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"Brush Up Your Gestures"

Some humorous advice
to Speakers

- **Wagging the Finger**

Any free citizen confronted by a wagging finger, especially if it is accompanied by the words "I tell you this." is entitled to ask: "Who is this person presuming to caution or admonish me? Is he my father? Is she my Principal? The Lord God of Hosts? If not, let him keep his finger to himself. Let her prattle on about the dangers of nuclear holocaust. I will not have a finger wagged at me".

- **Pointing the Finger**

This suggests you wish to call up your audience for cannon-fodder. If you do, go right ahead.

- **Stabbing the Forefinger**

This unseemly usage, punctuating every half dozen words, gives the audience the feeling that you would like

(a) to prod them in the chest:

(b) to poke them in the eye.

It is a gesture much used in Northern Ireland, where conversation is impossible without it and peace is impossible with it.

- **Raising the Forefinger Aloft**

Though not necessarily offensive, this gesture suggests that you are

(a) trying to detect a wind;

(b) leading a pack of tourists through a cathedral;

(c) directing attention to a high power;

(d) requesting permission to leave the room.

- **Sawing the Air**

"Do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus," said Hamlet. We do not know what Shakespeare meant by "thus" or "too much". Just don't saw the air at all. Or cleave it. Or rend it. Or chop it. Or pummel it. Or part it. Or grasp it. Or knead it. Or compress it. Or mold it. Or tie knots in it. Or lift it. Or smooth it. Leave the air alone.

- **Clenching (or "Balling") the Fist**

Today this gesture is no more than a mechanical response to the sight of television cameras. It may mean any of the following:

(a) Roll on the Revolution;

(b) Allah is great;

(c) Imperialists out;

(d) Down with the CIA;

(e) No more education cuts;

(f) A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.

- **Raising both Fists**

Lincoln used this gesture to express execration of slavery. Southerners used it to express execration of damn Yankees. Do not devalue it by using it to demand mustard on your hamburger.

- **Stretching the Arms Wide**

A gesture sometimes used to suggest that the speaker's heart encompasses all humanity. Unfortunately, it is also the fisherman's gesture for the one that got away.

- **Folding the Arms**

This means you do not greatly care what happens when the global supply of oil runs out and that it is time people got used to the idea of dying by hypothermia. It shows you are not a person to be stamped by sentiment.

- **Gripping the Lectern**

By doing this you will be able to retract your head into your chest and assume a look of defiance. It is a good attitude for defending the indefensible, especially if your eyes are ablaze with sincerity.

- **Pounding the Lectern**

This will merely spill water and send shock waves through the microphones, stunning your audience - but go ahead if it makes you feel better.

- **Putting Hands in Pockets**

A traditional way of expressing healthy contempt for bourgeois and military taboos; it also expresses healthy contempt for your audience.

- **Removing the Spectacles**

Doing this will set your audience speculating as to whether you look better with or without glasses. It is a useful trick when you wish to divert attention from a weak argument. Remember that spectacles often give an illusion of maturity.

Finally, here are some more gestures to avoid at all costs:

1. Any movement suggestive of a general blessing (unless you want to be mistaken for the Pope).
2. Laying the right hand on the heart (unless you want to be mistaken for an American President).
3. Slackening the tie-knot (unless you want to be mistaken for a third-rate media man).
4. Scratching the top of the head (unless you want to be mistaken for Stan Laurel).
5. The 'thumbs-up' sign (unless you want to be mistaken for an astronaut ready to lift off).
6. Any stiff upward jerk of the forearm (unless you want to be mistaken for an Italian dictator).
7. Touching the nose (unless you want to be suspected of a desire to explore it).