



CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir

I am shocked to see the meaningless expression “preg-robbing” in the title of a paper published in *Minerals Engineering* (Rees and van Deventer, **14**(7), 753–773 (2001)). This expression has been introduced in the gold industry for sometime now to indicate the loss of gold from leach solution by sorption on certain minerals in the ore. It is non scientific and should not be used in any scientific communication. I am wondering what the abstractors in *Chemical Abstracts* will think about mineral engineers!

Sincerely,

Prof. Fathi Habashi

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5 July 2001

Dear Sir

I respond to the comments by Prof Fathi Habashi on the use of the term “preg-robbing”. As with the use of many technical or industry specific terms, it is always a question as to whether an author should use a term that is widely understood by industry, or whether a more academically defined term that is the proud creation of the author should be used. The term “preg-robbing” is not one of the most well sounding terms in mineral processing, but it is widely understood in the gold industry. Alternative terms could be adsorption”, “re-sorption” or “solution depletion”.

However, none of these terms describes in widely understood language what happens. It is disappointing that Prof Habashi does not suggest a simple alternative either. If “preg-robbing” could be upgraded to a more scientific level, then Prof Habashi should also suggest more scientific alternatives for “rougher”, “scavenger” and “cleaner”, because most dictionaries have problems explaining these terms and do not even recognise their relevance to flotation. Ask most scientists what a “scavenger” or “cleaner” is, and they refer to a meaning far removed from flotation. I share Prof Habashi's dissatisfaction with an industry term like “preg-robbing”, but if we want to criticise, we should also propose widely accepted and understood alternatives.

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6 July 2001

Dear Sir

I do not think it is waste of time to think about our terminology and choose the scientific terms that are agreeable to most of those in the profession. Proposals should be solicited by professional organizations and/or journal editors, and discussed in committee meetings. Faraday who did not have a university education, gave us a wealth of scientific terms in electrochemistry that are used world wide today without any contest — anode, cathode, etc. Chemists met many times in the past century in international gatherings just to discuss naming new and old compounds. Why should we not try to improve our written language so that it becomes comprehensible to everyone?

It is a pity that not only in mineral processing but also in pyrometallurgy many Middle Age terms are still in use, e.g., smelting which is a corruption of the German “Schmelzen”, i.e., melting. Even modern metallurgists in the nickel industry use “bessemerized matte” for a product that has nothing to do with Henry Bessemer. I certainly welcome Prof. Van Deventer's proposal to find new terminology for “rougher”, “scavenger”, and “cleaner”. It seems to me that the plant operator who invented the term “Preg-robbing” reads a lot of comic books.

Sincerely,

Prof. Fathi Habashi

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6 July 2001