"Language and Communication in Building Citizenship"
Irving Lee

I didn't quite realize how prophetic a little poem, that one of my graduate students gave me sometime back. He had been to a conference and had listened to a series of speeches, one right after the other. When he got home, he thought he'd put his attitude toward that experience into a bit of a poem which he merely addresses to speakers. He says, "They may be short of stature, they may be short of gags, they may be short of listeners, the morning lags and lags. But wistfully I wonder, as I sit there bored to death, if I'll ever run across one who pretends he is short of breath! It couldn't have worked out better. Well, I hope that doesn't happen, I hope I regain it in the next few minutes, because I want to talk about the business of communication between people.

I am concerned with language and communication in terms of citizenship, in terms of productivity, in terms of people getting along with people. Now, I am concerned with citizenship, not in the narrow sense of going to the polls, but in the larger sense of living with people and working with people and getting along in functioning as productively and free from conflict and confusion as possible. The moment anybody says he is interested in communication, a host of problems open up. There are just countless numbers of different kinds of difficulties. For example, there is always the problem of clarity. I was in a very second-rate hotel in downtown Washington some time ago, and as I was leaving to pay my bill, I noticed behind the cashier's cage a little sign which I copied. The sign read, "In order to substantiate our desire to accommodate our guests, we would appreciate your cooperation to anticipate your credit requirements before departure!" I stopped and asked the young lady, "Whatever does that mean?" She looked me square in the eye and said, "Positively no checks cashed!" The problem of saying what one has to say clearly, and how to teach a child or an adult to write and speak clearly, is, of course, a tremendous problem. Those of you who fill out income tax returns know what I am talking about. But, it is not of the problems of clarity in relationship to citizenship, that I am interested in today. Nor am I interested in the kinds of problems that have to do with the choice of words. You know the difficulty you get into when you choose one particular word rather than another. I think I saw something of what was involved in a letter that a lady wrote to the editor of the Cleveland Press. She said, "Dear Sir, It's about time somebody put his foot down on dirty newspapers that print indecent language in their columns which go into the homes of respectable men and women with children they would like to seal from the language of the gutter. I will not make matters worse by repeating the word that appeared in bold, black print in your issue of November the 12th, on page 33, in relation to a dog show. I will only say that it was a harsh, short synonym for a girl dog. This is not the first time I have seen that nasty word in your paper, and if I see it once more, I am going to get good and mad!"

Well, matters having to do with the choice of words, and the kinds of words which are acceptable, and how you stop and deal with youngsters who violate the taboos, these are interesting and tremendous problems, but I am not concerned with them. Nor am I concerned with the problems of deliberate misrepresentation. We live in a moment of the cold war when it is all too easy to have a message utterly destroyed, distorted and misrepresented, so that you hardly know what was said in the first place.
I think I read an interesting story that tells what I am after. It was told by Paul Porter, who returned from the direction of an economic mission to Greece a couple of years ago, and he told how communist editors frequently distorted the purposes and objectives of his mission. He says, "I gave them a classic opportunity one night, at a banquet given in my honor, in Macedonia. The dinner started late and was garnished with oratory. When I was finally called up to speak, it was past midnight. Since I was tired and sleepy, I made my remarks brief but cordial. 'It is, indeed, a pleasure to be here tonight with you good citizens of Greece!' I said. 'You Greeks and we Americans have very much in common. We like to eat, we like to drink, and we like to sit around and talk!' The very next day, the communist sheet blazed the assertion that I had insulted the Greeks. 'Ambassador Porter said that we are just like Americans, gluttons, drunkards and gossipers!' Well now, how do you stop that kind of deliberate distortion.

That is a tremendous problem and a very interesting custom, but it is not of that that I am concerned this morning. I am interested, I think, in the kinds of things you and I do willingly and unwittingly, or that youngsters and adults do which leads to trouble when we talk with people. That is, I am interested in the simplest possible way, in the kinds of things that happen when I talk with you, which lead to conflict, confusion, distortion, prejudice, and non-cooperation. And I would like to approach my point of view, because it seems to me good citizenship in the last analysis. It means just that. It means the degree to which I can cooperate or work with you in things with which I have to work. That is in the largest possible sense.

