

## BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES; OTHERS WAIVE THE RULES

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*The New York Press* is a free weekly “alternative” newspaper that is livelier and less doctrinaire than *The Village Voice*, its archrival.

On June 16, 1989, the *Press*, true to its maverick principles, ran a front-page article by a Bill Wyman, entitled “Language Police.”

“Almost all usage dictates are pointless,” the writer declares. His main target is Strunk and White’s classic *The Elements of Style* (“this silly melange of misguided rules”). But other gurus don’t escape his tirade against “the artificiality of so many language ‘rules’” and “the zeal with which they are enforced by so many.”

A response I wrote appeared later that year, not in the *Press* but in a publishing industry journal. A newly revised version of that rebuttal follows.

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Mr. Wyman’s article peaked my interest. I prioritized it because I was anxious to utilize the guidance he infers. After pouring over the essay, I found that I was not adverse to his views. Indeed, I agreed with fully half of them.

The writer is certainly not reticent to express his opinions. His article begs the question: “Why do we need to run a gauntlet of foolish style and usage commandments?” Let’s have less of them!

Actually, he hones in on a problem that is literally explosive. Hopefully, readers will not be phased by his comments, nor will they be disinterested. Rather, they should observe the true facts that comprise the situation, form a consensus of opinion, and thus be enervated to finalize a plan and affect a solution.

Discovering this piece was truly fortuitous. Indeed, it is the most unique article I have ever read. I will surely refer back to it. I have made exactly the same observations on several different occasions, but he expresses them with much more flare.

From whence does his wisdom spring? The enormity of this achievement should be flouted. He deserves both fulsome praise and wide notoriety.

In conclusion, I offer the writer my complements and a kudo! His words impacted my thinking. And no one could ask for a better end result.