

BLISS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
FOR TRAVEL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN
PARIS

See also S.S. No. 249, Icograda and S.S. No. 262, IATA and ICAO

When I was an industrial executive in Vienna I had sometimes to deal with the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, and the more I saw of the activities of this "Chamber" the more did I wonder what the real activity behind this Chamber really is. In later years I found out. Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Manufacturers, Chambers of this and that Trade and more than often nothing more than fronts for political hand-outs of money to the political parties whether they are in the government or in opposition to it. In the U.S.A. they have at least found an honest word for it "lobbying". I have given much thought to this meaning and I have designed a significant symbol for it (see "Semantography" p. 621) showing what is really going on - not in the government committees, not in the parliament and in the senates, but what is really going on in the lobbies of parliament, of committees, of hotels, or restaurants and nightclubs anywhere where money can change hands in return for a good word and a good law to protect this or that industry, or to stop this or that law which may allow perhaps for the importation of cheaper goods to be enjoyed by the people who cannot pay for the same goods at much higher prices charged by their own industries who always profess that they have the welfare of the people at heart.

The men who slip money into the hands of the party bosses are very few and remain in the background and the backroom. In front are - who? I have found ^{out} in Europe and just yesterday I found out with a great country that the men who are the bureaucrats of the chambers and the trade commissioners are more than often the "unemployables". They are not traders, and they are not manufacturers, and more than often they wouldn't be able to sell a cake of soap, but they have one great asset, they are more than often nephews of aunts whose husbands are ministers or higher government officials. Thus they are appointed to important posts which are only important as far as the salary is concerned and they do usually nothing or next to nothing. All they can is perhaps open the trade directory of their country and advise prospective traders and manufacturers to contact this or that manufacturer or trader. They don't even do this. They have their employees to do it, and they themselves are more than often those "unemployables", nephews of ministerial aunts and the like. I have attended a number of times conferences in these chambers and have found that I and the other manufacturers could easily come to an agreement without those meddling ignoramus who have to show that they are busy, busy, busy. Sometimes they issue certificates of origin and other forms which are created for no other purposes than to employ some "unemployables". Sometimes we read in the papers that a trade mission is going to this or that country, but this is done only for the padded expense accounts. The real deals with imports and exports are done between the men who manufacture the things and who sell or buy, not by the bureaucrats in the Chambers of Commerce, and the like.

Well, it had to come - an INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. But where? The obvious place would be the most important international Forum be it either the League of Nations in Geneva, or the United Nations in New York. But Geneva is a dreadful Calvinistic place with sinful nightclubs not worth their name. New York in turn is also not good because they are snooping reports and photographers who could catch those wheeler-dealers in the act of enjoying themselves or with this or that government man.

The obvious place for the frontmen, the officials of the national Chambers of this or that is therefore Paris, les girls olala, the city of sin, the city where one can really enjoy oneself with the taxpayers money. And thus the International Chamber of Commerce is situated in Paris in order to accomodate those officials who come to important (for them) conferences and go home after having achieved nothing or nothing but some minutes of meetings with important speeches on this or that.

I did not know of that International Chamber until it appeared in the letters which I received from Icograda, the self-appointed International Council of Graphic Design Associations. Somehow or other, these designers have designed

symbols for this or that and a Babel was threatening to engulf all signs and all symbols of all sign and symbol designers. No wonder that the officials of that International Chamber of Commerce recognised the opportunity to rise to the occasion and to begin to be busy in some "co-ordination" efforts.

At that time, the most important effort in pictorial symbols has been made by the Union International of Chemins de Fer, the Union of International Railways. They have used symbols for the last 100 years when the first dining and sleeping cars came into use, and they have used 2 crossed forks, and the outline of a bed on the time tables of most countries. Now they had added some 30 more symbols. And this was the signal for the designers to jump to the occasion and to criticise the symbols used and to promise better signs - for a fee of course, but before these signs and symbols are designed much research must be introduced which would cost a lot of money. Icograda asked for half a million dollar for a start.

And as Icograda told me about the "co-ordination" efforts of the International Chamber in Paris I wrote to them the following letter:

Mme. Marcelle Kling,
Chef de Group, Transportation et Communication,
Chambre de Commerce Internationale,
38 Cours Albert ler, PARIS VIIIe, France.

Sydney 26 Sept, 66

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Forgive me not writing to you in French. I learned 7 years French in the high school and cannot write a letter. I lived one year in England and learned to write and speak English. And this fact highlights the difficulty which foreigners encounter who come as a traveller into a country and can't understand warning signs, and other important inscriptions in railways, airports, and public places.

I have been told that the International Chamber of Commerce is actively interested in the promotion of pictorial symbols which could be understood in all languages. I am also aware that an organisation in England called Icograda tries to be accepted as ultimate arbiter of such universal signs. I know too that the Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer has actively designed a number of pictorial signs which are already in use in the railways connected with the U.I.C.

I wonder then if you and your co-workers would be interested in my work which I started in 1942, a complete international symbol writing for all fields of international communication, commerce, industry and even science. The second edition of my work SEMANTOGRAPHY (Blissymbolics) came out this year, and I am enclosing a small Sample Tourist Folder to show you what my symbols can do. I shall be pleased if the International Chamber of Commerce would acquire my work for your library, and I am prepared to grant you the 25% reduction in price for libraries which brings the price down to \$9.00 post paid.

However, please do not think that I am eager to sell my book in order to make a profit. I am now in my 70th year, and all the time it was my desire to give my work to all humanity for common use. Only my great expenses force me to sell the copies. I would be only too glad to sell you one copy free of charge, but even the price of \$9.00 is below my selfcost. You would honour me by acquiring the book, and I am looking forward to your order, for which I thank you in anticipation.

It is easy to prefer the symbols worked out by U.I.C. when compared with my more abstract and analytical symbols. Surely the U.I.C. symbols are truly pictorial. But to all who work in this symbol designing it is common knowledge that only few meanings can be pictured in complete pictures. For instance it is impossible to picture the words NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR VALUABLES LEFT IN THE HOTEL ROOM. PLEASE DEPOSIT THEM IN THE OFFICE, and other complex meanings. But it is very easy to write these sentences (or any other sentence) down in my symbols. Consider the fact that every railway time table contains various abstract symbols like + etc, which tells the traveller that this train does not go on Sundays, and that the train....etc. In short, every traveller who goes on travel is forced to study timetables and directions with lots of symbols. It should then not be any difficulty to distribute travel folders like mine for menus in restaurants, for museums, for consulates, for sightseeing, etc. etc.

Please let me know whether you are interested in my work and in further discussions I am no fool to ask that present symbols should be abandoned. But my complete system could be of use as an auxiliary communication system in pictorial symbols. Awaiting your response, I am

Yours sincerely
C.K. Bliss.

As the result was silence I wrote again.

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 31 Oct 66.

You may have received my letter of September 26 in which I acquainted you with my work Semantography, a complete set of abt. 100 pictorial symbols which

can be used in combination for any meaning needed in international communication, transport, commerce, etc. etc. I have also sent you a Sample Tourist Folder showing my symbols for the international traveller.

Surely, you are very busy, and had no time to reply to my letter. There is no hurry. But I shall be much obliged to you if you could send me the set of my symbols which the International Chambre of Commerce has developed or proposes to develop for international Transport and Communication.

I am ready to send you immediately my bankdraft for the cost of these papers together with the cost of the airmail, and shall be happy and grateful if you would send them at your earliest convenience. Your symbols are very important to me, and I hope that this my letter will be acted upon soonest. I thank you in anticipation, and am,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

And received the following letter.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

4th November, 1966

International Signs and Symbols

I am so sorry that because I was late in answering your letter of 26th September you went to the trouble of writing again.

I had by no means lost sight of your first letter which, unfortunately, reached me only on 30th September, that is, after two days of discussion on the question of international signs and symbols.

As always after a meeting of that sort, some time must elapse before the decisions reached can be implemented: the ICC has been entrusted with this task, in co-operation with the airport associations.

The only thing I can do today is to send you the summary record of our Consultation of 27th-28th September. As you will see from it, it was decided to send a letter to all those concerned, and you will undoubtedly be among those receiving this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Marcelle Kling
Head of Group.

I shall now reprint excerpts from that

Document No. 398/29 25 October 1966 on Consultation INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

A consultation between international organisations concerned with tourism took place at International Headquarters of the ICC, 38 Cours Albert Ler - Paris VIII, on Tuesday 27th and Wednesday 28th September 1966, under the chairmanship of Mrs. M.R. Kling, Head of the Group "Transport and Communications" of the ICC, assisted by Mr. A. Nair, Assistant Secretary General of the International Union of Official Travel Organisations IUOTO.

International signs and symbols

It was decided that a draft letter to the other international organisations interested in pictograms, reflecting the opinions expressed during the discussions, would be submitted to the participant organisations before being sent to the others.

Place and date of the next meeting

It was decided:

- to hold a meeting early in 1967
- to accept the invitation from the World Touring and Automobile Association (OTA) to hold one of the forthcoming consultations in London.

1. INTERNATIONAL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

The first part of the meeting, stated Mrs. Kling, brought together as on April 1, 1966 representatives of organisations which have been co-operating since 1960 with a view to developing international tourism, as well as representatives of other organisations which the first group had specially invited in order to study with them the specific problem of signs and symbols which may facilitate travel and tourism.

Following the 3 sessions of the Working Party constituted on April 1, the meeting had before it the following two documents:

- the one, circulated in advance as No. 398/22, was a series of proposals whose purpose was to make the working party official:
- the other, circulated during the meeting, was a collection made by Mr. Sevray (WEAAC), at the request of the working party, of pictograms corresponding to the list of information retained by the working party as being of common interest and published as an appendix to its latest report (Doc. 398/19).

Now Mr. Kato is turning up, the "Director" of that incredible and inefficient and more in-in-in and impotent "International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier" in New York. My dealings with that man and with one of his employees are contained in the issues S.S. 237 and S.S. 271.

A letter was read from Mr. Kato (International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier - (ICBLB), unable to attend the meeting: he reported having accumulated much information which might be helpful to the international

organisations and offered to co-operate by serving as a "clearing house". The discussion then turned to Doc.

