



Semantography Series No. 257

THE SAFETY OFFICER AND THE
UNSAFETY OFFICER

Manuscript of an article by C.K. Bliss for the journal of the Industrial Safety Officers after Bliss' lecture to them (see text in SS.247)

Two years ago two articles appeared in the Sun-Herald of Sydney about my work Semantography (from the Greek words "a meaningful writing"). It is a writing more meaningful than ordinary writing in English, or French, or any other language. A road warning written in semantography can be read in all languages, because semantography is a system of simple pictorial symbols.

When I started on it 24 years ago, I was encouraged by the trend in road safety signs. More people die on the highways of the world than in many a war. Motorists travel^{se} countries in a matter of hours, and some die in a matter of minutes if they cannot read the road warning written in the native languages.

Because of this senseless slaughter, a few pictorial symbols have been adopted for road safety. A bent arrow means A BEND IN THE ROAD AHEAD in all languages. It can be quickly grasped in high speed and blinding rain, in the dark of the night, and even in the stupor of liquor. More than 35 years ago the League of Nations worked out more pictorial symbols. But few states adopted them.

When I had worked out my symbols for any meaning needed on the road, in commerce and industry, and even in science, 3 large volumes were filled. You can find them in Sydney libraries, and in libraries of all five continents. The librarians realised that here is an idea which will be used by all future generations.

When my books were out in 1949 I was full of hope. I felt that national and international road safety authorities will take my work to their hearts and use it, the more so as I stated that I don't want a penny for myself, nor a salaried post, not even recognition. "Take it, and use it, and stop the slaughter on the roads!" I cried. But I cried in vain.

I peddled it from one authority to another. "Give me a chance," I said, "at one of your committee meetings, to prove to you that I can picture in simple symbols any road warning needed in road safety!" But I never got my chance. Instead I was told "Mr. Bliss, you are not going to tell us how to run our business!"

And what is their business? The daily and nightly maiming, mutilating and massacring of tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children. Today, 17 years later after my approaches to them, we have a new Australian code of road warning signs, comprising 95 different road warnings. Of these only 14 are pictorial, being variations of the old arrow symbol. All others are in words only. I have pleaded to deaf ears.

This code of road warnings has been taken over from the American code. But in America different states have different codes. However, the state of Texas has more pictorial symbols than any other state. Why haven't the other states taken the Texas code to their heart? Why haven't they - and Texas too - adopted the pictorial symbols of the League of Nations? Is it because the officials said "Neither Geneva, nor Texas, nor Mr. Bliss is going to tell us how to run our business?"

I went to the Alma Mater. The words are Latin and mean "The Fosterin^g Mother". By these words that institution is meant which is the fostering mother of all new ideas, the university. I lectured at Sydney University to students on my work for the use in physics and chemistry, in geology and other sciences. I showed that the greatest handicap to worldwide co-ordination in scientific research is the Babel of languages in which too many scientific publications are printed. I showed how research report cards written in the language of the university and in my symbols can be read by scientists of all languages.

The students were enthusiastic about my work. The professors were apathic. My good wife Claire wrote thousands of letters to thousands of professors in hundreds of universities all over the world. She wrote her heart out. There was no response. In utter unhappiness she fell seriously ill, and went down and down for 8 long years until she died in desperation in 1961. I am now 69. I shall follow her soon.

"What is the difference between a crank and a pioneer?" I often cried. "The difference is small. Only 6 feet above or below ground. Only when the crank is dead for good, only then is he exhumed, extolled - and exploited. But he must be dead first in order to be proclaimed a pioneer of a new idea."

I went to the N.S.W. Chamber of Manufacturers. I explained that New Australians are working in most Australian factories to whom English is a foreign tongue. I showed my pictorial symbols for safety warnings in factories. I gave the director my issue of the Semantography Series No. 42 titled INDUSTRIAL EMERGENCY SYMBOLS IN SEMANTOGRAPHY in hundred^s of copies. I asked only for a chance to address the safety committees in N.S.W. factories. My papers went into the dustbin, and I didn't get a hearing.

And then, 15 long and bitter years later, I got my hearing. The officers of the N.S.W. Branch of the INSTITUTION OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY OFFICERS Mr. A. Goyot, Mr. H.A. Wade and Mr. R.A. Cole have read the articles in the Sun Herald, and they invited me to address their members on the 8th October, 1965.

It was as if a dam had burst. All the bitter memories of my futile approaches to the authorities welled up in me. I sat down to my typewriter as I always do, when I type my thoughts for any forthcoming lecture. I type directly onto the wax stencil to be duplicated as a permanent record, and to be distributed free to my listeners who want to take my lecture home to study it in earnest.

