

# Spelling Reform Anthology edited by Newell W. Tune

## §14. Spelling and Commerce, Marketing

This section delved into the spellings devised by commercial interests, which shows that such new spellings are always coined according to sensible phonetic principles.

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[*Spelling Reform Anthology §14.1 pp206-207 in the printed version*]

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1961 pp13-15 in the printed version*]

### **This Pore Ol' Mixed-up Alphabet - It Can't Help Johnny Learn to Read, by Jerrilyn Black and Ellen C. Henderson, former Editor of SPEECH MAGAZINE, and author of "You Can Teach a Child that Reading Can Be Fun," and "Reading and Speaking Techniques."**

This bewildering jumble of sounds and letters we call our alphabet is so mixed-up that it can't even spell its own name without confusion. The word "alphabet" does not come from the Alps Mountains, and has nothing to do with habits. If the alphabet was truthful in meaning what it said, "alphabet" would become "alfabet," and then maybe Johnny *could* learn to read by sounding out words.

As it is, however, an alphabet is an inefficient, clumsy, public servant. You probably have noticed that children soon learn to speak without much difficulty by using sounds. However, when they begin to spell and read, they need to use the alphabet, which is a visual, not an auditory tool. This is where the trouble begins. Through the use of our mixed-up alphabet, many of the spoken sounds become distorted into visual monstrosities.

Johnny stumbled one day, while trying to read one of these word-freaks, on the word: *would*. When he looked for help he was urged to do the impossible. "Sound it out!" his father said. Though "reading by sound" is practical when writing represents spoken sounds accurately, the way our alphabet behaves makes this task very difficult. What sound shall Johnny attach to the letters *ou*?

as in *sound*    as in *country*    as in *you*  
as in *course*    as in *would*    as in *cough*  
as in *soul*    as in *journal*    as in *ouija-board*

Johnny found he couldn't sound out the word. He had to learn it by sight, with the aid of the teacher. By leaving the *l* silent and selecting a comparable vowel sound, he was soon reading the words: *should* and *could*.

Then he turned the page. He saw the familiar group of letters in a new word, *shoulder*. As his face lit up in recognition, he triumphantly "sounded out" the word. He said "shooder," as in *should*.

Problems, perplexing problems! The two words appear to be almost alike. Yet in *should* you omit the sound of / and in *shoulder*, you speak it. How is one to know? There are no rules that are reliable. This inconsistent use of the alphabet is again illustrated by these pairs of similarly constructed words in which the / is spoken in one and silent in the other:

colon-colonel	palmetto-palm	helm-balm
almanac-almond	salamander-salmon	salver-salve
calmative-calm	Balkan-balk	soldier-solder
coln-Lincoln	coulee-could	fold-folks

Even worse, the problem is not solved even if you could find out how to use this letter /, for there is still the puzzle of the vowel sound. How can one apply sounding-out techniques to the following words, which have in common the letters *oul* but not the same sound?

could, boulder, boulevard, foul, ghoul.

This baffling experience is not unusual. Everytime Johnny turns a page in a magazine, he is confronted with similar difficulties. It is unfortunate that our spelling has few logical and consistent arrangements that allow the formulation and use of rules. If there were not too many of them, they could be a big help in learning to spell. And it would be easier to learn two dozen rules than to learn individually to spell two thousand words as the Chinese have to do.

The trouble with our alphabet is that too many sounds are heaped together in one letter. For example, the letter *a* carries a whole wardrobe. It can make two or three quick changes within the same word. If you were learning to read, and these words were not familiar to you, how could you tell which sound the *a* happens to be wearing?

adoration	agate	animal	baggage	canary	caraway
character	cravat	drama	fallacy	fallacious	lava
flagrant	harass	patriarch	dare	image	have

Another trouble is that too many letters have similar sounds, for you will find several letters having the same sounds. Some of the load the letter *a* carries is excess baggage. The sound of *u* in *upon*, *circus*, and *lettuce*, is also found in *canary*, *caraway*, *animal*, *lava*. It is present also as *o* in *tomato*, *e* in *secretary*, and *i* in *pencil*. It is known as the schwa vowel. If this sound were to have but one letter to represent it, learning to read and spell would be greatly simplified. As it is now, Johnny must waste time memorizing and then remembering which way the sound must be written. Is it *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, or *u*?

The vowels of the alphabet must work overtime, because there are only 6 (including *y*) to represent all 18 of the vowel sounds.

In sympathy, some of the consonants are working double or triple shifts, most of which would not be necessary if the vowels behaved themselves. Even tho duplication is not needed, some *e* letters are stealing the sounds of neighboring letters of the alphabet. The letter *s* is an example. If it wanted to be honest, it could stay home and work full time taking care of its own sound. Words carrying this sound occur often in our language, such as:

bus, folks, asparagus, so, this, sister, plus, purse, sits.

Instead, the letter *s* meddles in the affairs of others. It takes the sound of *sh* in *sure*, *sugar*, and of *zh* in *division*. However, it is most notorious for the way it confiscates the sound rightfully belonging to the letter *z*. Have you realized how often this occurs? Take these: boys, as, choose, does, please, physical, these, easy, wise, misery, reserve, Tuesday, says, ruse, reason, was, scissors, use.

While its back was turned, other letters have been stealing the sound of *s*. The *x* uses it in words like *extra*, *fix*, *axis*. The *z* uses it in *Zwieback* (swi-bak). The *c* takes control of the sound of *s* in *cell*, *fence*, and *receive*. Even the silent letter *p* goes along for a free ride in *psychology*, *pseudo*, *pseudo*, while the letter *c* slips itself in as a silent partner in *scene*, *scion*, *scimitar*, *scissors*, while in *science*, *c* commits two crimes, and then grabs a big share of the sounds belonging to *k*, as in *come*, *cook*, *picnic* and *bacon*.