Mr. Popliment (International Federation of Travel Agencies - (FIATV) first reported that the International Federation of Travel Agencies (FIATV) is about to merge with an organisation comprised of agencies which are not FIATV members and that he was thus authorised to speak for all of them. He further stated that it was at his own request that he did not belong to the working party since there did not seem to be any active role to play on behalf of tourists, who have only to read pictograms and therefore want them to be as simple and uniform as possible.

Having examined with interest the work done by the working party, he stated that he had no comment to make.

Mr. Nair reported that he had distributed the list of pictograms to IUOTO members, but had not yet been able to gather the views of distant regions. Observing that it is mostly very general signs which appear on the list, he would like efforts to be continued in a more touristic direction, dealing especially with museums, historic monuments, views, bathing sites, etc.... He further suggested that the English translations be revised specially with a view to the international tourist year.

Now Mr. Kneebone turns up that sorry "Chairman of the Commission for Signs and Symbols of Icoграда" of whom I had written quite a lot in S.S. 249, also in S.S. 283, 284 and 285 and later too. He had done what he could to discredit my work, though he slipped in some good words too in order ^{not} to make his displeasure too obvious, because I had done what he wanted to do for the pittance of one half million dollars.

Mr. Kneebone (International Council of Graphic Design Associations - (ICOGRADA) expressed his regret that he had not been able to attend the June 28 meeting and made four observations concerning Doc. 392/22.

1. The proposals made in the document departed from the principles which ICOGRADA had outlined on April 1, in a quite disinterested spirit, and not activated by narrow professional interest.
2. The measures proposed were too empirical, confusing ends with means, and the urgent and the essential.
3. While these measures would not solve the problem, ICOGRADA did not want to be negative and was ready to co-operate in any useful way.
4. While pursuing the spirit of friendly co-operation, ICOGRADA reserved the right to criticise developments openly from a constructive and not a hostile standpoint.

Mrs. Kling recalled that since document 398/22 was a compromise, it inevitably included departures from opinions on either side. Although it would have liked to do more scientific work, the working party was faced with the fact that some pictograms already exist, which meant that it was impossible to make an entirely fresh start.

Mr. Rojinsky (International Civil Airports Association) - (ICAA) affirmed that a more rigid grammar would have been desirable but that in drawing up the list, by no means - all inclusive, of 59 items of information, the working party first tackled the limited task of establishing signs of general interest.

Among the existing pictograms - most of which had been created by the International Union of Railways (UIC) - those of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) of airports and of the Tokyo Olympics have been studied. Moreover, the situation was rapidly changing: certain airports recently began using pictograms which the UIC had not yet adopted. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) was also studying the question, which had thus taken on an urgent aspect. Perhaps it should have been dealt with earlier, but it is necessary to be represented at future meetings in order to avoid an anarchic proliferation. The philosophy behind the proposals may not be satisfactory, but the working party had to do a rush job.

It may be a bit awkward, Mr. Nair said to support the working party's effort which were only in their early stages, while pictograms were already used in other organisations. But there is urgent need to accelerate co-operation between those various organisations and the working party: Mr. Nair stressed again the need for it to tackle the problem of signs concerning tourism.

Mr. Kneebone inquired whether a letter had been sent to all the organisations concerned to ask them to use new pictograms before a certain time, and whether it was planned to undertake, not only the most urgent first aid, but also more long term research. Mrs. Kling replied that the first task proposed at point 4 of Document 398/22, was recisely that of checking proliferation, and that the end of the same document advocated long term methods. Before carrying out these proposals, the working party needed the agreement, requested today, of all the international organisations.

Mr. Rojinsky asserted that the working party's wish was to contact the other organisations in order to try to moderate their creative urge, but not without having consulted as a whole the organisations which had assigned it this

task and in whose name a united step could be taken. Then a long term program would have to be established, including progressive creation of a grammar.

Mr. Miller reported that the IATA did a vast amount of work in this field before stating its position in a guide which is soon to appear: the same is true of an American airports committee and of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

After these general statements, Mr. Mercier (Institute of Air Transport) - (ITA) considered that it was all the more necessary to reach an agreement on concrete decisions concerning the creation of the committee proposed at point 1 of document 398/22 and the steps which it should be requested to take.

As the Committee's title, Mr. Kneebone pointed out the semantic confusion which can be caused by the use of the word "pictogram" alone, referring only to the figurative method, whereas the road signs already in wide use are abstract, a fact which will undoubtedly lead to deriving inspiration from them. Moreover, it should be emphasised that it is travel and tourism that are involved.

Mr. Nair supported this viewpoint. Mrs. Kling stated that the group had been faced with a dilemma since the title without being too long, had to show that it was a committee of non-governmental organisations (ONG) concerned with travel and tourism. Thus, for the sake of brevity, the word "pictogram" had replaced "signs and symbols".

Mr. Poplimont observed that "signs and symbols" was still vague: Mr. Mercier acknowledged that "pictogram" was more incisive, but stated that it covered only a part instance, dangerous goods, in order to avoid going too near them.

Mr. Nair would not like to sacrifice meaning in favour of brevity, while Mr. Depret would like to simplify as much as possible.

Mr. Rojinsky and Mr. Sevray both felt that there was no point in dragging out this semantical argument when urgent action was needed. At last the following title was chosen: International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols (Committee of non-governmental organisations).

Concerning the composition of the committee proposed at point 2, Mr. Kneebone urged that there should not be an implied difference of status or quality between the NGOs concerned with tourism and the "expert" bodies: the fact that intervention could be planned in two "staged" might imply that the two sorts of organisation would function at different times.

Mr. Rojinsky recalled that this classification was intended to avoid an anonymous approach when the time would come to contact other organisations. It was finally decided to talk of intervention in two different "capacities" and to omit, under 1., the reference to the UIC and the airports which were mentioned only as examples.

Mr. Mercier stressed the need to appoint delegates for each international organisation in order to guarantee continuity.

Points 4 and 6 were examined without discussion.

Point 6 referred to the collection made by Mr. Sevray, who submitted his document and named other organisations of which he should have liked to make inquiries. Since the drafts approved by ICOGRADA were not to be considered as official proposals of that organisation, it seemed preferable not to include them, particularly since they dealt with a totally abstract design which Mr. Sevray personally found interesting, but which did not withstand comparison with the altogether figurative designs presented in his collection.

Mr. Kneebone while confirming that the projects chosen by ICOGRADA were not an official solution, hoped that the Committee would study them and wondered, furthermore, whether the work of the British airports and of the Montreal Exposition had been taken into account.

Mr. Sevray stated that all the airports should meet, within the framework of the ICAO, to harmonise what has been done at least as far as air transport was concerned, and Mr. Rojinsky suggested that the Committee be represented at this meeting.

The Pictograms in his collection constituted a whole on which, Mr. Sevray felt, the Committee could already start to work to find out which ones were the most effectively understood, while remaining alert to the need for a certain unity of appearance.

The Committee should state its opinion of the idea value of each pictogram and of the certain general aspects: frame, colour, lettering style, and choice or rejection of the figurative solution.

Mr. Kneebone observed that if the pictograms were to be voted on and a selection made, he could not speak officially for the organisations he represented (ICOGRADA, International Union of Architects - UIA and the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design - (ICSID) particularly because they did not approve this method. But, in the spirit of friendly co-operation, he was quite prepared to express a personal opinion on their "idea" but not, at such short notice, on their "form".

Mr. Rojinsky considered that the matter should be thought over in several stages: the finality of the design: whether or not colour should be used and if so, whether it should be conventional: lastly the general form.

Mr. Kneebone considered that even if the Committee adopted a selection method as an emergency step, there should be agreement on the principle that these signs might be adapted to achieve homogeneity, since a mixture of styles would be likely to slow the process of visual communication.

Mr. Kneebone asked whether it was planned to make surveys in order to assess the efficacy of the signs. Mr. Sevray replied that a survey at Orly, of 200 people speaking French and English did not yield very conclusive results aside from showing that the "I" for Information and the pictogram for "lost - found" were never understood.

Next, the examination of the pictograms in Mr. Sevray's collection was taken up: this immediately raised the problem of colours. Mr. Leyrie indicated that for example, the UIC had been told never to use red, since for the railways, red meant "stop".

In this respect Mr. Lutier (International Organisation for Standardisation) - (ISO) expressed the views of the ISO.

Mr. Lutier stressed the role played in industry by colours chosen to warn workers of certain dangers or to give them, on the contrary, positive safety advice by arousing reflexes corresponding to the perception of these colours.

He recalled the criteria on the basis of which three colours were ultimately chosen by the International Organisation for Standardisation (Technical Committee ISO/TC 80 - ISO Recommendation R 408 - safety colours) and by AFNOR (NF X 08-003 - safety colours and signs - ratified in 1959). These colours are: red, orange-yellow, and green, and they indicate, respectively: danger - stop: possible danger: and safety as such or indication of where first aid equipment is to be found, etc.

An additional colour, blue, was chosen for safety information.

A physical definition of these colours was established according to the system of the International Commission on Illumination (trichromatic co-ordinates and luminance factor). The equations defining the areas of these colours within the conventional triangle were chosen in such a way as to make these colours visible under the best conditions, given minimum lighting, even for persons with defective colour perception.

Moreover, in compliance with the above-mentioned specifications, a corresponding geometric form was assigned to each of the three primary colours, viz: a circle, an equilateral triangle (base downwards), and a rectangle.

Finally, a certain number of diagrams have been standardised to clarify the meaning of items of information judged necessary in industrial firms: electricity, inflammable substance or fuel, explosives, toxic or corrosive substances. All of these elements together - colour, geometric form and diagram - constitute a standardised safety signal. (The border which may be added to these signals is also specified.)

In any study of pictograms, it would be best to take into account not only the diagrams but also the colours which have been standardised for safety signals, so as to harmonise the pictogram panels with the safety panels. The panel's background colour should be the same as for the corresponding safety signal, and the diagram should be the contrast element, either black or white as the case may be. (For material production of these panels or signals, refer to standard NF X08-003.)

