

IBRD:n kielentarkastaja on kokemuksensa perusteella laatinut "asiakkailleen" tarkoitettun pienen toivomuslistan, joka sopii johtolangaksi myöskin meidän oloissamme. Esitetään sen vuoksi seuraavassa ote siitä:

SUPERFLUOUS WORDS

- - - - -

Our papers can scarcely pretend to elegance. Their subject matter seldom lands itself to that. Even if it did, time is never adequate to permit the careful repolishing believed habitual with elegant authors. Clarity and brevity are the two cardinal virtues. The length of papers has frequently been a matter for comment, sometimes unfair. It may be annoying to be told that a paper is too long and simultaneously to be reproached for having omitted some allegedly significant detail. It is, however, surprising how much can be done to attain brevity merely by deleting superfluous words. Two words are usually better than one, but two words are nearly always worse than one, if one can convey the meaning.

Many examples which come to mind are trifling, but may have considerable cumulative effect. It is unnecessary to write "Prices have remained at high levels." "Prices have remained high" would suffice. "The volume of production of oil is expected to increase" says no more than "Oil production is expected to increase." "Is due to the fact that" can nearly always be replaced by "because", and "for the purpose of financing" by "to finance". If something "results in a reduction of the money supply", it just "reduces the money supply". Instead of saying "It is estimated by the Ministry of Finance that", why not be content with "The Ministry of Finance estimates that" ? And it is seldom necessary to say "In the year 1948". It is also usually unnecessary to say "It is worthwhile to recall, etc."; if not worthwhile, the point should not find a place in a paper. We need not say, "as has been explained, or mentioned, earlier", for none of our papers should be so long as to necessitate reminders.

Some verbosity surviving in our papers expressed, no doubt, a commendable caution. We do not wish to be too categorical in our forecasts; it is always prudent to maintain a backdoor escape, to be used if later our words are quoted against us. We are inclined, therefore, to say "On the scanty evidence at present available, it would appear that during the coming year exports are not likely, etc." Such caution is intelligible, but we should not have given any hostages to fortune by writing "During the coming year ex-

ports are not likely, etc." or, to be particularly careful,
"During the coming year exports seem unlikely, etc."

- - - - -

It might be interesting to calculate the time consumed in the writing or reading or listening to superfluous words, and to compare the results with the difficulties we all have in getting enough annual leave. The conclusion might have a sobering effect.