



Transactional Musings

Contention Breeding Strategems

In previous issues of “Transactional Musings” listening has been the central topic. Manipulating listeners is part of listening.

Dr. Franklin Ernst Jr. described ways he discovered that are used by some people to manipulate listeners. In Chapter VIII of his book “Who’s Listening - A Handbook of the Transactional Analysis of the Listening Activity” page 99 is a section on “contention breeding strategems.”

“Contention breeding strategems” can be identified by words and phrases [and body language] people use. For whatever reasons these strategems are employed, is for another discussion.

However, I recently witnessed a group of people getting manipulated into voting to form a new committee to review/change the by-laws.

The events leading up to the formation of this “bylaws” committee were heart tightening for some and maddingly off the charts of reasonableness for others. **I voted NO (loudly)**, after the chairman gleefully declared a unanimous aye vote in favor.

The members were conned into (opted for) having something to be “together on” after a previous heated

“debate” about having lost their ability to run for office (get their names put on the publicly printed ballot) so that the public can pick who they want to represent them.

During the minutes, hours, days, weeks, months leading up to the “debate”, much “confusion” was created: lying, deception and fraud may have been used, misrepresentation, man-handling, “rackets”, pleas, meetings, telephone calls, texting, more meetings, illness, etc.

The members were blocked at every turn to get their right to have their names put on the public ballot. Reportedly and “evidently” the chairman “evidently” took unilateral actions in collusion with the local “County Registrar of Voters” to take away people’s right and customary way of getting their names put onto the public [people’s] voting ballot. The “County Registrar of Voters” gave the chairman the opportunity to “opt out” of elected membership; tempting the chairman (privately?) to take the option of “membership by chairman appointment only.”

Vote Fraud?

Mind you, no by-laws changes have been made (yet) giving the

chairman the right to do things unilaterally, without membership approval.

Having been conned into voting to form a “by-laws” committee (after losing their rights of elected membership), the members now have to deal with making new rules that may or may not be followed, again.

The newly formed “by-laws” committee can now [try] to re-write the “by-laws”, (“ex-post-facto”) after the fact, after the law was broken; so that later it appears as if nothing had happened.

More “confusion” to come? Conspiracy?, as defined by the California Penal Code. Sure looks like it. County Grand Jury investigation? Red faces are obvious now, too. Clean-up?

This is not over.

Contention Breeding Strategems –The CBSs

Page 99 of “Who’s Listening”

A. “Throw-out” comments.

1. “I just want to throw out my thoughts on the matter.”

2. “I have a comment I want to throw in to the group as a whole (for some feedback)...” “Throw-out” or “throw-in,” these

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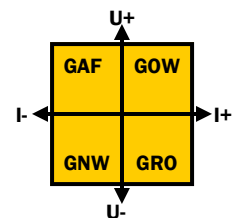
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Special points of Interest:

Contention Breeding Strategems” can be identified by words and phrases [and body language] people use.

Only the chairman’s appointments will be allowed ?

No more publicly elected membership



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comments are regularly "throw-up" comments, aimed at causing (psychological) vomiting or a sick stomach in two or more of those who were "thrown-up" on. A "throw-out" is a "throw-up" and is, therefore, something for others to clean-up (later).

B. "I hate to say this, but..." – Hate merchant.

C. "I don't see anything wrong with that (what he just said)."

This is often said to the "upperdog" by a third person ("arbitrator"). It is implying that the leader intended criticism and harm to the second person who has just been spoken to. The intent is to invite the person just-spoken-to to view the leader's just-concluded comments as criticism, as an unwarranted calling-down on the part of the leader (treater).

This Contention-Breeding-Strategist is seeming to be siding with Just-Spoken-To. Implication is that the latter was "treated like a dawg" and that "arbitrator" is "for the underdog" and "against the upperdog taking unfair advantage of poor lil-ole-underdawg." This siding with one person and against another is to invite the Just-Spoken-To (Dawg) to look for some hidden, mischievous, critical, maligning motive in the preceding talker's comments. This "protectiveness" has the aim of becoming a "protection racket." Also, the "protectionist," by implying wrong-doing, is encouraging "Dawg" to "stand-up-for-your-rights – Man!" This CBS here has the aim of

alienating one person from another in the group, of turning "underdog" against "upperdog" so that CBS eventually becomes "top dog."

Carrie persisted in the use of this tactic even after every member of the group had discontinued responsive transactions to this stimulus except for an infrequent, "Oh, come on, Carrie?" or "Thanks very much for your best piece-mealing peacemaking (peacemaking)." Her solicitous Parent was remaining fixated on "attempting to set the record straight," making the correction of an injustice. She meticulously watched for any group member to "wince" while being treated for something he had come to get-well-of. Even in the face of the distressed wincer calling her on her "interfering tactic," she often would continue. Her "I felt I just had to help him out!" came to be seen as Carrie's Parental protection for "taking a second helping," protection for her "snacking-and-seconds" operation (she was obese).

D. "Stick by your guns!"
 "Stand up for yourself!"
 "Don't let them push you around!"
 "Stand up for your rights (beliefs or what you believe in)."

These are rather straight forward immoral encouragements by fight promoters to "underdawg" to go out and risk losing his own blood fighting in order to be right and praiseworthy. Thoughtful responses such as "I want to think on it first" will usually be jeered.

E. "Like I said before..." This class of before-sayer has a different order of business in mind compared to the "as-I-said-before" before-sayer. Sometimes shortened to "Like I said" this phrase is diagnostic of the user's design for promoting contention. It is also used by persons with a wrath racket.

"Like-I-Said-Before," Bret was heard using "like I said before" over six times in the first ten minutes of his first session. He had been referred for counseling under seemingly coerced circumstances. He started "They said I needed some counseling. That's what I'm here for!?" Problems? "No, I don't have any problems to talk about" then on to a description "like I said before how they made me call you...." etc. about his situation of the immediately preceding six days, "like I said before." On the fourth occasion of "like I said before" the phrase was repeated back to him in the manner of reflectively musing on the words themselves. On the next repeat of that phrase "that's the fifth time you said 'like I said before' " ... Response: "Well I did say it before?"

Listening further, he was heard recounting the circumstances between himself and his wife as related to being forced to come. He affirmed "When I married her I loved Belle very much, then she..." After a few more minutes "like I said before, I love my wife very much." This contradiction of past tense and present tense use of the word "love" was investigated. After five transactions the story unfolded of his taking his wife for granted "like I said before, I love you..." and "like I

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told you before, I love you, now what...?" One time she duped him into an "Uproar" with legal consequences because Belle had not said that -- "this ..." could be assumed to mean "that..." At a later session with the two of them she was noted using "like I said before." In the three person setting this

Little Red Riding Hood was quick to be offended at "like I said before" being inquired into. When inquiry went further into what had "offended" her, the transaction then turned into her "taking offense at" what was being asked. She would turn from the offending husband to the counselor or vice

versa ready to claim being misunderstood by the person she had just turned from, seeming to imply to the second "Are you just going to sit there and let him talk to me like that? What kind of a man (gentleman) are you?"

Rewording Tactic

Commentary filled "news" programming loves to use this one. And the "news celebrities" especially like to mouth what they just heard "to make sure" they get their lines straight for later.

The REWTACs -
 "For the record," "To set the record straight," and "To straighten out what was said..." These tactics alienate the originally wording person

and get him to question his own thinking and way of expressing himself.

- A. "In other words, then you are saying that..."
- B. "I suppose then, we could say that..."
- C. "Well now, let me see. What you seem to be saying ..."
- D. "Now let me see if I understand you correctly. What you seem to be trying to say is..."

- E. "Now, let's face it!" (You had better admit it.)

The Rewtac, in effect, is telling the preceding talker (now the listener) that he, the re-worder, is far better qualified, if not indeed the only one who knows how to say it. He, the listener, is obviously inept, stupid, and incapable of speaking clearly--he is unable to make himself understandable.

Agreeableness Artifices

The AAs

These are intended to impart a sense of agreeableness and peaceableness on the part of the talker toward the listener. The intent of the talker is to convey an attitude of open-mindedness while at the same time luring the listening person into a "cornered" or "trapped" situation.

This quality of seeming to be impartial and objective has as its aim the presentation of a preconceived idea, a view about which the talker made up his mind years ago (an opinionated idea, a prejudice) but around which he wants to appear to be a "good guy." In a group there are additional

advantages which come from this self-created "forum for a discussion" which he is "holding for the benefit of others and is offering out of the goodness of his heart."

The plan of the agreeableness maneuvers is to appear desirous of avoiding the argument or disagreement: first by stating his case gently, then by drawing the other fellow out. While doing this, Good-Ole-Agreeable is at the same time carefully pruning his buddy's responsive options down to two in number, and two only. Ole Buddy gets to be either:

- 1. IN AGREEMENT with 'Ole-Agreeable, or Ole Buddy gets to be seen as

- 2. A DISAGREEABLE PERSON as he becomes vexed and irritable at Good-Ole-Agreeable who wants "a little consensus and thoughtful consideration." Ole-Agreeable has it all nailed down "because after all, you'd have to agree, you know, you'll just have to admit" that:
 - (a) Ole-Agreeable did open the subject.
 - (b) Ole-Agreeable did listen carefully and considerately and thoughtfully to Ole-Buddy through all of Ole-Buddy's' points.
 - (c) Ole-Agreeable did concede some to Ole-Buddy, as with, "I guess you could put it that way," "Yes, yes, yes, you do have an excellent point there, but have

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"Mastery of the universe is proportional to the symbols man has by which to represent his universe."

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you ever noticed how...," etc.
(d) Ole-Agreeable did listen to Ole-Buddy's points even though he may well not have been in complete (if any) agreement with them himself, you know, but he did listen thoughtfully anyhow, and how could you possibly be so crass as to have become vexed at Good-Ole-Agreeable?

Examples of AAs:

- A. "I was wondering if..."
- B. "Have you ever thought that..."
- C. "Now I don't want you to think that..."
- D. "I don't want you to get the wrong impression..."
- E. "Well, I think we can all see here that..."
- F. "Now wouldn't you say that...?"
- G. "I suppose then, you could say that..."
- H. "..., right?" "Right?" "Right!..."
- I. "Well now friend, (doctor, etc.) you don't mean to tell me that..." Agreeableness played harder.

If this last one is allowed to get farther, is allowed to go beyond this point, then the listener might just as well give in to an extended, if not vitriolic, rebuttal. If this "friendly talker" is not interrupted at exactly this point, any later interruption of him will be fought off as if the interrupter were questioning the virtue of the talker's mother and the man's family honor. The listener's option in this case is to interrupt at just this point. The interrupting

options could include:

- 1. "Well, I guess not.... to you!"
- 2. Hold up one's hands (in mock terror) saying, "Oh, No! No! Certainly not! Oh, please forgive me, kind sir!"
- 3. Or equivalent.

Whatever is done or said has to be gotten off prior to the beginning of the recitation, because once he has started, the talker's "family honor and all else that is sacred in this world" is bet on the line by this "friendly-meaning-Crusader."

- J. "Well, it seems to me..." agreeableness:

Clinical Example:

Jerry in a group was noted to be repeatedly cutting in when germane items were being handled. He would invariably preface his remarks with, "Well, it seems to me that..." and launch into a monologue, a filibuster. Various measures were initiated by members of Jerry's group to cut through this. Invariably he responded with, "You're barging in on me! It seems to me that after all, you know, when I have the floor the least you could do is give me the courtesy of listening while I am talking until I have finished!"

Jerry's "It seems to me..." was explosively wired. One time Ron gave very careful attention to what Jerry was saying, even though Jerry's head-tilt matched the angled prejudice of his presentation. After Jerry's opinion had been well portrayed, and at an appropriate moment, Ron gave an appreciative "WOW!" "Seeming" Jerry was quite angered.

When Ron did not take back the "WOW!", did not cringe or apologize, Jerry barged out of the room. Later, after the "well, it seems to me..." bomb had been disarmed for the purpose of exploration, it became evident that there was a little boy inside who had carefully copied and memorized in detail what his daddy had taught him. He had been very accurately delivering himself of these teachings. Later, by way of a slip-of-the-tongue, Jerry told the group that "It seems to me that..." stood for "My daddy says that..."

Individuals who use this phrase, "Well, it seems to me that..." with any degree of frequency are probably having trouble experiencing the reality of events. For them, experiences are of a "seeming" quality because of the extensive and intensive internal harking back to past teachings in order to deal with the now-and-the-here events. For them, the manner of dealing with today events is less often handled directly through the reality of today, but rather must first come into accord with "the sacred laws of my sacred teacher."