Mr. Rojinsky suggested that, as a first stage, the pictograms should be considered in one colour only, that is, under the most favourable conditions: polychrome pictograms could be introduced later.

Mr. Mercier emphasised that the purpose of the meeting was to create the Committee then to publicise its existence and avoid proliferations and contradictions on the basis of the fact that a certain number of pictograms existed and that a number of organisations were looking into the matter, a situation which was likely to become dangerous.

This was therefore an emergency, requiring some action to be taken even though it would have been better to define the grammar and the methodology first. It was not enough to publicise the creation and the purpose of the Committee: the collection should be studied so that an opinion could be stated on at least 5 or 6 of the least faulty pictograms or so that the decidedly bad ones could be pointed out.

This did not mean that the philosophy involved would not be studied later, so as to arrive at certain principles which might entail a revision of the first pictograms accepted.

Mrs. Kling stating that she thoroughly agreed with this view, urged that the collection be studied rapidly.

Mr. Rojinsky, supporting Mr. Mercier, observed that discussion could go on for hours as to the merits of such and such a style: but the main thing was to know whether the idea was understood. The goal therefore should be a concrete

document, stating the purpose of the pictograms, the need for unified expression, certain general principles as to the frame, the colour, and so forth...and providing for more thorough study at a later date.

Mr. Kneebone, while stressing the visual advantage of not changing from one style to another in a city, for instance, where successive signs are found, did agree with Mr. Mercier that first aid measures could be taken quickly without jeopardising more long term research.

Mr. Miller advised against "over-simplification" he believed that the IATA would not accept signs without any explanation, since it did not consider that a drawing was enough in itself.

Mrs. Kling reminded those present that it had been planned to allow some explanation during a short educational phase, and invited the meeting to study the collection of pictograms.

Upon Mr. Chergia's (ICC) query as to whether it was not up to the Committee to take care of that, Mrs. Kling recalled that in its document 398/22 the working party had proposed that the September 27 meeting study the collection, with a view to distinguishing among the pictograms which could be approved, those which could be adopted with slight alterations and those which should be completely redesigned.

Each organisation was therefore invited to express one of these 3 opinions on each pictogram: this resulted in the conclusions stated in document 398/INT.26, appendix I of this document.

This report, examined at the start of the September 28 session, gave rise to two observations.

Concerning approval based on the fact that the ideas already seemed accepted, the UIC remarked that this was true of certain of its pictograms, and Mrs. Kling, suggested that the UIC supply a list of those in use in a number of countries.

Mr. Mercier suggested that, to avoid definitive use of symbols which were felt to be bad, the especially bad signs should be sent, as a warning along with the letter to the organisations concerned. He pointed out once again that from the touristic viewpoint, there was still progress to be made.

In conclusion, Mrs. Kling proposed that a letter be sent to all the organisations concerned whose addresses had been given, in order to:

1. Announce the creation of the Committee
 - with the title chosen and the list of non-governmental organisations which had made up the committee.
 - with details as to its composition and the participation of organisations concerned, in two capacities
2. State the impossibility of making a completely new start, although it would be desirable to establish a more scientifically based grammar.
3. Report that the first study, made on September 27, revealed that many existing pictograms turned out to be unintelligible unless accompanied by some sort of title in a language with which the reader was familiar.
4. Warn all those concerned against the proliferation of non-homogeneous and sometimes even contradictory signs. There was an urgent need to check this proliferation as long as there was no agreement on certain principles, especially on the possibility of taking into account the colours standardised by the ISO, already accepted forms of framing, and the possibility during a transitional educational phase of completing the pictograms by text in the language of the country and perhaps in another, international language.
5. Make it clear that all these suggestions were meant only to bring first aid and did not exclude more thorough research.

Mr. Kneebone suggested that information be requested in exchange, and Mr. Sevray voiced the desire that the Committee be invited to ICAO meetings, this was approved.

It was agreed that a draft letter along these lines would be submitted to the participant organisations before being sent to the others.

As you can read a lot of talk was going on - without any result whatever, except that they will meet again. Mr. Kneebone (and the men of Icograda) did not state their real aim: money for research and money for the designs, but they had a lot to criticise.

Attached to this document were the names and organisations of the participants and I wrote to a few of them. Herebelow are some of my letters:

Mr. B. Sevray,
President, Commission des Pictogrammes
Association des Grand Aeroports de L'Ouest Europeans (WEAA)
Paris, France.
Dear Mr. Sevray,

Sydney 10 Jan. 67

Forgive me not writing to you in French, though I learned French for 7 years in school. It was exactly this failure of learning a foreign language in school,

that convinced me that only a system of pictorial symbols which could be read in all languages could be of real service to monolingual mankind. I attach to this letter my paper TO ALL OFFICERS, and beg you to read it carefully.

It was a quirk of fate that my information about my symbol system reached Mrs. Kling only two days after the September Conference. But even if it had come two days before the conference little would have been achieved as no one would know about it, and little could have been told. So, Mrs. Kling will distribute at a later date information about my work to all participants.

She did send me the document No. 398/29 of October 25 about the September conference, and the Appendix I deals with the reaction of the participants to your symbol collection. I have received the list of symbols from a number of organisations united in the September conference, and I ask you now kindly to post to me a list of all your symbols, I believe not more than 58. I am preparing at my own expense a comprehensive table of all symbols proposed by all organisations, and shall send to Mrs. Kling as many copies as she needs for the distribution among all NGO organisations. Such a table would be very helpful to ascertain the differences in the symbols for the same meanings, and would greatly help the organisations to realise that with a number of symbols the differences are small indeed, and thus a final agreement on the final shape of symbols could be reached with the help of such a table.

I ask you therefore to kindly send me your list of symbols as soon as you possibly can so that I can complete my table. I hope that you will be intrigued by my work, and that sooner or later some of my symbols would be found valuable enough to be used by the organisations concerned. Thanking you in anticipation,

Encl. S.S. No. 303

I am, Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 10 Nov 66

This is to thank you for your kind letter of Nov. 4 for your document No. 398/29 of 25.X.1966 and Appendix I and II. Thank you too for putting me on your mailing list. It shows that you consider my contribution valuable and I shall do everything to prove myself worthy of your esteem. I am sorry that I am not able to write to you in French, a language I greatly admire, and which I studied for 7 years in the high school - with the usual result. Primitives and Professors don't want to learn a foreign language, and this includes Esperanto. I am a research chemist, and was already in my youth fascinated by the fact that H₂O means water in all languages. I was an industrial executive in a large electronic firm, and we used extensively the pictograms of electronics which every radio mechanic can read in any of their languages.

What a pity that my letter arrived two days after the discussion on pictograms. Thank you for promising to send me the letter which you intend to write to all concerned. May I ask you if there is a possibility - because of my letter and my tourist folder reaching you 2 days too late - that you include my tourist folder and a short summary of my work (which I would submit to you) in this letter to all concerned. Here perhaps is a way out of the dilemma, which I can see clearly in the discussion, the dilemma that many people just won't agree on the many symbols proposed. Moreover, so far 30 to 60 symbols have been proposed, and some of them are purely abstract, as the I for INFORMATION. It is impossible to picture such important meanings as TO THE COMPLAINT OFFICE, RESERVATION CANCELLED, NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR VALUABLES LEFT IN THE HOTEL ROOM, etc. etc. - unless you use my complete system of basic pictorial symbols. The tests mentioned prove also that every symbol has to be learned. With a few exceptions, as for instance the arrow symbol, every other pictogram needs a minute of learning, and this can be easily accomplished if every symbol has the word in the native language underneath. Travellers would have a small folder showing in one vertical column all pictorial symbols they are going to encounter on their travel, and then in say 10 adjacent vertical columns there would be the respective words in 10 languages.

Moreover, my symbols which can be used to express any meaning in communication, commerce, industry and even science, have the advantage that the very same meaning can be symbolised not only on a highway sign, or in an airport, but also on the softdrink automat, on a camera gadget, on directions for merchandise, etc. Just a few days ago my friend showed me a garment imported from France with directions to wash it in French, English and German, and with a line in symbols, totally incomprehensible. Soon all manufacturers and all exporters and importers will need just such a complete system of pictorial symbols which can be typed and printed on anything. I have approached already the European Economic Community (Common Market) Headquarter in Bruxelles, and I shall soon approach your International Chamber of Commerce with this idea.

Most people take one look into my symbols - without taking say 5 minutes to see how simple my pictorial symbols really are - and dismiss my work with the argument that it must be "learned". But the experiments which Mr. Sevray made at Orly with 200 people who understand English and French proved that they too

did not understand some of the pictograms which - so it is claimed - can be understood at first glance without any "learning". This is a fallacy in thought, and I was happy indeed to read in your document that some of your delegates came to the conclusion that symbols without any explanation are just not understood.

So, dear Mrs. Kling, here is my proposal, and I shall be grateful if you would answer by return because you have already the circular letter to all concerned ready to send away. You could add say the following statement: "Two days after our meeting on the 27 and 28 September I received knowledge of Mr. C.K. Bliss' Semantography together with a Sample Tourist Folder showing his symbols for the international traveller. I believe that all delegates should have an opportunity to study Mr. Bliss' work so that our next meetings discussion and decision could be arranged. This is necessary as the previous meeting has shown that the matter of a decision on what to symbolise and what not is very urgent, in view of the proliferation of symbols by various organisations. I include therefore Mr. Bliss' Tourist Folder, together with a short paper addressed to all delegates."

In view of the fact that a number of delegates expressed concern about the rush of symbols brought forth by various organisations, it would be another delay if my system came up for debate at the next meeting in 1967, with no delegate having knowledge of it. If you however, add my folder and a short summary of my work to your intended letter then all delegates would have formed an opinion about my work and no delay would be caused at the next meeting.

So please dear Mrs. Kling, let me know by return whether you are prepared to add my folder and a summary to your letter, and I shall immediately work out all and send you by airmail as many copies as you need for inclusion in your letter.

I need not add that I am working on this idea for purely humanitarian and idealistic reasons. I do not seek any money, any post, any position, any salary, any grant, any bonus, and not even any publicity. I am a retired man, and have had enough publicity in my long life as an industrial executive, as a university lecturer, and even as a musician and artist. I know that publicity means nothing. I want to serve humanity - nothing more, and do it unselfishly.

