opportunity to study all your documentation more fully it would be wrong to voice any definite views or comments.

However, from what little I know about your very interesting system, I would think that in one way it is much more comprehensive than the first stage of our "Student Project I". Being an "alphabet" it also serves a slightly different purpose. On the other hand, like so many other Sign and Symbol systems (and "alphabet" systems) it seems to have been conceived without the co-operation of professional graphic designers or visual communicators. As a result, while the system itself may be most admirable, I venture to suggest that some of the details could be made visually more attractive and clearer and in some instances, also more functionally suitable for reproduction in smaller and larger sizes, two and three dimensionally.

As in your own case, our financial means are very limited and all our work is carried out entirely on a voluntary basis. However, I am asking our Treasurer to send a cheque for US\$9. in payment of a copy of your second edition, and which I understand is the correct reduced rate which you kindly offered. Perhaps you would be kind enough to send the book meanwhile to 33 Jubilee Place, London, S.W.3. By second class airmail I am sending you some documentation on ICOGRADA which will give you a better idea of our work. Until we find the necessary additional financial support from Governments, Foundations, Commerce and Industry, we shall have to proceed rather slowly, but good progress is being made in most directions.

Because of Student Project I (the results of which will be announced during the Second ICOGRADA International Congress on Graphic Design and Visual Communication Technology in Yugoslavia, July 11th - 16th, 1966) and the work of the ICOGRADA "Commission on Signs and Symbols" we have at last been able to establish an international platform where all matters relating to the solving of these important problems can be discussed and co-ordinated. We are also able to inform various people of what is happening in this field in different parts of the world, getting various experts to co-operate and thus, for the first time in our history, we hope to stand a better chance of creating some order out of the present chaos.

As you know, it's a long and arduous task, but at least something is being done to try and find some practical solutions on an international plane.

Thank you for your interest and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

W.M. de MAJO

President

ICOGRADA

c.c. Wim Crouwel

Peter Kneebone

Martin Gavler

The important Icograda men who received copies are Wim Crouwel Secretary General of Icograda, Peter Kneebone Chairman of that "Royal" Commission on Signs and Symbols, Martin Gavler Treasurer of Icograda.

Attached to Mr. de Majo's letter was a reprint of a short article from the DESIGN magazine London September 1965. It shows a few slightly different symbols from slightly different designers and has the title

A N I N T E R N A T I O N A L S I G N L A N G U A G E S T A R T S B A D L Y

Readers who travel on British Railways may have noticed that on a few stations (Waterloo, for example) pictograms have been put up, usually in conjunction with written signs, for a few services such as lavatories, buffet and telephone. The pictograms are devised from a booklet recently issued by the Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC) which covers a wide variety of signs, ranging from lost property offices and bureaux de change to directions for regulating carriage heating systems and seats reserved for disabled war veterans. The pictograms adopted by British Rail, however, are restricted for the moment to six signs only, and even these have undergone a certain amount of redesign before being put into use. Both facts point to a situation which is not satisfactory.

The main criticism falls into two parts: first the pictograms themselves are unsatisfactory: second they have only limited approval and appear to have been issued without more than cursory consultation with other interested bodies such as UNESCO, the International Chamber of Commerce, the World Touring and Automobile Association, the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier and the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) all of which are interested in promoting pictograms which are readily understood and valid throughout the world. The booklet's pictograms fall down on several counts: they are illogical (some incorporate words, some do not) they are not

appropriate for all countries (the wine glass symbol for 'buffet', which BR has replaced by a cup and saucer, applies almost exclusively to France and has been objected to by Canadian National Railways among others), and they can be misleading or difficult to read accurately, particularly at a distance. Thus the left luggage pictogram has been modified by British Rail to clarify the image, and hence its meaning.

The second criticism is fundamental. Only in road signs is there now some degree of international agreement, yet a host of other signs, many of which are equally applicable to airports, hotels, stations and places of public concourse, also need to be standardised. In an effort at least to begin the research necessary to do this, ICOGRADA started a student project at the end of last year in which graphic students in approximately 650 design schools throughout the world are working on a vocabulary of symbols for basic pieces of information (entrance, exit, no smoking, danger, hospitals, police, etc.) which are unequivocal, immediate and non-linguistic. The project's results will be assessed and announced at ICOGRADA's second international conference at Ljubljana Yugoslavia, in June next year.

ICOGRADA's lead, and the efforts to get some form of communication between designers working on pictograms for the World Fair in 1967 and the Olympic Games in 1968, show what is needed - namely, as ICOGRADA itself says, that first, existing and projected schemes should be considered as experimental research directed towards a fully integrated, rational and international system, and second that the final result - i.e. international sign language cannot be achieved arbitrarily but must be based on a design analysis involving graphic research, social and psychological study, and an historical examination of the basis of visual communication. ICOGRADA suggested that a study team should be set up to co-ordinate work in this field and eventually settle the question of what pictograms should be adopted. The International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (CSID) and the International Union of Architects (UIA) have associated themselves with these proposals. In the meantime, we also hope that the UIC pictograms will remain an experiment. The trouble is that once signs, including the not-so-good and the bad, are adopted, they are mighty difficult to change.

The first three rows above show six pairs of pictograms. In each pair, the pictogram adopted by British Rail is on the left and its UIC counterpart on the right. The only complete change is the substitution of a cup and saucer of wine glass as the symbol for 'buffet'. The bottom row shows, left to right, UIC pictograms for telegraph, pharmacy, ventilation control and sleeper reservation. They are crude, and the pictogram for sleeper reservation is particularly badly designed, and should not need a word to support it.

End of Article.

The most significant words in the whole article are the few last words, which criticise a picture of a bed in two variations, the first showing a big R on top, and the second showing the word RESERVATION underneath.

To this the Icograda apostles write:

"The pictogram for sleeper reservation is particularly badly designed, and should not need a word to support it."

As you see, they cling to the belief that no words should be put under pictures which may help travellers to understand the symbol.

And the result? TODAY MORE THAN 6 YEARS LATER THE ICOGRADA GENIUSES HAVE NOT EVOLVED A BETTER SYMBOL, EXCEPT THOSE DREARY 24 SYMBOLS DESIGNED BY SOME STUDENTS, AND NO SYMBOL FOR RESERVATION AMONG THEM AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE LIST OF THE 24 SYMBOLS WANTED FOR THE STUDENTS COMPETITION (see the first reprint on previous pages about the Student Project I).

And then I poured my heart out, and wrote a gushing letter full of hope, full of determination to convince the Icograda men that I have solved the problem. The fool I was. If I have solved the problem, then the Icograda men have no hope to get half a million dollars. Here I go in 6 closely written pages.

W.M. de Majo, Esq.,
President

Sydney 2 Jan 66

International Council of Graphic Design Associations (Icograda)
33 Jubilee Place London S.W. 3 Great Britain.

Dear Mr. de Majo,

Many thanks for your kind and friendly letter of December 8, and for the printed information papers which I have studied carefully. Every paragraph of your letter, and everyone of your papers is trenchment with new thoughts, the same thoughts which I have thought for more than 23 years for all my days, and even nights, and you can imagine what it means to see these thoughts now working also in other minds. It is a wonderful reward for an old man, who for many years has been considered even by his so-called best friends as nothing more than a good-natured crank. Alas, my good wife and co-worker cannot see your kind words. It would have been the best medicine for her, who went into despondency and death when she saw the

treatment meted out to me by the high and mighty in UNO, UNESCO, and in the hallowed halls of the great seats of learning. I couldn't unseat their thoughts.

The delay in answering your kind letter is explained by the fact that I have to make a living in other spheres, and that I felt that I must think about the answer to you and your co-workers. Because you all are at present for me the most important people in the world. If I can convince you of the truth in my thoughts, and if I can warn you of the traps in which I fell year after year, we could proceed to make this idea a working reality for the peoples of this world.

In the meantime, however, I have posted to you my new book, the second edition. It has left Sydney with a steamer on December 30, and should therefore be in your hands in the beginning of February. In the meantime, I shall send you a mimeographed paper in which I am going to deal with the special items of your papers referring to your work on an international symbol language. I feel that you should read this, before seeing my book. It is a heavy tome of 882 pages, and the very first thought of everyone who (for one reason or another) is antagonistic to my work, is: "Good Heavens, who is going to read all this?" And with this, he will dismiss all my work. Indeed - he is right - if he thinks that all we need are pictorial symbols for ENTRANCE, EXIT, NO SMOKING, etc. But how about this sign which is the most important item to be displayed in all hotel rooms, most important to all hotel managers the world over:

NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR VALUABLES LEFT IN THE ROOM

How can you picture the meaning of "valuables"? Give this word to your students and watch how they will try hopefully (but hopelessly) to depict in beautiful designs diamond watches and rings, bracelets, pearl necklaces and tiaras and money. But there are other valuables, a mink coat, a pack of love letters, a manuscript, or a contract. How to picture these?

However, all these things mentioned before under the general name as "valuables" are (according to my simple rules of my symbolic logic) material THINGS. They consist of MATTER, and hence they can be seen, and can be pictured. But how about the more important meaning of RESPONSIBILITY? The largest telescope, and the finest microscope cannot find this unpicturable meaning. Hence your students would be utterly unable to draw up a design conveying this. And yet, as said before, every hotel manager will tell you that this is for him the most important meaning he wants to have displayed in all his hotel rooms, so that it can be read and understood in all languages.

In my paper, which I am going to send to you in say 1 to 2 weeks I shall show you my symbol for RESPONSIBILITY. Would you believe it when I say here, that the symbol does not take up more space than this capital letter R? Would you believe it that it can be explained to a child of say 5 years? Would you believe it that it contains not more than 3 lines, being 3 symbol elements, two of which are already known and used by everyone, including every boy and girl? And would you believe it that it contains also the meanings of "egotism" and "altruism", because it directly "depicts" the egotism of the hotel manager, but also his altruism? He maintains a service for his guests which contains for him great risks. He asks the guest to deposit the valuables with him. He gives them a receipt. And he must maintain a heavy safe with all safety precautions, must carry heavy insurance, because he is responsible for any loss should a burglar break into his safe. And all this service is gratis, free of charge, for his guests. This is altruism, and this is depicted by my symbol. But my symbol goes even further. It can be applied to the responsibility a father and mother have towards their children, and towards their fellowmen.

But the semantics, logic and ethics of this my symbol goes even further. It implies the thoughtlessness of the guests who leave valuables lying around. It implies the managerial reasoning of the manager to take care of that thoughtlessness, and even implies his conscience. And all in 3 lines - unbelievable but true, as you will soon see for yourself.

Once you come to think of such meanings, and once you are faced with the task to picture them in a simple symbol language which can be read in all languages, you must realise that there is something which goes far beyond any language on earth. I started like you are starting just now - with simple picturable symbols for ENTRANCE, EXIT, NO SMOKING, etc. But I soon faced an impass when I thought of all the words in all the languages which defy symbolisation in pictures. I am a research chemist, and I was employed as a trouble shooter in a factory making electronic equipment. I am trained to think strange thoughts, and I have shown that I was not afraid to tackle the most difficult problem given to me - and solve it, to my own satisfaction and that of my employer.

Why do I say all this? Why do I write long letters to you, and to the men who work in the International Committee for breaking the language barrier? Because I want to overcome the feeling of antagonism which must creep up in everyone of you, who hears that a chap in down-under Australia has done it already.

This is a terrible thought. Being a research chemist I tell you that innumerable tragedies occur almost daily in innumerable research laboratories where men, engaged in a new work, suddenly read in a scientific journal that someone somewhere else has done it already. There is a paragraph in your letter dear Mr. deMajo, which is grim foreboding for me, because I have seen the same thing in many other letters of other people, who are trying to convince themselves that Mr. Bliss' work is full of faults and failures. Everyone, engaged in similar work, just don't want to admit that someone has done it already. It is a very human reaction.

All I want from you is the magnanimity of heart to give me a chance, to study my work with an open mind, and to be ready to admit that I have gone further than any other man in this quest. Can you say "Come on, Bliss buddy, pal, mate, come into our arms! You have done it. Good on you! Now we will take your work up and convey it to the world. We will say it in conferences and congresses, and we will instill into the peoples of this world the enthusiasm we feel about your symbols, and about the semantics, logic and ethics they contain!"

If you can do this, then all will be well with your plans, and you can go ahead with conferences and congresses because now you have a far greater message to convey than the 24 meanings only. Educators in Great Britain have made private tests with children, and they reported that children are "thrilled and fascinated" by the simplicity, the beauty, the semantics, the logic, and the ethics contained in my symbols. At present, two school teachers are engaged in working on two little booklets for children of 5 to 8 years of age, booklets with the titles "LET'S PLAY WITH BLISSYMBOLS" and "LET'S WRITE IN BLISSYMBOLS".

And here is a plan how you and all the students of all the art schools can join in the propagation of a truly "international symbol language". I give my copyrights free to any nation for use, provided the meaning of the symbols displayed in the roads, the buses, ships, trains, airplanes, etc. etc. carry the word in the native language underneath, in exactly the same way as today warning signs on the roads carry the native word underneath. Beneath a bent arrow we see the word CURVE, so that motorists learn the meaning of the symbol, and recognise it when in other countries where the same meaning in the other language is printed underneath the same international symbol. But this would not be enough for more complex meanings. It would be necessary to put a line or two in small print underneath the main word, explaining in an artfully designed picture the meaning of the symbol element or elements in the native language. The same artfully designed pictures of my symbol elements can be printed in folders available in all travel bureaus, all hotels, all restaurants which carry on for an international public (yes, I have also an international menu card in pictorial symbols), and elsewhere.

Even the word "responsibility" and other complex unpicturable meanings can be pictured with my pictorial symbols, because I have fulfilled the prophecy of the great mathematician Leibnitz who dreamed 300 years ago about the idea of which he said:

"A Universal Symbolism, very popular, very agreeable to the people, might be introduced if small figures were employed in the place of words, which would represent visible things by their lines, and the invisible, by the visible, which accompany them. I think these thoughts will some day be carried out, so agreeable and natural appears to me this writing for rendering our conceptions more real."

Here Gentlemen, is your task for all the artschools of the world, let them design artistic pictures for the visible things which are expressed in my symbols, and for the visible which accompany the invisible meanings such as responsibility. Let them design little folders and booklets which will be greeted with joy not only by travellers, but by the children of all nations.

More than 15 years ago, Professor Oliver L. Reiser of the University of Pittsburgh (one of the few scholars, who like Bertrand Russell really studied my 3 volumes) said in a lecture to the American Association for the Advancement of Science:

"Bliss realised the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz."

I thought it would create a stir. After all, an idea which for 300 years has been considered "impossible to realise" by professional logicians, linguists and mathematicians, has at last been realised. But the professionals refused to even look into my books. Why? After thousands of approaches to thousands of professional professors I have found out the reasons, and here are only two of them.

First, who in hell is Mr. Bliss? Is he a professional linguist, logician, mathematician or what? He has a university degree in chemistry, so "Cobbler stick to your last!" and let off other fields of study and research.

But the second objection is even worse. Had I written a scholarly "paper" showing in hair-raising abstract formulas and symbols my symbolic logic, all would have been well. That is, all they would have done is to file dutifully my paper in their libraries, and forget about it, without even reading it.

But I have committed a crime unforgiveable by professional scientists. I have drawn up symbols, and developed a symbolic logic which even children of 5 years of age can grasp and employ in their daily troubles. In short, I have indulged what is contentiously called by them "popular science". It is not popular with the scientists to be popular in science.

Why have I done this? Because I am an industrial engineer, a practical man who manufactured practical things for all the people to use. Because I had to talk to my factory girls, and explain to them what happens within a radio valve, what the electrons are doing, and what the ions are spoiling, and why therefore they had to look at the McLeod vacuum gauge very carefully in order to drive out all the mischievous ions, and molecules, and why they had to do this and that. In short, I had to use simple language. And when embarking on a symbol language I know I had to devise symbols which even children will easily grasp.

And now when approaching you, some of you may ask: "Who in hell is Mr. Bliss? Is he a commercial artists, a graphic designer, or what? And therefore let me end this overlong letter by proving to you that I AM ONE OF YOURS, Gentlemen!

I won a diploma in an artistic competition at the age of 8. In the highschool I was best in my class in drawing and painting, in geometry and projective geometry, and Cartesian geometry, but also in chemistry and physics. All my life I was intensely interested in art. At the university I studied also at the Graphische Versuchs und Lehranstalt in Vienna. I roamed the countries of Europe and studied in their art galleries. I could travel for hundreds of miles just to get the impact of a cathedral, or just one painting in the local art gallery. In later years I indulged in making artistic movies and they were shown to audiences in overcrowded auditoriums. Indeed, the thousands of pounds which I poured into my work on symbols I earned as a professional moviemaker, when I could not find work during the war in my own profession.

Why then did I not become a professional artist? Because 60 years ago when I was a boy the words "nation-wide advertising" and "commercial artist" just didn't exist. All I knew of professional painters and artists is that they lived in garrets and died in gutters. And this holds true even with the greatest of them, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. How they were tormented by their "benefactors" who refused them payment for years. Leonardo had to make a living as a fortification engineer. And poor Michelangelo? Just look at his self-portrait in the Uffizi in Florence. Have you ever seen a face more tormented by misery and desperation than his? And look how they treat his self-portrait. It hangs with other pictures of other artists in one room. In Dresden they have given a small room to Raffael's Sixtine Madonna to be viewed alone, not cramped up with other paintings. Why haven't they honoured Michelangelo in the same way? People by the millions visit the Sixtine chapel in Rome, and gape in wonder at the work which literally almost broke his back, and of which Goethe said that it is unbelievable that one man has done it. Why then haven't they made a shrine of Michelangelo's self-portrait? Is it because the face of Michelangelo cries out against the injustice done to most great men when they were still alive? Do the professors of art, and the experts of art want to hide the fact that right now in our time there are pioneers of new ideas and new work in art who have to go a-begging just to keep alive?

