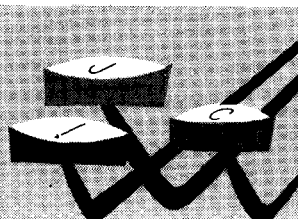


# Manner of Speaking



**MORE POSITIVE EXPRESSIONS:** When I was a boy in school (the old man said) we had bright kids, dumb kids, and what everybody thought he meant by just plain "us." We also had wild ones, tough guys, sissies, regular guys, dirty rats, sneaks, squealers, snot-noses, and teachers' pets. Our classifications were primitive and savage, but so were we, and our lines of communication were reasonably firm.

As it now turns out, we were all wrong. There are no dopes in the school system, but only "those capable of doing better." There are no brighties either, but only "more able learners." Which obviously leaves what the kids used to call "us" to go down as "able learners."

For a joyously detailed rundown of this new dispensation I am indebted to Mrs. D. H. MacMahon of Baldwin High School, Milledgeville, Georgia, who sent me a pamphlet called "Conference Time," prepared by the National School-Public Relations Association of the National Education Association of the United States (1201 16th Street N.W., Washington 6, D.C.), from which the pamphlet may be ordered at 60 cents a copy (plus 10 per cent discount on orders of two to nine, 20 per cent on orders of ten or more).

One part of the pamphlet, entitled "Watch Your Language," cautions teachers against expressions that may leave "a negative impression" and then tabulates the following "Negative Expressions" which are paired with the following "More Positive Expressions" (the parentheses are mine):

Must: Should.  
Lazy: Can do more when he tries.  
Trouble Maker: Disturbs class.  
Uncooperative: Should learn to work with others.  
Cheats: Depends on others to do his work.(!!)  
Stupid: Can do better work with help.  
Never does the right thing: Can learn to do the right thing.  
Below average: Working at his own level. (!)  
Truant: Absent without permission.  
Impertinent: Discourteous.  
Steal: Without permission. (?)  
Unclean: Poor habits.  
Dumbbell: Capable of doing better.  
Help: Cooperation.  
Poor: Handicapped.  
Calamity: Lost opportunity. (?)

Disinterested: Complacent, not challenged. (Teacher flunks for misusing "disinterested" for lack of interest.)

Expense: Investment.

Contribute to: Invest in.

Stubborn: Insists on having his own way.

Insolent: Outspoken. (I think teacher flunks again.)

Liar: Tendency to stretch the truth.

Wastes time: Could make better use of time.

Sloppy: Could do neater work.

Incurred failure: Failed to meet requirements. (Oh, my God!)

Mean: Difficulty in getting along with others.

Time and again: Usually.

Dubious: Uncertain.

Poor grade of work: Below his usual standard. (!!)

Clumsy: Not physically well coordinated.

Profane: Uses unbecoming language. (I'll bet teacher doesn't know how to distinguish "profanity," "blasphemy," and "obscenity.")

Selfish: Seldom shares with others.

Rude: Inconsiderate of others.

Bashful: Reserved.

Show-off: Tries to get attention.

Will fail him: Has a chance of passing, if (!!)

The tabulation concludes brightly, "And now it's conference time!"

I hope I know a good thing when I see one, but why stop with the comparatively positive when the golden superlative is only a step beyond? Both as a guide to parents who were brought up speaking only American English, and toward the perfection of this world's emphases, I hereby offer some samples from a projected guide to "Even More Positive Expressions," each followed by "Most Positive" substitutions:

Energetic: A Hell-raiser.

Temperamental: A stinker.

Working up to average competence: A dope.

Has not performed up to our highest expectations: Hopeless.

Does not always respond to behavioral guidance: Is a young hood.

Reading achievement not in the upper percentiles: Is illiterate.

We believe him capable of cooperating more effectively with others: Is a spoiled brat.

The NSPRA of the NEA of the U.S. is not exactly a pioneer in these psychic territories, but more nearly one of

the settlers (nesters? squatters? sheep-herders?) who are bringing their own substance and stability to the conquest of the golden land, whatever they, in their happily uplifting circumlocutions, imagine that golden land to be.