Hoping to have your agreement to my proposal I remain with thanks in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

Sydney 10 Nov 66

Dear Mrs. Kling,

I consider it my good fortune that you are a woman, and above all, a French woman. No country, and no nation has contributed more to the advancement of humanity than France. And in France, only enlightened French women have in their famous salons aided and helped and fostered and admired the struggling men of creative ingenuity in music and art, in inventions and in science.

What I think about women is best illustrated by the little memorial card which I made at the 3rd anniversary of the death of my good wife. She was my co-worker, and she slipped down, down into despair and ill health when she saw that recognition for my work is not in coming.

I am now a lonely man, and all I have to live for is my wife's and my brain-child - this work which I presented to you.

I give myself in your hands, and hope that you will help a creative man who has given to mankind something unheard of "One Writing for One World" to be used in all fields of human endeavours. Children can learn my symbols in a matter of hours, and some of them have written letters in my symbols which brought tears to my eyes, proving the goodness of my work.

In the name of humanity, I plead for your kind help. May God bless you!

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

P.S. Let me add that I have gone through the horrors of Dachau and Buchenwald and yet, I have not despaired of humanity. On the contrary. We can have a better future, if we strive hard for common understanding.

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 12 Nov 66

You have already my letter of Nov. 10 in which I deplored my misfortune that my letter came two days late for the conference. But even if it had come two days before the conference, all you could have done is to inform the delegates about it. The delegates would have to study it, and then at the next meeting some decisions could be reached. But they wouldn't be able to study it during the session.

I suggested therefore that you add to your proposed letter

1. My sample tourist folder and
2. My letter especially written for the delegates.

I have now formulated the text for this letter, and I am including it herewith for your study. If you agree with it, I shall have it printed immediately and send as many copies of both 1 and 2 as you need by airmail for inclusion into your

letter. You may advise that my submission came too late and is now included for study and later decision.

I would also print the same letter in French. I could have done the translation in French here in Sydney, but I know that the best translation can only be done in the country where the language is spoken. If you could give the text to one of your co-workers for a quick job inside or outside the office hours, I am prepared to pay for it.

If you agree, please send me your translation, or tell me to make it here, and you will have all copies (how many do you need in French and how many in English?) within say one week.

I appeal to you again to help this idea along. You have come to realise that I am an idealist who wants to give something to humanity which could be of help to all. You too would help in this venture, and I thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss.

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 28 Nov 66

With my letters of November 10 and 12 I sent you a circular letter draft to be attached to your circular letter, together with the Sample Tourist Folder, so that all delegates to the September Conference should have an opportunity to study my proposal, though it came two days too late into your hands. I asked you kindly to inform me by return, so that I can go ahead and have the draft circular letter addressed TO ALL OFFICER (see attached copy) printed in English and French, and sent to you together with as many copies of the Tourist Folder you need.

Having received no answer from you, I can only assume that my letters have gone into another department. I enclose herewith therefore the following copies:

1. Draft Circular TO ALL OFFICERS
2. Copy of my letter dated November 10.
3. Copy of my letter to you personally dated November 10.
4. Copy of my letter dated November 12.

I realise my handicap. I am not an officer of any organisation, but I have done what no man has done before, and the world, and especially all transport organisations need my work. I have stressed the fact that I am not out for money, or a salary, or a position, all I want is to help you and all organisations.

Hoping to have your answer by return, I am

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss.

At last an answer.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

20.XII.1966 mcf

International Signs and Symbols

I am really very sorry to see, from your letters of 10th, 12th and 28th November, that a misunderstanding has arisen from my letter of 4th November.

In fact the Secretariat of the Committee whose creation was to be announced officially by letter to all those concerned with signs and symbols throughout the world was entrusted to the Western European Airports Association (WEAA) and to the ICC.

It had been agreed with the former that I myself would prepare the summary record - which was duly accomplished at the end of October - and that Mr. SEVRAY, of the Airports Association, would take care of the draft letter which was to be submitted for commentary to the participant organisations before being sent to the others.

Finally, as Mr. SEVRAY's time was taken up by other unforeseen tasks, we were obliged to put the draft into final shape together and a little bit late: This draft was submitted early in December to the participant organisations, but since it had been decided that it was to reflect the opinions expressed during the discussions on 27th-28th September (See Doc. 398/29 p.1) we were obliged to respect this decision and therefore were unable to follow your suggestion of accompanying the draft by your draft circular and your sample tourist folder.

On the other hand, as I wrote to you on 4th November, we can include you among those receiving the letter as soon as agreement has been reached on its wording. And since this letter invites recipients to supply us with any information which the 15 Non-governmental organisations (NGO) may be lacking on the work they had undertaken, that will be the right time to circulate your draft circular and your sample tourist folder, as among the items of information received, and as a preparatory documents for the next consultation of the 15 NGO. Only then will we be able to tell you how many copies we will need. But we would like to thank you warmly, and without delay, for the generous assistance you so kindly offer us.

In September there had been some question of a consultation early in 1967 to make preparations for Tourism Year but also, of an invitation to London, and here again I must await the proposals of other organisations.

I hope you will understand that decisions on the part of organisations which have to consult members throughout the world cannot be taken as rapidly as those of someone working alone, and that to induce 15 of these organisations to reach

an agreement is a task involving still more patience.

Nonetheless, the question facing both Mr. SEVRAY and myself, after an examination of your letters and of that which you wrote to Mr. NAIR and which he transmitted to us, is whether your system meets the need which the September consultation had deliberately judged very limited. Its aim seemed to be to establish a small number of immediately intelligible symbols rather than the veritable international language which you propose.

But of course it is up to the Committee to decide.

May I, at this holiday season, send my letter with Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

Yours sincerely,
Marcelle Kling
Head of Group.

I wrote then the letter to Mr. Sevray (printed before) dated 10 January 1967 and then another letter to Mrs. Kling.

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 10 Jan 67

Many thanks for your mind and detailed letter of December, 20. I am holding myself in readiness to supply my information and tourist folder for your circulation in as many copies as you will tell me.

Meanwhile I am working on a table showing all the symbols so far proposed by some of the 12 Non-governmental organisations. What I need now are the following.

1. the symbols shown by Mr. B. Sevray of WEAA at the September Conference and discussed as to the reaction of the participants in Appendix 1 to Doc.No.398/29 Tr. attached letter to Mr. Sevray. Thank you very much.
2. The addresses of the following organisations so that I may ask them what symbols they have evolved. I know the addresses of a number of organisations, but not of the following, and your kind help would be greatly appreciated.

Association Internationale de l'Hotellerie (AIH)
Federation Internationale des Agences de Voyages (FIAB)
Institute du Transport Aerien (ITA)
Organisation Mondiale du Tourisme et de l'Automobile (OTA)
Chambre Internationale des Armateurs (ICS)
Association des Grands Aeroports de l'Ouest Europeans (WEAA)

Most other organisations whose addresses I know have responded and have sent me the list of their symbols. As soon as I have all symbols of all organisations I am going to make at my own expense a comprehensive table that will show that the differences between the symbols of a number of organisations are small indeed. I believe that such a table would greatly help you in your next conference, and would bring about a quicker decision of which symbols shall be agreed upon.

I include my paper to ALL OFFICERS in English, and now am working on the French and German text so that all persons interested could read in their language. I thank you for including me in your work, and I suggest that you adopt the name of my Institute of Semantography-Blissymbolics and its French counterpart Institute de Semantographie-Blissymbolics as the 16th NGO organisation. You count and list already the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier, and the Icoqrada Commission on signs and symbols, but these two organisations have not invented a single symbol. Moreover, I am the only person in the whole world who has with a few pictorial symbol elements symbolised any meaning needed. It is understood that the other organisations want at present only about 60 meanings symbolised, but surely there is no harm to take into the account as to how I symbolise these 60 meanings because once the value of my work has been recognised, many more meanings would need symbolisation and then my work is readily at hand to serve the whole world.

In this respect, your International Chamber of Commerce will soon be increasingly interested in my work for the following reasons. A few weeks ago I found in a Sydney department store, ladies clothes being manufactured by the French firm of

Moulinage et Retorderie de Chavanoz
Chavanoz (Isere) France

Attached to the garments are directions in French, English and German how to wash these garments, and also a line in symbols. Two of these symbols are good, the others are so arbitrary that I couldn't crack their meaning, and I am now writing to this firm for an explanation. I shall send you within a few weeks a photocopy of these washing directions, and shall ask you to kindly submit the matter to another department of your Chambre Internationale de Commerce that deals with the manufacture and export of such products and directions in languages and symbols in connection with the common market.

What do I want to say with this? Suppose the unbelievable happens and my universal symbols are adopted for the 60 meanings in transport (as discussed at the September conference) then a traveller who buys a product in any country could

read also at least part of the directions on these products, because the very same symbol elements which form WASHROOM in my symbols are the same which are used in WASHING DIRECTIONS. The same symbols used in say VENTILATOR SWITCH (in railways) will also appear on switches of say movie and slide projectors which the traveller buys in France or any other country.

Once you realise the universality of my symbol elements, you will also realise the universality of their use in every field of commerce and industry. Then not only your Transport and Communication Department will become interested, but other departments dealing with manufacture, export, import, customs, etc. Imagine that I have proved that my simple pictorial basic symbols can be used for an international customs declaration, or for a passport, or for a menu card, or indeed anything else. I have proved this at length in my book.

Of course adoption of my work will be something "unbelievable" as said above. I must be dead at least 50 years before my pioneering work will be recognised and used. By that time, there will be a veritable Babel of Symbols used by the various organisations. There is only one alternative to this. If someone, perhaps you, perhaps Mr. Nair, perhaps Mr. Sevray becomes the champion of my work and uses all powers of persuasion to make all other organisations see the value of my work. But you yourself have pointed out the difficulty of trying to get different people of different organisations to agree in conference and committee. The very tragedy of all your endeavours is signified by three letters NGO, Non-Governmental Organisations. Why don't the government officials of all nations collaborate with the 12 NGO organisations? Because government officials are a race of their own who wouldn't take advice from non-governmental people, least of all adopt their ideas.