Now, I would like to approach my point of view from a kind of tangent. Perhaps the best way to get at it is to read you two paragraphs from an essay that Sir Norman Angel, the distinguished British economist and educator, wrote a long time ago. In fact in 1941. He said, "If the world has nearly destroyed itself, it is not from lack of knowledge, in the sense that we lack the knowledge to cure cancer, but it is due to the fact that the mass of men have not applied public policy knowledge, which they already possess. Which is, indeed of almost universal possession, deducible from the facts of everyday life. He goes on, "If this is true, then no education, which consists mainly in the dissemination of knowledge, can save us. If men can disregard, in their policies, the facts they already know, they can just as easily disregard new facts, which they do not, at present, know. What is needed is this. The development in men of that particular type of skill, which will enable them to make social use of knowledge already in their possession, enable them to apply simple, sometimes, self-evident truths to the guidance of their common life. May I put what Sir Norman is saying, in my own words? Certainly, in the last 75 years, the range of what we know keeps getting pushed further and further back. We know more and more about more and more. There are more specialists in this room today, than I should find in a room like this with a similar number of people 75 years ago. We publish 12,000 books every year. The range of what we know keeps getting pushed further and further back. A typical student at Northwestern gets a Bachelor's degree with 50 courses out of a possible 2100. If he were at the University of Minnesota, it would be roughly, 50 courses out of almost 3100. At the University of Illinois, it is almost 2600. So, the typical graduate comes away with just a small, tiny fraction of the immensity of the resources that there are available. Certainly, I don't know anybody, I literally don't know the name of a single person, who wants to stop the continuous advance, in front, in the realms of science and the arts. Certainly, we would give a great deal to know just a little more in certain areas. What is it that brings polo to the youngster down the street and doesn't touch the child across the street? What is it that causes those
calls to proliferate into cancer. Think what we wouldn't give, if we knew just a little bit more. And I know nobody, today, literally, I think that is true, who says, "We know enough. Let's stop. Let's declare a moratorium on further research?"

I have been very much interested in a movement that began, roughly, 30 years ago, which moved in a quite different direction. It was an attempt to ask this question, "What is there, in all this, that we now know? In the far reaches of the universe of the curriculum from anthropology to zoology, what is there in all this, that all of us ought to know together? Is there any distillate from the tremendous wisdom that comes within a university curriculum within a whole university, that everybody can say, I agree? Is there any distillate, any common denominator, on which all of us, whether we are in the social sciences or the arts or the physical sciences, can agree? And then, the movement asked another question. If there is anything that belongs to all of us, is it possible that the neglect of that wisdom, during the hurry and scurry of the day, may lead to poor citizenship, non-cooperation and conflict? And then, the third question this movement asked, Is it possible to put this common distillate in words of one syllable, so that perhaps we could teach this common denominator throughout the schools? If there is anything, could I put this in such neutral language, that the distinguished artists and physicists at the same time could perhaps assent, "Yes, this is what we know in common"? "This is where we can agree!"

Well, I would like in the few minutes that I have, to discuss some of the findings of this broad adventure in research. It is a kind of arrogant presumptive program, to bring together, out of everything we know, the things that all of us can agree with and say that is true. And there are many such big ideas — perhaps 50 of them. In the time I have, I want to discuss one or two or three, to see whether or not the neglect of these big, common, distillate ideas in the realm of human communications when people talk together, whether that neglect might somehow, be remedied in the things we do in the classrooms with children and with adults.

Well, let me begin by getting to one of these ideas and let me say that one of these ideas begins, perhaps, in an English class. We know, I am not going to define for you the way our English elementary textbooks define a declarative sentence. A declarative sentence is defined in all sorts of ways. Sometimes it is defined as a conglomeration of words with a subject and predicate containing a complete thought. Sometimes it is defined as a declarative sentence that is a statement which asserts a fact. No matter how we do it, I should like to make a very simple observation. That in English, it is possible, with a declarative sentence, to say all kinds of things without realizing that we are doing it. May I approach this by means of a very primitive, I trust you will forgive, illustration. Suppose I were to say, there are seeds in this apple. That is certainly a declarative sentence. There are seeds in this apple. It asserts something. It contains a subject and a predicate. It contains a complete thought.

But, the question I would like to ask of you is this. In terms of the kinds of teaching we now do, would you consider that a statement of fact? There are seeds in this apple. It would be fun, if we were in a smaller room, and I could ask you to tell me yes or no. Would anybody care to tell me? Do you, in terms of what we now teach say that is a statement of fact? There are seeds in this apple. Would anybody? Are there people who would say no? Well, that is a curious thing. Just for the fun of it, how many, would you raise your hands quickly, how many would say yes? There are seeds in the apple, is a statement of fact. Now those of you who would say no, it is not a statement of fact. A small, brave, hardy and courageous number. Now I want to take the side of this
second group. Let me just pose a hypothesis. Let me just pose a simple distinction to see if it fits. I would like to say that in English, we can have in the declarative form about six different kinds, but at least two kinds of statements. One is the statement based on what we observe and the other is a statement based on what we assume, on what we guess. In other words, I can in terms of what I see, all I can see, is an outside and stem and colors and soft because I have been carrying it from Laramie. I didn't want to take a chance on buying it this morning. That is what I can see. Now I would like to make a distinction between a statement based on what I observe and a statement based on what I assume. So if I say there are seeds in this, I can't see that, can I. I have to assume that. Indeed, from where you are in the back of the room, if you say this is an apple, a real apple, you are making an inference statement. You are making an assumption, you are guessing. As a matter of fact, only about two of us in this room can make a statement of the fact. Do you mind, please, smelling that? Does it smell like an apple? Yes, it does. Look like one? Yes, it does. Feel like one? It does. Suppose you say there are seeds in this apple, would you be making a statement of fact? No man. All you can say is -- in other words, let us make a distinction between statements based on what I see, on what I observe, and statements based on what I guess.