Some time ago I found myself browsing a similar sort of guidance offered to teachers in (as I recall) the New York school system. I have forgotten most of the details, but none, I shall believe, of the tone. One piece of advice to publicly-relating teachers was to avoid saying "slums" and to say instead "older, more densely populated areas of the city."

Then, in the course of more such, I came on one that stuck tight. Instead of "underprivileged child," teachers were to say "a child whose experiences have been limited to his immediate environment."

Public relations aside, I must treasure that one as zeroing in on the exact responsibility of the school system. And this responsibility still remains: to bring the child not out of but through his immediate environment into the environment of the mind of man; into (if only at long and hoped-for last) that conceptual neighborhood where Aristotle, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Praxiteles, Copernicus, Michelangelo, Newton, and—make your own list—the great imaginations live to great experiences.

**I** BEG the NSPRA of Etc. to believe me when I say I am joshing its PR guide only mildly. At worst, it can be said to work at its own level. I must certainly sympathize with a disinterested (as distinguished from "uninterested") search for a diplomatic language in dealing with anything as unpredictable as parents. With every such educational agency I know we are building classrooms faster than we can put good teachers into them. By sadly evident mathematics, therefore, some of those classrooms must be profaned (though, I hope, with neither blasphemy nor obscenity) by mere clerks. A clerk is different from (not "than") a teacher, as the rote mind is different from imagination. And to the rote mind one must speak rote. Fair enough: go ahead and program those second-class filing systems that cannot take anything more significant than second-class programming.

But I cannot fail to find a certain dreariness of tone in those "Negatives" and "More Positives." And I must believe that tone to be exactly the one most likely to deafen a child to the language of that conceptual neighborhood to which he must move if he is to hear anything like the resonance of mortal ideas made immortally vibrant.

—JOHN CIARDI.

Glass design by George Thompson  
Engraving design by Don Wier



### THE VICTORIANS

O the gondolets, the mandolins, the twangling of the lutes,  
The girls all dressed in crinoline among the flowers and fruits—  
The flowers all symbolical, the lily and the rose,  
And how the sherry blossomed on the end of grandma's nose.  
The maiden sighs and turns away; the maiden she relents,  
Attracted by the glitter of a pile of five per cents.  
They danced beneath the arbors, they strolled upon the grass,  
O never aware, O never aware of what would come to pass.

THEODORE ROETHKE

Here is one of the 31 crystal pieces now on display at Steuben's exhibition—with the poem that inspired its design.

## "Poetry in Crystal" by Steuben

You are invited to a unique exhibition—the interpretation of poetry in crystal.  
Now through May 18 at Steuben Glass.

THE crystal piece above is part of a creative adventure. Two years ago, Steuben Glass and the Poetry Society of America set out to discover if the *spirit* of a poem could be expressed in crystal. W. H. Auden, Marianne Moore, W. D.

Snodgrass and other eminent American writers were invited to submit new and previously unpublished poems.