Enough of this. I have let myself go in my long letter to Mr. Nair, simply because I am an idealist who believes that mankind should be helped, and I still believe in this and work for it, though I am a graduate of the German concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald and the Japanese segregation camp of Shanghai. Now dear Mrs. Kling, thank you for reading this and now please help me in the following (1) my letter to Mr. Sevray, (2) the addresses of the other organisations, and if possible (3) could you tell me the names of the organisations that have instituted the International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier (New York). And thank you for everything.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

A few days later the following circular arrived.
Dear Sir,

9.1.1967

International Signs and Symbols

It is often invaluable for a tourist travelling in a country where he does not know the language to be able to identify a certain place, service, or danger by means of a sign or symbol, figurative or not.

After several work sessions held from April to September, 1966, at ICC International Headquarters, among representatives of 15 non-governmental international organisations (NGO) concerned with tourism and the use of pictograms in tourism, these NGO, by mutual agreement, have decided to create an International Committee for travel signs and symbols (which would be translated in French by "Comite International des signes et symboles en transports et tourisme") and possibly represented by the abbreviation, "Intersign".

We have been entrusted with the mission of informing you, on their behalf, of the creation of this Committee which is made up of representatives of organisations participating in two capacities:

1. - Ten organisations concerned with the development of tourism and which have been co-operating for the past few years:
 - International Hotel Association (IHA)
 - International Air Transport Association (IATA)
 - International Chamber of Commerce. (ICC)
 - International Chamber of Shipping (ICS)
 - International Federation of Travel Agencies (FIAT)
 - Institute of Air Transport (ITA)
 - World Touring and Automobile Association (OTA)
 - International Union of Railways (UIC)
 - International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO)
 - International Road Transport Union (IRU)
 plus two airport organisations:
 - International Civil Airports Association (ICAA)
 - Western European Airports Association (WEAA)
2. Organisations invited in their capacity as experts in matters of graphic design and standardisation, and the list may possibly be extended:
 - International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)
 - International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA)

which also represents the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID)

Plus:

- International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier (ICBLB)

Having observed the various sorts of work undertaken in often contradictory directions and which have sometimes resulted in the use of five or six different symbols for one and the same notion, the fifteen NGO wish, above all, to warn all those concerned against this proliferation of conflicting signs which - far from being of use to the tourist travelling in a country where he does not know the language - are more likely to confuse him.

The ideal would have been to base this new international language on scientific principles, but because certain existing signs and symbols are already in use, it was difficult to make a completely new start.

However, a first examination of the signs of general interest carried out on 27th September, 1966, revealed that a number of them proved intelligible unless accompanied by a title in a language with which the reader was familiar: you will find some examples in the appendix.

There would seem to be an urgent need to put a halt to the proliferation of such signs until some measures of agreement have been reached on various principles, including the possibility of taking into account the colors standardised by the ISO and the shapes already accepted in - for instance - road traffic, and the possibility during the transitional educational phase of completing the sign by a text in the language of the country in question and perhaps by another international language.

This action, of prime urgency, does not of course exclude more long-term studies intended to analyse the problem more fully and permit the establishment of a rational homogeneous system, since a mixture of styles would be likely to slow the desired visual communication.

To help these fifteen NGO's contribute to the development of tourism we hope that you will be willing:

- to take heed of this warning against the dangers of a disorderly proliferation.
- to supply us with any information which we may be lacking on the work which your organisation has undertaken and the methods it had adopted with a view to establishing certain international signs and symbols.

Yours sincerely,

P. Jarniou

President, Commission on Pictograms of the WEAA
Marcelle Kling

Head of Group Transport of the ICC

As the foregoing circular was designed by the Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce I was glad to see a new name and my hope rose again that perhaps he would listen to me. Hence the following letter which proves, if anything, that I am doing my best to advance my case, as best I can, though with the hindsight of all my futile endeavours I must have been a severe pain in the neck to those officials.

The Secretary General of the ICC

Sydney 26 Jan 67

International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols

Paris, France

Your letter MK - 398 of 9.1.1967

Dear Mrs. Kling and dear Mr. Jarniou,

I have received your first communication of the newly created committee and congratulate you to it, and promise to give all my energy and all my experience for co-operation. Consequently, I beg you to assist me in the following:

1. Please consider my Institute for (or of) Semantography, or Institute de Semantographie as the 16 NGO organisation in your committee. I could name a number of eminent persons who support the Institute, but as usual it is one person who represents and works for an organisation, as for instance Mr. Kato for the International Committee for Breaking, etc. or Mr. Kneebone for Icograda.
2. I submit to you the following circulars for distribution among all members and ask you to tell me how many copies you need in French, in English and in German. These circulars bear the titles:
 - a. TO ALL OFFICERS in English (Semantography Series No. 303)
 - b. A TOUS LES FONCTIONNAIRES in French (S.S. No. 304)
 - c. AN ALLE BEAMTE in German (S.S. No. 305)
 - d. UNIVERSAL PICTORIAL BLISSYMBOLS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLER (S.S.280)
 Please read my circular, and realise that I am the first man who has evolved a complete, simple, and scientifically constructed pictorial symbol system, and that therefore my work merits your careful consideration and testing.
3. Please consider my proposal to send you further information in as many copies you need. I can do it easily in English, but if I had to make a

French circular it is costly for me, and moreover, as I have found out, Frenchmen who have lived for many years in an English speaking country acquire subconsciously English idiomatic expressions which sound queer to people living in France. If you could translate my English circular for distribution you would help greatly the cause of the committee, and I beg to consider this.

Here is what I want to say in a circular for distribution after having read your first letter MK-398:

I am delighted reading your words:

"The ideal would have been to base this new international language on scientific principles, but because certain existing signs and symbols are already in use it was difficult to make a completely new start"

and

"(We do) not of course exclude more long-term studies intended to analyse the problem more fully and permit the establishment of a rational homogeneous system, since a mixture of styles would be likely to slow the desired visual communication".

You must have realised already that the various organisations who have already put up their signs and symbols will be very reluctant to take them down. You have also realised that it is extremely difficult to find symbols which tell travellers at first glance without any educational effort what it means. I want you now to see that it is possible to start now on that "ideal, a new international pictorial languages based on scientific principles." Let us then realise that there was always another system already in use, when a new system was to be introduced. Before the introduction of the numerals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 there were the Roman numerals I II III V X etc. Before the Latin alphabet, there were other alphabets. Before the International flag symbol code there were other flag symbol codes. And at present, as you the NGO organisations try to introduce new travel symbols, there are all the GO, the Governmental Organisations of all countries who have already introduced road warning signs which are different in different countries. Different States in the United States of America have different road symbols, and this is the case also in the different States of Australia. Great Britain is now changing over 1,500,000 road warning signs, and the new signs are contradictory to other governmental signs in other countries.

This all means that you the NGO organisations have a duty and a task to start on a real international scientific pictorial symbol system. And you are lucky in so far, as the job has been done by myself already, and all you have to do is to make tests with my pictorial symbols, and the best test possible is to teach them to children, and see how easily they pick them up, and how easily they can combine them to various meanings. Prof. Eric de Grolier of Paris has made already such tests.

4. I propose therefore, the following first actions, in this year INTERNATIONAL TOURIST YEAR 1967 will be activated, and if you write appropriate letters to the Australian National Travel Association, asking them to sponsor my work for nothing more but testing, it would bring results. If the Australian National Travel Association would bring out a folder with the title AUSTRALIA'S PROPOSAL AND CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE TRAVELLERS OF ALL NATIONS, and if this folder will be distributed among all travel organisations, agencies, agents, travel magazines and newspapers and magazines, there would be a basis of international interest and co-operation in nothing more than testing my symbols. I ask you therefore, to write to the Australian National Travel Association urging them to bring out a folder as suggested.

5. You know that millions of people who have faulty eyesight refuse to wear glasses. No tests have been made so far to find out whether those pictorial symbols are difficult to discern at say 30 feet in a crowded railway station or airport. My symbols however, are consisting of a few lines only, and hence easily visible even at longer distances. And furthermore, their very simplicity make them typable on an adjusted IBM typewriter. Very soon, perhaps in a few years, international travellers would want to have a line in symbols on a receipt, telling them in symbols what ticket they have purchased, for airplane, ship, bus or railway, what date, which seat number, departure time, and at what date must the full fare be paid or the reservation will be cancelled. All this can easily be done with my symbols as shown in the travel folder.

6. How important a complete symbol system is, can be seen from the attached washing instructions written by a French firm. The first and third symbol are easily understood, but the 2nd and 4th symbol are incomprehensible. Here the International Chamber of Commerce had a gradiose task to give mankind an international system of communication, and this means my work. I am 70 years old. I want no money from you. I want only a fair test of my work. Hoping to hear from you soon, I am.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 20-4-67

I sincerely hope that this letter will find you in the best of health and spirit, and that this mood will make you receptive to my letter. I haven't received an answer to you and to Mr. Jarniou, written January 26. Neither has Mr. Nair answered my letter written November 30, and again April 4, neither has Mr. Sevray answered. What would you think if your letters would not be answered? You wouldn't be happy, would you?

What are the reasons why you are all ignoring me? It could be understood if I would press you all for a position, a job, a salary, a livelihood, a bonus - money for short. But no! All the time I emphasise that I don't want a single penny. I give even my copyrights for the use of all NGO organisations.

The second reason is perhaps that I am a nobody, not the representative of this or that organisation. And yet, I am the only man in the whole world who holds the answer to all your troubles with symbols. All the meanings needed in international travel and communication can be symbolised with my pictorial symbols. And yet, I am ignored.

The last reason may be that you don't consider my work useful for your purposes. This may be deduced from the page attached to your document MK-398. This page shows four symbols for HOTEL, ELEVATOR, INFORMATION AND LOST-FOUND. And the heading says clearly SOME EXAMPLES NOT TO BE FOLLOWED, and below "Each of the four "pictograms" hereunder reprinted is understood only thanks to its joint literal explanations."

