

CONCRETE CONSIDERATIONS

EDWARD R. WOLPOW
Brookline, Massachusetts

On reading that a number of priests had gathered for a CONCELEBRATION of the Mass, it seemed that a formula had presented itself for the generation of collective verbs which might be used in the manner of the spate of collective nouns with which we have become familiar. James Lipton's An Exaltation of Larks (Grossman Publishers, 1968; paperback edition Penguin Books, 1977) sets forth large numbers of legitimate collective nouns and adds many new coinages, from a colony of bacteriologists to a cc of Mexicans.

So, if a group of priests can, legitimately, CONCELEBRATE, couldn't a gathering of dog-lovers be said to CONCUR?

Here are some suggested collective verbs in several categories. Relatively straightforwardly, groups of swearers CONCUSS, shoemakers CONSOLE, and mountain climbers CONDESCEND. Packs of plumbers CONDUCT, shepherds CONTEND, mattress-makers CONFIRM, and molders CONFORM. Swarms of electricians CONFUSE, musicians CONNOTE, waiters CONSERVE, checkwriters CONSIGN, and launderers CONSORT. Teams of athletes CONSTRAIN, teachers either CONTEST or CONSTRICHT, lawyers CONTORT (do they ever!), and mathematicians CONSUMMATE. Roomfuls of travel agents CONTOUR, real estate agents CONTRACT, brinksmen CONVERGE, and poets CONVERSE. With linguistic nicety, mobs of judges CONFINE and diplomats CONTACT.

More obliquely, crowds of rifle-owners CONCOCT, fishermen CONTROL, Hellenists CONCRETE, Italians CONVINCCE, fascists CONDUCE, Jimmy Carter and Sam Nunn CONGA, antique dealers CONJUNCT, Oz-lovers CONTINGENT, anti-percussionists CONUNDRUM and fastball pitchers CONK OUT. And, most deviously, cliques of scarlet-caped bullfighters CONGO-RED.

Finally, there is a large storehouse of fanciful adverbery in the form of Tom Swifties: "I forgot what to buy at the store," said Tom listlessly. Combining a collective noun with a collective verb and a Tom-Swiftie adverb may produce a fierce hybrid:

A stampede of letter-writers conscript penultimately
A mass of churchmen conspire gracefully