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I have written a letter to the Managing Editor of the Reader's Digest, cancelling my own and all gift subscriptions and telling why. This paper to my friends contains my allegations in a more detailed form.

Written Xmas 1972
Semantography Series No. 359

F A R E W E L L T O T H E S E M A N T I C A L L Y
M U C H P O L L U T E D R E A D E R ' S D I G E S T

A letter to my friends who received year after year ^{my} gift subscription.

My dear friends,

Forgive me when I am sending you this letter instead of renewing my gift subscription for the Reader's Digest (henceforth referred to as RD). I simply cannot do it anymore as I cannot endure anymore the disastrous change which has come over the RD in the last years. I hope you will agree with me when you think of some of the facts which have much polluted the once sweet and pure publication of the RD as started and carried on for many years by the originators DeWitt Wallace and Lila Acheson Wallace.

I shall now refer to some of the items which are more than enough to condemn the present owners and editors of the RD. I have written to them, giving these facts and have cancelled my own and gift subscriptions.

Advertisements. Whereas the RD was started and carried on throughout many years without advertisements, throughout the later years more and more highly dubious and highly dangerous advertisements have appeared in the RD. At a time when it was clear to all concerned that cigarette smoking was highly dangerous, the RD still carried ads for this destroyer of the Nations health. Only in the last years has the RD under pressure of the US Health Agencies given up the easy money from tobacco ads. But the RD still carries many ads for liquor, though the editors should know very well, that alcohol is a worse killer than nicotine. Indeed, as it has been proved many times, the maiming and the deaths by alcohol are greater than those suffered by all other diseases and epidemics taken together. This demon alcohol kills slowly reason, love, affection, marriage and parenthood of many millions of people, and the ads carried by the RD are a mockery to the saintly articles about love, affection, marriage and parenthood which are published between the ads.

Other ads are equally dangerous and utterly misleading too. I refer to the ads for cosmetics, which are printed in such a way as to appear as a regular RD feature. The first word on top "Advertisement" is usually overlooked. Such ads titled "New Loveliness for your Skin" are not only misleading, but false and dangerous. I refer for instance to the American book "Cosmetics: Trick or Treat?" by Toni Stabile who accuses the multi-million dollar cosmetics industry of marketing beauty aids with ingredients that could kill, maim, disfigure - and actually did so to many victims.

But the most insidious ads are those by which the RD could be taken to court for advocating the dubious practice of pyramid selling by which gullible readers of the RD are made to part with their earnings and to lose them. I refer here only to one advertisement in the April 1971 issue of the RD which is made up like a real RD article even with a big picture of a big man with the name of Larry Huff. The title, "THE GREATEST CHARACTER I KNOW" by a Mr. Ash Marshall, who should be prosecuted together with Mr. Huff and with the managers of the RD for spreading falsehood with intent to defraud.

In this article Ash Marshall praises into Heaven Mr. Larry Huff who asks for \$2,000 outright for a concession to sell bio-degradeable detergents. And Mr. Marshall has the temerity to tell the gullible readers of the RD that he has made \$100,000 in the last 12 months by having bought a concession from Mr. Huff. To this article is attached a stiff cardboard coupon to be sent postage paid to GOLDEN CHEMICAL PRODUCTS AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD. 11 AVERILL STREET, RHODES, NSW 2138. On the other side of the coupon you have to fill in your income requirements \$.... per month. Imagine you have to state how much you want to earn.

And now imagine the unimaginable. When I tried to telephone this firm I found that they have not even a telephone at 11 Averill Street, Rhodes. No phone at all.

All these nefarious advertising practices of the RD are not mere chance happenings, or in conformity with all other papers who too bring dubious and dangerous ads. For instance, the Sydney Herald and the Telegraph and other Australian papers bring often reports and articles on the misleading advertising practice by advertising agencies. But the proprietors of the RD have done one better. Some time ago they bought the publishing firm of Funk and Wagnall, New York. As it happens with publishers there are at any time books in preparation, or in the press, or with the binder about to be published. One of such books to be

published by Funk and Wagnall before the takeover by the RD, was a satirical novel about the advertising industry. Just a harmless entertaining satirical novel. But the proprietors of the RD were outraged about this book of their new subsidiary and they halted production and they condemned the book to the wastepaper baskets.

Lotteries. The RD has many millions of readers all over the world, and really does not need sales gimmicks to boost sales. Yet, the proprietors have installed lotteries of the most dubious nature. Usually when a lottery is arranged, interested parties can buy or get lottery tickets with a number, and the drawing of these numbers out of a barrel is done publicly and can be attended to by all the holders of such tickets. For some reasons, perhaps the illegality of lotteries in Australian states, with the RD the lottery prizes are drawn first and assigned then to subscribers, and they are notified that maybe they have drawn the lucky ticket, and therefore they should send in their notification that they want to participate in the lottery.