This proves that the people in the NGO still believe that it is possible to design symbols which are instantly understood without a moment of "learning". Alas, you will soon find that this is only possible with a few symbols showing the arrow, because we all have learned the meaning of the arrow long before. How can you ever picture the much needed meanings INFORMATION, RESERVATION, CUSTOM HOUSE, DUTYFREE SHOP, FLIGHT INSURANCE AVAILABLE HERE, NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR VALUABLES LEFT IN THE HOTEL ROOM, etc. etc. The answer is: only with my pictorial basic symbols which can be learned within a few minutes.

Now I have learned from third sources that you will have a conference in Montreal in May. Would you kindly tell me whether you and all the other members intend to discuss my work? If you would, I would appoint someone to represent me at the conference. I would also supply to all members present (or not present) relevant papers of which I include a few in this letter. I can prophesy already that no agreement will be reached on all the symbols needed, simply because it would mean compromises all around, and this most people are not prepared to make. Only if my universal system is adopted, only then can all problems be solved. Please answer by return, in order to enable me to make the necessary preparations.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

At last I received a comprehensive letter with interesting papers. The Icograda have apparently convinced Mrs. Kling and the other members of the committee that UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHALL WORDS BE ADDED TO THE SYMBOLS. As I said before and in all the writings of mine, the money hungry designers are much afraid that they would lose business and this means money if an explanatory word underneath the symbols would be added. Naturally, this means too that my symbols are not acceptable to them.

The tragicomic intrigue unfolds itself in the following papers:

Dear Mr. Bliss,

26th April, 1967

Signs and Symbols

I am very sorry that in your letter of 20 April you report that you have received no answer to the various letters you have sent to members of our Committee on Signs and Symbols and wonder why we are all ignoring you.

In fact I can assure you that far from ignoring you, all those to whom you have written and to whom we have sent your leaflet have taken great interest in it: recently I talked about it again with Mr. Kneebone, president of the Icograda Commission on Signs and Symbols.

But as it happens, we are dealing with a Committee made up, as I told you, of representatives of fifteen different organisations. All viewpoints, and what is still more difficult, all systems already in use must be taken into account.

Thus it has been out of the question to make a completely fresh start or to impose a system such as yours, which is much more extensive than, and wholly different from those advocated by, for instance, the airlines and the railways.

For the time being, in answer to the letter of 9 January, a copy of which was sent to you, we have received abundant documentation and our Committee must now examine it all, including yours. This brought up the practical problem of reproducing the pictograms, but ICOGRADA has agreed to help us with that. We are planning a meeting in June to discuss the matter and the methods which have been employed or suggested.

Meanwhile, the ICC is indeed holding a Congress next month in Montreal, it will devote a discussion group on Wednesday afternoon, 17th May, to tourism. One of the six items on the agenda is the question of signs and symbols, and we intend on that occasion to review the work undertaken in that respect, then to hear the views of the ICAO, which had consulted us by letter (copy 398/33) also enclosed). The final reply (the translation of which is not yet ready) was not very different from this draft.

Yours sincerely,

(To this letter were attached the following papers) Marcelle Kling
I quote however, only those parts relevant.) Head of Group.
Dear Sir, 17.III.1967

International Signs and Symbols

In accordance with the decisions taken by our committee at its meeting on 27 and 28 September 1966, we sent to a number of bodies more or less concerned with the creation of a system of signs and symbols the letter of 9 January (of which you received a copy) informing them of the creation of our Committee, its composition, and its aims, and warning them of the danger of a certain proliferation of signs and symbols throughout the world.

We have received numerous replies to that letter, including in particular the reply by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) which, in our opinion, calls for an immediate response. You will find a copy enclosed, with the draft response which we intend to send, if it meets with your approval.

Since the deadline for sending our answer to the ICAO committee is very near (the end of March), we would appreciate your sending us your observations as a matter of urgency. If we have received no reply from you by 29 March, we will assume that you have no objections.

We expect that the Committee members will have to meet again, probably in June, to study the letters we have received from throughout the world in reply to our letter 1 of January, and to examine the progress of the work undertaken by the ICAO and of which we will be kept informed.

Yours sincerely,

The Secretaries of the Committee.

B. Sevray

Western European Airports Association.

Marcelle Kling
ICC Transport Group

Transport and Communications

Document No.398/33

17.III.1967

(translation)

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR TRAVEL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

COPY OF THE ICAO'S LETTER

(International Civil Aviation Organisation)

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Further to your letter MK - 398 of January 9, 1967 which you sent to the Chairman of the Air Transport Committee and which you expressed the wish that the International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols be associated with the work of the ICAO for the development of international standard signs for use at airports, I have the honour of informing you that ICAO has set up a group of experts on airport signs. In view of the interest which your Committee takes in this matter and the contribution which, in a consultative capacity, it will undoubtedly be able to make to the work of the experts' group, I have pleasure in communicating to you the following information and the enclosed documentation.
Working methods of the experts' group

It should be possible for the group to do much of its work by correspondence directly between the Secretary and the members of the Group. In this case the Group need only meet once, probably in Montreal: if however, the correspondence method did not prove satisfactory a second meeting might be called for.

We are enclosing a working paper which will give you some details on the experts' group, its terms of reference, etc.. and some basic ideas on which I would appreciate having your opinion. As you are doubtless aware, the experts group was set up on 17 October 1966 and the enclosed paper was sent to all of the other members of the group in December 1966. As indicated in paragraph 4 of this paper, members were asked to let me have their opinions no later than January 31, 1967, and nearly all of them met this deadline. I would be very grateful if you could let me know your opinion on this paper as soon as possible and preferably by 23 March.

Once I have received the replies of the group's various members, I shall send them perhaps in the form of a resume, to all members and advisers, for their information and observations.

The group will probably have to hold a meeting when the exchange of views has reached a certain point. The Committee on air transport believes that the correspondence phase of the work could be completed early enough for the group to meet in the second quarter of 1967. You will be notified well in advance of

any decision taken concerning the exact date and place of the meeting.

For your information, we are also enclosing a list of the group's members. The list will be revised, in due time, when I have received further information: And I would appreciate it if in your reply you would let me have the name and address of your adviser, so that I may get in touch with him.

Yours sincerely,

F.X. Byrne

Secretary of the Experts' Group
on Airport Signs.

Appendix to Document 398/33

WORKING PAPER OF THE ICAO GROUP OF EXPERTS

The present note provides some useful information on the reasons which led the committee to create a Group of Experts on signs for use at airports (PAS.) and invites the members of the Group to make observations on this matter.

1. Further to its examination of the advantage there would be in creating an international standard system of signs for use at airports, the committee on Air Transport concluded that this was a desirable aim and decided to ask the contracting States and the organisations concerned to provide more ample information. After examining the replies it received, the Committee on Air Transport decided to institute a Working Group, composed of Committee members, to look in the matter further. This working group, which held eight meetings, submitted to the Committee on Air Transport a report comprising the pertinent information on the genesis of the question. You will find a copy enclosed for your information.
2. On the basis of this report, the Committee described in principle, to institute a group of experts and entrusted it with the task of making a thorough study of the question and to submit to it recommendations as to the terms of reference of the group of experts, etc. Following the recommendations of the Working Group, the Committee itself recommended - what the council later authorised the creation of a group of experts whose terms of reference appear in the annex.
3. As for the Group's terms of reference, it should be noted that although its chief task consists of studying consists of studying the questions appearing in the major portions of paragraphs (a) and (b) and of formulating recommendations with respect to them, the lists following those paragraphs, as well as the observations on the different signs which accompanied the terms of reference should not be considered as complete or restrictive and are given only as general indications for the Group.
4. These indications do however, have another aspect, in that they constitute a valid starting point for the Group's work. The members of the Group are therefore invited to study these elements, to propose additions, eliminations or any other changes as they see fit, and to forward their observations to the Secretariat of the Group of Experts as soon as possible and in any case no later than 31 January 1967.

Document No. 398/32
17.III.1967

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR TRAVEL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

DRAFT REPLY TO THE ICAO

(International Civil Aviation Organisation)

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 28 February and for the attention which you have given to our letter of 9 January informing you of the creation of the International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols and of its efforts, on a high and broadly international level, to promote a standardised system of signs and symbols, meeting the common needs of the various international sectors of transport and tourism.

We appreciate your explanation of the work methods of the experts' group created By ICAO for the purpose of studying the development of international standard signs for use at airports. We welcome your organisation's decision to take up this matter as concerns air transport and airports and are prepared to contribute, in a consultative capacity, to the work of this group. You will find below the observations consultative capacity, to the work of this group. You will find below the observations on the working paper PAS - WP/1, enclosed with your letter, which we feel we are in a position to formulate in the light of the opinions expressed by our committee.

1. The International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols considers it desirable that international travellers and tourists be able to find their way about easily in airports, railway stations, hotels, public buildings, harbour stations, and bus stations, tourist sites etc. by means of signs which instead of being written in a particular language make use of internationally standardised symbols. It is nonetheless aware that to achieve this aim it is

necessary to halt the growing proliferation of conflicting symbols, and considers that it is indispensable to adopt a single standardised system applicable to all of the major sectors of transport and tourism.

The desired unification and harmonisation will be possible only if the symbols have been given suitable study and are made to respond fully to what is demanded of them. This is why the inclusion of professional graphic designers is indispensable in groups such as ours.

However we have observed the variety of work undertaken to this end and the fact that some of them have, to our knowledge, already widely applied. Consequently, it would be unrealistic to try to study the bases of this new international language as if nothing already existed in that field. It would seem reasonable to reach agreement first of all on the principles which should govern the conception of the system, then to review the various symbols suggested so as to choose those which are found satisfactory. Those items of information for which no symbol will have been chosen in this manner will require the creation of new symbols, in line with the principles laid down and the concern to arrive at a homogeneous system.