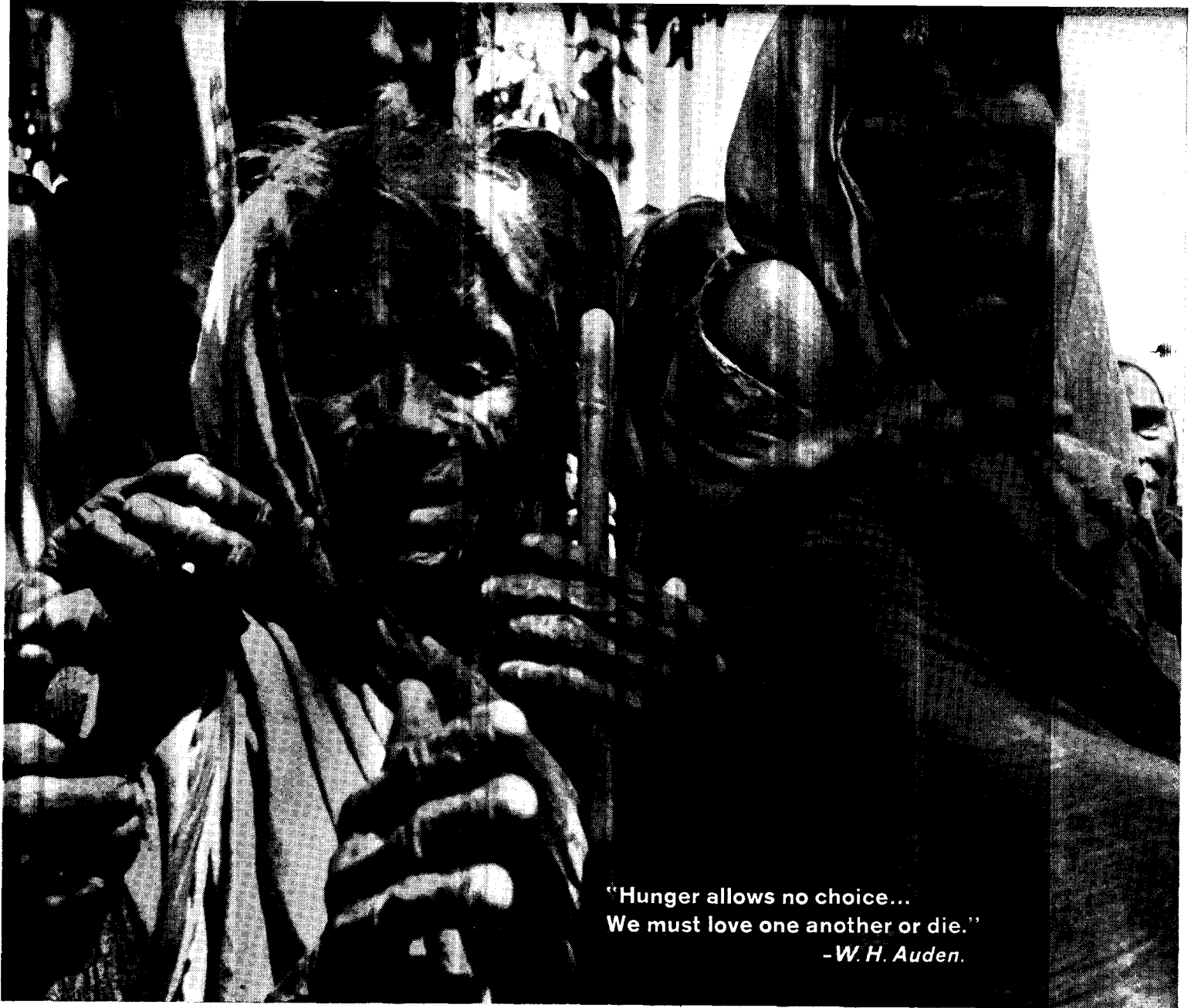
Steuben's artists and craftsmen then took the poems, explored their meanings and expressed them in crystal sculpture.

There are 31 pieces in all. You are invited to see them, and to read the poetry that inspired their design, at Steuben Glass—Fifth Avenue at 56th Street. The exhibition is open Mondays through Saturdays, 9:30 to 5:30.

# STEUBEN GLASS



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"Hunger allows no choice...  
We must love one another or die."  
—W. H. Auden.

—Werner Bischof (Magnum).

## THE MATHEMATICS OF HUNGER

By CARL BAKAL, a writer and consultant on public affairs who was involved last year in the preparation of an international conference on the world food problem.

**I**F YOUR eating habits are those of the average American, you down four and a half pounds of food a day—somewhat more than you should.

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Like most Americans, you probably also eat too much fat (which makes up 40 per cent of the U.S. diet), but otherwise your diet is fairly well balanced and is as remarkable for its diversity as for its quantity. Furthermore, as an American you can buy more food—and a greater variety of it—for a smaller percentage of your income than any other people in the world. Only 19 per cent of your take-home pay goes for food, compared to the 60 per cent a Russian

spends or the 80 per cent a Nigerian is forced to pay out.

Responsible in good part for this is the awesome productivity of U.S. agriculture. With less than one-tenth of our people working the land (by contrast, farmers comprise almost half of Russia's population), we turn out literally more food than we know what to do with. Our food supplies are in such great abundance that they have caused embarrassing bulges in both warehouses