Now, there is a big difference between these two. Would you bet all you have that there are seeds in this? Would you bet your life? I wouldn't either. And the difference is, if I open it and look at it and make statements about what I observe, we tend to get fairly close to certainty, or we get as close to certainty as we can. But, until I open this up and look at it, until I make observations, all I am doing is betting probability. It is not certain. And that is the difference. A statement, based on what I assume, shows degrees of probability, a statement based on what I observe, comes as close to assurance and certitude as we can come. Now an interesting thing about these kinds of sentences, is this: Until we have an opportunity to make observations, disagreement is inevitable. The moment, however, we can open this and look, agreement becomes almost automatic and inevitable. This distinction has been widely known. But the point I should like to make, very quickly, is that, when the distinction is neglected, when in the hurry of our behavior during the day, we make inference statements, as if we were making factual statements, when we make guesses as if we were talking about what we observed, when in the hurry of the day, we do that, then sometimes trouble comes.

I remember a story that President Eliot of Harvard enjoyed telling, the story of an experience he once had, illustrating the distinction I have been trying to draw. He once entered a private, New York restaurant and handed his hat to the doorman. As he came out, he was astonished to see the doorman promptly pick his hat out of the hundreds there and hand it to him. In his surprise, he asked, "How did you know that was my hat?" "Oh, I didn't know it was your hat, sir," was the answer. "Why, then," asked Mr. Eliot, "did you hand it to me?" Very courteously, the doorman replied, "Because, sir, you handed it to me." And the story goes, that Mr. Eliot was very pleased at the precise distinction made by the doorman between things he could observe and what he assumed.

Now, in the hurry of human activities, I have been astonished, especially in my work with military agencies and industrial agencies, how frequently, in the heat of the day, we leap to make inferences as if we weren't. I shall tell you a small story that I saw in an elementary school, not so very long ago. I had been part of a team, making surveys of equipment in a neighboring state and we landed in a very small school and we learned this was the teachers very
first teaching assignment and it was the opening day of the school year. As we went South, the days advanced, somehow. And we noticed that there was considerable confusion, but after a while things got organized and then this young teacher found that her interest and attention was focused on a little boy. As I recall it, they had some pictures they were looking at, finally, she thought maybe they would put the pictures away and do something else, but this little boy kept on looking at pictures. Then, I noticed that the boy was looking out the window and not participating in some group activity and she asked the boy to participate, but he kept on looking out the window. Then, I noticed one other thing. A little later, there was some group activity and she wanted students to come back and the little boy stayed over there and she turned to us, there were three people in this horrible party, and she turned and said that little boy is a problem. "That little boy seems fairly impudent and impertinent to me." I didn't say anything. I was just a visitor and I just agreed. But, when the boy did something else and didn't respond to her question or assertion, she went to the front of the room and pushed a button. I assume it rang a bell down the hall or somewhere, because the principal came in very soon. A man I had met earlier in the day. He came in and she told him the story about this little, uncooperative boy. He called the boy up. He asked the boy some questions and he didn't get anywhere. He took the boy gently by the arm, and walked out. I thought, at that point, that is where the drama will be, so I followed after him. I went into his office and he talked a little bit, and he called the nurse, and I'll cut this story very short, the youngster just didn't hear a thing. The youngster was 95% deaf. The principal, then, ruffled through his basket and found a note from the family physician saying, "Please allow the boy to come to school until we have time to get him adjusted," and so on. But we are sure he won't be able to do it.

Well, never mind with all the other details, but let us get back to the teacher. She said that boy is impertinent, that boy is impudent. That sounds like a statement of fact, doesn't it? It sounded like something you observe. And, yet, if I look at the rule, the only thing I could have observed was, she asked the boy to do something and he didn't, she asked the boy not to do something and he did. That's all. But how easy it is, in English to say he is not doing what I told him to do. Or he is, on purpose, violating my instructions. He is impudent; he is impertinent. One doesn't see that the only thing one saw is that he didn't do it, or he did.