2. The analysis of the general principles, as given on page 3 of annex to document PAS - WP/1 corresponds to that made to our committee. Paragraph f.) gives rise, however, to the following observations. The aim of a system of signs and symbols is not to provide illustrations for signs with words. We consider that if from the beginning symbols are chosen for the purpose of creating a system without words, they are more likely to be of the desired quality, for in such a system, mediocre graphic design is unthinkable. On the contrary it is felt that words should "teach" the symbols to their users, this means the symbols are much too approximative to be used without supporting explanations. If words used, even only temporarily, this will lead to a regrettably slack conception. Furthermore, we would point out that explanatory words will be of no use to those passengers or tourists who are not familiar with the languages used to teach the symbol.

Consequently, it is the wish of the International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols that no words be allowed, even temporarily, or that at least words will not be officially recommended except in rare instances, pending a better and purely symbolic solution.

3. The list of facilities and services which can be indicated by signs obviously varies with the types of operations where the recommended system will be used. Nonetheless, the representatives of the member organisations of our committee have drawn up a common list of needs applying both to Transport and to Tourism (cf. annex.) This list, limited to 60 items of information, was based on a document covering 200 items of information which could be translated by symbols. Although it is desirable to avoid a disorderly increase in the number of signs, our proposed list will probably need to be extended in the future to meet new travel and transport needs.

4. As for the use of standardised shapes or colours, our committee has not yet expressed a final opinion. It is however, agreed that if recourse is had to such types of codification, care must be taken to avoid conflicting with certain already accepted standardisations or specifications, as for instance, those used in international road signs or by the ISO.

5. Taking into consideration the criteria or guidelines previously established as well as the list of needs given in the annex, the International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols examined the existing symbols or pictograms created by the UIC, the IATA, The Paris Airport and the Organisation Committee for the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. The pictograms are reproduced in the blue-covered working document which is enclosed. The observations of the committee may be summarised as follows:

f) Symbols are preferable to words, the use of which should be avoided as much as possible, the long term aim being to eliminate words when the public becomes familiar with the signs in question. However, where words are found to be essential the official ICAO languages should be used with the national language of the country concerned. Nevertheless, it is recognised that there might be some international airports where it would be desirable for the convenience of travellers to use one or more other languages, e.g. if a substantial number of air travellers using those airports come from areas where the ICAO languages are not generally understood.

Toilets (in general):

No final decision was reached on the symbols proposed by the IATA and the UIC, which we found to be the most important. We did however, observe that the project submitted by the UIC (W.C.) had no real international meaning and that as for the IATA proposal, it could be altered by placing a vertical partition between the two silhouettes.

Toilets (Men - Women):

Favourable opinion on the symbols proposed by the IATA and UIC.

Telephone:

In favour of the symbol proposed by the UIC, possibly add some wire to the apparatus.

Post Office:

No definite agreement. But the symbol proposed by the IATA was not judged satisfactory.

Telegram:

In favour of the symbol proposed by the UIC and IATA.

Bank or Currency Exchange Office:

Reservations.

Information:

Reservations. It was observed that none of the symbols proposed were satisfactory.

Taxis:

In favour of the symbol proposed by the UIC.

Bus to City:

In favour of the idea behind the symbols proposed by the UIC and IATA.

Nursery:

This item has not been included in our list of necessary information.

Restaurant:

Hesitation between, on the one hand, the UIC and IATA proposals and, on the other, the symbol submitted by the Tokyo Olympics.

Snack Bar:

Fairly favourable to the symbol submitted by the IATA.

Bar:

Fairly favourable to the UIC proposal, if the shape of the glass was changed.

Baggage lockers and left-luggage office:

Two symbols are needed, to represent the normal checkroom and the automatic locker system. No opinion as yet.

Luggage delivery:

Opposed to the IATA proposal.

Departure area - gate numbers:

The IATA proposal was found unsatisfactory.

First aid:

Reservations.

No smoking:

Reservations.

Lost and found:

The UIC and IATA proposal was confusing. It was found unsatisfactory.

The Committee examined other proposed symbols and reached the following decisions:

Elevator (lift):

Opposed to the IATA proposal.

Hotel:

Opposed to the IATA proposal.

Bath:

Fairly favourable to the symbol proposed by the UIC.

Shower:

Fairly favourable to the UIC proposal.

Non-drinkable water:

No opinion expressed on the UIC proposal.

Drinkable water:

Fairly favourable to the UIC proposal.

Police:

Opposed to the Tokyo Olympics proposal.

Railway Station:

Opposed to the UIC proposal.

Do not throw anything:

General opposition to the UIC proposal.

Other proposed symbols were examined. In all cases opinions were so divided that they cannot not be considered satisfactory and useable in their present form.

After this analysis, we felt that while in a certain number of cases existing proposals for symbols could be adopted as they were many other symbols remained to be created. It is our chief concern that this future phase of our work be carried out in close co-operation with the other organisations concerned, and with yours in particular. We hope that very shortly the necessary dialogue will be established between your group of experts and our Committee.

I am sorry to say that I cannot reproduce here the symbols discussed, because I simply have not the time to do the elaborate drawings, and because exactly to the day today the 17th March 1972 five full years have gone by without a single change being brought about to the symbols of the UIC the International Railway

Union, in spite of all the conferences. These symbols are only a few, and they rely on letters of the alphabet too as for instance the letter R to mean reservation, etc. etc. However, the Committee published a leaflet which shows glaringly how well the Icoграда men have succeeded in making the Committee believe that symbols must be self-explanatory. This leaflet shows 4 symbols and the heading is

SOME SYMBOLS NOT TO BE FOLLOWED

and the explanatory words:

Each of the four "pictograms" here reprinted is understood only thanks to its joint literal explanations.

The first pictogram shows an outline of a house (much as my outline) and inside a bed and above the word in the native language, and below in English: GASTHOF - HOTEL

The second pictogram shows two arrows, the first going up and the second going down and above the word in the native language and below in English: HISS - ELEVATOR.

The third pictogram shows only an exclamation mark and above and below RESEIGNEMENTS - INFORMATION.

The fourth pictogram shows a hat and an umbrella and a glove all with the hanging ticket on each good as in a LOST-FOUND office, and above and underneath the words HITTEGGOD - LOST - FOUND.

In the next letter I am welcomed as a new member.

Dear Sir,

International Committee on Signs and Symbols

In our letter of 17 March, consulting you on a draft letter to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) which was finally sent on 14 April in the form reproduced in Doc. 398/32 Rev., we had let you expect a meeting in June to examine the information received in reply to our letter of 9 January and the progress of the work undertaken by the ICAO.

That organisation has just informed us that its group of experts will not be able to meet until the third quarter of 1967, and that its Secretariat hopes to transmit to us in the next few weeks the views expressed by the members of the group of experts and its observers.

Consequently, we should appreciate your reserving Tuesday 13th June for a meeting of the International Committee on Travel Signs and Symbols, which will have before it an analysis of the replies to the letter of 9 January and of the information received from the ICAO.

A detailed agenda will be sent to you at the end of May.

Unless we hear from you to the contrary before 31 May, we will assume that you agree that we may welcome the representatives of three new organisations which have asked to belong to our Committee:

- Union of International Fairs (UFI) - Mr. Rolf Lemser (Leipzig)
- International Typographic Association - Mr. Charles Peignot, President. Paris.
- The Institute for Semantography - Mr. C.K. Bliss (Australia)

We should be obliged if you would let us know who is to represent your organisation at this meeting and who is to take part in the subscription lunch which has been arranged on this occasion on 13 June at 1.00 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

The Secretaries of the Committee
B. Sevray

Marcelle Kling

ICC Transport Group

Western European Airports Association

This recognition was in reply to my letter which follows underneath.

Dear Mrs. Kling,

Sydney 1 - 5 - 67

Thank you for your kind letter of April 26, and for soothing and reassuring words that nobody wants to ignore me and my work. I repeat again that I do not I repeat again that I do not want any recognition, any reward, any remuneration. I am 70 years old, and simply can't help it, approaching all people who are interested in symbols, simply because I am so far the only man in the whole world who has made the greatest contribution to this field. The fact that not one of the organisations involved has expressed any desire to acquire my book is ample proof that all organisations think my symbols are just not good. Never mind. You are all at present in your working and wrangling with the problem of symbolisation where I was 25 years ago. Hence, the day will come when you will see that only my system provides a coherent and "homogeneous system" to use the 2 words from your letter draft to the ICAO. Meanwhile do me the only favour and let me know about your work. I want nothing more. I don't want to convince you.

Now here is the fact that I haven't received any of the communications during the months of February, March and April. The last I received was your circular letter of January 9, and now the copies attached to your letter of April 26. The reason of course is that I am not one of the 15 organisations. The 14th and the 15th are Icoграда and the New York Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier.

Let's have a look at them both, Icograda hasn't evolved a single system. The Committee for Breaking hasn't evolved a single symbol. This is the fact.

In my previous letters I have asked time and again to be accorded the privilege and the honour to be included as the 16th organisation. I ask you therefore again to accept

THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY
as the 16th organisation, and to see to it that I get automatically all the circulars and papers all others get including Icograda and the Committee for Breaking.

As your Montreal meeting will allow only a few minutes for discussion, I can't see how my work can be considered there. However, I beg you to distribute two of my papers to all persons present, namely (1) my tourist folder, and (2) my appeal to all officials who are working on symbols. In order to give you enough copies for distribution, I am sending you with the same but separate mail a number of copies, and beg you to distribute them at the conference. I want nothing more, and thank you for this. I am wishing you a pleasant voyage.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

Dear Mrs. Kling,

15th May, 1967

Just received your document MK-398 of May 9, and wish to thank you for proposing my Institute for Semantography to be admitted to your committee. I cannot imagine that anyone would object to the admission.

I shall prepare whatever may be interesting for your committee to consider at the forthcoming meeting on June 13, and shall send it to you.

Meanwhile I hope you have received already a number of papers to be distributed at the Montreal Conference.

You are aware that the Directors of Expo 67 of Montreal have commissioned a Toronto designer firm to design pictorial symbols. These designers and the directors of Expo 67 have adhered to the belief that words are unnecessary and that the symbols alone should be "instantly understood". Some of these symbols are already used all over the world, as for instance the picture of a man in trousers, and a woman in a skirt as silhouettes to mean MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TOILETS.