And this is the task which I have taken on, and which I am carrying through as only a practical engineer can do it. I am working to show to mankind that mankind's best sons, the pioneers of new ideas, are treated worse than the worst criminal. A criminal gets a cell, all the food he needs, all the shirts, socks, trousers, etc. and completely gratis. But a pioneer of new ideas who has committed the crime of a creative idea is condemned by the very men who should take him to their heart, the professors and the experts who work in the same field. They drive him into debt, desperation and untimely death.

In my other forthcoming book you will see in a graphic design the difference between a "crank" and a "pioneer". It is only a small difference and shown in geometrical design form. It is a difference of 6 feet only, 6 feet above or below ground. Only when the crank is dead, only then is he proclaimed a pioneer. Only then is he exhumed, extolled and exploited. But he must be dead first.

More than 15 years ago Bertrand Russell exhorted all men to support with money the publication of my work. He said "any man or men who will spend the money to get this work printed will, in my opinion, be performing an important service to mankind." Lord Russell knew what he was saying. He had approached the London publishers of Allen, Unwin & Co. with a proposal to publish my work. They are publisher-specialists in all books on language. But they turned Lord Russell and me down. This is not yet a profit-making proposition to publishers. And hence Russell exhorted the philanthropes. And I sent out thousands of letters with Russell's words to thousands of men in the universities, in the schools, in the education departments, and in the scientific foundations. And the result: I DIDN'T GET A PENNY, though my letters were polite and pleading.

Now, I had to mortgage my home in order to get my work printed. Now, suppose I ask you, all officers of Icograda, to buy one copy for your private library. Suppose I ask you to exhort and to press upon all graphic design associations united in Icograda to buy one copy, and be it only for relieving the gloomy spectre of a foreclosed mortgage from my worried head. Will you do it? If you will, I shall bless you all. But I have little hope.

For one and a half years I implored the "executive director" of the international committee for breaking the language barrier to go to the Public Library of New York, or to Columbia University, and to take a look into my first mimeographed edition of my 3 volumes, just to convince himself that I have done already the work for which he is now paid a salary. And hence, he found false counter-arguments for his stand, counter-arguments with which I am going to deal in my forthcoming paper, because other people who are in the same position voice similar arguments just to prove to themselves, that Mr. Bliss is wrong.

People are spending many millions for charities, millions which are used first and foremost to pay the salaries of the charity workers. Now here is a charity worthwhile spending money on, helping a new idea and its pioneer. But there is a hitch. Giving money for my work is not a tax deduction. It may be one in 50 years time when mankind will realise that my work is "educational". But at present it is little more than lunatical.

However, there is a group of people who have no ax to grind, and for whom I am no threat whatever. They are the librarians of the great university and public libraries. Some of them have taken my work to their heart, have realised that my work is far ahead of this time, and that it should be preserved for the coming generations. But these librarians went even further. They have given me a standing order to send them all my future writings, and be it even typewritten. Thus by their instigation my Semantography Series came about. This letter to you is a desperate plea for help - not me, but this idea. If you will help, then you will prolong my life. I would see that you are actively engaged in fostering this idea. If you will turn me down, then you will actively shorten my life. In other words this long letter is for me a matter of life and death, and I am writing it out of my heart. I am writing it also because it will become an issue of my Semantography Series, together with my forthcoming paper.

When you will hold my book in your hands you will see the thousands of drawings I have made with my own hand, as a true graphic designer, one of your fraternity. I beg you to realise that I have drawn these thousands of drawings on the most exasperating drawing surface any designer had ever to face, the soft wax of the stencils for duplicating machines. Look at the professional designers employed by Gestetner, Hallam, Roneo, and other manufacturers of such stencils. Look at their work, and then realise that I am a designer too, one of your fraternity.

When you look into my book, when you will see my drawings, and my thoughts, you may wonder as I am wondering when I look at this all. Who guided my hand when designing my symbols? Who guided my thoughts when writing all this? In the EPILOGUE to the second edition, beginning on page 609 I pose this question in the title to "WHOM" DO WE OWE THIS WORK? And I answer it: NOT TO ME. My mind is only the vessel into which the ethical power which pervades this universe has planted the seed of a new idea which can help humanity. Now, I hope that the ethical power working in your mind will overcome any feeling of jealousy and that you will respond to it.

In one of your papers sent to me there are photographs of all the officers of Icograda. The pictures of your faces are most heartening to me, because they all show men of vision, openhearted and friendly. I wish I had a picture of Mr. Kneebone, because he is the man who guides the student project on a symbol language. At present, I must be for him the most disturbing person in the whole world, a direct threat to all his hopes and ambitions of competitions, conferences, and congresses. I have written this letter also to you dear Mr. Kneebone. I want desperately to convince you that with my work, all your ambitions can be fulfilled in a way of which you have never dreamt of. In your hands now is the possibility to tell all the students of all the art schools that here is a student project which will enrapture their hearts and fire their imagination to do great designs for it. And in this hope, I close my overlong letter, and beg to forgive me of having taken up so much of your valuable time. I am thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

P.S. Don't answer this letter - yet. Wait for my paper and my book.

Three days later I sent off a second letter. My book had been sent before by surface mail.

W.M. de Majo, Esq.,
President,

International Council for Graphic Design Associations (Icograda)
33 Jubilee Place, London S.W. 3 Great Britain.

Dear Mr. de Majo,

5 January 1966

Many thanks for your kind letter and for all the papers. I have not written to you, though knowing of the existence of your council and your interest in symbols for half a year. The reason is that I was reluctant to suffer another heartbreak, such as I have suffered so many times in the past when approaching people. Now I have your papers in my hand, and I see that your council is now where I was more than 23 years ago. You believe that it is possible to draw up graphic designs which would tell anyone at the first glance what is meant. This may be so with a few, very few meanings, but it is impossible with many other meanings needed in international travel, etc. etc.

I felt therefore I had to write to you a long letter, explaining this position. And once I started I felt I had to seek some personal contact. I had to tell you about my work and my person. When all was said I found I had written 6 pages. But better more than less said. I want to have you as friends, not competitors.

Unfortunately I could make only 2 copies, whereas you have sent 3 copies to 3 of your co-workers. I am sure you have a copying machine at hand, and you can make more copies for anyone interested in what I have to say. Meanwhile you will receive a paper written by me about the problems you are facing, and then my book. I posted it on the 30th December by surface mail, and it should be in your hands at the beginning of February. My long letter is also a preparation for you to be conditioned beforehand before you see my book.

Nothing more for today than my best wishes for a Happy New Year to you and your family, and to all the officers of Icograda. I am,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

Then I wrote a special issue of my Semantography Series No. 250 entitled IS IT POSSIBLE TO DESIGN SYMBOLS WHICH CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AT FIRST GLANCE?

No, I said, and proved that even the "self-explanatory" arrow is not "self explanatory" at all. It takes little children years until they perceive that the oblong arrow is always accompanied by words as TO THE EXIT, TO THE TOILETS, and until they see that sometimes these words are accompanied by a picture of a hand with the index finger pointing in the same direction as the arrow does. Only then does the arrow symbol become "self-explanatory" but not before.

I sent off this new issue S.S. 250 printed on January 13, 1966 with the following words to the following organisations:

A letter and an Appeal, and a Demonstration to the men engaged in the designing of pictorial symbols, and working in the various organisations, notably Icograda, International Council of graphic design Associations, Europe International Committee for breaking the Language Barrier, New York Union International des Chemins de Fer, International Union of Railways, Paris British Railways London

International Olympic Games Committee, Montreal World Fair, 1967

E.P.F., I.S.O., IM CO., and the others of over 300 organisations.

I had no idea which 300 organisations are meant, but these words "300 organisations" appear in the outpourings of another "Symbols for Money Seeker" Mr. Soichi Kato Director of the International Committee for breaking the Language Barrier, mentioned above. The other sorry story of Soichi Kato is told in S.S. 237 which please see. Herebelow is my letter to

Dear Mr. de Majo,

27 Jan 66

I hope you have received my long letter of January 2nd, accompanying short letter of January 5th and perhaps also my book. If it has not arrived, it should not be long in coming. I hope also that you have received the impression from my long outpourings that I want desperately to have you as my friends, not as my competitors. If there was a bit of bitterness in one or another paragraph, I'm sure you understand the bitterness which has filled me throughout the last 23 years, when I saw that the men actively engaged in designing symbols, the road safety authorities, have treated me very badly, though I told them time and again that I don't want a penny, nor a post, nor recognition, but only that my symbols be used for the benefit of mankind.

Together with this airletter, I am despatching to you under airmail second class, copies of my promised paper which carries the title IS IT POSSIBLE TO DESIGN PICTORIAL SYMBOLS WHICH CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AT THE FIRST GLANCE? Whatever kind words they are, please consider them directed towards you and your co-workers. The bitter words are directed to the New York Committee for breaking the Language Barrier. They treated me shamefully. Somehow, justice has been done, because I was informed a few days ago that the committee for breaking has broken up at last. A new organisation has been constituted under the name of "Symbols for Intercultural Communication, Inc." You may know about this organisation because a competition of symbols will be held in the fall of 1966 in New York. They have invited artists, designers and others to present the same amount as the 24 meanings in your competition. I am sure that your organisation will submit the winning entries

of your competition. I have been invited to attend and to submit my proposals. As far as I can see, my exhibition is quite different from the intended competition, because I operate with basic symbol elements, which I combine to any compound meaning needed.

I want very much to be in New York and "to present my work to the world" as the organisers wrote. But I don't know how to raise my travel expenses. In your letter of December 8th you wrote that your financial means are very limited, and all the work of your organisation is carried out entirely on a voluntary basis. In your press release 1965/2 you wrote about the financial requirements for your commission of international signs and symbols, and that you are trying to collect for the 1st and 2nd year \$30,000 - \$50,000 and for the 3rd year \$100,000, rising to \$300,000. I hope that you have been able to get some money already. If so, may I ask you and your co-workers whether there is any possibility to give me a grant for my travelling expenses. As I said in a previous letter, helping me with money is a charitable act, because you are helping a pioneering work which is of great benefit to mankind, as Bertrand Russell said sixteen years ago. Will you help me? I hope you will. In this hope I greet you all and remain,

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

I received the following lengthy letter. It contains very well-meaning words, which however were made meaningless by the action later taken not for, but against my work.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

February 8th, 1966

Thank you for your letter of January 27th. I had not answered your letter of January 2nd because you had suggested that I should await arrival of your book which so far has not yet been received.

I have sent copies of your letters and material to all our Board Members as well as to Mr. Peter Kneebone and some members of the ICOGRADA Commission on International Signs and Symbols. I have forwarded some of your documentation also to Mr. Wrolstead, the Editor of the New American Journal of Typographic Research as he intends to cover such allied fields as Semiotics.

It will take some time before we can give you a considered opinion, as I feel we must study very carefully your work before reaching any conclusions. Even to skim through an 800 page document would take some time, and we want to try to do it justice. In addition to our regular professional work and the many wide-spread activities of ICOGRADA, we have to study a large number of other documents. All this work has to be carried out on an honorary basis.

We agree that your story is a very sad one. This, alas, is often the case with the work of truly creative people and innovators. At the moment we cannot yet see whether and how we can help, beyond offering to do everything possible to study and consider your proposals and bring them to the notice of the various people who, we feel, should be more familiar with them.

Apart from the fact that we are a young organisation and that our financial resources are as you know, extremely limited, the problem is so complex that there will have to be so much thought and work before one can even begin to create order out of the present chaos. We are trying to see how we can best achieve co-ordination of the various efforts, many of which are quite genuine and serious. We appreciate your kind comments and understand the problems which you have with the ICBLB and others.

We know that to some extent the title of our Student Project I is a misnomer but it was intended only to start the ball rolling. It has certainly highlighted the important complex problems which we have to try to solve, internationally, if we are to make a positive contribution.

There were many sound reasons why we asked, in the first instance, only for 24 symbols. You will appreciate that this represented not only an international research project but also an international educational project. The Student Project should not be confused with our whole signs and symbols work, although it forms a part of it.

To have set more than 24 subjects would have been unrealistic in terms of sheer physical practicality - particularly as we asked for development in black and white and in colour, in large and small sizes, and in two and three dimensions. These questions were fundamental to the problem of successful application for all purposes.

However, the 24 subjects, excluding the sort that have now become accepted internationally as road signs, covered information, direction and instruction. They were chosen so as to give students the opportunity to evolve a visual system capable of logical extension throughout the field of public utility.

After the ICOGRADA Student Project was launched in 1964 we were made aware of the UIC work on pictograms. While we do not agree with many of the methods and results of the UIC, we have attended two international meetings in Paris called by the UIC during the past eight months and, at last, we seem to be establishing the possibility of closer co-operation and a sensible approach to

research and development with the collaboration of the interested bodies in the field of tourism.

We have, moreover, made it quite clear that the problems in this field are an integral part of the overall problem of visual communication in all fields.

As we see it, our present work, and certainly our future work, is in no way a contradiction or a duplication of your efforts. The purpose of our less ambitious initial symbol project is slightly different in approach to your much more comprehensive and complex system. The aim of our system is to give, if possible, easily recognisable information, the bulk of which should be self explanatory and does not need to be 'taught' or learned, at least not to the extent of the new learning needed with your system.

One of the biggest problems is time, and most commercial or tourist organisations and enterprises say they have no time, but must have something which works reasonably well and can be introduced almost 'at once' and improved on as one goes along. So we hope that a better "sign and symbol" system can be worked out, at least to give an interim acceptable solution.

Alongside these efforts, which need badly to be co-ordinated as so many organisations have suddenly realised the need to communicate rapidly without ambiguity, we are studying as a long term project, all the very complex problems and research results which need to be investigated before one can come even to preliminary conclusions.

Thus, believe me if I say there is no jealousy on our part. As long as we can help to find and get accepted a practical solution in the long run, we clearly don't mind whose it is. Our job is not to "sell" a solution, but to help to find one.

We understand your bitterness and greatly respect your endeavours. Much of what you say is most pertinent and well reasoned, but I feel that not much is achieved by quoting, and sometimes out of context, for instance a paragraph from our rules and regulations or extracts from correspondence. This can often lead to further misunderstanding.

It is because, as you point out, that an arrow means something different to various people (which applies equally to many other symbols) that we have always stressed that before these problems can be solved, research in depth and over an extended period must be carried out. On first impact, even many of your signs are either not clear, easily understood, or mean different things to different people and assume that the person viewing and interpreting them can read and write.

I need not bore you with statistical data, as you know that a large proportion of the people throughout the world are illiterate.

We feel that, if possible, we must search in the first instance, to find a way by which they can understand well whatever system we may propose: and before we can even consider what to do, we must make quite sure, through research, that we select the most suitable of all the many approaches. The ICOGRADA 1966 Congress, where "Breaking the Language Barrier through Signs and Symbols" will be one of the main themes, should help us to clarify the problems.

We were most interested in your comments regarding ICBLB and the supposed new organisation about which we have not yet heard: I have written to Mr. Kato in the hope of finding out more about it. We have told him that we do not think it advisable to hold the proposed exhibition at such short notice, if it is to serve a useful purpose, and that we shall want to receive detailed proposals, as to its purpose, operation, etc., before we could consider co-sponsorship.

With regard to your request as to whether we could help finance your trip, I am very sorry to have to say that we have absolutely no funds for such a purpose.

While, as you saw from our Exposé, we are trying to raise much needed funds to help us pay for even such elementary items as postage, administration, etc. so far as we have not had any major response to our financial appeal. Like yourself, apart from a very small nominal budget allocated from ICOGRADA's meagre main funds for postage, all our travelling and practically all our translation, duplication and secretarial work, are carried by the voluntary efforts of a few enthusiasts. It will be some time before we can hope to raise sufficient funds to enable us to do our work on a proper everyday-routine basis.

There are some foundations in America, and no doubt even in Australia, who make funds available for travelling purposes but it is difficult to know which one could find the right pigeon hole for your application.

Finally for your information:

We have been invited by the ICC and IUOTO to organise a special session on the problem of Tourist Pictograms in connection with their General Conference on Tourism during March/April, at which we shall underline the importance of co-operation, co-ordination and research. We are also hoping to hold a special conference in the Autumn to which representatives would be invited from all kinds of International Organisations interested in solving the problems of signs and symbols for every category of use - not only for tourism. Your approach to the whole question must clearly be studied carefully in this context.

With kindest regards and the hope that 1966 will be a year when a better understanding can be achieved by all concerned with the problems which are so dear to our hearts.

c.c. Wim Crouwel
Peter Kneebone
Gilbert Cohen-Seat

Yours sincerely,
W.M. de Majo
President

P.S. By separate mail I am sending you a copy (alas, a slightly badly printed one) of some thoughts by Maximilian Vox for a "Language Silencieux" which you may find of interest.

This article by Maximilian Vox "The Silent Language" contains such interesting symbols that I have decided to make it a separate issue of my S.S. No. 370. I answered de Majo

Dear Mr. de Majo,

15 Feb 66

Just received your kind letter of February 8th and wish to thank you for your detailed and most sympathetic answer. My thanks also for distributing my letters to the officers of your organisation and for your kind promise to convey information about my work to the other organisations. In this respect, I would be much obliged if you could kindly give me the addresses, and if possible, the name of the person in charge of pictograms, of the following organisations:

U I C, I C C, I U O T O and possibly other organisations.