I don't know whether it is important to make such a distinction, but I recall the same kind of error I see on our own campus. One of my advisees, a boy named Tom, for whom I got a note from a very important professor of history on our campus who wrote saying, "Won't you please advise with Tom and get him to forget these courses because he can't do this work?" Tom was trying to graduate and these were upper level courses and when I called him in I said, "Well, if you can't do this work and if you can't take these courses, better count on not graduating this quarter. So, this is serious!" The professor insisted that we change this program because Tom can't do this work. I called Tom in and said, "How do you account for this all. He then told a story. He was a veteran, he had a family—a wife and a youngster—and Uncle Sam's $125.00 doesn't go too far to take care of three people and besides, "we are expecting a fourth." That is certainly not going to cover them. He looked at me a moment later and said, "Who has time to read history, we're too busy making it!" But, I am very much interested in the professor, when I called immediately. I said, "You wrote me saying Tom can't do this work. Do you mean that? Well, sure, I mean it. Tom can't do this work!" I said, "Is that something you know, you've observed?" "Sure, Tom is doing miserably! But, please observe, that is the only statement of fact the professor could have made. Tom isn't doing the work. Tom hasn't been doing the work. That is factual. Tom can't do the work, that is a guess. That is
first teaching assignment and it was the opening day of the school year. As we went South, the days advanced, somehow. And we noticed that there was considerable confusion, but after a while things got organized and then this young teacher found that her interest and attention was focused on a little boy. As I recall it, they had some pictures they were looking at, finally, she thought maybe they would put the pictures away and do something else, but this little boy kept on looking at pictures. Then, I noticed that the boy was looking out the window and not participating in some group activity and she asked the boy to participate, but he kept on looking out the window. Then, I noticed one other thing. A little later, there was some group activity and she wanted students to come back and the little boy stayed over there and she turned to us, there were three people in this horrible party, and she turned and said that little boy is a problem. "That little boy seems fairly impudent and impertinent to me," I didn't say anything. I was just a visitor and I just agreed. But, when the boy did something else and didn't respond to her question or assertion, she went to the front of the room and pushed a button. I assume it rang a bell down the hall or somewhere, because the principal came in very soon. A man I had met earlier in the day. He came in and she told him the story about this little, uncooperative boy. He called the boy up. He asked the boy some questions and he didn't get anywhere. He took the boy gently by the arm, and walked out. I thought, at that point, that is where the drama will be, so I followed after him. I went into his office and he talked a little bit, and he called the nurse, and I'll cut this story very short, the youngster just didn't hear a thing. The youngster was 95% deaf. The principal, then, rifled through his basket and found a note from the family physician saying, "Please allow the boy to come to school until we have time to get him adjusted," and so on. But we are sure he won't be able to do it.

Well, never mind with all the other details, but let us get back to the teacher. She said that boy is impertinent, that boy is impudent. That sounds like a statement of fact, doesn't it? It sounded like something you observe. And, yet, if I look at the rule, the only thing I could have observed was, she asked the boy to do something and he didn't, she asked the boy not to do something and he did. That's all. But how easy it is, in English to say he is not doing what I told him to do. Or he is, on purpose, violating my instructions. He is impudent, he is impertinent. One doesn't see that the only thing one saw is that he didn't do it, or he did.

I don't know whether it is important to make such a distinction, but I recall the same kind of error I see on our own campus. One of my advisees, a boy named Tom, for whom I got a note from a very important professor of history on our campus who wrote saying, "Don't you please advise with Tom and get him to forget these courses because he can't do this work?" Tom was trying to graduate and these were upper level courses and when I called him in I said, "Well, if you can't do this work and if you can't take these courses, better count on not graduating this quarter. So, this is serious!" The professor insisted that we change this program because Tom can't do this work. I called Tom in and said, "How do you account for all this. He then told a story. He was a veteran, he had a family—a wife and a youngster—and Uncle Sam's $125.00 doesn't go far to take care of three people and besides, "we are expecting a fourth." That is certainly not going to cover them. He looked at me a moment later and said, "Who has time to read history, we're too busy making it?" But, I am very much interested in the professor, whom I called immediately. I said, "You wrote me saying Tom can't do this work. Do you mean that? Well, sure, I mean it. Tom can't do this work!" I said, "Is that something you know, you've observed?" "Sure, Tom is doing miserably!" But, please observe, that is the only statement of fact the professor could have made. Tom isn't doing the work. Tom hasn't been doing the work. That is factual. Tom can't do the work, that is a guess. That is
fact, but what a difference it would make if we recognized that we couldn't.
What a difference it would make in the arrogance or the or the humility that would
be achieved, if I realized that the basis of what I know, is merely a guess or an
assumption, or a hypothesis. That, it seems to me, is where wisdom begins.
May I talk about another one of these ideas that, it seems to me, have to do
with the way human beings talk together and which can fit around the curriculum?
May I take advantage of you with a rigged experiment? If you were in small groups,
I would like really to do this. Suppose I can't up to you and said, "I want to
tell you something about Mary! Now, Mary is a sensible and giddy young lady,
wise and silly beyond compare. She was a slight and small creature, yet so large,
that everybody, who knew her, loved her. She felt rather lonely, because she
lived in a town with no other houses or people for miles around. If somebody
came up to you and said that, what do you think of words? What is your spontaneous comment? What do you
feel like saying? What is the thing that was up, if you were to talk without
any thinking at all? And I were to say, Mary is a sensible and giddy young lady.
Wise and silly beyond compare. She is slight and small, yet so large that every-
body, who knew her, loved her. If I were to say something like that, give me
a one word comment. What are you likely to say spontaneously? Anybody? Contra-
diction. What other one word? Crazy. You mean the speaker or Mary or both?
Give me some other ones. Incongruous. Anybody likely to say anything besides
these words? You would like to say humorous, Anything else? Nonsense. Now,
I've taken fair advantage of you and this is a game, in a way, it is a sort of
a trick. But, may I call your attention to something. I said some words. It
seems to me you had two choices. You could respond to my words, interpreting
them as if you were doing the talking, or you could respond to my words, wondering
what I mean. It seems to me everybody has two choices when he looks at a bunch
of words. He can interpret them in terms of himself, or he can say he used those
words. What do you suppose he means?