Such a dubious practice opens the doors to dishonest employees to "manage" the allocation of the prizes already drawn to the subscribers of their choice. In order to alleviate doubts in the minds of the RD subscribers as to the honesty of the procedures, the RD prints the following soothing words:

"Employees of Reader's Digest, their advertising agencies, suppliers or magazine wholesalers and members of their immediate families are not eligible."

But who controls the employees who can ask a friend who is a subscriber to send in the lottery numbers allotted to him - by that employee? And both sharing the fraudulent spoils!

Some years ago Sydney newspapers were swamped with crossword puzzles which were so insidiously worded that for every word to be filled-in two correct answers were possible. In order to send in the correct solution, newspaper readers had to purchase many forms and return them with the filled-in words. But the possible correct solutions were so many (with every word allowing for two correct answers) that a reader would have to purchase thousands of forms and still would not be able to cover all possible combinations. The wary public was informed that the correct solution had been placed into a Bank vault, by whom? Naturally by the men who worked out the puzzle and conducted the lottery. Then it came out that the first prize was shared half by the wife of the proprietor of one paper. Bingo! This story has nothing to do with the RD lottery. No matter how honest the managers may be, there may still be some dishonest employee who got hold of the lucky numbers and who shuffled the subscribers' allotments of the prizes won.

Now, this is not the whole story, and indeed the RD could honestly protest against the expressions of such doubts. But there is no doubt in this report by the Australian Associated Press from Washington about the RD and the US Federal Trade Commission which cracks down on all dishonest and dubious advertisements liable to mislead the public. Here below is the AAP report.

US BODY CITES 'DIGEST'
'SWEEPSTAKES HALF AS RICH AS ADVERTISED'

Washington Tuesday - The US Federal Trade Commission today accused the "Reader's Digest" of misleading the public with 11 promotional sweepstakes, which were less than half as rich as advertised.

The Commission also charged the magazine with using in its advertising the names and addresses of winners without their permission.

The Commission announced a proposed order, which would require "Reader's Digest", in future sweepstakes, to award all prizes of the value and type advertised and to use names only with prior written consent.

The order also would require the magazine to reveal the long odds against winning.

The Commission said the magazine implies that all participants had a "reasonable chance to win," when the odds were 980,000 to 1 against winning a first prize, and 480,000 to 1 against winning a second prize.

"Reader's Digest" may accept the order or demand a hearing on the charges.

The commission said that, in 11 sweepstakes conducted since January, 1966 the magazine claimed winners would receive 699,293 prizes worth about \$A5.04 million, but that only 274,282 prizes worth about \$A2.25 million were awarded.

All 11 contests were of the "You may already have won" variety, in which millions of tickets, each bearing a printed number, were mailed to prospective purchasers of "Reader's Digest" magazine and others of the firm's products.

Winning numbers were drawn before the tickets were mailed.

The Commission said that if a winning ticket was returned, the prize was awarded, but if the ticket was not returned, the prize was not awarded.

In addition the Commission said winners of third or fourth prizes were required to submit an affidavit, while winners of first and second prizes were required to submit an interview with a private detective. These conditions were not disclosed prior to the contest.

The Commission also said the magazine implied that tickets were mailed only to a few people, when in reality they were sent to millions of people. (AAP)

In Sydney last night, the Managing Director of the Readers' Digest Association Pty. Ltd., Mr. W.S. Leuchars, said he had heard nothing from America about the cabled report.

"There was a big enquiry in Washington about a year ago, and I understood we received a favourable comment from the board or commission which carried out the inquiry", he said.

"For at least a year, if not longer, every prize has been awarded and all testimonials have been authenticated." The End.

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that the U.S. Federal Trade Commission is in correspondence with me and is studying my semantography as a means to detect and demask vague and ambiguous words in advertisements. Articles on Sex. Almost every issue of the RD carries a "family article" on sex. But the confused and worried people who have trouble in their sex life and who read such article in the hope to get some good advice are bitterly disappointed, because of the vague language of the article. The articles simply don't tell what to do. Here is but one example in an article which appeared in the issue of April 1971 under the paragraph heading: "What can a wife do to help if her husband is repeatedly impotent?"

Here is the wishy washy answer of the RD:

"The best medicine for any impotence at any age is a loving wife. A woman who sincerely and compassionately helps her husband see that he has succeeded in making their marriage and their life together meaningful and fulfilling is worth her weight in gold. If she is devoted and determined, her chances of success are excellent."