Now before me is the latest issue of TIME magazine and on page 67 (May 12) there is a report about Expo and it begins with a story about these wordless symbols, and the report says:

"The sophisticated silhouette pictograms intended to point the path to the lavatories were so esoteric that many people could not tell what they were, managed to find washrooms only after many desperate queries."

This fact proves what I am trying to say all the time, namely that symbols must be learned, and that the best way to do so is to have the native language word underneath the symbol, so that the people learn the meaning of the symbol and recognise it when abroad.

I know that you are against words under symbols, and that you believe that symbols could be designed which can be instantly understood. This can be done with the arrow symbol, because we all have learned its meaning already in our childhood. With other symbols they must be learned.

I hope now that you and all committee members will now be more inclined to study my work and to have it tested - with children preferably.

Forgive me if I try to convince you against your own conviction. I know it does not make me popular with some of the committee. But I have studied and worked on this problem for the last 25 years. I am with best regards.

Sincerely yours,

C.K. Bliss

Now poor Mr. Soichi Kato comes on the scene and tries desperately to get involved in research into symbols in order to get a salary. Here is his letter to the Committee.

International Committee on Travel,
Signs and Symbols,
International Chamber of Commerce,
Paris. France.
Gentlemen,

June 4, 1967

As an organisation which established the International Symbol Project in 1962, we are glad to see the recent rise of interest among various groups in symbols. Now the problems which face us are:

Who should make the final selection of symbols? Should the United Nations be involved?

How can we evaluate the effectiveness of various symbols developed by different groups?

How can various groups work together most effectively instead of duplicating or competing with one another?

We have discussed these questions with many people. The general consensus is that neither the United Nations nor any other organisations can give the right answer. The right answer will be determined only through scientific, interdisciplinary and cross cultural research by high level experts.

No airline will purchase a jet plane with research, nor will they purchase a jet plane recommended by biologists instead of engineers. Similarly, only scientific research by experts can establish the validity of symbols.

If all of us, the participants of this group, agree to the need for such scientific research, how can we best contribute?

1. Each participating organisation should contribute a substantial amount of funds and services to enable such scientific research. The International Committee for Breaking the Language Barrier has given a great deal of funds, time and services in the past five years.

2. Through our worldwide surveys, we have discovered several groups and individuals who are interested in this subject without knowing one another's efforts.

For example, the ICOGRADA was planning a student contest on symbols but had not known of symbols developed by the UIC. As a result of our efforts, there has been communication for the first time among such groups and individuals.

It is essential to hold conferences by experts who have been devoted to this subject for years. Such conferences should be held in different places, instead of being held only in Paris or in New York.

3. For effective co-operation among groups, we should avoid duplication of activities. Many organisations will only be confused if they receive inquiries on symbols from various sources. The ICBLB has been contacting over 500 organisations throughout the world in the past five years. We will continue to serve as the central clearing house for the dissemination of information and opinions.

I regret very much that I cannot attend the meeting. I hope that you have a most fruitful discussion. We also hope that you will be able to attend a conference which will be held in New York in the near future.

Sincerely
Soichi Kato
Executive Director.

I.C.B.L.B.'S. RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Scientific research in symbol communication required the following conditions:

1. Symbols should be studied with a global scope covering different industries, cultures and regions, instead of studying and recommending symbols for only one industry, such as railways: or one region, such as Europe.
2. Symbols should be studied in terms of their use in relation to the various functions of verbal, non-verbal, visual and audio communications. Symbols cannot be studied as an isolated factor.
3. Symbol research should be developed by high-level experts of communication together with experts in various fields of science and industry.

For scientific research and worldwide implementation, the following programmes have been undertaken by the I.C.B.L.B. during the past five years.

1. Operating a center for information, where reference materials are collected, catalogued and distributed.
2. Publishing reports on symbol research.
3. Making surveys on both verbal and non-verbal signs presently being used for machinery, packaging, traffic, travel, safety, etc. to establish a list of messages to be symbolised.
4. Holding symposiums and workshops of experts integrating interdisciplinary skills and knowledge from science, art and industry.
5. Using mass media to observe public response and stimulate their interest.
6. Setting up standard evaluating methodology.
7. Conducting experiments of selected symbols in practical situations.

The I.C.B.L.B. received inquiries, requests and offers of co-operation from various groups and experts. Several latest developments were discussed at a workshop which was held on June 2 in New York participated by communication experts, e.g. Dr. Mario Pei, Columbia University: Will Burtin, International Center for Communication Arts and Sciences: Colin Clipson, Ohio State University: James Pirkel, Syracuse University: George Sadek, Cooper Union: Ephraim Gleichenhaus, International Center for Typographic Arts.

The I.C.B.L.B. wishes to reinforce its programme of service and research among with all those who are interested in the success of the International Symbol Project, such as the I.C.C., I.C.O.G.R.A.D.A., etc.

Dear Mrs. Kling,

1st June, 1967

I am in possession of your document MK-398 of March 17 and your letter of April 26 in which you informed me that you are planning a meeting in June. You may have received my letter of May 15 in which I thanked you for proposing my Institute as a member of your Committee. I hope that this has been now carried

through.

Meanwhile you have been to Montreal, and you had a look at the 24 symbols which form the sign "language" of Expo 67, only 24 symbols without any word underneath, because the Expo people and their designers believe that symbols should be instantly understandable. You may have seen the report in TIME magazine of May 12 from which I re-quote about the confusion caused by these wordless symbols about which TIME says:

"The sophisticated silhouette pictograms intended to point the path to the lavatories were so esoteric that many people could not tell what they were, managed to find washrooms only after many desperate queries."

Imagine that these symbols for toilets, an outline of a man and woman are already internationally displayed in many hotels, and still - without any explanation by a native word cause confusion.

This story is not new. In 1964 the British Ministry of Transport designed a number of road warning signs for British motor roads, and again without a word in English underneath. One year later confusion still reigned so much that the British humorous magazine PUNCH spent 2 full pages on this. I enclose a photocopy and am sorry that the right page did not come out in full. But the left page tells the lesson.

Now, at your meeting in June you will study all the proposals, including my proposal for semantographic pictorial symbols which can be used to depict any meaning - provided a FOLDER is distributed in all tourist bureaux which explain the basic symbols and some of their combinations to travellers. I hope therefore that at the June meeting the lesson of Expo, and now the lesson from PUNCH will make some impact, and the members will be more inclined to have my symbols tested - I don't ask for more - preferably with children. If children can grasp my symbols and can read and form new combinations then it will be "child's play" for adult travellers. I hope therefore that I have been able to convince you, so that you may convince the other members to agree to a test.

Sincerely yours

C.K. Bliss

Now Mr. Sevray issued his own leaflet from his Paris Airport office.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR TRAVEL SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Joint Statement

June, 1967

The International Committee for Travel Signs and Symbols set up in September 1966 by seventeen non-governmental organisations (NGO) which 3 other organisations have since asked to join, has examined the data collected after consulting many bodies concerned, on the items of information of general interest which it had thought most useful to translate into signs in order to meet the needs of tourism and transport.

This examination confirmed that there is often a variety of signs for the same item of information, and that consequently there is an urgent need to halt this proliferation, which is likely to confuse rather than help tourists.

Recognising however that this proliferation in itself proves that an urgent need is felt for certain signs, the Committee wishes to make a distinction between two aspects of the problem.

1. As a matter of first aid, a limited number of existing signs could be temporarily adopted. It intends to proceed later to choose one sign when several exist to translate the same item of information and with the possibility of having designers improve the sign thus chosen so as to achieve a certain visual unity.

Although some of its members continue to believe that this would entail serious disadvantages, the majority view within the Committee is that words can accompany these first aid signs for an educational period, especially where symbols are abstract and their interpretation open to doubt.

2. Simultaneously, the Committee considers it important that the study of the problem thus raised of mass communication be carried out on scientific basis: only on the results of such a study can the creation of a universal system be founded.

To that end, it wishes to draw the attention to the ICOGRADA/Ulm research programme, as an example of a possible method. The plan may be submitted as follows:

"Communication is possible only if the "sender" of the message used a repertoire of signs familiar to the "receiver". The signs which are known to the population (travellers and tourists) may be found out by a "production method" a statistically significant sample of potential travellers and tourists is asked to produce drawings of verbal concepts relevant to tourism and transport. It is anticipated that a survey collecting these drawings will not be too costly since about 96% of the world's travelling population at present are of European

The foregoing 23 pages of typed and mimeographed letters and reports were done at a time when I believed that I would have to mimeograph all my issues of the Semantography Series. I shuddered at this job as it would entail making drawings of the many symbols proposed at the meetings in Paris.

Fortunately in May 72 I visited the Library of Congress in Washington and there I was told that at last the libraries of the world have agreed on one unified microfiche of 4 x 6 inches size and containing 96 pages. This at once relieved me of the arduous task of making hundreds of drawings, a task which I couldn't do it in my old age. I shall therefore add the drawings and other papers with symbols to the microfiche cards on which the foregoing letters will appear. The reader who has these duplicated pages at hand and cannot see the microfiche cards of the symbols may excuse this. I hope that before or after my death it will be made possible to supply scholars and private persons with copies of microfiche cards containing the papers in which they are interested. They could then view these cards in their nearest library.

I wish to end this sorry story which had cost me many unhappy days and nights by informing the reader that one year ago in 1971 I wrote a letter to the Chamber of Commerce in Paris, requesting information what has happened to the activity of the symbol committee as I haven't heard anything for 2 years. I received no reply, which tells me enough to know that this activity has ended rather dismally. At a time I had a good mind to write a letter of Protest to the Secretary General of the Chamber protesting about Mrs. Kling and the way my work has been treated, but I refrained from this act as this would be the end of the correspondence. There is no use today to write a letter of protest as the Committee is dead, not for good, but for rather bad. I had great hopes when it started, and I deplored only my fate of not being able to go to Paris. I am sure I would have been able to turn the minds of the secretary general and also of Mrs. Kling in my favour.

And so another great effort came to naught. I started this long issue by saying that the Chambers of Commerce in all countries are peopled by bureaucrats, and this holds true with the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris. And this indeed is my greatest stumbling block.

The End