Now, I would like to offer two possible theories having to do with the
meaning of words. One of the theories says, a word is like a container. A
word is like a cup. You can put contents into a cup. You can put meaning in a
word. Words have meaning just the way a cup can have content. That is one
theory. Another theory is this: Words don't have meaning, only a person does.
Words don't mean, I do, you do. The content of meaning is not in the word, it
is in the writer or speaker, in other words, words don't mean, people do. These
two attitudes keep on going. In the first one, we tend to pay fairly exclusive
attention to what a man says. To his words. In the other, we tend to pay more
attention to the words in the context of the speaker. Now I used the words
sensible and giddy. I suppose 99 persons and I, myself, will tend to say, "Well
now wait a minute. He is obviously using those words the way I would if I were
during the talking. If I were doing the talking and if I'd put sensible and giddy
together, and wise and silly and small and large, I would be talking nonsense.
I would be contradicting myself, I would be incongruous, I would be crazy, etc.
But now there is another point of view, and that point of view says the words,
"What does he mean?" In terms of the human dimension, what happens if you look
at the words? You tell me I am mixed up, I don't know what I am talking about.
I am illogical. I am not using words right. I am confused. In effect, you
dismiss me. You start alienating me from you. If, however, you say, "Well
now, wait a minute, he's who he is. He is using words, what do you suppose he
means? What quaint, peculiar, unusual thing is he doing?" Instead of dismissing
me, what will you be likely to do, then? You probably would be likely to ask me
questions. Tell us more. Please explain yourself. What do you have on your
questions. Tell us more. Please explain yourself. What do you have on your
mind. And I am astonished, frequently, during the day, when I see supervisors work
with other people. Other people say something, the supervisor immediately leaps
to the feeling, "He is using words that I would, were I doing the talking"
So that we never stop to wonder, "What does he mean? What do you have in mind?"
Now, this is the point, I have found, at which tension arises, in so many circum-
cumstances. I am not going to have time to tell you, but, may I say the trick I was playing on you is this. I was using these words in a sort of antiquated sense. As you know, the word run, has, as Irving Lord's pointed out, something like 400 different uses, old and contemporary and recent. Now, I was using some of these words in fairly old senses. Take that word giddy, sensible and giddy. Well now, the word giddy, if I wrote it on the board, would look like Godly.
It comes from the same stem as Godlike or Godly and in a fairly earlier stage in English history. The word used to be used in the sense of enthusiastic, divinely possessed, and that is the way I was using it. You may think I am frivolous, or eccentric, or queer to use words in older senses but, remember, that was me. And in the human communication situation, I am surprised how often I do this too. I tend not to wonder about what he is doing, instead of saying and listening and wondering and asking and allowing him to talk, my impulse is to say, "Aw, he's mixed up. He doesn't know what he is talking about!" But he did.
In this case, he meant that Mary was a sensible and enthusiastic young lady, wise and silly. Now, in the history of English, the word silly has a usage very much like the word zelig in German. Zelig—blessed or happy. Accordingly, and as the language developed, the word silly was used in a satirical sense.
Old Salom once said, "No man had a right to call himself happy until he was dead!" Accordingly, anyone who regarded himself blessed was a fool. So the word got turned around in its usage. And that's what I was saying, wise and blessed. Now, you play the game, please. She was a slight and small creature and, yet, so large that everybody who knew her, loved her. What large? I mean by the word large? Not big. Generous, large in heart. And incidentally, the word large, in the sense of big, is only recent. The word large, in the sense of generous or large, of warm, open, was the deeper. Now then, what I am saying is this. We can teach children, we can teach adults, that words mean, or we can teach them that a man means. And it seems to me, teaching the latter theory introduces a note of the humane. It says, "You spoke, please, I now want to know what you had in mind!" It doesn't say, "You spoke, I wouldn't use words in that way!" I wouldn't be in your shoes. You are to be dismissed. And it seems to me, in the realms of citizenship, in the realms of domestic activities, in the classroom, it is not the word that youngsters use, but what do youngsters mean?

Now this, I think, means something different in the training of teachers. It means that we have to teach patience for a brand new reason. It means that we eliminate the kind of egocentric feeling. "He used a word, I know what he means!"
Well, one sees this is not very unusual, one sees illustrations of this in all sorts of places.

In Cleveland, Robert Harris, 40, a handy man, was found guilty, in traffic court, of driving while drunk. "One hundred dollars and costs!" intoned Judge Perry Fry, "to be executed by July second!" "My God!" exclaimed Harris, fainting dead away. When Harris was revived, Judge Perry Fry explained that he used the word executed in a legal sense and he merely meant that Harris had until July second to pay the fine. It seems to me to ask the question, "what does the word execute mean?" is to miss something important. The word execute, the Judge meant.