What can a worried wife make out of this "advice?" Nothing. How simple to tell her that the "impotency" of her husband is simply a limp penis which prevents him to enter the vagina of his wife and achieve a satisfying orgasm. How simple to tell the wife that her husband with even a limp penis can have his orgasm - outside of her vagina. All she has to do is to caress the penis by various means as for instance by her loving fingers until orgasm and ejaculation is achieved with the penis still being limp. But such simple advice is not given by the RD. All the worried wife is getting are wishy washy words as the ones above.

The Readers' Digest and Communism. From its very beginning the RD warned the world of the ultimate aim of the communists: world domination. Those articles which appeared during the many years were excellent. But during the last years it has become not fashionable to warn against communism - in spite of the massacre in Hungary, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and all the other catastrophic attempts of world communism to disrupt the western world, including Korea and Vietnam.

No wonder that the new proprietors of the RD have thought it wise first to tone down their articles against communism, and then even to laud the Soviet Despots. Take for instance the article ALL ABOARD THE TRANS-SIBERIAN EXPRESS. The report is jubilant about the Express. Only in an aside do we learn that the waggons are "Victorian". What does this mean? That they are still from Czarist days. But "the train is smoothly run", we are told. But we are also told (among the jubilant words that the "Express" could do 75 m.p.h.) that the average speed is under 37 m.p.h. An "Express" indeed. The most enjoyable thing on the Express are the people you meet, we are told. But my late wife Claire who travelled to Shanghai on this "Express" told me that Russian travellers who got chummy with foreigners are warned of the dangers they face, and this means the concentration camp. Naturally from the windows you don't see the camps, but they are there full with the poor prisoners who have to suffer by the Soviet despots. We are told with pride that the train which travelled for nearly one week with the colossal speed of under 37 m.p.h. was only 90 seconds late. And many more such wonderful marvels. Only in a footnote in very small print are we told that the Soviets are transporting 80% of their weapons and ammunition over this line. Whereto? -- To North Vietnam. What for? To kill American boys. Glory be to the enthusiastic report of the RD.

There are other articles on the glory of Russian communism. As for instance the ravishing story about "The Moscow Circus", which comes quite often to Australia. I happen to be a circus buff and a circus expert, because when I was a teenager I wanted to join a circus as a juggling musical clown. I spent thousands of hours to learn juggling even with knives and torches, and I can still do it. And I like to make musical jokes on my instruments. As to my clowning ability I have some of my films which testify that I know how a good clown can bring the circus down. And I have seen the clowns of the Moscow Circus on TV and found them utterly miserable, as well as the many acts. No wonder that the recent visit of the Moscow Circus to Australia showed in their advertisements that half of the actors are not from the Soviet Union but hired

from Germany, Belgium and other countries. But the RD story is exultant. Other disagreeable gimmicks of the RD. When the Wallace couple started the RD they gave full credit to the newspapers and magazines from which they took the reprinted condensed article. Now take a look at the "credit" which the RD gives today. At the bottom of the first page of an article appears a line in the smallest type possible, indeed so small that many people cannot read it or simply overlook it. In this smallest type the RD editors tell where they got their article SECONDHAND as it first appeared in TIME Magazine, or FORTUNE, or other reputed publications. By printing the credit in the smallest type the RD has complied with the copyright practice but at the same time concealing from the reader that it is not the RD but quite another publication which brought first that article.

Another totally unnecessary gimmick is this: The reader gets invitations to receive books or records or other things free for inspection. All he has to do is to send of the reply paid postcard. Now these reply postcards or envelopes need no stamp. But the RD asks all the hundreds of thousands of readers to stick a large stamp in green and gold to the envelope. The reader thinks that this is necessary. This practice was carried on for many years, until I sent an irascible letter to the general manager with one of these gimmick stamps and asked him to lick it - and then try to get the disagreeable taste out of his mouth which clings to it for hours. Apparently he followed my command, licked the stamp, got his mouth full of bad taste and stopped the idiotic practice.

There are more disagreeable practices to report, as for instance the sending of books which you have to post back if you don't like them, and this has to be done within 10 days - otherwise, well otherwise the forgetful reader^{has} to pay.

And so my friends, understand my unhappiness about a wonderful publication venture having gone bad - a case of pollution of taste and misleading words, and forgive me when I stop my gift subscription for you and instead am sending you something else to assure you of my continuous friendship.

I remain with my best wishes for your Health and Happiness in the coming New Year and for a merry Xmas too.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss.