

examples supplement

The Examples Supplement to the Informal Logic Newsletter is our end of the year (usually) feature for those who face the task of teaching informal logic or critical thinking and who need a robust and regularly updated inventory of examples to use in devising assignments, tests, etc.

We would like to thank those who contributed material for this year's edition: Trudy Govier, Perry Weddle, and

especially Charles Kielkopf of Ohio State University for granting us permission to reprint material from his study guide. The last 17 pages of this supplement reproduce the tenth unit of that study guide.

Once again we encourage our readers, especially those who have a portfolio of examples, to share the wealth by sending some of it to us so that we can publish it in next year's Examples Supplement.

A

BACKGROUND: In January 1982, an article appeared in the Toronto Globe and Mail claiming that coloring books were not a good thing for children. In reply to this article, F.J. of Toronto replied: (January 17, 1982):

I would like to say it for all time that the belief that the use of coloring books by children stifles their creativeness is a myth. I adored my coloring books when I was a child and went on to teach art myself for 25 years. I see no reason for denying a child the opportunity to have pleasure with his crayons and coloring book.

ANALYSIS: The argument from the second statement above to the first is a classic case of hasty generalization, and there is also the questionable assumption that an art teacher is a creative person. (Trudy Govier)

B

BACKGROUND: In Toronto in 1981, the police raided a number of gay bars, prompting this letter to the Toronto Star (February 25, 1981) from D.T.:

Regarding the letter "Bleeding hearts condemn police," J.J. has done the unforgivable: he has criticized the "in" crowd. I have long wondered when someone would have the fortitude to call it as it is; and he is so right.

But the "lib-left" has access to the media. It is a self-perpetuating group. They back-slap each other, congratulate each other, and call each other "great Canadians"--all ad nauseum. And they will all receive the Order of Canada--the same medal that was presented to Terry Fox!

We have one of the safest cities on the continent and who do you think is bringing this change about?

Our institutions, including the courts, the schools, and the churches have failed us, in not giving positive leadership. Why? Because they have been infiltrated by the "lib-left" and their sympathizers.

Come to think of it, isn't this Canada's real root problem today--we've got our basic values all screwed up?

ANALYSIS: Trudy Govier identifies the underlined as cases of questionable cause. The editors agree, and add the following observations: The first underlined claim must be spelled out from the context to mean: "The police are responsible for making Toronto one of the safest cities on the continent." Granting for the moment that this claim can be made precise and is factually correct, we are inclined to think that this diagnosis is much too simple; i.e., that a host of factors converge to make Toronto relatively free of major crime. The second underlined claim is questionable as well: not merely in its causal component but in its assumption that the courts, the schools and the churches have failed us by not providing positive leadership. The problem here is vagueness, too: it's impossible to tell what counts as positive leadership from the little said here. Likewise, the final claim that the basic problem is that we've got our basic values all screwed up is vague.

C BACKGROUND: From a discussion about wage settlements in the wake of a strike, M.K. wrote the following letter to the Toronto Globe and Mail (February 24, 1981):

It is interesting to note that wages of the cleaning personnel and maintenance staff are surprisingly close to the wages of a registered nurse or of a forester. The latter example actually finds a university graduate often being paid less. My premise is not that maintenance personnel are over paid, nor that a university degree should guarantee a job, but the fact that many university graduates of nursing and forestry would be better off by relying on their Grade 12 diploma.

Our society has been introducing a disincentive for higher education by allowing the annual income of the skilled and even unskilled laborer to approach that of certain professions. The four years required to obtain a university degree represents a large investment of time, money and personal sacrifice. It is becoming increasingly difficult to justify those four years by young people when the rewards of graduation are increasingly limited to personal satisfaction.

ANALYSIS: "The argument seems to me to depend crucially on the assumption that one is better off if one makes more money and that non-financial rewards have a lesser status than financial ones," writes Trudy Govier.

D BACKGROUND: This is an excerpt from an article entitled "Licensing Parents," by Hugh LaFollette which appeared in Philosophy and Public Affairs (Vol. IX, No. 2, 1980):

Our society normally regulates a certain range of activities; it is illegal to perform these activities unless one has received prior permission to do so. We require automobile operators to have licenses. We forbid people from practicing medicine, law, pharmacy, or psychiatry unless they have satisfied certain licensing requirements.

Society's decision to regulate just these activities is not ad hoc. The decision to restrict admission to certain vocations and to forbid some people from driving is based on an eminently plausible, though not often explicitly formulated, rationale. We require drivers to be licensed because driving an auto is an activity which is potentially harmful to others, safe performance of the activity requires a certain competence, and we have a moderately reliable procedure for determining that competence. The potential harm is obvious: incompetent drivers can and do maim and kill people. The best way we have of limiting this harm without sacrificing the benefits of automobile travel is to require that all drivers demonstrate at least minimal competence. We likewise license doctors, lawyers, and psychologists because they perform activities which can harm others. Obviously they must be proficient if they are to perform these activities properly, and we have moderately reliable procedures for determining proficiency. Imagine a world in which everyone could legally drive a car, in which everyone could legally perform surgery, prescribe medications, dispense drugs, or offer legal advice. Such a world would hardly be desirable.

Consequently, any activity that is potentially harmful to others and requires certain demonstrated competence for its safe performance, is subject to regulation--that is, it is theoretically desirable that we regulate it. If we also have a reliable procedure for determining whether someone has the requisite competence, then the action is not only subject to regulation but ought, all things considered, to be regulated.

ANALYSIS: "As it stands, this seems to me to be an unusual example of a hasty argument. It is unusual, I think, in being a kind of generalization but not to an empirical conclusion," says Trudy Govier.

E BACKGROUND: Here is an advertisement put out by Monsanto foods. The advertisement appeared in Harper's (November, 1980). It was accompanied by a picture of a hand holding a fresh orange, and the title "Mother Nature is lucky her products don't need labels." The copy read:

All foods, even natural ones, are made up of chemicals. But natural foods don't have to list their ingredients. So it's often assumed they're chemical-free. In fact, the ordinary orange is a miniature chemical factory. And the good old potato contains arsenic among its more than 150 ingredients. This doesn't mean

natural foods are dangerous. If they were, they wouldn't be on the market. The same is true of man-made foods. All man-made foods are tested for safety. And they often provide more nutrition, at a lower cost, than natural foods. They even use many of the same chemical ingredients. So you see, there really isn't much difference between foods made by Mother Nature and those made by man. What's artificial is the line drawn between them."

"MONSANTO...WITHOUT CHEMICALS LIFE ITSELF WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE."

ANALYSIS: The ad is trying to persuade us that we should not be suspicious of man-made foods. And it tries to persuade us of this by reminding us of the fact that both man-made foods and natural foods (potatoes and oranges) are made of chemicals. This is true; all things are made of chemicals, for everything which exists has a chemical constitution. The trick is, though, that "chemical" is also used more narrowly, as in "chemical factory", i.e., foods with lots of additives and preservatives. Chemical factories have a bad name right now. In calling an orange a chemical factory, the author of the ad cleverly pulled together the broader and narrower senses of "chemical", to try to transfer the innocence of the ordinary orange to chemical factories and their man-made products. As for the bottom line: "Without chemicals life itself would be impossible": you should now be able to see how this exploits an ambiguity. In the broad sense of "chemical" it is true (indeed, necessarily true) that without chemicals life itself is impossible. But if we mean by "chemical" something pertaining to the man-made food products of such companies as Monsanto, it is false that "without chemicals life would be impossible". (Trudy Govier)

F

BACKGROUND: An argument (source unknown) dealing with the debate between creationists and Darwinians on the issue of evolution:

Creationists are people who believe that the explanation for the beginning of the physical world must be found in the Bible, specifically in the Book of Genesis, and must refer to the creative activity of God. They have become active politically to try to have their view taught in public schools, in addition to the scientific theory of evolution. Accused of being unscientific, creationists very commonly reply, "Evolution is only a theory." The point is supposed to be that the account of the beginning of the world given by evolution has not been proven beyond all doubt to be true, and that this somehow constitutes a justification for teaching a religious view of the matter in the school system.

ANALYSIS: The claim that "evolution is only a theory" is ambiguous in a crucial way. "Only a theory" may mean "not proven beyond all doubt". In this sense evolutionary theory is only theory, but so is all science, and indeed, much common sense. Or, "a theory" may be something which is merely speculation and has not been checked by evidence and reasoned assessment at all. (Trudy Govier)

G

BACKGROUND: As quoted in "The Peacenik", in Today, the Toronto Star magazine for June 12, 1982, James Stark of Operation Dismantle said the following about arms and security:

Listen, it is generally conceded that the superpowers have enough weapons to destroy the world 20 to 60 times over. I challenge you to give me one more rational reason to build one more bomb. Why should we be able to destroy the planet 21 or 61 times?"...

"They tell you that we need more weapons to make the world more secure. The balance of terror. What crap! It used to be that everyone carried a gun--for security. Would you feel more secure now if Toronto were armed? Are you less secure now that Toronto doesn't maintain an army in case Hamilton invades? We haven't ended conflict between individuals or cities; we've just found other ways of dealing with it."

ANALYSIS: The first part does not seem to be an argument, but more a challenge issued to his opponents. The arithmetic is problematic. The argument offered in the second part seems to be basically an inductive analogy. Start is comparing the east-west situation with the situation of two cities such as Toronto and Hamilton. In the latter hypothetical case, and in historically similar cases, arming made people less secure. In the former, he infers, arms also make us less secure. How good is this analogy? One crucial flaw is that in the case of cities there is a supervening power (the provincial, or federal government) which has access to force in resolving conflicts. Extending the analogy, we might conclude that a world government should be established so that a supervenient force could resolve east-west conflicts. The practicality of such a solution is dubious. However, it has to be admitted that the present balance of terror does not exactly provide security. (Trudy Govier)

H

BACKGROUND: From the Globe and Mail, June 12, 1982 on the subject of nuclear disarmament; this letter from A.D. Arthur:

From your article, Disarmament Issue Galvanizes Women (June 3, 1982) I gather that the Women's Movement, casting around for a badly needed focus, has decided to jump on the nuclear disarmament bandwagon. However, apart from the naivete of this support for a peace movement that Soviet Russia has been praising for some time now, what struck me as ludicrous were the comments of Kay MacPherson and Marilyn Aarons, who believe that only women can solve the world's problems because they claim women have a "different mind set" and believe in negotiation, whereas men believe in war.

These women should be reminded that the toughest, most single-minded rulers in this modern world has been, or are, women--Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, to mention but three of many. They also need to be told what should be obvious; only the strong stay free, and if we disarm unilaterally (this is the ultimate goal of this highly manipulated peace movement) we shall be taken over by totalitarianism.

The so-called peace movement is a greater menace to the West.

ANALYSIS: A.D. Arthur (June 12, 1982) attacks straw women. Feminists don't think that "only women can solve the world's problems." Some think women might on the whole be slightly better at this than men, due to their experience in child rearing and lack of a macho upbringing. Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, and Indira Gandhi aren't inspiring examples, I admit. It's a gross overstatement, however, to say that these are "the toughest, most single-minded rulers in this modern world." What about such candidates as Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, or Idi Amin? Anyway, even if feminists did think that only women could negotiate to solve world problems, this would not commit them to the view that all women could solve world problems. (Arthur's logic doesn't pass here.) The women who have achieved political power have worked through structures almost exclusively male. Possibly structures in which both sexes were represented more equally would produce female leaders with different traits.

Arthur likes straw, apparently, for after attacking straw feminists he goes on to attack straw peace supporters. They have as their ultimate goal, he tells us, unilateral disarmament. Well I've got news for him: we don't. We are for unilateral disarmament, with western initiatives accompanied, if necessary, by strong sanctions to bring about compliance from the eastern bloc. The allegation that 'so-called' peace movements are a greater menace than Russian nuclear weapons is simply an irresponsible bit of insult, devoid of substantiation. (Trudy Govier, World Emergency, Peterborough, Ontario.)

