MERRIAM-WEBSTER THESAURUS

Defames Arabs

arab *n* **1** ***syn*** VAGABOND, clochard, drifter, floater, hobo, roadster, street arab, tramp, vag, vagrant ‖**2** ***syn*** PEDDLER, ‖duffer, hawker, higgler, huckster, monger, mongerer, outcrier, packman, vendor

The above definition is an excerpt from *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus,* published by G & C Merriam Company. We maintain that none of these denigrating terms for "arab" are used as synonyms in contemporary English, and we have vigorously protested G & C Merriam's gratuitous insult to our Arab ethnicity.

In April, 1981, ADC launched a major campaign to have the G & C Merriam Company strike the word "arab" from its thesaurus. In our letter of protest we stated:

The magnitude of your obnoxious and racist characterization of the word "Arab" can be gauged if we substitute the word "Jew" for "Arab" and follow it up with synonyms like "money-lenders," "shylock," and "conspirator." That simply would not happen in 1981, nor should such a crude display of anti-Semitism find its place in a respected reference book. Why then was the Arab described in so mean and base a manner?

ADC members joined in our protest by sending hundreds of letters to the G & C Merriam Company. Initially, Webster's responded to our protests with a form letter signed by Frederick C. Mish, who claimed that the terms for "arab" had to be included in the interest of scholarly comprehensiveness.

More recently, however, as the ADC campaign continues to grow, William Llewellyn—President of G & C Merriam—has attempted to answer our complaints. He contends that G & C Merriam cannot afford to give in to minority group pressure, for that would compromise the quality of *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus.* Why then, we ask, does the thesaurus include none of the scurrilous synonyms for "Jew"?

In response to ADC protests, *Roget's Thesaurus* admitted that its listings for "Arab" and "Jew" were an insult to both ethnic groups, and it consequently removed the denigrating terms from the thesaurus. Webster's, we feel, must follow suit.

We urge you to join us in this protest. We recommend that you:

- ask friends, relatives, neighbors, and academic, political, and religious figures in your community to join you in writing to G & C Merriam Company
  Mr. William Llewellyn
  G & C Merriam Company
  47 Federal Street
  P.O. Box 281
  Springfield, MA 01101
- request that local schools, libraries and bookstores remove *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus* from their shelves.
- organize symbolic protests in front of bookstores that stock the thesaurus.
- alert the local media. Let them know about our grievances!

American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination Committee
1731 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20009

☐ I would like to know more about the work of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Please send me information about your committee.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____