

Talks (Live or Recorded)

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25th September 1962

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Service Light Programme

Title Woman's Hour - "The Americans Have A Word For It"

Date of Recording

Time of Recording

Place London, Broadcasting House.

Date of First Broadcast Monday, 8th October, 1962

Time of First Broadcast About 4 minutes between 2 & 3 p.m. (Req: 11.30 - 1.0 p.m.)

Fee 5 guineas (inclusive of all expenses)

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Mike Tigar, Esq.,
11, Castellain Road,
London, W.9.

Yours faithfully,
THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION,

Lalitha Litchu

Talks Booking Manager

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THE AMERICANS HAVE A WORD FOR IT.

There are German-English dictionaries, and French-English dictionaries, and ~~MMMM~~ Russian-English dictionaries, but not, to my knowledge, any handy guides designed to break down the wall of incomprehension which has descended across the Atlantic. ~~MMMM~~ That's a pity. How was my wife to know that what Americans call a biscuit is really a scone, or that a cookie is a biscuit. And how was I to know that a sidewalk is a footpath, ~~MMU MMU~~ ^{and} that gasoline is petrol?

~~But~~ There are American words which have no precise English equivalent, ~~MM~~ but which nevertheless express an idea cogently and well. Take, for example, "raincheck." ~~MMMMM MMMM~~ ^{If} you go to a baseball game in America, and play is called on account of rain, the stub of your admission ticket can be exchanged for a ticket to another game. The stub is called a raincheck, but the word has evolved into much wider use. ~~MM~~ I'm invited to dinner, but don't have the evening free; I indicate to my would-be host that I'd appreciate an invitation for a more convenient time by saying 'I'll take a raincheck on it.'

Or, how about a "hootenanny"?, spelled h-o-o-t-e-n-a-n-n-y. Hootenanny used to be used in America to indicate or refer to the indescribable. But the folk-singers gave the word a new use. A hootenanny is a ~~MMMMMMTTTTMMMM~~ folk-song concert performance in which the audience is invited to join in with the performers. Among the initiated, the word is shortened to 'hoot'.

But these are words which ~~MMMMMMMMMMMM~~ one ~~MMMMMMMMMM~~ can see a use; they are not prententious, they do mean something. The greatest service which I can render, both to this audience and my fellow citizens, is to sound a grave warning

against a ~~SUBVERSIVE, CONSPIRACIOUS~~ plot to undermine the very basis of the English language. On the fringes of American civilization, where dwell the bureaucrat, the organization man--there's a word--, and the lower echelon Pentagon official, a ~~CONSPIRACY~~ center of conspiracy rankles and festers. Stealthily, subversively, but not silently of course, our language--yours, too, but mostly ~~OURS~~ ours--is being subjected to dreadful persecution.

Adjectives--like 'final' and 'definite' ~~and nouns--like implement~~ are being rendered into verbs in order to give the chimerical appearance of profundity where only empty-headedness dwells. Finalize, definitize, ~~and lament~~ are spawned. ~~FINALIZE~~ Definitize might mean to make definite; after definitizing, whatever it is must be finalized. ~~FINALIZE~~ ^{ad} ~~FINALIZE~~ To describe this barbarity, ^{of making new verbs when none were before,} one is forced to create still another word--perhaps 'verb-osity' would do it.

And then--'wise'. 'Politicalwise', meaning nothing, but conveying the impression that one wishes to discuss politics. 'Costwise', to precede pontification on money matters. Wordwise, I am not impressed.

~~THE SMALL IMPROVED, PERHAPS, BY~~ And, you perhaps remember the Dullesism 'massive retaliation', which meant that somebody planned to drop bombs on somebody, and which had the incidental effect of bring the word 'massive' into massive abuse.

There are more, of course. The acronym--ChiCom and ChiNat for Chinese Communist and Chinese Nationalist, and the collection of initials--BUSANDA for Bureau of supplies and accounts.

On reflection, action seems necessary now. I'll take a raincheck on that hootenanny, ~~FINALIZE~~ ^{definitize} some ~~FINALIZE~~ positive inputs for ~~FINALIZE~~ you to finalize, and the massive retaliation of ~~FINALIZE~~ incomprehension

Can be begun. Defense-wise, that is.