BACKGROUND: A perennial topic for debate has been the issue of doctors' salaries. In the August 24, 1981 issue of Maclean's, Dr. Nicholas Rety, a urologist from Vernon, B.C., argued that doctors' salaries were not too high. In part, he said:

Robert Evans, a University of British Columbia economics professor, sneers indignantly that doctors earn three times the average income of the general public. He gets wide coverage in the West Coast media, yet he ignores the fact that theoretically a worker of modest skills earning \$12 an hour, with standard overtime benefits, would almost equal the doctor's average of \$53,422 by working a doctor's 66 hour week. Much public resentment is stirred up by such critics who, in truth, only comment on issues from a professor's chair with tenure (the ultimate in job security) and enjoy a year's sabbatical at public expense every few years.

ANALYSIS: Dr. Rety commits ad hominem in his defense of doctors' salaries against what he takes to be an attack by Prof. Evans. (1) Evans, according to Rety, has said that doctors earn three times the average income of the general public. Rety does not take issue with this claim, but with what he extrapolates from it (probably correctly): the position that doctors salaries are too high. Part of Rety's attack is aimed at his position, but part is a personal attack against Evans. Evans is characterized as "sneering indignantly" and as having a job that has maximum security and generous paid leave provisions. Rety's point seems to be that Evans' cushy university job disqualifies him from having anything worth consideration to say about doctors salaries. (2) Evans' comments about doctors salaries, however, can be

assessed quite independently of his attitude (whether he is indignant or not) and his working conditions. Indeed, if his resentment or his sort of job interferes with his judgement, that is to be decided only on the basis of a prior determination that his judgement is wrong (plus other factors). So it has to be found that his views about doctors' salaries are mistaken, quite independently of the position from which he advances those views.

There are problems with Rety's argument that doctors are not overpaid because their hourly rate is roughly equal to that of "a worker of modest skills". Problematic premise--a minor point, but it needs making: we want to be sure that Rety's facts are right, since this whole argument depends on them. Rety owes us an account of where he got the \$12 per hour figure, and what he counts as "modest skills". (He could well be able to do so.)

Perhaps more to the point is a question about the sufficiency of the comparison. It does seem relevant to compare hourly rates of pay. But that by itself does not settle the question of fairness, because, on the one hand, doctors can control the number of hours they work, whereas hourly-rated workers cannot; and on the other hand, it may be that both doctors and hourly-rated workers at the level Rety describes are paid too much. Rety needs to argue further that these workers are not overpaid, and also show that the doctors' opportunity to book a 66-hour week is not a relevant difference. So Rety commits hasty conclusion in this little argument. (Eds.)

K

BACKGROUND: In Today, the Sunday supplement widely distributed in Canada, George Grant, a well-known professor of philosophy now at Dalhousie University, wrote an article "The Case Against Abortion" (October 3, 1981). This is an excerpt from that article:

In 1978, more than 62,000 Canadian women had their children killed before they could be born. An increase in these numbers takes place every year, so that by the end of 1981, we may nearly have reached the 100,000 level. The percentages are similar in Western Europe. They are greater in the Soviet Union. Obviously, one cannot be against abortion when the woman's life is at stake, but that situation is now exceedingly rare. The present mass fetucide takes place almost always for convenience. The medical professionals tell us that 95% of abortions are now done to kill healthy offspring of healthy women. (In Canada they are all called "therapeutic".)

ANALYSIS: First, we charge Grant with two counts of problematic premise in connection with the figures he produces in trying to show that abortion has reached dangerous proportions and that it is almost always done for convenience. The 1978 and 1981 figures of 62,000 and 100,000 are indeed large. Since they are important to Grant's case that abortion is a significant problem, he owes us some indication of where they come from, so we can assess their reliability. (Do hospitals release their abortion figures? If so, to whom?) and the claim that "medical professionals" tell us that 95% of abortions are done to kill healthy offspring of healthy women also needs backup. For (a) this is a surprisingly high figure, which puts strain on our credulity, and (b) the

judgement "healthy" is a call that could be controversial, if not ambiguous: is it physical or mental health that is being judged, for example? And who are these "medical professionals"? Doctors, or nurses? Others? Have they the competence to judge? So the evidence which this figure is based on needs to be produced.