Please forgive a frivolous story, but in New Mexico, when an airline hostess passed out chewing gum with the routine instruction, for the ears, a lady passenger later complained, it worked all right, but couldn't you use something not so sticky. Now, these are frivolous illustrations. Those are illustrations when it doesn't count. But, I wish I had the time to give you
Here is a different kind of illustration. This I have taken from a work by former Secretary of State, James Byrnes, called Speaking Frankly. He says, in a private conversation with Mr. Molotov, it became apparent that another difficult problem had arisen between ourselves and the Russians. At the San Francisco Conference, when the question of establishing a trusteeship system within the United Nations was being considered, the Soviet delegation had asked Mr. Stettinius what the American attitude would be toward the assumption by the Soviet Union of a trusteeship. Mr. Stettinius replied, rather quickly, expressing the opinion, that the Soviet Union was eligible to receive a territory for administration, under trusteeship. And sometime later when the Russians made a formal request for trusteeship in the South Pacific, the United States voted against it. At which time the Soviet representative accused, in public, the United States of bad faith, of dishonesty, of misrepresenting his intentions. Now please go back, take eligible. Mr. Stettinius said the Soviet was eligible. What does the word eligible mean? It seems to me, that is not an important question. The question that is important is, what does Mr. Stettinius mean? What he meant was, I guess, I am eligible to try out for the United States track team, because I am a citizen. But, that doesn't mean, because I am eligible to try out, I will become a member or I will get a place on it. It means you are eligible. Sure, go ahead and ask. But, that is not what Mr. Molotov assumed, Mr. Molotov interpreted eligible, in the sense, if we may, then we should get the trusteeship. A kind of simple situation, in which we talk past each other. If I had the time, I should like to show you that we tend to take for granted that we understand, far more than we have a right to take for granted that we understand. In the hurry of the day, I am not interested in asking people to define terms. I am interested in the kind of human behavior that will allow me to sit with somebody, a child or an adult, so that we can discover, rather than dismiss or debate. This is another one of those things that it seems to me, you can get agreement on around the curriculum.

Because the clock is moving on, I want to move to the last of these topics, to the last one I want to talk about this morning, though, this is three out of fifty or more, that comprise this semantic discipline. Suppose we had a lot of time here, we weren't going anywhere and coffee wasn't waiting us. Suppose you and I were to have a conversation about an apple that is now fairly well battered. What are some of the things we could say about it? Anybody? We could talk about color. Now, let us say we had a bunch of blackboards, and I had a bunch of secretaries and assistants and we wrote those topics on the board. Color. What else might we talk about? Small, yes we could talk about size. Bruised, yes, and how the bruises got there. The shape, variety, so on and so on. Now, may I ask a question? How long would we have to stay here, talking about this? Somebody care to guess? How long would we have to stay here writing things on the board, until we could exhaust what could be said about this? Anybody? Give me one word answers. Forever. I suppose that if I were to have asked, in other words, instead of putting a period, let me put a comma and a great big etc., meaning more could be said, but for the sake of time and convenience, we will just stop right here. We are just tired of this particular game. I have a feeling that, if I were to ask a group like this 75 to 100 years ago, the same little, simple game the answers would not have been as rapid. The answers would not have been as immediate. We probably never could exhaust what could be said about this because one of the great differences between the 19th and 20th centuries is in the 20th we have come to recognize that this world is rich
and complicated beyond human imagination. There are so many details in a little
frillless, unimportant thing like this apple. There are so many details, that
probably we shall never be able to say all that can be said about this. In the
19th century, there were loads of people, however, who believed, if you leave
us alone, let us go to work on this, and we will exhaust, we will some day cover,
we will some day be able to tell you all there is to be said about this. I
think in the 20th century, we now know that this world is rich and tremendous
beyond any dream that we may have had in earlier centuries. Now, this isn't a
new idea. But, this is an idea that one can get agreement on around the curriculum.
So far as I know, no historian has ever said all there is to be said about any
single event in history. No geologist has ever given a complete report of the
geological characteristics of any bit of terrain. No artist has ever caught,
in a picture, all the details of a subject. No, nothing, so far as I know, no
writer, no speaker, has ever said all that can be said. What do you usually do?
If one were to give you a speech about the apple, what would he do? I think one
would select some of the details to talk about, and omit the remainder. I deal
with some of the characteristics of this semantic adventure and omit the remainder.
Now, as I said, this isn't new. Thoreau, in Walden, says at one point, "The
universe is wider than our use of it." And Walter de la Mare, the poet, said,
"What we see and hear is only the smallest fraction of what is." And George
Santayana once wrote, "The most exhaustive account, which human science can ever
give of anything, does not cover all that is true about it!" And William James,
even in 1890, said, "The word and, trails along after every sentence. Something
always escapes!" Hamlet, indeed, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
then are dreamed on in our philosophy!" Though, I like the way that said it
who, while working, on his grapefruit said, there more in this than meets the
eye. That is to say, this world is a big, rich place. There are a lot of
details and the moment I start talking, I select some of the things and I omit
the remainder. But now, undergraduates, when we talk about this sometimes say,
"Well, so what. What difference does that make?" It seems to me, the difference
it makes is that in our haste, in the eagerness we have in argument and debate
with people, it is so easy to act, in our talking, as if what we say about it
is all there is to be said about it.

