

## **A Humble Petition from Members of The Federation Of Writers Scotland to The British Broadcasting Corporation regarding the Corporation's use of the English language:**

Whereas it has come to our attention that your news presenters and reporters are often deficient in their command and control of our beautiful language we urge you to institute their immediate retraining, preferably led by a professional writer of high standing, by which said reporters and presenters learn to avoid the worst clichés, irrelevant stresses and unthinking metaphors while presenting their reports. We do not think it worthwhile your extending this training programme to “celebrities”, politicians or trade union leaders appearing in (“not “on”) your programmes since most appear irredeemably illiterate or at best cloth-eared.

We draw your attention to the following examples:-

The persistent and annoying practice, used by one of your major presenters, (sometimes referred to as “Preposition Hugh”) of stressing the preposition in a sentence, as in “The Prime Minister returned TO Downing Street and set about consulting WITH the Home Secretary about Parliament's decision to refuse all pay increases TO struggling writers.” Prepositions have a structural function but no intrinsic meaning. Note also the intrusive TO.

The use of words and phrases such as the following:-

“incredible”. If something is incredible there is no point mentioning it since no one is likely to believe it.

“going forward.” Who or what is going forward is seldom clear. The phrase is an unthinking replacement of “in the future”.

“at this moment in time.” How can a moment be out of time?

“fantastic”. Unless one is reporting fantasy this word would imply that the fact/ report/opinion referred to is of no importance, probably not worth mentioning and a waste of your reporter's breath and salary.

We limit these examples of poor professional practice as an exhaustive list would exhaust us.

We do not regard this petition as material for arguing that the licence fee be abolished. We recognise that other broadcasting organisations also commit such crimes against our language but you should know better.

Albert Haddock aka Derek Crook