Second, we question the claim that abortion "takes place almost always for convenience". The way to get at our worry is to charge hasty conclusion in the argument from the premise (the only one cited here) that health care professionals tell us that 95% of abortions are now done to kill healthy offspring of healthy women. Granting that claim for the sake of argument (but see our problematic premise charge, above), we still don't get the conclusion of "convenience" from it. For example, a single parent who has an abortion so she can keep her low-paying job and continue to support her other children and not be forced to give them up to foster homes would hardly be described as having an abortion for convenience, no matter how healthy she or the fetus were. More evidence is needed here. (Eds.)

BACKGROUND: In response to Grant's argument, Walter Stewart, the editor of Today, wrote a column "The Case Against the Case Against Abortion," disagreeing with Grant's position and saying:

Dr. Grant is a distinguished scholar, but not in this article. He says that abortions in Canada take place "almost always for convenience". That's funny; I've read the law, and it doesn't say a word about convenience. In fact, everywhere except Quebec, the law demands the approval of a therapeutic abortion committee, composed of doctors, in each hospital where any abortion is to be performed. The law also sets out the medical conditions--which are the only conditions--under which an application for therapeutic abortion will be granted.

ANALYSIS: Something is logically awry with this portion of Stewart's reply to Grant. Stewart takes on Grant's claim about most abortions being for convenience, criticizing it ("that's funny", "...doesn't say a word about convenience"). But Stewart's point, that the law makes no mention of convenience, seems to be beside the point. What is at issue is what the practice is, or how the law is interpreted by hospital abortion committees, not what the law strictly speaking says. We are all aware that women can get abortions in Canada, approved by hospital committees, on grounds that having a child would be detrimental to their psychological health, even though they are physically quite capable of bearing a healthy child with no danger to their own health. The issue is whether Grant is right and this application of the law amounts to permitting abortions for "convenience". Stewart diverts attention from this issue to the question of what is literally in the law, and so introduces a new and irrelevant focus to the exchange. In other words, Stewart commits red herring. (Eds.)

M BACKGROUND: The Chicago Bears Football Team had just lost their sixth game out of seven played, when James Tulley, of Rockford, Illinois, filed a small claims complaint demanding a ticket refund, claiming that the Chicago Bears Football Team was guilty of false advertising and consumer fraud. His reasoning was thus:

The Bears advertised a professional football game but they don't play a very professional game. They make too many mistakes and don't live up to their advertising. It's like if Barry Manilow came on stage and suddenly got laryngitis and couldn't talk, I'd get a refund. If the Rolling Stones came to town without Mick Jagger, that would be misrepresentation.

ANALYSIS: James Tulley commits faulty analogy. (1) He defends his conclusion that he should receive a refund for his Bears game ticket(s) with an argument from analogy. His argument is: since one would receive a refund if Barry Manilow or the Rolling Stones didn't show for a concert, and since a ticket to a Bears' football game is like a ticket to a concert performance, so he should receive a refund for the poor performance(s) by the Bears. (2) A concert ticket refund is given just when the performers do not show and the concert is cancelled, so for the analogy to support Tulley's conclusion it must be the case that the Bears support Tulley's conclusion it must be the case that the Bears did not show for their football performance(s) and the games were cancelled. But the Bears did play their game(s); the performance was not cancelled. Hence the two cases are not similar in the key respect (no performance) and the conclusion doesn't follow. (Eds.)

N BACKGROUND: In January, 1981, in the Report of the Bertrand Commission, the commissioners alleged that oil companies had conspired to fix gasoline prices in Canada. In response, L.R. wrote:

Bertrand and the commissioners must be out to lunch. In no possible way could he have one lousy shred of evidence to support their allegations. I can say this because I know that no price fixing occurred, and therefore no evidence for it could exist. My husband has been working for the oil company for 30 years and the company has always been good to him. To say that the industry my husband works for has been ripping off the public for years really irks me.