I want to talk, for a very few minutes, about a disease we call illness.
A human disease which is at the heart of not only citizenship, but human and
personal problems in a broader sense. What I mean is very simple. Have you
ever run into people who leave you with the feeling that, what they say about
anything, is all there is to be said about it? Have you ever come into relation-
ship with people, who leave you with the feeling, well I've said it, period?
Nothing more remains to be said about it. That is the disease in its most obvious
form. It is encouraged by the way I talk. Note, if I say that is a bad girl,
that is a slow student, how the implications, the aura surrounding that state-
ment, she is a bad girl, period, this is a slow reader, period. Nothing more
can be said about it. That is the illness, the sense of assurance.

It would be fun to talk with you about the relationship of this illness
to the large problem of human unteachability, the problem of the unteachable
person, young, medium aged or old. I teach policemen in Evanston, durin the winter.
I don't know whether you have ever had the experience of talking to a classroom
full of policemen, or whether your experiences are limited to the smaller numbers,
one at a time. But, my experiences with these policemen makes this very clear.
I have learned to like these people and I have learned to work with them, and
they are really a joy, except in the early days. I can almost imagine, as I
stand here, at this moment, my visits to the first of these police classes. We
have a police school at the university and these men come from all over the country and from other countries, to learn about how to do safety and traffic administration and some of the advanced activities. As I enter the class you can almost see the opinion written large on their faces, as if they were saying to themselves, "Look, go ahead, say anything we haven't heard. Say anything that we, in our vast and infinite wisdom don't know." And may I say, that so long as this attitude and atmosphere prevails, so long as this allness is there, not very much learning takes place. Because allness is the attitude in a person, allness is the mood for the atmosphere in which communication cannot possibly take place.

Dean McSwain, I am going to take three more minutes to tell you of a reading experiment we have been conducting. I want to say first, that I am no reading expert. I know less about the reading problems than 90% of you in this room. But, I have been participating in an experiment. Trying to see the implications of what I have been talking about. The experiment is a very simple one, but I think it is interesting. It is not being conducted at Northwestern but at a small college where the teachers know all of the good students. At the end of the first semester, any teacher is allowed to say, this youngster, this freshman, doesn't seem to be able to get what I am talking about. These youngsters haven't seemed to be able to keep up with the reading. They haven't done enough reading. They seem to know what it is all about, but they don't seem to read fast enough. Is there something wrong with their reading? Well, we get them in groups of about 20 or 25, and we simply meet them in a room and the very first thing we do is send them to the educational clinic to see whether there are any mechanical defects that need to be corrected. And about 25% of all of these students are spotted as having automatic mechanical problems that you know more about than I do. Some of them need glasses. They are dismissed and sent to their corrective work and the reminder come back to us.

I haven't time to tell you all the things we then do. But just to give you a hint or small sample of what we do, we give them a number of reading, very simple, reading assignments. And the one I will tell you about is this: We found a letter that Thomas Jefferson once wrote to a friend of his. In the letter, Jefferson is arguing the values of living in a democratic process. "Only in a free, democratic community, with everybody given the opportunity to get an education, can you discover what the capacity of the citizenry is. If you don't allow a man to go to school, how are you going to know what his gifts are?" And so on. Well now, it is three pages long. Two thirds of the way down page two, this sentence is inserted. "And anybody who really believes that I, Thomas Jefferson, am in favor of the democratic society, misunderstands me completely. I think most people are too dumb to learn. Most people oughtn't to be allowed to go to school, and besides, I don't like the idea of education, anyways!" I insert that sentence. We give this to the students and this is one of a series of texts. And the students are given the letter and are told, please take this home, please read this very carefully and bring it back tomorrow. When they return, we give them a quiz, a series of questions, very simple, on the Jefferson letter.

This is question six. At any point in this letter, did Mr. Jefferson have any doubts, did he say that he was opposed of didn't, perhaps, like democracy or did he have anything to say against the democratic process? Seventy odd per cent of almost 500 students answer no to question six. There we have then, when they answer no and answer similarly on other tests and we have a profile, that is reasonably consistent, we then assign each of these students to a clinical psychologist for conversation. And they sit and talk. Now they may talk
directively and non-directively for hours. Some of those conversations have
gone up to twenty hours. They have but one objective, to see whether or not
the youngsters will give up any answers as to why and how come they answered
no to question six, about Jefferson, and all these things. Now, this is what
we found and I don't know whether it is startling. I really don't know what
it means, except from my little, narrow point of view. Almost 74 out of every
100 of these youngsters will, in the course of these conversations, break down
and say something like, "O.K., so I didn't read it! Something to that effect.
They didn't read it. And we now come to wonder whether the problem is that the
youngster can't read or simply that the youngster doesn't. And why doesn't he?
Well, as these interviews go on, the youngsters say, "Aw, freedom, democracy,
citizenship, all of that stuff. Everybody knows that! That is, if the young-
ster comes to seek with the feeling, I know that. That is old stuff. Freedom,
that stuff. This atmosphere of allness creates an effective bar to his efforts
to communicate with the printed page. And, from my point of view, would we
have proceeded to do with these youngsters one additional thing, in addition
to all the other things that you all and your professional reading people tell
you to do. We have attempted to break through this wall of allness. We have
attempted, by exercises and demonstrations and conversations and activities,
to make the youngster explicitly realize, you know what you know, but it isn't
all. You realize what you realize, you experience what you experience, but
there is more. And the realization of the etc., that there is more, it seems
to us, has done something to lessen the rigidity and the unteachability of these
youngsters.