I want to write to them if only for nothing more than offering my book for purchase. Please take my sincere thanks for this information, and, if possible, answer by return. Allow me to enclose international postal coupons to cover your mailing expenses. An airletter will do.

As to the contents of your kind letter and to the various activities you are planning, allow me to make the following comments:

1. I'm most grateful to you all for your determination to study my work in order to do it justice. But please don't waste your valuable time by reading the many chapters which have nothing to do with pictograms for practical purposes.
2. I understand fully your explanation as to why you decided at first on only 24 symbols for your student project. So far this is more than the new organisation "Symbols for International Communication, Inc." of New York, intends to work on (20 symbols only). And more than the few symbols so far chosen by the U.I.C. and the B.R. I understand fully why all these organisations have limited themselves to meanings which can easily be pictured.
3. You are surely aware of the fact that once certain symbols have been agreed upon and printed and painted by the thousands in the thousands of railway stations, etc. that it will be impossible to convince any bureaucrat that it will be better to scrap them all and replace them by better symbols. Apart from the budgetary cost involved, once an official has agreed upon a certain action, it will be almost impossible to convince him that what he has done is not good. Certainly, an organisation like yours can only advise, can never exert any pressure, nor overrule any official decision. International agreement would certainly do this, but even in this respect local officialdom loathe to comply with some international decision taken in Geneva, Paris, New York or anywhere else.

More than 30 years ago the former League of Nations developed a series of very good pictorial road warning signs, but to this very day the majority of states have not ratified and not adopted these pictorial symbols.

4. It was just this thought which prompted me to work out a comprehensive system of basic pictorial symbol elements which can be used in combination to express every meaning needed in rail and road, shipping and air, hotel and business communication. Nothing like this has ever been invented before.

5. But the most important advantage of my elements is that they can be typed on a typewriter of ordinary size, as for instance the new IBM ball typewriter. Equally well, they can be printed especially by the modern photo-offset process now increasingly used for all printing. Just imagine a ticket for a stadium. It must contain pictorial symbols indicating the gate, the balcony, the rows and the seat. Only my pictorial symbols which are reduced to the barest minimum of lines can be used for printing all this on a small ticket.

6. Lastly, the main counter argument against my symbols is that it cannot be immediately understood because they are often a combination of a few elements. But just think of any notice in public telephone booths and other public conveniences. There is usually one or two bigger words followed by a few lines in finer print. In my case only one small line underneath the big symbol is necessary. For instance my compound symbol for telephone will be explained in the small line underneath showing the mouth symbol for speech, the ear for listening and the zig zag lightning line for electricity. This small line can be done in real pictures of an ear, a mouth and a lightning bolt. In my first letter I suggested that your student project could be extended in a second competition for choosing the best of such little pictures.

This is all I have to say and I ask you all to kindly keep those thoughts in

mind when you discuss the forthcoming symbols with officials in Paris and elsewhere. I renew my plea and suggestion that some of your officers acquire my book to the reduced library price of \$9. After all, every person buys books, some to read, some to be looked up for references, and some never to be read at all. I'm sure that my book when available in the homes of your officers, will help you all to learn about, and to recognise the value of my comprehensive system of symbols.

I close now my letter asking you again to send me if possible by return the addresses of the afore-mentioned organisations and the names of the officials in charge of symbols. I shall then wait until I have received your final comment on my work.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

P.S. Many thanks for the article about Maximillian Vox "Language Silencieur". The symbols shown are mostly a repetition of Indian, Eskimo and other picture writings. See p. 232 in my book, where I quote from Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha" who gave the American Indians a picture writing. You will find there the description of some of Maximillian Vox symbols. Other symbols for modern meanings are equally primitive.

End of letter.

In due course I received the CONGRESS INFORMATION NO. I about the Icograda Congress on Signs and Symbols to be held in Yugoslavia in July 1966. I quote from this 6 pages leaflet those items which are most important as far as I am concerned.

Congress Main Theme: "Graphic Design + Visual Communication Technology".

Main Speakers: Professor Dr. R. Buckminster Fuller (Southern Illinois University)
Dr. Thomas Maldonado, Rector of the German Hochschule fuer
Gestaltung (University of Design) in Ulm Germany.

Peter Kneebone, Chairman of the Icograda Student Project I, London

These 3 men have some meaning for me. Buckminster Fuller, the designer of those geodesic domes, and the well known philosopher, with whom I had a most satisfying correspondence in which he said: "You have done some extraordinary fundamental thinking." I am going to make a special issue of my Series of our correspondence.

Maldonado bought my book for the library of the university, but did not answer my letter, which is reprinted in this issue. Peter Kneebone too did not answer my letter reprinted in this issue, and caused me to write some very bitter letters to Icograda (reprinted in later pages). However, when he approached me in 1969 to write an article for the magazine PRINT I mollified, and when I heard that he is suffering tuberculosis I offered him to secure an entry permit and accomodation in Australia, and urged him to come to this sunny land where he will regain his health. I now continue to quote from the Congress programme: Tuesday the 12th July is devoted to discussion on "signs and symbols."
Speakers will be Masuru Katsumie Japan, Josef Mueller-Brockman, Switzerland, and Hans Weckerle, Germany.

Katsumie did not answer my letter. I wrote to Mueller-Brockman with the same negative result. I wrote to Weckerle and got no answer. These designers have designed a few symbols, but none of them has designed anything coming near a consistent system of symbols.

I then received a very long letter from de Majo in which he thought it wise to give me some advice that I am too emotional, too this and too that "it will take some time before any one of us can hope even partially to study your book".

This was ominous, because de Majo wrote in the end that they haven't studied it at all, but reject my symbols altogether. This was a very heavy blow, but at the time of de Majo's letter quoted below I was still very hopeful that Icograda will recognise my major contribution and will support it.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

March 7th 1966

Thank you for your letter of February 15th.

As requested, attached is a list of people in the various organisations who might be interested in your book. May I though, offer some advice without in any way meaning to offend you.

When writing to these people you are welcome to mention that you "have received their name and address through ICOGRADA who have a copy of your book which they are now studying, and who thought that you might be interested in obtaining a copy for your library".

I would ask you, however, not to quote us in any other way whatsoever and advise you to keep your letter as brief and factual as possible.

Having myself spent several years in Vienna, in fact I was partly educated there, I feel that I can speak to you frankly and with some friendly understanding. It occurs to me that one of the reasons why you appear to have problems in getting through to ^{various} organisations and making them understand you, is that some of your letters are very long and emotional (which of course is understandable in view

of the great problems which you have encountered over the years) and often somewhat "aggressive".

From my work in Icoграда and other organisations, I realise that one has to be persistent if one wishes to see one's ideas materialise. At the same time other people have their problems and their points of view and sometimes by pushing a little less hard and using less emphasis, they may be more willing to listen and to come round to one's own point of view - after a little while. Serious work presented over-emphatically can sometimes appear, quite unjustly, amateurish.

Your book has now arrived safely and it is a very impressive piece of work. As already indicated, it will take some time before any one of us can hope even partially to study your book and assimilate the great amount of thought and material which it contains. So please do not be disappointed if you don't hear from us for some months about it.

We will meanwhile continue to bring your work to the notice of various people who we think should know about it. We have made reference to it already in some of our reports and Peter Kneebone will also mention it in some of his lectures and writings, including his reports to the second ICOGRADA Congress in Bled. In case I have not done so before, I am sending you some information on this by separate mail.

Symbols for Intercultural Communication, Inc.

While we have not yet received more full details about the aims and purposes of this new organisation, nor do we know who the members are, I understand from Mr. Kato that they are an entirely new organisation, (unless he has got them confused ^{with} the Glyphs Inc., New York, another organisation across whom we have come recently and who are inviting designs for 5 glyphs from a list of 20 for an exhibition. Their address is C/- Michael Lax Associates, 1311 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028.)

some of whose members were originally on one of his committees.

Incidentally, Mr. Kato's Committee is far from disbanded and, in his own way, he is proceeding with his work as enthusiastically as ever. In spite of the bad experience which you have apparently had with him and some complications which we have encountered, we are trying to see whether and how we can co-operate with him and channel his enthusiasm into what we consider to be the most useful directions. For your information, at the January UIC Meeting in Paris, which Mr. Kneebone and I attended, the UIC presented three lists. List A contains all the symbols which they have already introduced experimentally. List B contains pictograms which they feel they must introduce as soon as possible and on which they are working at present. List C, the longest list, is based on the "survey" made by Mr. Kato's Committee. They have now agreed that the pictograms for this list should be worked out by an enlarged International Committee. We hope that ICOGRADA will be able to help raise the standard of research, design and co-ordination at least for this list.

ICOGRADA is also now in charge of an exploratory session on Tourist Pictograms in connection with the World Conference on Tourism to be held by the ICC on behalf of the IUOTO in Paris during March/April.

After the ICOGRADA Congress in Bled, where we anticipate that a wide range of visual communication problems will be highlighted and analysed, we hope to hold an International Conference in the autumn in Paris. All international organisations concerned with the use of every kind of sign and symbol will be invited. We hope that, as a result of this conference, an International Working Group or Council can be formed with ICOGRADA co-ordinating professional, design and research matters and other organisations carrying out other appropriate functions.

We are aware of the problems involved once signs and symbols have been introduced and of the difficulties in getting them changed for at least a 15 to 20 year period thereafter. It is because of this that we are stressing the importance of initially carrying out research in depth to avoid unnecessary mistakes being made in new sign systems. Of course, as you will appreciate, the best long-term solution is not always immediately possible as the "user" organisations are often in too much of a hurry to get quick results.

There is, though, one other problem which occurs to me the more I study your system. In order to be quickly and easily recognised any sign, particularly for public utilities and tourist use, should be visible and clearly identifiable when viewed from a distance. We know from extensive research carried out by various people, including Dr. Tomas Maldonado at Ulm, that any sign which consists of more than three components is difficult to notice, assimilate and retain in the memory.

As one of our Commission members put it after an initial study of some of the documents which I showed him of your system, "our initial problem is not so much to be able to write the Lord's prayer with some 50 or so signs but to establish some information signs which have already some generally accepted constant association so that the greatest number of people will interpret

them correctly with reasonable ease and certainty."

Another member remarked that in the case of tourist symbols endeavours must be, of necessity, to minimise learning, by finding out from those people who will have to rely more often on visual symbols, because they travel often outside their own language community, what kinds of symbolisation of a given referent they tend to understand.

According to statistics the people who travel most outside their country are Europeans followed by Americans (96% of the world travellers!). We must therefore find out what kind of symbols they understand for telephone, etc. before we can decide on what kind of system or what kind of symbols to use and let the rest of the world learn these symbols. The final selection will need to have built-in procedures for self-renewal, to make it a living visual language so that if in 10 years Africans or others travel more than Europeans, the symbols can be slanted towards what they can understand more readily.

No doubt some system based on the above and using some of the "noun-verb" ideas of yours or Maldonado's etc. may well provide a suitable solution.

Incidentally, various Board members have expressed their intention to purchase a copy of your book and will get in touch with you.

Thank you for reminding me that you suggested in your first letter that at some stage our Student Project could be extended to create an even more graphic presentation of your initial symbols. I will draw Mr. Kneebone's attention to this point.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

W.M. de Majo

In order to get closer to Icograda I decided to become a member of the Icograda branch of Australia. I wrote some letters, and got some answers. One of my collective approaches to the members of the Australian branch was mimeographed and a copy is attached to this issue. Somehow or other I hoped to gain supporters for my system in Australia and I was quite hopeful when I went - after paying my year's subscription - to a meeting of the Sydney chapter. My disillusionment was complete. Only about 12 people assembled and talked about their own problems and not about Icograda, and of course not about my work. I realised what I have realised vaguely before, namely that Icograda is an artificially built-up "International Council" with few, very few adherents, but with hope, very much hope that the few who self-elected themselves to be the President, Vice President, etc. etc. of that Council will gain some gains for themselves as designers. There is no need to reprint here my correspondence with the nobodies of Sydney and Melbourne. I answered de Majo.

Dear Mr. de Majo,

20 April, 1966

Firstly, I must apologise for the long delay in answering your detailed letter of March 7th. The main reason for this unforgiveable delay is explained in point 2 below.

I shall deal with all arguments brought forth in one last "appeal" to all the officers of Icograda and you will receive this paper within the next four weeks for distribution, for which I thank you in anticipation. Meanwhile here are some points of interest.

1. I have recently become a member of the Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists Association.
2. I am now working on a booklet named "Pictorial Blissymbols for the International Traveller" for which I received the catalogue card No. 66-22141 from the Library of Congress in Washington. I shall be able to send you and some of your officers a sample page within the next few weeks, but it may be some time before the booklet will be out. In this booklet I will prove that about 50 basic symbols (approximately 30 of which are already internationally recognised) are capable of expressing not 20, not 40 but HUNDREDS of meanings needed by the International Traveller. In fact, my experiments have proved that both children and adults who have learned my basic symbols, have been able to recognise these same symbols in combination of new meanings which they have not seen before. A small folder showing my basic symbols, (In the form of a kind of "symbol dictionary") would be the answer to all problems and could be given away in travel bureaus all over the world.
3. Professor Brattinga and Mr. Crouwel have both ordered my book, the action of which has filled my heart with gratitude.
4. From one of your news bulletins I see that you accept advertisements. Unfortunately I have not the money for this. I would like to ask you to give me a little space in one of your forthcoming bulletins, in order to promote my work in the hope that some of the members of the associations, or individuals, may become interested.
5. Being now a member of Icograda I ask you kindly for the privilege of a short paper about my work, written by myself, be read at the forthcoming Congress. It need not take more than 5 to 10 minutes and I would provide the French and German

translations to be read simultaneously.

I would also provide enough copies of my paper to be distributed at the Congress. It may well be that a member of the Australian Association will be present there and with your kind permission he may be able to read my paper. Otherwise someone else could do it, maybe even someone of your own choice.

6. I would like to thank you for the addresses you have given me. As yet, I have not approached the persons mentioned. I shall do this as soon as my booklet mentioned previously, is completed.

7. Since the second edition of my book came out I heard again the arguments which I have heard for the past 24 long years. Although I have dealt with each argument at length in various chapters I find it necessary to add something to the book which will stop such arguments effectively. I conceived the idea of a book mark, and I enclose one printed on plastic paper for your own book and two more printed on ordinary paper. Please inform Mr. Crowel and Prof. Brattinga that I shall send them such plastic bookmarks as soon as I know that they have received my book.

Awaiting your answers to points 4 and 5 and thanking you once again for your kindness, I am with best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss.

In this letter I speak somewhat desperately of "My last Appeal" to the officers of Icograda because my hopes were dwindling down and down.

I announced also three special publications as follows:

1. Universal pictorial Blissymbols for the International Traveller S.S. 280

Being the eternal optimistic fool that I am, I began a frantic work on a small folder showing how a few of my symbols and the internationally known symbols can be combined to hundreds of meanings. Being driven somewhat desperately to finish this folder in time for distribution at the Congress, I achieved indeed a little masterpiece which has been lauded by all who think well of me. By those who don't they didn't even mention that they have received it.

2. A Paper to be read at the Congress, which would take not longer than 5 to 10 minutes to read. The usual procedure at scientific congresses is that the participants are reading their papers which they present. Those who cannot be present send their papers in for being read. These papers are then read by somebody else. Unfortunately I had not the money to go to Europe, as otherwise I would have participated at the congress. On the other hand, I was already furious with the Icograda men that they have selected a communist country for a meeting place, and I would not have gone into a communist country, even if they would have paid all my expenses.

But something happened in the meantime. de Majo's letter came with the sorry story that they haven't had time to study my symbols, but they nevertheless reject my work. This letter created a turmoil after the great hopes I had put into the Icograda men. I therefore changed my paper for the congress into a protest paper. At many congresses men go up and create an incident, a scandal, a turmoil, and I wanted to do just this. But because I could not be present I had to print it and send it in. By this time I was already suspicious about all the aims of Icograda, and suspected that they will simply not read my paper. In order to forestal this I wrote and printed my paper in hundreds of copies to be distributed, or just put on a table (as it is usually done) for the participants to pick up. To make sure that I should be understood I printed the paper in English, in French and in German and thus I produced the following issues of my series:

S.S. 283 I protest and I accuse! (in English)

S.S. 284 Je protest and j'accuse! (in French)

S.S. 285 Ich protestiere und ich klage an! (in German)

To make sure that this my protest paper will reach all the important people I sent copies to all of them, and asked that it be read. I sent also hundreds of copies to the Congress Secretariat hoping that the innocent helpers will put them on the distribution table to be picked up by the participants.

There was still the possibility that de Majo and his henchmen will gather all the copies of my protest paper and will destroy them without giving the participants a possibility to learn of my protest AND THIS IS INDEED WHAT HAPPENED. Nothing could prove more the ulterior motives of the "Symbol Seekers" of Icograda.

The reader must understand my terrible disappointment. When I began my correspondence, and when I believed to have found in de Majo a man who sympathises with my work, I felt that here at last I have found what I have hoped for for so many years, namely The International Council of Graphic Design Associations all over the world that will take up my work and will give it to mankind as a "universal symbol language" I felt I have arrived. I have met at last the right men.

And then the terrible disappointment. But soon it changed into grim laughter, when I saw with my own eyes what symbols have won the first prize. The 24 symbols of the student project 1 are in part so silly and so badly designed that one can only laugh in grim recognition of the fact that the Icograda

men are a bunch of Ignoramuses. I shall show the prize winning symbols in later pages, and I am sure every reader will agree with me.