ANALYSIS: L.R. is guilty of blind loyalty in her argument. (1) She rejects the Bertrand Commission's criticism of the oil companies--its allegation that they conspired to fix gas prices in Canada--calling Bertrand and the commissioners "out to lunch", i.e., wrong. This is a criticism of something L.R. identifies with--she points out that her husband has been working for an oil company for 30 years and that it has always been good to him. This is evidence that she thinks well of the oil companies. (2) L.R.'s rejection of the Bertrand allegations is unreasonable because she refuses to credit the available evidence and also denies the possibility of evidence. Presumably the Commission's allegations are the result of its investigations, so at least some evidence must point to a conspiracy to fix gas prices. But L.R. insists that "in no way could he (Bertrand) have one lousy shred of evidence to support their allegations".

Further, L.R. denies the possibility of evidence: "no evidence for it could exist". (3) L.R.'s insistence that no price fixing occurred is based, in her own argument, on the fact that her husband has worked for an oil company for 30 years and it has treated him well. She is "irked" that the industry "my husband" works for could be charged with ripping off the public. These phrases point to strong ego-identification, via her clear identification with her husband, with the oil industry. So it is plausible to see L.R.'s unreasonable response to the Bertrand charges as due to her loyalty to her husband and the oil industry. (Eds.)

BACKGROUND: This letter about registering handguns was sent to us by Professor Perry Weddle (California State University, Sacramento) who provided the analysis which follows:

EDITOR: Opponents of registering handguns usually ask, "Will registration keep guns away from criminals or won't it?" and then conclude that it won't. They should ask instead, "Will it keep guns away from some criminals?" Clearly it will. "Lifers," hardened professionals, can always get handguns, not to speak of machine guns, but lifers commit only a fraction of violent crime. Overwhelmingly such crime is committed by youthful casual offenders--"punks." Registration would deny illegal handguns to punks by raising their price tenfold--as Prohibition raised the price of illegal booze tenfold. Few punks have the resourcefulness, or the \$1000, to purchase an illegal handgun. And so, as it would greatly reduce punk violence with handguns, registration makes a good deal of sense.

ANALYSIS: Redefining the issue from "all or none" to some," the author then claims that violent crime will be reduced because handguns will become too expensive for "punks," who commit most of the violent acts.

Despite an excellent start, breaking that false dilemma, the author leaves much vague or unargued:

1. What of the issue itself? Where are handguns to be registered? Sacramento? The U.S. If either of the former, then wouldn't easy access Nevada make the law ineffective? California does have some registration already, so exactly what is being proposed?
2. And how would registration raise the price? Legal guns would still be available everywhere--to be borrowed, stolen, owned. If not, then we need details.
3. Prohibition didn't register booze, it banned it. The analogy's suspicious. If close, it's worse for Prohibition created a criminal class and was a notorious failure. Besides, that "tenfold" statistic is pure guess.
4. Finally, those stereotypes--"lifers" and especially "punks": Are "punks" really as we imagine them--casual and unresourceful? If 90% of "punk" violence is by 21-30 year olds, then they would buy registered guns. "Punks" implies teenagers.

P

BACKGROUND: An excerpt from a column by Bob Greene, syndicated columnist, which appeared in Sacramento Union, November, 1979:

People may say they have all kinds of reasons for liking Kennedy, ranging from the idea that he's a good senator to the assumption that he will bring the country "new leadership"-- But you know and I know that there is one and only one reason that Kennedy has a following... That reason is that he is John F. Kennedy's brother.. Think about it. If you had to give up your job tomorrow would your own brother (or sister) be the person most qualified to take over?... If I were to be cut down by an assassin's bullet tomorrow would the editors of this newspaper turn immediately to my brother to carry on the torch of my column? Of course not. My brother is a bartender..in Boulder, Colo.... By the same token, if my brother Tim were to be cut down...tomorrow...would I get an emergency call from the owners to take over behind the bar? Never.

