

CLICK!

In the same post one morning came a letter and a package. In the letter was Douglas Pickett's photo, to go with his article on pp. 37–40, and in the package was a new title from Pelham Books in London: Godfrey Howard's *A Guide to Good English in the 1980s*.

In his letter, Douglas Pickett wrote: 'I must say, I enjoy your usage pages, and David Crystal's article on split infinitives and Michael Swan's article in *ET3* were very salutary. I can now wave them at the reactionary.' In the package from Pelham there was a letter from Godfrey Howard himself, part of which ran: 'I have quoted (with acknowledgement and permission) from Jenny Cheshire's article "A Question of Masculine Bias" in *English Today*. . . . I enjoy reading *ET* and have heard nice things said about it by teachers of English in other countries. Congratulations on getting it going and I hope it will be with us for a long time to come.'

Letters like these warm the cockles of the heart – a cliché that may be in Nicholas Bagnall's personal list of no-no's (See pp. 19–22).

From Canada, three separate people sent me clippings from the *Montreal Gazette's* 'What's in a nickname? Just try "limey" on a Brit' (by Harry Bruce). Not only does Mr Bruce handily review Brits, Limeys, Bluenosers, Canucks and others, but acknowledges as one source 'the suitably lucid new quarterly *English Today*'. I was so taken with both the article and the idea that I have begun gathering material for an *ABC of Ethnic Slurs* to supplement my *ABC of World English*.

Lastly, there is the question of whether a periodical like *ET* really will make a difference. We believe it will. In this context, the review of *ET* in *CATESOL News* June 85 (California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Newsletter) observes:

'Have you ever rubbed your eyes and looked again at an optical illusion? Then you know how I felt reading *English Today*. . . . There I was browsing through articles like "How 'English' is English Literature?", and "The Idea of World English" when CLICK! the focus shifted in my mental lens and I saw my language and my profession from a very different perspective.'

'It's easy when you spend each day in an American classroom, using American materials to teach American English to develop a distorted view of what you're all about. It's easy to get the idea, for example, that we in the U.S. own the syntax, vocabulary and accent everyone else wants and needs. It's easy to become myopic. . . . CLICK! English is changing rapidly and beyond my control. This is a real head-slapper for a person like me who spends classroom time controlling language development. . . . But Out There folks are developing Englishes in response to their own culture and needs, to suit special purposes not included in my tightly constructed syllabus. CLICK! My lens zoomed from close up on teacher and classroom to panorama of world, teacher's size diminishing proportionately. . . . CLICK! Commentary on English can be interesting as well as useful, lively as well as thought-provoking, accessible as well as substantive. My profession is discussable.' (Denise Mahon, editor)

Eminently discussable. If you can tell us about quotes from *ET* in anything you've come across, can let me have something substantive on ethnic slurs, or want to point to any shifts in focus like Denise Mahon's, I would be glad to hear from you.

Meantime, *ET* continues to develop as a forum for discussion and as a bazaar for sampling the wares of both English and the languages that have influenced it (pp. 23, 27 and 35). In this issue, the forum includes our cover theme of gobbledygook, jargon and plain English. People have asked us not to be overly academic – to focus on real issues in the real world, matters that everybody can identify with. This issue's cover theme is just such a matter.

Tom McArthur

The editorial policy of *English Today* is to provide a focus or forum for all sorts of news and opinion from around the world. The points of view of individual writers are as a consequence their own, and do not reflect the opinion of the editorial board. In addition, wherever feasible, *ET* leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the magazine itself is that of Cambridge University Press.



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