However, the Congress is still months ahead and I am still indulging in heavy work with regard to the three papers mentioned before, and still in great hope that nevertheless I shall still succeed with Icograda. I could indeed entertain some hope because other men of Icograda were very favourably inclined towards my work and I quote therefore some of the letters which we exchanged. There was Mr. Brattinga, a teacher of art of Amsterdam who had indeed good news for me. Interestingly he had two addresses, one in New York and one in Amsterdam, and here is the good news which I got from him.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

February 14, 1966

Through the correspondence which is circulated to all Board members of ICOGRADA I have seen that you published a book on signs. During the last board conference in Brussels Belgium I saw your book and I am intrigued with it, I would like to take the opportunity to ask you to send this book to: Mr. Wim Crouwel, Herengracht 567, Amsterdam, who is the secretary general of ICOGRADA and to me: Mr. Pieter Brattinga, Prinsengracht 628 Amsterdam, who is a coopted member of the board of ICOGRADA.

Furthermore I talked to Dr. Will Sandberg of the Jerusalem Museum who would also like to receive your book as fast as possible since he is working on an article on sign-language. The address of Dr. Sandberg is: The Israel Museum Jerusalem, Israel. I do hope that you can send his copy straight to Jerusalem.

Enclosed I am sending you a money-order for the two books you will send to Amsterdam and I do trust that you will enclose an invoice to the book to Dr. Sandberg (please by airmail) who will pay you directly on receipt of the book.

With best wishes

Sincerely,

Pieter Brattinga

I was glad to see that Battinga and Crouwel, both of Amsterdam want to have a copy of my book, but I was even delighted with the news that Dr. Will Sandberg of the Jerusalem Museum wants my book per airmail. This was very good news for me, because I entertained for a long time the idea to supply books to the important institutions of Israel as my small contribution to the new State. I have read the name of Sandberg in a monograph on the development of writing issued by Unesco, and therefore I hoped very much that Sandberg will further my work. Alas, my detailed letters to him remained all unanswered, and I am still smarting under the insult, this time by a Jewish scholar. However, today when typing these lines in January 72 six years have gone by and I having read anything published by Dr. Sandberg about symbols. I assume therefore that he is just another academic who makes a living by being busy with academic doing^s without producing anything constructive in this field.

I answered with a letter to Brattinga and Crouwel as follows.

Dear Mr. Brattinga and dear Mr. Crouwel,

I was happily surprised to receive your letter dear Mr. Brattinga, informing me that I should send a copy of my book to both of you and to Dr. Will Sandberg to Jerusalem. All three books went today registered, the copies to you both by surface mail, the copy to Dr. Sandberg by airmail, the only way to avoid the roundabout way for parcels outside the Suez Canal. But more than the orders for my book, (the money of which helps me to pay off the mortgage which I incurred to pay the printer) was your desire to acquire my book. I am sure you will find it interesting and if it seems too long-winded to you, you must understand that I typed chapter after chapter by fighting with myself. I was director of the patent department of a Vienna firm making electronic equipment, and I have fought big patent fights with Philips, Telefunken, and others, and I have trained myself to deal critically with all counter arguments which opposed my own stand. This attitude is reflected in my book.

You may send me the equivalent of U.S.\$9. in any way you choose. This price is 25% lower than the retail price and is given to libraries, and special friends. It amounts to about my own cost, and as I said all the time I don't want to make a single cent from it all.

Mr. de Majo has been very kind and understanding to me and has answered my very long and passionate letters in detail. Yet I feel that I have not been able to convince you all of the soundness of my symbols for international travel. I shall make one last appeal, dealing with all counter arguments, and I shall also ask for the privilege to submit a short paper to the forthcoming Icograda Congress in Bled, this paper to be read in not more than 5 to 10 minutes. I shall also submit the French and German translation and I beg you to support my plea that my work should be given favourable attention at the Congress.

And now to something personal. As you are living in Amsterdam and as you dear Mr. Brattinga at least are a Dutchman according to your Christian name greet me my Amsterdam and Holland which I have come to love dearly.

As executive of my Vienna firm I have visited Holland a number of times. We had a radio valve factory in Tilburg, and the general manager had his home near Amsterdam.

Seeing Holland was one of the most wonderful experiences in my life. As a boy I collected stamps but did not think much of the real meaning in the words Niederlande, Netherland, or Paix-Bas. Then in Holland I saw suddenly an incredible sight: a train passing under a bridge and on the bridge a ship sailing down to the coast. Then I learned in amazement that parts of Holland are 5 metres below the sea. For me the closure and filling up of the Zuider Zee is one of the great wonders of the world. And there is Amsterdam with the wonderful houses and the many grachten with exactly 365 bridges (at least this was the figure I learned from the Baedeker 30 years ago.) I sailed with my good wife Claire through the many canals and I made a beautiful film of all. And then I remember it so vividly when I speeded with the express from Rotterdam to Amsterdam and there between Leyden and Harlem the railway turned the corner and suddenly the tulips and hyacinth fields came into sight - and my heart stood still virtually for the sheer beauty of the sight. Among my treasured possessions which I carried around the world are my pictures, movies and postcards from Holland. Now being an old man I give the picture cards slowly away to every Dutchman I meet in Sydney and do not fail to express my admiration for the Dutch people who have not only fought the furies of the sea but also enslavement under the Spaniard Alba.

Here in Australia we have almost every year disastrous floods and then the minister in charge and his officers write apologetic letters and articles in the press that these floods are inevitable. Read what I say about the meaning "can do" and "cannot do" on page 378. One article of the minister infuriated me so much that I wrote an article HOW TO PRETEND TO PREVENT FLOODS. In this article the minister told of the legend of the Viking king Kanute who (the lie goes) has told the waves to stop. I said that every Viking child of olden days would know that you cannot stop the waves. But I said, the modern Vikings, the Dutchmen have effectively stopped the waves, and I suggested that the minister should get in touch with his colleagues of the Dutch Ministry of the Waterwegen (I hope I spell it correctly) and he will be told that the floods in Australia can be stopped effectively.

Well I can go on and on raving about the wonders of Holland, about the Reyksmuseum and about all the other wonders and beauties of Holland. So I close this thanking you again for your interest and asking you again to give my love to the people of Holland. I am

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

and received the following answer which was indeed heartwarming as he promised to help me with the Congress in Yugoslavia. He wrote

Dear Mr. Bliss,

31 March, 1966

Thank you for your letter of March 23, which arrived here some days ago. I am very glad that you are sending me the book. As soon as I have received it I will send you \$9 by airmail.

As future secretary general of ICOGRADA I will try to do my best to get all possible attention to your work during the next ICOGRADA Congress in Bled. Please be assured of my evaluation of your work.

I am very glad that you are still a friend of Holland and have read your reminiscence with a lot of pleasure.

Please excuse me for keeping this letter so short while your letter was very long but sometimes daily matters are so overwhelming that I cannot find time enough to live. I hope you will understand this and remain with best wishes.

Peter Brattinga

P.S. Form Mediation is the name of my firm and means that I am trying to mediate between two different partners. The one partner maybe the museum and the other maybe an artist or a partner might be a designer and the other an industry. This explains the word Form since I do not wish to narrow myself to the word design or art. You will also understand how I came to this symbol to fields nearly touching but never able in close contact, and the circle means my sphere of activities between those two.

End of letter

19 April, 1966.

Dear Mr. Brattinga,

Many thanks for your kind letter of March 31st and for all your good words for my work. I shall be most grateful for all the help you will give me for my work. You may be interested to know that I have joined Australian Designers' Association associated with Icograda. I shall approach Mr. de Maio with the request that a short paper about my work written by me be read at the Congress.

I keep this letter very short. When you have a little more time I shall enlarge about your symbol for your Form Mediation, International, which I find very attractive and very near my basic symbols for a similar meaning. Nothing more for today than again my thanks and best wishes.

Yours sincerely, C.K. Bliss.

I am now coming to that man Mr. Peter Kneebone who is at the root of my troubles. He is the self-elected Chairman of the very royal "Commission for Signs and Symbols" (oops, I made a mistake. On his letterhead he truly proves that he is very much concerned with signs and symbols, and therefore he has printed on it "Commission for Signs + Symbols". Truly, the plus sign tells the story. There is no use to dwell here that the two words "signs and symbols" are nothing more than synonyms, two different words meaning the same thing. The difference is in language only. Sign comes from the Latin signum, and Symbol from the Greek aymbolon. Every time I see in print these two words mentioned both as if there is a difference which must be noted, I go mad, mad about the bladdy ignorance of the people who use these two words together, though it should be easy for all of the academics, to look up their dictionary and see that there is no necessity to mention both words. Now here is my first letter to that Chairman who above all has the duty to examine my work, because he is entrusted with all work on "signs + symbols". He, not deMajo, and not the other guys must study my work. Apparently, de Majo wants to soften the blow to me when he said in previous letters that they all may not have the time to study my work. But Kneebone has to study it and has to give his opinion. Realising that he is the key man I wrote the following letter.

Mr. Peter Kneebone, M.A., F.S.I.A., Sydney 21 April, 66
Chairman, ICOGRADA Commission on International Signs and Symbols,
37 Emerdale Road, KEW, Richmond, Surrey.
Dear Mr. Kneebone,

This is a personal letter to you, written in the dead of night. It is a passionate plea to you to break your silence of nearly one year, a silence which has caused me many a sleepless hour in many a night, a silence which is virtually deadening for an old man.

In September 1964 you proposed the idea of "An International Symbol Language". In May 1965 you sent your press release to the United Nations Association of Australia, and in turn were informed about my work. I expected then a letter of enquiry from you, and waited for it for half a year. It never came. Then on November 27, 1965 I wrote to the Secretary General of Icograda. Mr. de Majo replied on December 8, and said:

"I am passing all your information to Mr. Peter Kneebone, who is both in charge of ICOGRADA "student project I" and Chairman of the recently established ICOGRADA "Commission on International Signs and Symbols" so that he can discuss matters with you." But you didn't start any discussion. You remained silent.

On January 27, 1966 I wrote then a long and passionate plea to all of you, and said to you personally "I have written this letter also to you dear Mr. Kneebone. I want desperately to convince you that with my work all your ambitions can be fulfilled.... In your hands is now the possibility to tell all students of all the art schools that here is a student project which will enrapture their hearts, and fire their imagination to do great designs for it". But again there was no response from you.

Meanwhile, you have received my book. I expected at least a word of appreciation. Mr. Brattinga and Mr. Crowel ordered it, and found good words for it, but no word came from you. On March 7 Mr. de Majo wrote: "Peter Kneebone will mention it in some of his lectures and writings, including his report to the second ICOGRADA congress in Bled". But what are you going to say? Your continuous silence contains grim forboding for me. I don't want any faint praise like "impressive", "valuable", etc. I want either your acceptance or your condemnation setting out all your criticism, and all your counter-arguments so that I shall at least know where you stand. You have stressed in conferences and congresses the need of an international symbol language. I have met this need. Why then are you silent? I need your criticism, because my printer is already at work on a brochure titled "Pictorial Blissymbols for the International Traveller" (Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 66-22141). Your letter will be much appreciated, I assure you, and I thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

When after more than 2 weeks no answer came I got worried because after all it all depends on him and therefore I was afraid the letter got lost. I wrote again.

Dear Mr. Kneebone,

Sydney 9 May, 66

More than 2 weeks ago (April 21) I wrote to you a letter which is very important for me and I asked you for an early answer. Now, not having received a line of acknowledgement, the letter may have got lost. Would you please inform me by return, so that I may send you a copy.

If however you have received my letter, you should be able to give me a considered reply by now. Then please do so without delay, and be thanked for it.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. BLISS.

And the unbelievable happened. He ignored both my letters. This was for me grim foreboding and I worked feverishly at my Tourist Folder and my Protest Paper to be presented at the Congress. Meanwhile I wrote to Mr. Masaru Katsumi who is a professor of design in Tokyo, and he will be a speaker at the Congress.

Mr. Masaru Katsumi,
Speaker at the forthcoming
ICOGRADA Congress

Sydney 29 April 66

sent by courtesy of the President of Icograda Mr. de Majo, London.

Dear Mr. Katsumi,

From the Icograda papers about the forthcoming Congress I learned that you will be a main speaker on the problem of signs and symbols. May I then approach you herewith asking you to acquaint yourself with my work, a simple system of about 100 basic pictorial symbols which in combination can express any meaning needed in international travel, communication, commerce, industry, and even science. I attach herewith a reprint, Semantography Series No. 198.

As you are a Japanese, you will be interested to hear that my first inspiration came when I visited Japan in 1940 on my way to China. As a scientist in Europe I experienced the great difficulties of scientific literature in too many languages. In Japan I saw an ideographic writing at work, and later I learned of the prophecy of Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain, late of Tokyo University who wrote in his books THINGS JAPANESE and THINGS CHINESE that

"Ideographic writing will surely achieve the final victory over phonetic writing." The phonetic alphabets of Katakana and Hiragana were invented 1000 years ago, and still they could not replace the 1500 ideographic symbols which the Japanese took over from the Chinese, and which they still use.

The second enlarged edition of my book has been printed in Japan and also published there. I don't know whether you live in Japan or America or elsewhere but I would appreciate it if you could acquaint yourself with my book in order to convince yourself that I have solved the problem for all and any meanings needed. I worked on this idea for 24 long years and I believe I shall never see any application of this idea within my lifetime. But now millions of people are on travel and the railways and other travel organisations are busy developing pictorial symbols for travellers. Those officials don't want to hear that a guy in down-under Australia has solved the whole problem. Consequently they find lots of arguments against me and my work. I have found that it is impossible to convince bureaucratic officials. For twenty long years I have approached national and international road safety authorities offering them my system free of use. It was of no avail. Now we see that the mightiest man in the whole world, the President of the United States of America, is unable to convince the leaders and officials of the various North American states to agree on a unified code of road warning signs.

The same idiotic situation is here in Australia and elsewhere. How then can I, a man without power, convince anyone?

There is one way possible for me, namely to ask you and the other main speakers at the forthcoming Icograda Congress, to stand up and to propose that my work should be promoted by all the associations united in Icograda. I ask you kindly to do this. Unfortunately, I cannot send you my book free of charge, because I have mortgaged my home in order to pay the printer. I hope therefore that you will have an opportunity to look into my book which will be in the hands of Mr. de Majo or Mr. Kneebone at the Congress. I hope then that you will support my work, and remain thanking you. Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss.

I did send him some leaflets so that he may get an idea of my work. But no answer came. And when I wrote to him years later to Tokyo when I got hold of his address, and again the mighty writer did not deem it worthy to accord me the courtesy of an answer. Maybe you have seen his designs for man and woman for toilets. Both have a circular dot as head, and the woman is a kind of figurine in a crinoline which is so wide, that all the people I confronted with this figure could not guess that it means a woman.

Slowly throughout the heartbreaks of the foregoing years I have come to the following conclusion: the difference between me and all the designers is that I have worked on this idea without pay and without thinking of money, whereas the designers make a living by designing. Hence any designer who is an "amateur" which means originally an amator, a lover in Latin, a man who does something not for money but because he loves the subject, is suspect in the eyes of any professional designer who resents the fact that somebody does something and has even success in something which actually the professional designer should have done himself. Hence the word amateur has been perverted by all professional money makers in academic and non-academic professions as to mean something badly done, just "amateurish".

Hence, how can the money makers stand my success? The answer is they cannot stand it at all. They hate it and they must hate it. They must prove to

themselves and to others that my system is just not good, just "amateurish" and that they would - provided they get the million for research - do a much, much better job of it. But meanwhile what should they do with the pleading and polite letters I do write to them? The answer is: by showing me their contempt, by simply ignoring me and my letters. This Mr. Kneebone has done, Mr. Katsumi too, and most of the other "symbols for money seekers".

I wrote similar letters in German (which I need not translate here) to Prof. Maldonado, to Mr. Mueller Brockmann and to Mr. Weckerle and stressed in all letters the importance that it was a German, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz who proposed the idea at first. And again I begged them to say a good word at the Congress so that the Congress should voice and vote for the support of my work. At that time I still believed that the "International Council of Graphic Design Associations (Icograda) is really something and really has something to say in the name of all Graphic Design Associations. The fool I was. One day later I received a nice calendar from the paper manufacturer Bowaters with a lot of old signs, medieval and mystical, but without one single new sign for our modern world. I wrote to de Majo

Dear Mr. de Majo,

28th April, 66

Today I received a wonderful calendar on signs and symbols by the Bowaters Co., and coming from London which means coming from you. The calendar is wonderfully made and beautifully designed and all the pictures are just glorious and I shall treasure it very much and hope to be alive until the last card of the last week of this year 1966 has been turned. I'm sure that you and the other officers of Icograda had a hand in the beautiful design of this calendar. Looking through all these signs and symbols I became again convinced of the correctness of my attitude that a little education is needed to understand the meaning of any symbol and sign. Without the education in the title underneath the symbols, few of the meanings can be recognised as such. This is why the railway officials and other organisations cannot conceive more than about 40 symbols which seem self-explanatory to European travellers, but are not so to others. And this brings me again to my argument that all symbols, including my own, need to be explained by a word underneath and in much the same way as it is done in this beautiful calendar for which I thank you very much.

By the same mail I received also the latest papers for the forthcoming Icograda Congress. Seeing that a number of designers will be speaking on the theme of signs and symbols, I have written three letters to Mr. Weckerle, to Mr. Mueller-Brockman, and also one to Mr. Katsumi whose addresses I don't know. As you can understand German you will see from these letters that I ask from them only to become acquainted with my work, and if they find it worthwhile, to promote it at the Congress. You have given me the address of Dr. Maldonado of ULM, and I have written to him a similar letter. Mr. Martin Krampen of Canada has ordered my book already and Professor Buckminster Fuller will also get a separate letter from me asking both to acquaint themselves with my work. I'm sure you approve of these personal approaches, because otherwise these people come into the Congress, and being embroiled in the hustle and bustle of activities would simply not know who Mr. Bliss is, and what he has done.

With the same mail I also received the symbols from the UIC. Most of them I know already and I know too of their weaknesses which Icograda has already castigated in one article on which you have sent me a reprint. You have kindly given me the address of the secretary general of UIC, Mr. Louis Armand, and I am now going to write to him though I think it's a hopeless case, just as hopeless as my twenty years of approaches to national and international road safety committees. Twenty years ago, in my first edition (see page 489 of the new edition) I quoted the American Association of State Highway Officials in Washington who deplored the fact that different states of the U.S.A. have different road warning signs. Now Congress wants to improve road safety, but the mightiest man in the world, the President of the U.S.A., cannot persuade the states to a uniformed symbol code. What chances have I got? I am,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. BLISS

It was love's labour lost. He was determined NOT to recommend my work at the Congress, and most probably it was that "Chairman" of that very royal "Commission on signs + symbols" who had a hand in it. But then something happened which cast a new light on the whole business of a Congress for a few people to be sure. I received CONGRESS INFORMATION No. 1 which told me how much money every participant has to disgorge in order to hear the speakers. He has to shell out US\$40 to 45 for being able to sit and hear. If he comes with his wife he has to pay another \$20. Furthermore, if he and his wife want to participate in the "Gala Evening" another \$5 per person has to be paid. But he must pay also for the hotel. A single room for one person would cost from \$1.50 to \$3.50 per night if he has no shower or bath. With shower or bath the price goes up from \$2 to \$4.50 per night. Now I happen to know that hotels in parts of Jugoslavia

former Austria. They are all from Austrian times and dilapidated too. Considering the charge of \$45 for one participant, it will become clear to everyone that the Icograda men are going to make money, and as the top men of Icograda and the speakers will not pay for themselves but will be admitted free, it becomes clear that the profit will go for their expenses, travel and hotel and what have you.

Meanwhile another man order my book Mr. Gavler who is a Swedish designer. As he himself may or may not participate at the Congress I wrote to him deploring the fact that it will take 8 weeks until he will get my book and therefore I demonstrated to him the versatility of my symbols of being able to combine any meaning wanted. I wrote to him speaking of the great telephone inventor Ericson who was a Swede like Mr. Gavler is.

Mr. Martin Gavler,
Studio Gavler AB,
Kvarnasvagen 17
Osterskar SWEDEN

12 May, 1966

Dear Mr. Gavler,

Many thanks for your kind and active interest in my work and for your order of my book. I have posted it immediately but it may take 8 weeks for surface mail to reach you. Allow me to grant you the 25% library discount which brings this price down to U.S. \$9.00 (about my own cost.)

I am much indebted to Mr. De Majo for directing your attention to it and I am sending him a copy of this letter. I lose no opportunity to find a new friend, and to promote my symbols. The fact that you are a Swede reminds me of a great Swedish telephone pioneer, Ericsson. It reminds me also of my fight against the symbols for "telephone" adopted by the French and British railways bureaucrats and supported by that "Committee for breaking the Language Barrier" in New York.

They have adopted the outline of handle bars. There are millions of telephones even in the U.S.A. which are of the older types, and the handlebar type is already obsolete. I attach herewith part of a page from a Swedish prospectus about the new Ericofon. Now houses in Australia and elsewhere are built with a number of telephone outlets in a number of rooms, and the Ericofon is the best answer.

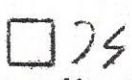
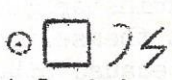
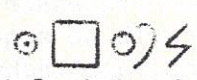
Against symbolic outlines of technological apparatuses (which change overnight) I promote symbols which are timeless and good for thousands of years to come. Here they are






mouth, speech ear, hearing electricity telephone

Thirty years ago I saw in the Kurfuerstendam in Berlin a "Fernsehsprechstelle" (television phone) with Leipzig. It will surely be common place soon. How to symbolise it?

any enclosure radio television televisionphone

As you can see my symbols are independent of any temporary outline. Should you have any symbols to design in the course of your work, please let me show you my suggestion. Why are my symbols not "beautiful" from the designer's point of view? Because I am an engineer, and I designed them to fit an ordinary IBM ball typewriter. A friend of mine, an electronics engineer of Lorentz in West Berlin Mr. Bruno Owe Fahlke writes to me in my symbols. One day the whole world will write and type letters to each other in my symbols. But when?

Thanking you again for your interest, I am,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

In order to show him that the present symbol for telephone, the handle bar receiver as displayed everywhere is already becoming obsolete through the new Swedish Ericophone which contains the dial, the earphone and the speaking tube in one piece I attached to my letter a prospectus of the new Ericophone.

Looking through my large file of the Icograda matter I find a newspaper article dated 5th July 1966 just before the Congress was to be opened in Yugoslavia. The newspaper reported that President Tito has purged his Vice President Rancovic and that a larger purge is in the making - just the peaceful country for the Congress. Meanwhile I received a busy letter from de Majo.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

13th May, 1966

Thank you for your letters of April 20th and 28th. Sorry I have not replied to them earlier but I have been abroad and also my correspondence is increasing to such an extent that I find it difficult to cope with it. Forgive me therefore, if I am brief.

I note with interest that you have become a member of ACIAA. We have discussed your request for a five to 10 minutes maximum paper about your work to be given at the forthcoming Congress. While our programme is already extremely packed and we are not featuring any single solutions we are willing

to give time to such a paper providing it is literally not longer than five to ten minutes. Preferably it should be illustrated by 35 mm slides. If you can find a suitable person from Australia who will be coming to the Congress to read your paper, please let us know his name as quickly as possible. Alternatively we are quite happy to arrange for the Session Chairman or some other suitable person to give this paper on your behalf in English. It would be helpful if for each illustration shown, you could also supply a second slide which would show a one-line caption or explanation in French and German which we can project simultaneously on to a second screen. This is how all the presentations will be done on Tuesday as we have no simultaneous translation facilities available on that date.

If it is difficult for you to provide slides and captions, please send the relevant drawings to Mr. Kneebone and he will be glad to assist in having the slides made for you. The captions should preferably be set in Univers Medium, white on black background or alternatively photographed from a clear typewriter face.

I am afraid you slightly misconstrued the purpose and workings of the advertisements. The only time which we can spare space for advertisements is if they are paid advertisements, as we are so short of money that we must try and find some means of paying for the production of the Bulletins.

If, as a member of ACIAA, you wish to have an item of general interest reported, the correct procedure is to send it to Mr. Leydin and ask him to incorporate it on the appropriate questionnaire which he is receiving for each new issue of the Bulletin. At the moment this is the only way in which we can feature items from different countries, as obviously individual Member Associations must have the right to decide what news from their country should appear. You will appreciate that such items have to be quite brief.

Mr. Kneebone was originally going to mention your work in his general speech to the Congress and we are quite willing to distribute copies of your paper at the Congress, providing they are sent post paid and clearly marked "printed matter - no commercial value" to reach the Congress Secretariat in Ljubljana in good time before the Congress. Please also mark them on the outside for my attention.

For what it is worth, if you are printing such material especially for the Congress, I would advise you strongly to get the assistance of an experienced typographer/designer member of the ACIAA to help you with the layout as the audience at this Congress will be very conscious of good visual presentation. A well presented document, even if it is only one or two sheets and done by ordinary typewriter in a clear modern layout, may help a lot to drive home the points you wish to make.

Thank you for sending copies of your bookmarker which I distributed to the Board Members and we also note with interest that you are working on a new booklet.

Yours sincerely,
W.M. de Majo

I am findingⁱⁿ my file drafts of that 5 to 10 minutes paper, because at this time I hadn't received the final NO from de Majo. There is no need to reprint my drafts as they deal with my usual pleading to consider the advantages of my symbols, etc. etc. And then came the final NO from de Majo in the following letter which contains a lot of wishy washy words, except for the wailing that they need money, money, money for research. Apparently Mr. de Majo has not realised that my symbols are basically pictorial, as otherwise he would not propose the nonsense that it would perhaps be better to adopt a "non-illustrative system", meaning a non-pictorial system, which means an abstract system in which the designs are not related to the actual outline of the things symbolised. This is the height of nonsense, as this would involve heavy learning of every abstract symbol. Apparently he referred to an article which appeared in the London "New Scientist" under the title "Fingertalk" which should operate with the 10 digits of the numbers. Such number languages have been invented by the scores in previous decades and centuries, as for instance 147 should mean "I love you".

Then de Majo refers to a meeting in Paris with the International Chamber of Commerce, and which has disheartened him. The idiotic conferences in Paris are reported in another issue SS 261 which conferences went nowhere and achieved nothing, except (as far as I am concerned) Mr. Kneebone did his best to deprecate my system. He produced part of his tourist folder SS 280 and (though he printed on it that the Copyright is mine) he managed to distort the presentation by blocking out the explanation of the symbol elements underneath the symbols. Thus, the onlookers could not get the meaning of my system, namely that meanings are composed of the few meaning elements, and thus even children could after one hour lesson read many symbol combinations they have never seen before. And

combine elements to new meanings they want to represent. All this is shown and explained in S.S. 261 which please see.

In the end, Mr. de Majo expressed the sympathy of Icograda men with me, my efforts and my work. Damn it! Here is his letter:

Dear Mr. Bliss,

May 16, 1966

This is to continue my letter of May 13th,

Letters for various speakers

I have forwarded the letters which you sent me for distribution to the various speakers, as requested. We have, of course, already sent them copies of some of the material received from you to the various Commission members. I agree that personal approaches are very useful providing you remember that each one of us has already to cope with quite an unbelievable amount of routine matter and correspondence. Therefore, if it sometimes takes rather long to answer, this is not for lack of goodwill, or disinterest. The deeper we get into our activities, relating to signs and symbols, the more complicated matters get and it is not surprising that as a one-man band, you have not succeeded in promoting your work more successfully during the last 20 years. If only we could find somehow the money needed, for administration of and research into these very vexed problems, no doubt we could then achieve within a reasonably short period better co-ordination, more successful collaboration and conclusive results.

While none of us still has had the time to really study your proposals in great detail, no-one to whom we have talked can see that your system, as it stands at present, is quite the answer to many of the problems which we face. But then heaven knows whether and how we can ever find a solution which will give the user organisations a quick solution but one which communicates clearly and quickly, without people having to spend too much time learning it. The fact that we must also consider other fields and problems, apart from Travel and Tourism, complicates matters further.

My personal feeling is that if the final system needs to be one which has to be learnt, then it might well have to be a non-illustrative system which can also be easily reproduced by some of the new machinery equipment, such as computers, etc. While all this may not be much consolation to you at the moment, at least you can rest assured that you have our sympathy and that we will consider your proposals very carefully.

After the recent meeting which we held in Paris and where we started an International Working Group, together with the ICC, International Civil Airport Association, etc. we are, however, rather disheartened to see how difficult it is to get all the other parties to accept and understand even some of the fundamentals which must form the basis of any work undertaken in this field.

Still we must battle on, and hope that our efforts will at least achieve some good results in the end. I suppose the fact that at least we have managed to get the Travel and Tourism people to sit around a table and discuss with us these problems is at least a beginning.

FINGER TALK

I thought you might be interested in having the enclosed copy of an article which appeared recently in the New Scientist.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

W.M. de Majo

After this blow I decided to change my congress paper into a protest paper, but I hesitated and decided to make one last appeal to the top men of Icograda. Here is my long letter:

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Dear Mr. de Majo

Dear Mr. Crouwel

Dear Mr. Gavler and

Dear Mr. Brattinga.

6 June, 66

I must write to all of you, because your letter dear Mr. de Majo of May 16th is a real funeral letter complete even with the expression "you have our sympathy". The funeral is for my hopes that Icograda will take over and promote my work. My first letter to you of November 27th, 1965 ends with these words:

"I shall die soon, and I shall be glad to see that you are taking up my work." Now your last letter ends my hopes. But I am still alive, and my work is more alive than ever. However, my relationship with Icograda has now entered into a new and decisive phase. Indeed it concerns you more than myself because it has a bearing on the future of Icograda. Something has happened which has convinced me (and it will easily convince you) that one man (none of you) is dead set against my work, and that he is endangering the reputation of Icograda.

And therefore I ask you to give this letter your kind attention, and to excuse its length. It may well be my last letter to you, and because of this, I want to tell you how much I have appreciated your kindness in writing to me before and in

buying even my book. Please receive herewith as a token of friendship a memorial card which I have designed in memory of my good wife. I give it only to friends and I consider you as such.

And now to your funeral argument that my work is not "quite the answer to many of the problems which we face." These problems are twofold, and in our previous correspondence we have mixed them up. It is now necessary to draw a sharp dividing line, and to examine each problem entirely separated.

The first problem: How to convince officials that co-operation and co-ordination would be the best thing, and that Icograda would be the best body to do it.

The second problem: The creation of a complete and truly universal "international symbol language" as promulgated by Mr. Kneebone in 1964, not just 24 disjointed symbols for men's and women's toilets etc., as announced by him for his student project.

These 2 problems are as different as darkness and light, the darkness being the stubborn self-assertion of officials, who won't admit that another guy has a better symbol, who won't submit to anybody, be it Icograda or Bliss, and who won't let their symbols be scrapped in favour of better ones proposed by Icograda or Bliss.

I have learnt this lesson 20 years ago, and you are learning it now. You dear Mr. de Majo write:

"We are rather disheartened to see how difficult it is to get all the other parties to accept and understand even some of the fundamentals which must form the basis of any work undertaken in this field".

Suppose now I try to prove that it is your "Chairman" of the Commission on International Signs and Symbols" who does not "understand the fundamentals which must form the basis of any work undertaken in this field." Suppose I prove that he has fundamentally blundered in his approach to those officials, and in his approach to the student competition.

Mr. Kneebone could have had a chance, even with the most stubborn officials, had he designed symbols which are desperately needed, symbols for which no-one has yet found a proper solution. Who needs new designs for men's and women's toilets? You can see them in almost all hotels, cinemas, etc. Who needs a new design for a "directional arrow"? You can see it everywhere. And who needs new designs for the rod of Aesculapius, Roman God of Medicine, which symbols you can see on doctor's cars in all countries, on most pharmacies, and on the lapels and sleeves of military medical men.

And who needs a symbol for a "historical monument"? When we stand before a statue of a statesman do we need to be told that this is a "historical monument"? And if students picture a statue, is it appropriate for a historical tower, for a temple, and the picture of a temple for a totem pole? Are these examples not proof enough that Mr. Kneebone does NOT "understand the fundamentals which must form the basis of any work undertaken in this field."

Mr. Kneebone is the ultimate arbiter and ultimate expert in signs and symbols and it must be his opinion which you dear Mr. de Majo voice, when you state that:

"The deeper we get into our activities, relating to signs and symbols, the more complicated matters get. If only we could find somehow the money needed, for administration of and research into these very vexed problems, no doubt we could then achieve within a reasonably short period better co-ordination, more successful collaboration and conclusive results."

This is the outcry of Mr. Kneebone, and he has voiced it more than a year ago, when he cried out for money, and much money at that. He demanded \$0,000 to 50,000 dollar per year in the first and second year to cover the "barest necessities," then 100,000 in the third year, and up to 300,000 in the fifth year, altogether nearly three quarter of a million dollars, a staggering stick of money. And realising the immensity of his demands he puts in the following plea:

"If because of Icograda's work, the life of only a few people each year can be saved...if through the creation of an international symbol language...the present language barrier can be broken...those who have contributed their work and financial support to the solving of this complex problem will have made a major contribution to the better understanding between peoples everywhere."

These great words are justified. Many thousands of people die on the roads, often because there are too few road warnings in symbols. Most warnings are in the native languages only. But - incredible as it may seem - Mr. Kneebone expressively excludes research and design of symbols for road safety. He expressively excludes designs for such life saving symbols in his student competition. Here is the fundamental basis of work on symbols: "to save lives" as Mr. Kneebone himself puts it. Had he started work in this field, he could have had support - and even money - from the public and also from official bodies. Instead he preoccupied himself and his hapless students with symbols for "men's and women's toilets", for a "directional arrow", for a "historical monument", and for others either utterly unimportant, or already oversymbolised for centuries.

No words are too strong to condemn Mr. Kneebone for his futile approach, and for his refusal to design road warning symbols which can really save lives. I did not bother with symbols for toilets. I bothered national and international road safety authorities with my symbols for road warnings only. Some of my approaches from issues of my Semantography Series can be found in my book pages 796 - 808.

Why did I not succeed and why do you become "disheartened?" Because officials won't admit that their symbols need improvement and unification. Look at the mightiest man in the world, the President of the United States of America, Congress is now working on laws to put more safety into cars, but the public outcry goes also for unification of road symbols which are different in different states of America. And the mightiest man in the world cannot get the officials of the various states to agree on one uniform symbol code for the whole United States. The same sorry state exists in the different states of Australia and in other countries.

If President Johnson cannot convince them, how could I? You at least have impressive titles, "International Council of Graphic Design Associations" and Mr. Kneebone claims to be a "Chairman" of a "Commission". I am a nobody.

But Mr. Kneebone is also a nobody, in spite of his title. The fact is that Mr. Kneebone has no power whatsoever in putting up any sign, not even in your own rented office on your own toilet. If you move out, you have to remove it. If you try to put it on the toilets of your office block you cannot do it without permission from the management. And you cannot even force all members of Icograda to adhere to the symbols favoured by Icograda. In fact Mr. Kneebone's idea of a competition has a disastrous built-in drawback. It will please one prize-winner, but it will infuriate all other students who lost out. And some of them may use the first opportunity when designing a public building, hotel, etc. to put up their own signs rejected by Icograda - and to hell with Icograda!

Why then do some of the official organisations allow you to sit with them in conference though they don't allow you to overrule their own symbols? I have studied these symbol committees for years, and I can tell you that if official bodies let you sit with them, they use you as some sort of "rubberstamp stooges". Excuse these words, but here are the facts,

A wise Englishman, whose name I have forgotten, calls this phenomenon "Irresponsible government by committee." Officials feel pretty secure. Yet, in Western countries with elected ministers, public outcry can force them out of a job. Hence they must play safe. If they form a committee for the design of road warning symbols, they make sure to include in this committee first-class experts whose expert knowledge is known to the public. They will co-opt the chairman of automobile organisations, professors of medicine, physiology and eye specialists, road building experts, and last - but really last - artistic designers, if any at all.

And then, they will propose their own symbols, and will persevere with them. Usually those exalted experts have not the time to come to committee conferences. Usually the official version prevails, and if there is later a public outcry, the officials can prove that the highest experts in the land have been consulted, and have "agreed". No blame can fall upon the officials.

So you see, you as artistic designers have no say whatever. and when you say in your letter that you are "disheartened" this is understandable, because they don't want to listen to you. They want ^{you} to listen to them and to rubberstamp their symbols. This fact can easily be proved. For instance, you have criticised in your article "An International Sign Language starts badly" (Design Magazine, London Sept '65) the UIC pictograms for telegraph, pharmacy, ventilation control and sleeper reservation. You said "They are crude, badly designed etc." And what happened? Your criticism was disregarded, and the symbols were adopted in spite of your criticism.

Or try this proof. Suppose you tell them at the next meeting that their symbols are just no good, and that they will do better to adopt your symbols. What would happen? Nothing. That is, there will be no more invitations to you to come to Paris for talks. It would be your last "official" visit to Paris. If they still feel they need an artistic expert as a cover, they would co-opt the best-known French designer, or an exalted artist, preferably a member of the Académie Française, preferably over 70, who will nap through the sessions, agree to their symbols, and pocket whatever gratification they will award him. And to hell with Icograda!

Here Gentlemen is your real trouble with Problem No. 1 CONQUERING THE OFFICIAL MIND. And this Problem No. 1 has nothing, just nothing to do with Problem No. 2 THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL LANGUAGE, which ^{we} will turn to now.

You dear Mr. de Majo said that: "None of us has had time to really study your proposals in great detail. This however cannot be said of Mr. Kneebone, because it is his duty to study my work in detail. He has had four months to do it.

You Mr. Crouwel, Mr. Gavler and Mr. Brattinga have not yet received my book. No blame can fall on you therefore. Hence, your funeral letter dear Mr. de Majo was inspired by Mr. Kneebone and no one else.

And what is his ultimate argument against my work? That my symbols "have to be learnt".

But they can be learned in an instant, even by children. I attach herewith a statutory declaration by Miss Maureen Bates, my secretary, an English girl from Yorkshire. Please read her amazing story carefully and see that young children can grasp my symbols almost instantly.

If this is not proof enough, please ring Dr. Peggy Volkov with whom I corresponded years ago. She was then (and may still be) editor of the Journal THE NEW ERA IN SCHOOL AND HOME of the New Educational Fellowship (see the London phone book) I wrote her young twin daughters a letter with the English words beneath each symbol. In addition I sent them a separate sheet explaining the symbol elements and how to combine them. Dr. Volkov tried the following experiment: she obliterated the words underneath the symbols in my letter and gave her little daughters the sheet with the symbol elements. In no time at all the twins read my symbol letter and answered in symbols, combining boldly and logically my elements to new meanings they needed. Photocopy of their letter is available.

If all this should still not convince you, please look into the attached first 2 pages of my sample tourist folder which I am preparing for the congress. Just look through it line by line and see how simple my symbols are, how easily they can be "learned" because they are really pictorial. That they consist of the barest outlines, and that the picture of a house and the picture of a letter (to mean post office) are of the same size is explained by the fact that these symbols can be typed with an ordinary typewriter in which the redundant capital letters are substituted by symbol lines for the composition of my symbols. The most beautifully designed pictures by art students cannot be accommodated on an ordinary typewriter for the composition of thousands of meanings.

Having written so far I see that this letter is already too long. I close now and shall send you in a few days, the remaining part where I shall convince you that Mr. Kneebone is acting contrary to the interests of Icograda.

Please don't answer, but wait for the second part, which may well be my last letter to you.

You must understand how deeply your, that is, Mr. Kneebone's letter has hurt me, and you must therefore excuse the length of my answer.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

P.S. For you, dear Mr. de Majo I enclose a copy of my letter to Mr. Gavler, in which I thanked him for his order of my book, and in which I show him how the Swedish Ericofon has made the handlebar symbol for telephone obsolete I enclose a picture of the Ericofon in my letter for you dear Mr. Crouwel and dear Mr. Brattinga.

End of letter

In the meantime I exchanged a few letters with designers in Australia, and then mimeographed my approach to the Australian designers in 2 sheets which are attached to this issue. The date is 22nd June 66, a few weeks before the congress was about to start. I also received a letter in German from Mueller Brockmann in Zuerich, and I answered also in German. At that time I was already determined to send off my protest paper, and I asked him to understand my unhappiness and my protestation. I used some citations from Schiller's "William Tell" which should impress him because he is a Swiss man. But he did not respond to my plea, and I heard nothing more of him. I wrote also a letter in German to a Mr. Hans Neuburg, a designer and "Vice President" of Icograda, and another letter to Weckerle in Germany and another to a Yugoslav "Vice President", and another again to Dr. Maldonado - all futile, futile, futile.

In my long confidential letter to the top men of Icograda dated June 6 I have expressed my bitterness that Mr. Kneebone has ignored my letters. To this and to the other part of my letter de Majo replied as follows.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

June 15, 66

This is to acknowledge your letter of June 6.

Before answering in detail I will await, as suggested by you, the second part of your letter, especially as with the forthcoming Congress we are all so busy that we do not know what to do first.

While I appreciate some of the ^{nice} things you say, it really is a pity that, no doubt because of your disappointments in the past, you feel so bitter and are apparently unwilling to accept that everything is not necessarily just black and white or that because one is necessarily for something one does not have to be against it either.

I can assure you that your accusations against Mr. Kneebone are not only

unfounded but extremely unjust and that if anything some of the pieces you quote were in fact written by me, even though they may have gone out under Peter Kneebone's signature. Therefore, if anybody stands accused it has to be me.

Believe me, as I said before we are all most sympathetic and trying everything we can to tell other people about your work without as yet adding any definite views or comments. While we can see all kinds of snags, it is impossible to come to any conclusions quickly. Not only are we all so very busy with so many details relating to Signs and Symbols and a hundred other things, but as professional people we are obviously not willing to commit ourselves or to give a considered opinion until we have studied the whole problem and not just one individual system or fragments of the problems.

If Kneebone has not written to you yet it was only because he too is working very hard and felt that there is no point in saying very much to you until he really has had a chance to assess and discuss the whole matter with other members of the Commission. The first fuller opportunity of doing so will, we hope, be at Bled.

You can see that Mr. Kneebone is very sympathetic by the fact that on many occasions he has mentioned you and your work and has offered to help you make the slides which are to illustrate your paper. Incidentally we have not heard from you recently on the subject, and while we have made arrangements for, most likely the Session Chairman, to read the paper on your behalf, we must know by return what is going to happen about the slides. If you are providing your own 35mm. slides that is fine, but please let us know how you are sending them (if it is via someone from Australia, who the person is, as we have had no registration as yet from anyone in Australia). If you intend to send them by post, please be sure to send them to the address of the Congress Secretariat in Ljubljana to reach there before July 1 or if between July 1 and 8 they should be sent to:

ICOGRADA Congress Secretariat
Festival Hall,
Bled
Yugoslavia, Europe.

The packet should be marked clearly "Slides for ICOGRADA Congress, no commercial value" and be declared with the nominal value only.

If you expect Mr. Kneebone to have the slides made, then please send the material to his address to reach him not later than June 27.

You can write to him freely and I can assure you there will be no animosity in spite of your letter of June 6. Please remember who your friends are, irrespective of whether we may or may not eventually be able to agree on your system. Please remember also that at present no one in ICOGRADA has "condemned" your ideas as you seem to think.

Finally, thank you also for your memento which is much appreciated and for sending an advance copy of the folder for your basic symbols, copies of which you will have sent directly to Bled for distribution to all Congress members. These too should be clearly marked for my attention, so that I can ensure that they will not be mislaid and handed out at the appropriate session.

Finally, the student seminar, the main theme of which is "Breaking the Language Barriers..." will be Monday to Wednesday. This will be followed by the main congress theme "Graphic Design and Visual Communication Technology".

Yours sincerely,
W.M. de Majo.

Apparently he scolded Kneebone that he had ignored my letters and Kneebone at last wrote to me.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

24th June, 1966

Since I received your kind letter of 21st April I have been abroad on several journeys to do with our mutual problems, and I have also been heavily involved in academic problems at my college. Forgive me for not writing sooner.

It would be foolish of me to say that, since Mr. de Majo passed on to me a copy of your remarkable and moving book, I have been able to absorb the whole of it. Also you do not wish me to say simply that I find the development of ideas contained in it very exciting. It is certain that clear analytical thinking of the quality that you have applied to the problem is an essential prerequisite if the international bodies responsible for the development and application of a sign system are to reach valid conclusions.

As you know, it has taken us some time to get these bodies to agree to collaborate at all. The first meeting of a Working Party representing the principal bodies concerned with signs for transport and tourism was held on 2nd May in Paris as the result of a meeting on 1st April at the International Chamber of Commerce. At this earlier meeting we were able to demonstrate that the situation was dangerously confused, that contradictory signs were proliferating and that signs must be unambiguous, mean the same thing to all people using them

and be read quickly. You, of course make the same sorts of points when you write about "The Babel of Highway Signs".

After this promising start we were very depressed at the 2nd May meeting to find that everyone was talking about getting quick results by selecting from among the signs now in use - some of which have already been discredited as being inefficient or contradictory. Two things seemed to influence the situation. Firstly, a desire to get rid of the problem as quickly as possible, and so quite misunderstanding the nature of visual communication, and secondly, pride of authorship on the part of bodies like the U.I.C.

Since then a smaller interim meeting was held, at which we were not present, and it would seem that these bodies have now agreed that the work needs to be done rather more seriously, and involving analysis of requirements, principles of graphic communication, method of research, and so on.

At a full meeting of the working party next week, we shall be represented by Roger Excoffon and Gilbert Cohen-Seat. I am communicating to the International Chamber of Commerce, at their request, details of known research, development and interest in this field. This naturally including more information about semantography.

It is not our role, at this stage, to propose solutions but rather to propose ways of reaching acceptable solutions and make the responsible bodies aware of the problems. While you may very reasonably feel that, if the matter is approached properly, there is only one proper solution, I think the realities of the situation may involve a compromise, or a partial solution, or a long-term approach and a short-term answer, or a solution which might satisfy a certain range of of informative and prohibitory needs, but which would not necessarily be part of a total system of visual communication, and this in its turn might be figurative or non-figurative. This is not to say that we should necessarily wholly approve of any of these alternatives. While we continually stress the need for fundamental research and far-sightedness, we are at the same time negotiating with the 'user' organisations who, naturally, sometimes find it difficult to see beyond the immediate needs. It is possible, for example, that it would be thought that a system which required the use of three or four separate elements, as in your No 4 Spitting, or Hotel, would be too complex visually.

These seem mere quibbles and, of course, you point out that signs can only be read 'right away' if the system has been learnt. This is true of virtually any system that is going to be sufficiently flexible to be useful. While we may think it of the utmost importance that a system should be learnt which will communicate everything from simple utilities to complex emotions, we are faced basically with trying to achieve the first step - a realisation that a better system (with particular reference to travel) cannot happen simply by reference to what is already in use. Naturally we would infinitely prefer it if we could talk in terms of long-term complete solutions - and be understood when we talk like this.

It may help to underline this point if I mention that I have recently received a request from the British Standards Institution for comments on an International Organisation for Standardisation enquiry as to whether it is desirable to investigate and achieve unification of travel signs. This enquiry seems to be based largely on knowledge of the U.I.C. work but, alas, it makes it clear that 'selection' is envisaged as a way of reaching a solution!

Might I suggest that you get in touch with the Australian Standards body to see if they have received a similar enquiry and to make sure that your views are known to them?

I am delighted that we shall be seeing your material at Bled. I hope that reaction to this and discussion on it might be fruitful.

With kindest regards,
Yours sincerely,
Peter Kneebone
Chairman

ICOGRADA Commission on International Signs + Symbols.

Meanwhile I have sent off a follow-up letter to my letter of June 6 and again addressed CONFIDENTIAL to the 4 top men of Icograda. In this letter I did not mince my words. As my Protest Paper was already with the printer I need not use any cajoling words, having realised that Icograda are not interested to support my work - or for that matter any other system of symbols. All they wanted to do is being busybodies at their congress. I therefore gave them a piece of my mind in this letter.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Dear Mr. de Majo
Dear Mr. Crouwel
Dear Mr. Gavler and
Dear Mr. Brattinga.

9th June, 1966

My first part of (what may well be) my last letter to you, may have infuriated

some of you, You dear Mr. de Majo have in^aprevious letter chided me for my "emotional" letters which look "amateurish" etc. It is therefore necessary to bring my outpouring into the right perspective.

I have solved a problem which has been considered impossible to realise. I have received the highest praise from eminent scholars. And yet, in my approaches to you and other people I go down on my knees almost literally. I crouch and cow-tow and cajol and beg and beseech, and do it without dignity and self-respect. Why do I humble and humiliate myself?

Because of two words which, to my astonishment, I have found written in German on the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales "ICH DIEN", I serve. From my earliest youth it has been my burning desire to serve mankind in some unheard-of-way. Now I have realised the dream of Leibnitz, the Symbolis Universalis, a simple pictorial international symbol language, which also contains a simple symbolic logic and semantics. How great, or how small is my achievement?

This is illustrated by Professor E.T. Bell in his biography of Leibnitz. He said: "The very diffusion of Leibnitz' genius made him capable of the dreams which Archimedes, Newton and Gauss missed, the "Universal Symbolism". Others may bring it to realisation. Leibnitz did his part in dreaming it to be possible."

And Professor O.L. Reiser continued: "Bliss realised the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz" (for these two quotations see page 12 of my book).

If my work and my name is mentioned on the same level as Archimedes, Newton, Gauss and Leibnitz, four of the greatest geniuses who ever lived, then I too must be considered a genius. My words and my letters must be measured quite differently. Moreover, you all know that Archimedes, Newton, Gauss and Leibnitz had their full measure of enemies who made life miserable for them, and within Icograda I have Mr. Kneebone. You must therefore take a hard look at his doings and undoings, because the reputation of Icograda and the success or failure of the Congress is at stake, nothing more or less.

In your previous letters dear Mr. de Majo, I searched in vain for the assurance that Icograda is going to promote my work at the Congress. I began to approach the prominent speakers at the Congress, and at last I wrote two personal and pleading letters to Mr. Kneebone himself. I enclose a copy of each letter and ask you to read them first and then continue here.

Why did he fail to accord me the meanest courtesy of an answer? He has time enough because you suggested that he will make slides of my symbols for his speech. Why then did he treat me with such contempt?

There is only one explanation: he is dead set against my work, because it shatters all his hopes that he and only he will be able to create an international symbol language, after much research and after spending even more money. Hence, the funeral letter.

I protest therefore, and I accuse Mr. Kneebone not only of not adhering to scholarly and academic courtesy and decency, but also of acting selfishly and unethically and last, but foremost, of gross incompetence in the matter of symbols. These accusations I am now going to prove.

In 1964 Mr. Kneebone announced research into "an international symbol language". Later he outlines a plan for donations of up to three quarters of a million dollars. What for, this staggering stick of money? For research, and also as he outlined for going to conferences. And he proceeded for support to organisations throughout the world.

He received an answer from the United Nations Association of Australia which answer was a bombshell. It shattered all his dreams for research and for going to conferences. He was informed that I have already solved the problem. As he approached organisations for much money, he must have been aware that his sponsors are interested in the solution of the problem by anyone, not only by Mr. Kneebone. It was therefore his duty to write to me immediately and to ask information about my work.

But he wasn't interested in any solution of the problem by anyone but himself. He kept quiet, and let me wait for months. And he kept silent even after my correspondence with you dear Mr. de Majo. And to this very day

Mr. Kneebone did not indicate that he is going to design symbols of his own. Had he done so, I am sure you would have sent me papers about his symbols. Furthermore, he expressively excluded research into and competition for better symbols for road safety. Instead he put students to work on symbols which are already oversymbolised for centuries, such as "a directional arrow", "men's and women's toilets" and others also utterly unimportant symbols. I have written about this futile work in my last letter.

But the worst is his impossible condition which he imposed about hapless students. He demanded from them designs for:

"symbols which must be directly intelligible to persons of all nations, of all degrees of intelligence, and of all ages."

Under this outrageous condition fall all the tots and toddlers of "all ages",

all the halfwits and nitwits of "all degrees of intelligence", of all nations" which includes the primitive tribes of Upper Chindwin in Burma, and Lower Slobovia in Al Cappland.

Imagine the poor students who racked their brains in desperation trying to design symbols for a "telephone", and "exchange bureau", a "museum" and a "historical monument" for "persons of all nations" who have never seen nor heard of such things, and who may not have a word in their language for them.

All these facts, taken directly from his papers, prove that this man has no idea about the working of symbols. In the name of the many art students who have wasted their time and talents on his impossible demands I protest, and I accuse him of gross incompetence.

Now what has Mr. Kneebone to say against my work. "It must be learned" and you dear Mr. de Majo expressed this conviction with these words:

"If the final system needs to be one which has to be learnt, then it might well have to be a non-illustrative system which can also easily be reproduced by some of the new machinery equipment such as computers."

If this is the opinion of Mr. Kneebone, it is the grossest nonsense I have ever heard. Does he think that toilet doors should contain binary code numbers of say 10010110010 to be scanned by a portable transistorised computer, which by some failure of a diode could land a man in the ladies' room?

The crucial words in the foregoing quote are of course "a non-illustrative system which has to be learnt". Mine is apparently "an illustrative system which has to be learnt". How much learning does it need? I hope that my photograph of 2 pages of a tourist folder has convinced you that the "learning" can be done instantly. But I have an even better proof for the instant learning of my pictorial symbols. I have sent you with the first part, a statutory declaration of Miss Maureen Bates. Read again her amazing story. She did this experiment during the weekend. I was not aware of it and I did not suggest it to her. And what she has to say will prove to you that Mr. Kneebone has not taken any time to study really the few pages dealing with my symbol elements, nor has he ever made any experiments as to how slow, or how quick grown-ups would "learn" my pictorial symbols, against his idea of binary codes 1001010001110 for men's and women's toilets.

All this lambasting and lamenting has only one purpose: to convince you four, the most important men of Icograda, that Mr. Kneebone has betrayed your trust, that he has not studied my work impartially and objectively, and that he has rejected it for selfish and unethical reasons. And this may have a lasting effect on the reputation of Icograda. Mr. Kneebone in his general speech will show some of my symbols and explain them, naturally not by raving about the ingenuity and simplicity of them, but the contrary. He will prove that my work is not the answer, and must be rejected therefore.

Now, you have allowed me 5 to 10 minutes for my paper. I won't be there, and so far, all my enquiries by letters to the state secretaries of ACIAA show that no designer from Australia will be coming to Bled. I thank you for the granting of 5 to 10 minutes. I shall not use them. Instead I shall send by airmail a number of illustrative papers of my symbols, and may everybody whether they be present at the Congress, or absent on sight-seeing, or away in the home anywhere in the world, just judge for himself as to whether I am wrong and Mr. Kneebone is right, or vice-versa.

Were I in Vienna, I would come down to Bled and deliver a withering counter-attack at Mr. Kneebone's speech and arguments. Though the congress is held in a country where freedom of speech is unknown, you all must provide the congress as a platform of free speech, where (as it happens sometimes at congresses) a bombshell is detonated which provides, if nothing else, a little diversion and attention at otherwise dreary proceedings. I intend therefore to write such a paper and have it printed in English, French and German for distribution. The question is whether you will distribute it. If you will, I shall in addition send the paper to all associations and important persons interested in the main theme of the Congress namely, "breaking the language barrier through signs and symbols."

I ask you to give kindly your serious thoughts to the question of what would happen if you would stifle my protest, and if you would let Mr. Kneebone prevail in condemning my work, and considering it unsuitable.

Invariably the reputation of Icograda would suffer, and it might never recover from such a setback, having denounced the only possible solution to the problem of "an international symbol language" which has been worked out by me only.

Mr. Kneebone can mention and can ridicule my work and my name in any way he wants to do so. In my counter paper I shall not once name him by name. Hence my criticism will be levelled not against Mr. Kneebone but against Icograda, and the way Icograda is handling the problem and is handling my work. And this is something you should allow, because it is within the meaning of free speech.

Lastly I wish to say that I was director of the patent department of a large electronic firm. I have fought dozens of patent litigations in the courts of a number of European countries including Holland and England against such giants of the industry like Philips and Telefunken. I have employed at times dozens of lawyers and I have won law suits against all odds. Documents to prove this are available for your inspection. Here in Australia I have fought a whole industry which infringed a patent of mine, and I have won. Again documents for your inspection are available. In short, I just love a good fight, and I for one know how to fight in court, and how to win, even against overwhelming odds. My lawyers have come to respect my legal knowledge, my determination and my ingenious handling of such court cases.

And all this leads up to the invitation to Mr. Kneebone to challenge me in any court he wishes. I shall be happy to meet him and to defeat him. If for nothing else than to prove that he is totally incompetent to judge my work, and to be the main speaker for Icograda.

In other words: the reputation of Icograda, and its future name is at stake. If you prevail to support Mr. Kneebone against me, you will weaken the support you have from the associations throughout the world. You will also lose the support of the organisations whom you want to serve by co-ordinating their symbols, etc. etc.

If on the other hand, you kick Mr. Kneebone off his pedestal as he deserves, if you reverse his stand and if you declare at the Congress that I am the only man in the world who has solved the problem for which this Congress has been convened then you will strengthen the position of Icograda, and you will have a great fundamental work to carry it to success,

I close again with the same words, which ended my first letter to you.

"I shall die soon, and I shall be glad to see that you are taking up my work."

I am,

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss.

P.S. Spare yourself any argumentative letter. Just tell me that you will distribute my paper of protest and my tourist folder and let me know how many copies I shall send by airmail to you c/- to Congress Secretariat.

My letter incensed de Majo and he wrote

Dear Mr. Bliss,

June 24, 1966

Your follow-on letter of June 9th has just arrived. I am amazed by its rather vitriolic contents and sad spirit, which are neither appreciated nor warranted.

It is one thing to be a fighter and another to be just aggressive. This certainly is not the spirit which we expect after all the goodwill and co-operation which we have shown you in the past.

You are wrong in practically all your accusations except one: Mr. Kneebone is, of course, at fault for not having written to you earlier, although I understand that a letter is meanwhile en route to you. His late reply certainly was in no way meant to convey discourtesy or animosity but purely due to overwork and that he felt I had, per interim, covered also on his behalf, any major general points. Until such time as he has been able to study your work properly and discuss it with other Commission members, he had no intention of making any specific comments.

I have neither "chided" you, nor ever, as far as I can recollect, told you that your letters are amateurish. All I tried to do was to suggest helpfully that even serious work presented over-emphatically or over-emotionally can sometimes appear to look amateurish. But then since you beg this point, you have an unfortunate habit of quoting and often out of context or without really being aware of all the facts.

There are many aspects and details which it is impossible to put into a letter or to discuss over such a long distance by correspondence. The result is that you are either not aware or do not always appreciate the tremendous complications involved in our work or the reason for some of our actions. If we can be accused of anything, it would only be that the title of Student Project 1 inadvertantly was a misnomer and should more clearly have been "Designing an International Tourist Sign System". As your work relates to a symbol language "alphabet", maybe this is where some of the misunderstandings between us occur.

You think you are quoting Mr. Kneebone on many occasions, when in fact you are quoting my views. Wrong as these may seem to you, at least I cannot be accused of not keeping an open mind. I am also at least willing to listen to what you and others may have to say, before forming a firm opinion. At the same time, I believe in friendly co-operation between people and in constructive criticism, as long as we can learn from our own faults and those of others.

Because we are all basically very sympathetic and appreciate your great enthusiasm and idealism and all the work which you have carried out, we have - I believe more than anyone else before - gone out of our way to spread the news about your work, as we feel all interested parties should know about it.

In doing so, at this moment without any comments, we felt that this was the fairest way as we want to study your book and the whole subject properly before coming to any conclusions.

Mr. Kneebone has never belittled your work, nor intended to talk about it critically. As I have already informed you, at the Bled Congress we are not going to propose any one particular system, but to draw attention to the basic problems and to tell everyone what is happening in the different parts of the world, as far as we have been able to find out.

Mr. Kneebone certainly never intended to carry out any designs or to create himself any system. This is not how we work in ICOGRADA.

As requested, we have now deleted your paper from the programme, which to us seems a pity, especially as after your request, we had gone to a lot of trouble to accomodate you.

If you send a leaflet and it is not polemic or offensive to anyone, we are still prepared to arrange for its distribution. We don't mind if it contains constructive comments or criticism, but certainly do not wish to enter into a slanging match with anybody. The number of copies required may be between 300-500 and they should be sent marked for my attention.

Finally, let me say this. If you feel that ICOGRADA is not of interest or benefit to you, then just let us forget about our co-operation in the future. Like yourself, we are all idealists and this is why we have put so much time, money and effort into all our work.

We do mean to carry out our work to our best abilities and with the co-operation of other leading visual communication experts. We are not willing to reach conclusions lightly, without having acquainted ourselves with as much detail as we can without carrying out at least fundamental research, even though we realise that we may have to compromise at various stages, when dealing with user organisations.

We certainly cannot afford time to engage in acrimonious correspondence, particularly when there is still so much constructive work left undone.

Yours sincerely,

W.M. de Majo

At last the tourist folder S.S. 280 and the Protest Papers "I protest and I accuse!" in 3 languages S.S. 283, 284, 285 were ready in envelopes and I sent them off with two different letters, the first printed herebelow addressed to the 4 top men, the second short letter in 3 languages (mimeographed) to go with every tourist folder and protest paper. Herebelow is the first letter.

Dear Mr. de Majo, Mr. Crouwel, Mr. Brattinga and dear Mr. Gavler. 1st July, 66

With my separate airmail letter I am sending you my paper of protest which will enrage you dear Mr. de Majo. But as you asked the world to give you half a million dollars, not for "co-ordination" only, but for the creation of an international symbol language, you could not dismiss my work and say that none had time to study it. It was your duty to do it and hence my protest. And it is your duty to circulate my protest among the leading men of the congress. I am a member of the Australian Icograda Association, and therefore my protest and my accusations must be dealt with properly.

I shall send you a number of copies of the paper to Bled. But for the small fry and students who come only for a holiday, I am sending you 300 tourist folders only. I am also sending you the same letters to Bled in case this letter does not reach you at home. In the same way I am sending to Bled additional second letters to the leading men and speakers, who have already received my paper of protest and tourist folder.

I ask you four also to be kind and bring your copies of my book to the congress. It is the most formidable counter argument against my work, because short-sighted people exclaim "For goodness sake, who is going to study all this?" Yet, men of vision (Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley, etc.) take one look and know that I have solved the problem. Here is what Professor Buckminster Fuller has to say in his letter of June 21, 66.

"I am greatly impressed with your book on "Semantography", and with your "Bliss" language. (If I were a different type I would have said 'It is Blissful'.) Your work is much too worthwhile to let any facetiousness enter in...there is no question about it, you have done some extraordinary fundamental thinking!"

Professor Buckminster Fuller knows that you have rejected my work.

However, you all have a chance to do what I outlined under action 4 accompanying my paper of protest. I hope you will do it in all fairness and thus bring the work of the congress to a successful conclusion. I am, with my best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss.

I mentioned especially the letter which the main speaker at the congress Professor Buckminster Fuller wrote to me.

To the speakers I wrote in English, French and German (mimeographed copy attached to this issue) the following English text.

To the leading officers of Icograda,
and to all speakers at the Icograda Congress.
Gentlemen,

Sydney July 1966

After having read my tourist folder, and my paper of Protestation, the following actions are open to you:

1. You may condemn me and my work. Then I shall fight you to the death - my death. And you will join all those who have opposed new ideas and their originators. And for this you will be remembered long after death - your death.
2. You may ignore me by "totschweigen" as the Germans say, a conspiracy of silence to kill the news of a work, and its originator. Reaction will be as in 1.
3. You may find some praising words of little meaning, like "valuable", "impressive", etc. Spare yourself this as reaction will be as in 1.
4. You may choose the only honest way open to all of you: Stand up and say that the problem has been solved, and that no further "research" is needed. And make an appeal to all mankind to adopt my work. If you do this, I shall bless you, because you will prolong my life. And humanity will bless you too for bringing to life a work which will help humanity.

Sincerely yours,
C.K. Bliss.

And herebelow is the text in English of my protest paper. I decided not to mention Mr. Kneebone as the culprit, but to speak only of "that man" who may be Kneebone, or de Majo, or anyone else.

Semantography-Blissymbolics Series No. 283

I P R O T E S T A N D I A C C U S E

Written for the Congress of Icograda (International Council of Graphic Design Associations) to be held in Bled, Yugoslavia, 11-16th July, '66.

By C.K. Bliss

Graduate of the University of Technology, Vienna
Inventor and Author of Semantography (Blissymbolics)
a complete international pictorial symbol writing.

For the main theme of the Congress:

Breaking the Language Barrier through Signs and Symbols

At the first Icograda Congress, in 1964 a leading Icograda man made a call for work on an "International Symbol Language"

He also made later another call for money, more than half a million dollars to be spent on "research", going to conferences, including all expenses, including grants, salaries, etc. He then approached organisations for financial support (see Icograda papers, 1965)

He received an answer from the United Nations Association of Australia which was a bombshell, shattering all his dreams of research, conferences and expenses. He was informed that an Australian scholar, C.K. Bliss, has already solved the problem, has written a book about it, and has received highest praise from eminent scholars. The reaction of that Icograda man to this news is the basis of this paper.

I protest against the treatment I have received from this man who calls himself "Chairman" of a "COMMISSION for international signs and symbols." I accuse him of discourtesy, selfishness and incompetence. In the following paragraphs I shall prove the truth of my accusations.

In his appeal for money he said:

"If because of Icograda's work, the lives of only a few people each year can be saved...if through the creation of an international symbol language...the present language barrier can be broken...all those who have contributed their work and financial support to the solving of this complex problem will have made a major contribution to the better understanding between peoples everywhere."

These words about symbols for saving lives are justified. Thousands of people are dying on the motor roads of the world because road warnings are mostly in the native languages not in pictorial symbols. But incredible as it may seem he excluded expressively work on road warning symbols which can save lives. Instead he instigated an art students competition for 24 symbols only, most of them are already symbolised for centuries, and others are utterly unnecessary, as the following examples will prove.

Who needs a new design for a "directional arrow?" We can see it everywhere. Who needs new designs for "men's and women's toilets?" We can see them in most hotels, cinemas etc. And who needs a symbol for "a historical monument?" When we stand before a statue of a statesman, or an old castle, do we need a symbol to be told that this is a "historical monument?"

But the worst is his condition which he imposed upon helpless art students. He demanded from them to design:

"Symbols which must be directly intelligible to persons of all nations, of all degrees of intelligence, and of all ages."

Under this outrageous condition fall all the tots and the toddlers of "all ages". all the halfwits and nitwits of "all degrees of intelligence", of "all nations". This includes the primitive tribes of Upper China in Burma and Lower Slobovia in Al Cappland.

Imagine the poor students who racked their brains trying to design symbols for an "exchange bureau", a "museum" and a "historical monument" for "persons of all nations" who have never seen nor heard of such things, and who may not have words in their languages for them.

All these facts, taken directly from his papers, prove this man has no idea about the working of symbols. In the name of the many art students who have wasted their time and talents I protest and I accuse him of gross incompetence.

He acted also discourteously and selfishly. A man who asks for more than half a million dollars for work on an "international symbol language" must realise that his money-givers want him to search and research far and wide for anyone who has already worked out such a language. It was therefore his duty to write to me for information immediately after hearing of my work. But today, after one long year he has not answered my polite and pleading letters.

At last in November 1965, I took the first step and send Icograda enough informative papers to prove that I have solved the problem. Later they received my book. Here are two of my last sentences from my first letter to them in which I refer to my old age:

"I wish to state that I don't want to make a single penny from my work. I shall die soon and I shall be glad to see that you are taking up my work."

(Copies of all my letters to Icograda are available to interested persons)

The letters I received then from the president of Icograda were non-committal until in his last letter of May 16th, 1966 he declared my work to be unsuitable, but said at the same time:

"None of us still has had time to really study your proposals in great detail".

And this after half a year! Time enough to study my papers and leaflets, I attach herewith my folder "Universal Pictorial Blissymbols for the International Traveller" and ask the reader to find out how long it takes to read through. Perhaps 15 minutes or a little longer. But the Icograda men couldn't find the short time to study my leaflets. Why not? Because they left all their studying to their "Chairman of the Commission for International Signs and Symbols". Hence all my protests and accusations are solely directed against that man, and if I speak of the "men" of Icograda, I want to say that they bear responsibility for letting that man influence them. They should have stopped him long ago.

That man, has he designed and published any system of symbols for an international language? NO! Have the other Icograda men done it? Again NO! What then does he do, and what then does he want to do? This becomes clear from his papers. He wants to travel to conferences with all expenses paid, and wants to do "research" by "co-ordinating" the creative efforts of others. For this he demands more than half a million dollars. My work puts an end to his dreams. Naturally he is against it and he has influenced the others.

What argument does he bring forth against my work? My symbols must be "learned". But he did not take the time to do some "research" to find out how quickly people "learn" my pictorial symbols. Educators and others have found that children grasp my pictorial symbols and write whole sentences within the first lesson. The reader may see from the attached folder how simple my symbols really are.

What right have I to protest and to accuse? I have solved this problem posed 300 years ago by the great mathematician Leibnitz: a universal symbolism, a complete symbol language, a simple system of pictorial symbols, containing also a symbolic logic and semantics.

Professor E.T. Bell, late of the California Institute of Technology wrote in his biography of Leibnitz:

"The very diffusion of Leibnitz' genius made him capable of the dreams which Archimedes, Newton and Gauss missed, the 'Universal Symbolism'. Others may bring it to realisation. Leibnitz did his part in dreaming it to be possible."

And Professor Oliver L. Reiser, of the University of Pittsburgh, stated in his lecture to the American Association for the Advancement of Science:

"Bliss realised the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz".

I am an old man at the end of my life. I have given my labours, my time, my earnings and savings for this idea and I have stated time and again that I don't want to make a penny out of it. I want to give it to all mankind.

I am aware that this paper may have legal consequences. But my quotes from the Icograda papers do not infringe any copyright because, according to international legal usage, short quotes for critical evaluation are no infringement of copyright. I am also not afraid of any court action for libel, because the truth is not libel.

Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me! C.K. BLISS

And now came the letter from de Majo in which he said that my protest paper and tourist folder (the two documents) were distributed to the delegates. This is simply not true. In later months I received an enthusiastic letter from a Japanese designer (I have not the correspondence at the moment, his name is Ota Yokio, and I shall make a separate S.S. of the symbols he has designed) who informed me positively that the protest paper WAS NOT DISTRIBUTED AND WAS NOT AVAILABLE ON THE TABLE WITH ALL THE OTHER PAPERS TO BE PICKED UP BY PARTICIPANTS. This gives the, well, let's say incorrect assertion of Mr. de Majo. He could not end this letter without saying that Prof. Buckminster Fuller (though he used fine words for my work) has offered some constructive criticism. This too is not true. He only proposed some symbols and I answered him why his suggestions would conflict with the whole system of semantography. Our correspondence is to be incorporated into a special issue of the Series.

And here is the letter of de Majo

Dear Mr. Bliss,

August 12th 1966

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 1st addressed to myself, Messrs. Crowel, Brattinga and Gavler and your circular letter of July as well as the two documents which you sent to Bled for distribution.

Your personal letters were distributed and your documents made available to the delegates. We also arranged to have available a copy of your book so that anyone wishing to study it could see it. Your work was also referred to on several occasions by Mr. Kneebone and other speakers and our delegates were also informed about the correspondence which we had with you since 1965.

If we did all this, it was not because we were either intimidated by your threats or your unwarranted and false accusations against Mr. Kneebone and myself, but only because we have nothing to hide or to be ashamed of and under the circumstances felt it was best to let everyone judge for themselves.

As I already indicated in an earlier letter, without prejudice, we do not wish to enter into either polemic or acrimonious correspondence, nor do we wish to take legal proceedings, even though most of your statements are ill founded, defamatory and libelous.

Your belligerent attitude is not conducive to co-operation and it is sad that you should have found it necessary to alienate the friendly spirit in which we offered you whatever assistance we could give.

Incidentally, we were interested to note that while you quote from Professor Buckminster Fuller's letter to you of June 21st, 1966 you omitted to quote other parts in which we understand he offered you some constructive criticism.

Yours sincerely,

W.M. de Majo.

It took me two months until I was able to answer his letter.

Dear Mr. de Majo,

Sydney 4 Oct, 66

Many thanks for your kind letter of August 12. I hope you will be kind enough to send me a copy of the congress protocol so that I can read whatever has been said for or against my work. I can always learn from counter-arguments.

I wonder whether you and your friends have realised what your congress has meant to me. Throughout 24 years of ridicule and abuse I dreamt that one day a congress on signs and symbols will be held, and there my work will receive the recognition it deserves. And then this very dream came true, a congress on signs and symbols. My spirits went down when half a year passed without any word from you and Mr. Kneebone who have been informed about my work, my name and address through the secretary of the U.N. Association of Australia. At last I wrote, and after that I wrote one passionate letter after another. And then came the shock when you informed me that you and your friends are not in favour of my work, though you admitted at the same time that ^{none of} you had any time to study it. This was a cruel and shattering experience. I thought I am having a nervous breakdown. I had to fight back. I had to. Every upright man including you and your friends would do likewise.

But suppose you would have told me that you are going to move the following motion, which no doubt would have been accepted unanimously by the congress because it is nothing but a string of empty words:

"This congress expresses its admiration to Mr. C.K. Bliss for his work on an international symbol language, and is resolved to bring it to the notice of all concerned, so that it may help to bring about international understanding across the language barrier."

There is no commitment whatever in these words, but they would have gladdened my heart. But it came otherwise. Why you had to write that cruel letter, I don't know. Surely not all leading Icograda men are with you. I have received encouragement and even orders for my book from leading Icograda men AFTER the congress. And I hope that you all will realise that all the organisations concerned will sooner or later realise that my system is the only possible way to express all meanings needed, not only the 40 - 50 meanings pictured in different ways

by the different organisations. Even they cannot picture INFORMATION, or RESERVATION, and least of all NO RESPONSIBILITY, etc. etc. no matter how much research is done.

I hope therefore that sooner or later a rapprochement will come about, and that you and Icoграда will co-operate in bringing my work to practical reality, though I may be dead by then having now entered my 70th year.

As to your remark in your last paragraph that I have omitted to quote the criticism of Prof. Buckminster Fuller, please be informed that I did so in order not to embarrass him. He criticised my horizontal earth line as conforming to the old belief that the earth is flat. I should have chosen a sphere. But I have, as shown on the pages 118, 248, 361, etc. complete even with the inclined earth axis. The horizontal earth line symbolises only a small piece on earth on which something is situated or is happening. So far as to the criticism.

Allow me to close this letter with a consideration which I am going to place before everyone who will come across the argument of my enemies that my symbols MUST BE LEARNED. They must be INSTANTLY UNDERSTOOD. So far, only a few symbols have been proposed and used, and even they NEED TO BE LEARNED. For instance, as I learned yesterday, on the doors of toilets in Yugoslavia shoes are painted, a low heel and a high heel to mean men's and women's toilets. This too must be learned. And so must the symbols invented by the travel organisations be learned, that an I means INFORMATION, and an R means RESERVATION. How pictorial indeed!

How long does it take for a traveller to learn the symbols in his travel guide and the symbols in his time tables? It takes them much longer than my symbols for travel. It may take perhaps half an hour to learn my pictorial symbols and combinations. But this is intolerable to my enemies. Instant understanding is their cry.

Now, how long does it take to learn a language, say German, or Russian, or Hebrew or Greek - or just plain English? It takes many years of study. Indeed, even native Englishmen are never in full command of the English language. They may know perhaps 20,000 to 50,000 words of the Oxford Dictionary, which contains over 500,000 English words. In contrast, how long does it take to learn Esperanto? Not much less. Even fervent Esperantists admit that it takes at least 2 years of study to be fluent in Esperanto. And this is supposed to be a fluent regular language.

But when it comes to the Blissymbols NOT EVEN 10 MINUTES OF STUDY are tolerated. INSTANT UNDERSTANDING IT MUST BE. But it can't be. It can never be. The symbol seekers have already reached an impass, and they can't go on. They only hope to be able to go on. - provided money is coming forth. But will it come forth?

A day will come when my enemies will be ashamed about the spurious counter-argument they have brought forth about my work, and against an old man who all the time insisted that he doesn't want a penny for himself. I hope to be alive when that day will come. I hope even to see some of my enemies become my friends.

I am with all my best wishes to you and your family and your friends.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.

And got the following answer.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

3rd November, 1966

We are hoping to publish a full report on the Congress early in the New Year. The publication price has not yet been fixed but will most likely be between \$15 and \$25.

I can assure you that all leading ICOGRADA executives are with me. I would never act without the approval or agreement of my colleagues. On the other hand neither I nor Mr. Kneebone have ever condemned or negated your work. Quite the reverse is the case. In fact it is only because we, and other ICOGRADA representatives, despite your abusive and unjustified accusation, have brought your work privately and in public speeches, to the attention of the Congress and other interested parties, that you have received certain orders for your book.

Your work has always been mentioned in terms of great respect. The Congress could not as a body, debate and pass the sort of formal motion that you suggest, nor was there any incentive to even consider such a motion, in view of your recent actions. Moreover, you have, in the past, said that you don't want just admiration expressed for your work. I am sure that if you had listened to our friendly and well meant comments and offer of support, instead of publishing an unnecessary attack, then even more people might be considering the work seriously and extending a helping hand.

We have never pretended that we have a ready-made solution available nor that the Student Project would provide one, although we hoped that it would highlight further important facts, which it has done. Also we have not said that the final solution can only be one which does not have to be learned. In fact in his letter to you of 24th June Mr. Kneebone said "...of course you point out that signs can only be read 'right away' if the system has been learned. This is true of virtually any system that is going to be sufficiently flexible to be useful."

A number of experts actually incline to the view that the long-term answer should be a diagrammatic, or abstract, system (not necessarily a "language").

In terms of practicalities, i.e. our endeavours to make the International Working Group in Paris understand the scale and seriousness of the problem, we are faced with very real difficulties. As Mr. Kneebone explained to you in his letter there is the basic conflict between the international 'user' bodies who want to sort out the present muddle quickly, with little method and minimum upheaval and ourselves who insist on the absolute necessity for long-term thinking in depth and involving all relevant disciplines. This is why we are in the process of initiating a research programme at certain universities and colleges. One of the colleges involved is being asked to order a copy of your book and your work will no doubt contribute fundamental evidence in any research with which we are connected. It is impossible to say more without prejudging the results.

There is no enmity towards yourself or your work on the part of ICOGRADA but we simply must press on with our work rather than waste time in countering unwarranted personal attacks.

Yours sincerely,
W.M. de Majo.

I did not answer this letter, and thus my connection with Icograda was finally broken - as far as I am concerned. But not as far as Mr. Kneebone is concerned. He had the temerity to issue an Icograda sheet on his Talk given at the 10th Congress of the Association Typographique Internationale UNESCO one week after deMajo's letter on the 10th November in which he said (and found it necessary to incorporate this blatant untruth in the Icograda sheet the following about my work:

"The practical use of Semantography, the pictogram "language" (and not system) created by C.K. Bliss, need full analysis. It is ^{the} most logical all-embracing concept existing, but two built-in disadvantages are that, because it is a language, certain key referents require a combination of an excessive number of graphic elements and also certain combinations which function grammatically may not be readily comprehended by certain linguistic groups."

To speak of "an excessive number of graphic elements" in my system is a shameless perversion of the truth, and to say this to a Unesco Conference is a dastardly attack too. How did I react to this?

When he approached me 3 years later for an article in PRINT and I learned from his letters that he is suffering from tuberculosis I offered him my help to get him out of foggy cold England and promised him an entry permit in Australia and accomodation in Sydney. "Come to sunny Sydney," I wrote "and you will regain your health."

These last lines to complete this sorry story are written in September 1972. I want to end this page showing the 24 symbols which have won the first prize, but I cannot find them at present in my papers. But they will turn up later, and I shall add them herebelow. They will come as a shock to the reader as only a few are faintly pictorial, some are utterly abstract, some utterly idiotic.

To
The Federal President, the State Presidents,
the Federal Secretary, the State Secretaries,
and to all other officers, and all members of the
Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists' Association

Sydney 22th June 1966
2 Vicar Street, Coogee,
N.S.W.

Dear Sirs,

Some time ago I sent out letters to all State Secretaries enquiring whether any Australian member will go to Europe and will be present at the Icograda Congress in July. I received a reply from the State Secretary of Tasmania, and South Australia that no member from these States will go to Europe. Last week someone in Sydney rang me up (unfortunately, due to my old age, I do not hear well, and hence could not make out his name). He told me that he will ring me up this week, and then we may discuss this matter. So far, he did not ring. Now Mr. Watson President of the Victorian Branch wrote me an urgent letter, after having conferred with Mr. Eaton, and asked me to submit my paper (which I want to be read at the Congress by a visiting Australian member), to him and to all other officers in order that a decision may be reached that the Association will sponsor my paper. I am very pleased with this idea, but in the meantime a drastic and dramatic change has occurred, which makes it very unlikely that the Association will sponsor my paper - unless the spirit of Australian mateship pervades you all, and you decide to stand by an Australian fellow, even if he cries out in protest against the treatment meted out to him by some leading member of Icograda. Because this is what happened, and it causes me still sleepless nights.

I shall try now to give you an account of the happenings of the last year. I am ready to submit to you all my polite and pleading letters to Icograda, so that you may see for yourself that what I am saying is the truth. Unfortunately, due to the pressing time, I cannot make any draft of this my letter, and therefore type it directly on to the waxstencil. You must therefore excuse all the shortcomings of this letter and its duplicated copies.

I am the inventor and author of "Semantography" a complete pictorial symbol writing. The first edition of my 3 books are in the university and public libraries of most Australian States. The second edition in one volume is just out. Great scholars have given great praise to my work. The Australian Government asked the National University of Canberra for an appraisal of my work, and when this proved favourable, the Government recommended my work to the United Nations, because the U.N.O. has sent out a call to all nations to develop pictorial symbols which can be read and understood in all languages. In fact, leading men in the travel and tourist trade, in the railways, shipping and airlines, etc. have realized that the greatest handicap to pleasant travel is the Babel of languages, and that only pictorial symbols which can be read in all languages is the only answer. And in a number of offices men are sitting trying to design such symbols.

And here is where Icograda comes in. At the 1964 Congress a leading man who calls himself "Chairman" of a "Commission for international Signs and Symbols" made a call for work on "an international symbol language." Later he made another call for money, and much money at that, over half a million dollars to be spent on research, going to conferences with all expenses paid, grants, salaries, etc. He also instigated a students competition for 24 symbols. And he sent out letters for financial support to organisations in various countries, including Australia. The United Nations Association of Australia answered with a bombshell. He was informed that an Australian scholar with the name of C.K. Bliss has solved already the problem. My address was given, but that Icograda man did not bother to write to me, and in fact up to this very day he has not written, and has even ignored my polite and pleading personal letters. This is a discourtesy, but also an expression of contempt. Naturally, because there is now little left for him to do in the way of research, conferences, etc. etc.

At last, I wrote to the Secretary General of Icograda, and submitted a number of informative papers and brochures, and later my book, to prove that I have indeed solved the problem. The President Mr. de Majo answered, and his letters were friendly and polite throughout all our correspondence. I personally was delighted that Icograda has become interested in this idea, and all my hopes went high. Here are the last sentences in my first letter to Icograda, where I refer to my old age:

"I wish to state that I don't want to make a single penny from my work. I shall die soon, and I shall be glad to see that you are taking up my work."

It was in this spirit of hope and happiness that I decided to join the Australian Association. I felt that I have to do it in all fairness, now that Icograda takes an interest in my work. I was an artist since I learned to draw and paint in the highschool, but I did not make a living by it. I went to see Mr. M. Hurtz a leading member of the N.S.W. branch, showed him my work and my book and my drawings, paid my fee, and in due course became a member of your esteemed association. However, there were some disturbing features in the conditions for the art students competition, and in May a member from Tasmania visited me here in Sydney and showed me his designs for the competition, which unfortunately he could not submit, having learned too late of it, and therefore missed the date line for submissions. His troubles with his designs convinced me that something is very wrong with the competition conditions, and that an injustice has been done to all students who competed. However, this competition of 24 symbols only, has nothing to do with my work, and therefore I concentrated on the main point, to win support from Icograda at the Congress. Here however, another disturbing feature became apparent. Mr. de Majo was very friendly, but I could not find in any of his letters a firm will to support my work. All my hopes centred on the Congress, and I began to approach some of the leading men and speakers of the Congress, submitted my papers and asked for support. In addition I conceived the idea of a short paper to be read by a visiting member from Australia. This is where I wrote to all State Secretaries. In addition to work on this paper, I worked also feverishly on a short tourist folder, showing my symbols for the international traveller. And here is why.

As told before, officials in various offices of railways, airlines, etc. are trying to design pictorial symbols for travellers. And the main idea of that "Chairman" is to visit these officials and to convince them that Icograda should be the main body to co-ordinate all their efforts. Mr. de Majo informed me that they had a number of conferences in Paris, and elsewhere with these officials, and that they met stiff resistance and are "downhearted" about it. I thought then that a small tourist folder will convince Icograda, and will help Icograda to convince those officials that my work is indeed the answer to their problems. I received yesterday the first copies of this folder from the printer, and I hastened to send them to all leading members of Icograda, and now to you.

And then came the bombshell, before I had the folder ready for the printer. Mr. de Majo informed me that Icograda will not sponsor my work. At the same time, he admitted that no one had really the time to study my work in detail. From all the letters it became clear to me that behind the opposition against my work is one man only, that Chairman and instigator of the Student Competition. Naturally, because my accomplishment shattered all his dreams. I hope you will understand the utter turmoil which fell upon me, seeing that all my work for the support by Icograda, all my letters to them, and others were all wasted. And feeling too that injustice has been done to me, and to all competing students. No man would stand such treatment. I had to tear up my paper which I prepared for the Congress. I wrote too long letters to the leading men of Icograda (which are available for your inspection) in which I pointed out the great injustice, and asked then that a paper of protest be read at the congress. So far, I have not yet received a reply from Mr. de Majo. If he agrees to this democratic and parliamentary procedure, well and good. If he refuses to have my paper of protest read at the congress, I shall then submit it to all member associations.

And now to your dilemma in this situation, and mine too. I wish I had never applied for membership, now that I have become a rebel and revolutionary and an outcast. Miracles don't happen. I can't believe that the Australian Association will approve of my paper of protest. Besides there is not enough time for all officers of all States to discuss my paper. On the other hand, there is a parliamentary procedure which you may well adopt. It is the "private bill" which a member of parliament may bring in, even if his party does not approve of it. In my case, you may dissociate yourself from my paper, and you may declare that it does not represent the view and will of the Association, and that you don't approve of it. You may go even further, and expel me from your association. In this case, I would be willing to assist you in tendering my resignation. As said before, I am an old man, and I prefer to go down fighting. I shall wait until the end of June for Mr. de Majo to reply to my suggestion that the paper be read at the Congress. On the 30th of June I shall send you a number of copies and you may by telegram cable your final decision, and dissociation from it, by addressing your telegram to the Congress Secretariat, c/o Mr. de Majo. However, I still hope that some of you will support a great idea, and the man who worked it out. We Australians should show the men "up over" that here "down under" are men with the true pioneers' ^{spirit} in their veins. We shall prevail. I remain
Yours sincerely
C.K. Bliss, B.Sc.

Enclosure: Tourist Folder No. 280