ANALYSIS: Greene's reasoning is strange. It is probably true that if Greene were cut down by an assassin's bullet, his editors would probably not turn to his brother to carry on. Nor did the U.S. turn to Robert Kennedy (but rather to Lyndon Johnson) to carry on after John F. Kennedy was assassinated. The principle that Greene implicitly appeals to here (that one doesn't turn to X's sibling to fill X's job) is certainly generally valid. But that doesn't mean there won't be cases where it fails to apply, and one could well argue that this is one of them. The substantial point here is that Ted Kennedy has a following only because he is J.F.K.'s brother. One does not have to be a supporter of Kennedy to realize that this view is a rather simplistic one. Kennedy has been one of the most effective Democrats in the United State Senate for the last decade. (Example supplied by Perry Weddle, analysis by Eds.)

Q

BACKGROUND: These are the concluding paragraphs of a column entitled "It's Language that Reveals Poor Leaders," by Alan Fotheringham, which appeared in the Windsor Star on March 18, 1982:

In his perhaps most brilliant essay, Politics and the English Language, George Orwell explained that the reason politicians cannot think clearly is that they cannot express themselves clearly. Because they use the language sloppily, they think sloppily. Their adulteration of the language leads to an adulteration of their principles and policies. The river of thought, in effect, flows backwards.

Because Pierre Trudeau, in his retirement-bound arrogance, and Joe Clark, in his leadership desperation brutalize the language, it is no surprise that the unlettered public in irritation has shoved Ed Broadbent's NDP six points up in the Gallup poll. There is some justice.

ANALYSIS: Fotheringham's reasoning here seems to depend on two questionable assumptions. First, he assumes that the public is sensitive to the abuses of

language of the sort he ascribes to Trudeau and Clark. But this assumption is in some tension with his later reference to the public as "unlettered." Second, he seems to assume that Broadbent and the NDP are not themselves guilty of sloppy use of language, that the public knows this, and that this realization accounts for the boost in the Gallup poll experienced by the NDP (during the period in question). It must be admitted that this is a novel explanation, but not an easy one to accept. (Eds.)

R

BACKGROUND: Gordon Sinclair is a Toronto columnist. This is an excerpt from his appearance before the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry (1976):

Since your Commission has attracted so few briefs that do not complain about violence or what they call "excess violence," I'd like to say that without violence or its threat, we become vegetables unable to take care of ourselves.

Violence is not only useful or necessary, it is essential to human survival. Without it we would become pitty pat cream puffs, and absence of physical violence would soon embrace mental violence. Protest could disappear.

The human is an animal and animals are at times violent by nature.

Consider the baby. She is among the most violent creatures on earth. The baby is unable to protect herself, feed herself, shelter herself or even move from place to place. To survive she must make her needs felt through violent screams, shrieks and cries. She must kick and scratch and demand. Gradually, as this baby grows up, she gains a measure of what we call civilization. She becomes house broken, learns that screams and shrieks are not her only means of getting her needs.

. . . I for one would prefer a measure of potential violence to a life without struggle, disagreement or hostility. It would be a sad world if we all peacefully agreed one with the other, yet at least 95 per cent of the people who have appeared before this commission have declared that violence is a bad thing and have deplored and viewed it with alarm. List me to be among the other 5 per cent. Violence is part of life; all life. It is essential to survival.

ANALYSIS: Clear it is that Sinclair means to defend the need for some violence as essential in human society. The problem with his position is that he leaves this crucial term vague. What exactly is he defending here? The second paragraph suggests that he takes protest to be a kind of mental violence, which is certainly a strange classification. Elsewhere in the article, Sinclair certainly takes violence to be physical violence: as in bull-fighting and boxing. In the last paragraph, he suggests that hostility is violence, while in the fourth paragraph he classifies the screams of a baby as violence. Certainly no one is going to argue against the screams of a baby, but is this the position of the other 95 per cent Sinclair refers to? Do they really advocate life without struggle, disagreement, or hostility? Sinclair's argument is guilty of both vagueness and straw man. (Eds.)