But this time my paper became a "book" of over 20,000 words, I wrote not only about the safety precautions on the roads and in the factories. I cited every instance where valuable lives are wasted. I cried about the children who die by swallowing lethal doses of tablets, I cried about the wives and mothers who die a sudden death at the electric washing machine. I wept about the tragedies caused by the draughts, when great water basins are beneath the Australian soil, waiting only to be tapped. And I showed who is responsible for this. And I tried to show the way to overcome all these tragedies. If you are interested you can order my paper (Semantography Series No. 247).

The small first edition (1949) of my 3 volumes were out of print years ago. In order to get the money for a second enlarged edition in one handy volume of 882 pages, I mortgaged my home. In order to repay the mortgage I have to sell the books. Though I sell them below cost, postage fee and bookseller's margin add up to a retail price of \$10.80. I give libraries, including factory libraries a 25% discount, which brings the price down to \$7.00 below my ^{own} cost.

Fifteen years ago I went to the C.S.I.R.O. and begged the money spent on my book shall be declared a tax deduction, because my work helps the nation, industry and science. I begged in vain.

Now I use this article to appeal to all safety officers in industry to acquire my book for their factory libraries. In addition, I am willing to help each safety officer with his particular problem in his factory. I hope that my appeal to all of you will be favourably received by your management. A few dollars spent which will bring more safety and less accidents, less sufferings, less waste in manpower and material, is surely a very good and cheap investment.

You can order the book, and the paper on my lecture to the safety officers (No. 247) and my approach to the N.S.W. Chamber of Manufacturers (S.S. No. 42) for \$8.40 from Semantography (Blissymbolics) Publications, 2 Vicar Street, Coogee, N.S.W. I shall be grateful and happy about your active interest.

Now looking back at the title of this article, you may ask "Who is the Safety Officer, and who is the Unsafety Officer? By now you should be able to answer this question.

I wrote then the following two letters (after some phone conversation)
Dear Mr. Cole, 21st March, 1966

Here is the article you wanted on exactly three foolscap pages. I have written it out of my heart, and I hope it will have the desired effect. You will see that I have closed my article by announcing the new second edition of my book, and I have made an appeal to all safety officers to acquire it for their factory libraries. In return I have offered myself to all of them to help them in every particular situation where they want a pictorial safety symbol installed.

I appeal now to you, to Mr. Wade and Mr. Goyot to support my plea in a few lines right behind the article, and I express my thanks in anticipation.

Knowing what devilish tricks printing machines can do, I suggest that you tell your printer to send me a galley proof of the pages which contain my article. I will scrutinize it immediately, and will send it back with my corrections with the next mail. In addition I shall call up the printer to tell him on the telephone if no corrections are needed, or might tell him beforehand what corrections he can make, even before receiving the proof back.

I don't know whether the institution of safety officers has a library, but in any case I propose to you to acquire one copy for the institution so that the officers and members can borrow it and study it. In addition I shall be most grateful to you if you would kindly advise, in writing, other branches of the availability of my book, and suggesting to them that they too might acquire a copy. I have even in mind that you should put this suggestion to your headquarters in London.

As said in my article I had to mortgage my home in order to pay for the printing, and the special price of \$7.90 is actually below my own cost. If I

fill the order of a bookseller I lose heavily. But this is as I want it. I never thought of making money out of it, and indeed my will consists mainly of the direction to my executor to distribute free all the copies of my book and all other writings to important libraries in the world. He is also advised to sell my home and to print more copies for distribution.

You will remember that I responded immediately and happily to your proposal to give a lecture and now to write the article and I don't mind all my time, labour and money, because I think it is well spent. If only one child or one man in a factory will be saved through my symbols it will be a great reward.

Please give this letter to Mr. Goyot and Mr. Wade to read, and if you think that you can acquire a copy of my book, I shall be most grateful to you.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

Dear Mr. Cole,

Only today do I find the time to write to you and to thank you for your kind thought to include in your forthcoming journal a list of my books.

You may know that it is customary to give authors who don't get paid for their articles what is called "Reprints". If you would kindly advise your printer to take the typeset of my article and to print say 50 reprints on separate sheets I shall be grateful, because I shall distribute them to people interested in this field. However, if your journal is printed by photo-offset this procedure would entail the making of a new plate. In this case I shall be grateful if I could get say 20-50 of the pages containing the article and also one or two complete copies of the journal.

If, as said in the beginning, your journal is typeset printed then the printer may put a line on top which may run somehow as follows:

Reprint from (follows the title of the journal) by kind permission of the editors.

If the printer has any doubts please tell him to ring me up. Meanwhile I am, thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

The article never appeared and I received no letter of thanks or acknowledgement.

The End.