# Past history argues against predicting the future.

June 18, 2008 By Paul Dalton

I am a bit of a language curmudgeon. My father was an English teacher, and one of our family pastimes was- and is- correcting each other?s grammar and diction. I also had a series of effective English teachers, especially Alex Desantis and Mike Lasser.

My propensity toward both sesquipedalianism and grammarian priggishness have served me well professionally, if not always personally. In my work, it helps to be able to read the articles we write at Project Inform, with a critical eye aimed both at form and content. In my non-work life, I must remain hyper-vigilant against my instinct to correct.

One linguistic tendency that get?s my hackles up is pleonasms, or common redundant phrases. On the wall near my computer is an invaluable sheet of paper called, ?Dog Puppies,? listing 240 such wastes-of-letters, ranging from ?a bolt of lightning? to ?young lad.? Some that I really detest are ?past history? (what other kind is there?) and ?predicting the future? (as opposed to the past?).

AIDS of course has it?s own set of pleonasms: HIV virus (Human Immunodeficiency Virus virus), Full Blown AIDS (is there a half blown type I don?t know about?), Greedy Drug Companies- ok I digress.

Acting high and mighty often leads to a harder fall. Quickly scanning the ?Dog Puppies? list reveals more than a handful of things I say regularly. It is the old cliché: those who live in linguistic glass houses would do well to refrain from throwing stones.

If you start out to completely eradicate already existing false pretenses, the exact opposite might possibly recur again.

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