When we do this with the police, something very interesting happens. I
can only tell you qualitatively, when we put them through, in the beginning,
we send them out to make an accident report, we say this. "Please bring in a
complete accident report of all the details of this particular accident! And
the police say, "Yes sir, we will do it! They come in with their reports and
we say, "Have you got the complete stuff, got all the details?" and they say,
"Yes sir!" and they insist, when they read it to us, this is the complete picture.
And it takes a little while, until we have been able to break through and make
them realize they have seen what they have seen, but it isn't all. Or as one
of them once told me, "I guess, Prof, what you are trying to tell us is, that
we know what we know, but it ain't all, huh?" That is right, and it seems to
me, that makes sense. Now, the awareness of this doesn't mean that youngsters,
suddenly, reverse their processes. It suddenly means that they sense an arro-
gance, which I had before, I no longer have. I am not saying that a man doesn't
have ideas or strong beliefs, or strong convictions. Not at all. I am not
saying that a man doesn't have strong beliefs and strong hopes and strong aspir-
ations. You believe what you believe, you know what you know.

It seems to me, you can distinguish between two different kinds of persons.
Here is person number one who recognized the fullness of the world and who says
I know what I know and my experience has been what I have experienced, but there
is more. There is another kind of person, who says I have experienced what I
have experienced and period. That is enough. That is all. It seems to me that
is the picture. That is the image of the bigot, of the dogmatic person. That
is the man you can't talk with.

I have two experiments under way right now that I can just hint at. We
have an opportunity to work with a group of workers. You take the group in a
very well known organization in Chicago, we have been able to rotate foremen.
This is a parallel of that study done with children at Iowa some years ago,
that Llewyn, and White and Lippett did, we were able to take a foreman in this particular group, a foreman, who is arrogant, who knows it all, who won't listen and says I am telling you what to do, period, and don't ask any questions, that kind of a man. I now find a way of measuring it. All this doesn't stay with him. Allness in a man never stays in him, it becomes a part of the group. And then we take him and remove him, bring in another kind of person. This kind of person supervises, tries to behave in the image, well, I know what I know, tell me more, I will be glad to hear you through, tell me what is on your mind, this is what I know, tell me what you know. His whole atmosphere is of communication with. He says, "I am not going to make any inferences, I am not going to project, I am not going to assure you are using words! Let's find out, and qualitatively, when you make sociometric and other qualitative studies, something happens in a group like this, so that one never can, it seems to me, neglect the influence of the character of the behavior of the people involved.

Well, I want to draw this to a conclusion. I think what I have said is very old stuff to many of you, perhaps, most of you. What I have been trying to say, however, is that part of this semantic adventure has been to discover things that we can teach at all levels. Things that we can teach supervisors and principals and teachers and workers and all the way down the line.

Sometimes it seems obvious but I should like to go along with Justice Holmes who once said, "The vindication of the obvious is sometimes more important than the clarification of the obscure! It seems to me, when things become too obvious, we neglect them. And it is the neglect of allness and projection, and inference making that I would call attention to. Old St. John once said something that gives me comfort. He says, "It is not sufficiently realized that men need more to be reminded than informed! And I should like to find a way of reminding us, continuously, of the pattern of the responses that we make in our communication with others.

Now, I would like to close this by reading you a parable. This, perhaps, will summarize what I have been trying to say better than I have been able to say it. This story was written originally by William Saroyan. Carl Sandburg, however, saw it and he rewrote it in Carl Sandburg's inimitable prose and I read it. It is the story about a fellow who gets to paving around a second hand store and picks up an old cello with one string to it and takes it home and sits in a corner of his front room, finds a place for his one finger to hold down that one string. Then he saws back and forth with the bow. Hours on hours every day, his patient wife has to listen to him, saving back and forth on that one string, and his one finger always on that one place. Weeks pass and she notices he never once changes his one finger from that one place, as he saws and saws back and forth on that one string. Sometimes he went so far as to wish that he would drop dead and his one finger be loosed from that one place where he held it on that one string. Other times she hoped and prayed he would, suddenly, realize what he was doing and stand up and smash the cello and throw away the bow. But, this didn't happen, he went on playing. You see, he had taught her to speak softly or else. So, one day, she said softly to him, she'd watched other players playing the cello. They always had four strings on the cello and more, that they kept changing their fingers from one place to another all the time they were playing. As she went on, she particularly said, they never kept one finger on the same place on the one string while playing the cello. He looked at her a slow moment, he laid down his bow and cello, he told her, "I might have expected this from you. You are a woman. Your hair is long, your understanding short. Of course the other cello players are always moving their fingers from one place to another. They are looking for the right place. I have found it.