Many letters have helped themselves to the sound of the letter *k*. Notice how many different ones and how common in occurrence they are:

ache, accuse, character, beckon, epoch, welcome, queer, khaki, wax, school, corner, chord, orchid, black, darken, unique, axiom, accident.

If the unruly letters of the alphabet would return the stolen property they have acquired, much of the confusing double-talk of the present alphabet could be eliminated. In thousands of words there would then be only one sound for each letter, an easy, logical and rewarding means to learn reading and spelling.

Often beginning spellers are more logical in their writing than is the system. What is more sensible than this sentence, written by a sixth grade boy?

"I went with my frend to the wrong wrifle wrange."

In our speech, we actually say *frend*, rather than *fri-end*: and if wrong is not spelled *rong*, why shouldn't rifle and range just as logically be spelled with a *w*? At least this boy was more consistent than we are, and whereas our present alphabet is not used consistently.

One famous word-family has long caused trouble for readers and spellers. This is the *ough* family: *bough*, *cough*, *dough*, *enough*, *through*, *slough*, and *hiccough*.

Bough could logically be spelled *bow*, as it sometimes is.

Cough might as well be written *coff*, if not why is coffee not written *coughee*?

Dough could easily be *foe*, because Poe is not Pough.

Enough could be written *enuff*, or else rebuff should be rebough.

Through could be *throo* as found in *room*, which is not spelled roughm.

Slough is either *sluff* or *sloo*, depending on which you would mean.

Hiccough is sometimes seen as *hiccup*.

And though and thought should be written as *tho* and *thaut*.

As a matter of fact, the use of the alphabet was constantly undergoing changes. At one time *old*

was spelled *olde*, *when* was spelled *whan*, and *pierced* was *perced*. Such reform by natural evolution is a slow, grinding process and appears to have come to a halt. Formal reforms on the other hand, often lack universality of support. Moreover, each planned reform may involve different methods of un-mixing the alphabet.

The need to have a universal, logical, and systematic use of the alphabet by weeding-out parasitic, dead, or duplicating letters has long been recognized. How it is best to obtain such a reform has long been the problem and the stumbling block. Legislative action may be the answer. It appears to be the only way to get any action. In fact, a bill was presented to Congress in 1957 and reintroduced in 1961 by Harlan Hagen (California). The Bill provides the appointment of a National Spelling Commission to establish the simplified spelling of words, and to publish an Official U.S. Dictionary with all words in both the new and old spelling. As soon as practicable this reformed spelling would become the Official United States Government Spelling, and its use required by Government employees in their official correspondence and in all printed matter issued by the Government. While there no direct pressure on anyone else to actively employ it, the simplified spelling system of this Official Dictionary would reach the public through income tax forms, postal orders and receipts, the Congressional Record, pamphlets of various federal agencies, commissions, courts, news releases, and various other ways. Newspapers releasing these news reports would use the new spellings in order to make a quotation or verbatim report. From here on, surely it would be but a step to its acceptance and adoption by the state governments and the public as well.

Now that there was a need to teach this simplified spelling, the schools would jump at the chance. For no one seeking a government job could qualify unless he knew the new spelling. Private industry would have long before recognized the value of such phonetic spelling. Indeed, some of them are away ahead of us. Just take a walk thru your nearest supermarket and see how many products you can find with phonetic spelling! You will probably see:

Acro, Antrol, Apl-butter, Apl-jel, Bif, Bizmac, Bug-geta, Cocomalt, Drano, Dreft, Duz, Ever-fresh, E-Z-Creme, Flit, foto, Frenz, Fulvita, Go-Go-Mobile, Gro-Master, Handi-pak, Donut, Jello, Jiffy-Jell, Karo, Kid-E-Skool, Kip, Kix, Kodak, Korn Krispies, Klek, Kreml, Krispy-Kake-Kones, Kwik-Snax, Lux, Mum, Nu-life, Odor-O-No, Par, Pard, Penit, Pepto-Bizmul, Prem, Prest-O-lite, Presto-lite, Pro-Tek-Sorb, Punch-N'-Gro, Rex, Rinso, Roi-Tan, Saran, Skat, Spam, Staf, Sun-Kist, Surf, Swel, Thermos, Tiz, Tod-I, Trig, Vel, Wel-Bilt. Look up patent # 282,294, (Preshus), and #535,314, (Klass). Almost all of these preceding names are patented. Why? Because private industry recognizes the value of such phonetically spelled names, because they cannot be mispronounced.

When the time comes that our written language can be made to approach more closely our spoken sounds, then Americans will be able to "sound out" written words. This will give pupils the confidence they need in attacking new words. It will stimulate the pupils use of logical reasoning instead of suppressing it and causing confusion, embarrassment, frustration. Spelling will come naturally, easily, in English-speaking countries as it has for generations in Italy, Spain, Finland, Czecho-Slovakia, and other countries whose alphabets more consistently represent the sounds of their speech. Much time now used in learning to read and spell can then be used more efficiently in creative and scientific use of the language. Our alphabet can then become an efficient helper rather than a hindrance to two of the basic 3 R's.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §14.2 pp207-208 in the printed version]  
[It is not in Spelling Progress Bulletin.]

## Book Review, by Newell W. Tune

Jacobson, Sven: *Unorthodox Spellings in American Trademarks*, Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm, 1966. pp. 53, 8 x5

This book was found in the library of the Univ. of Arizona. It is one of the Stockholm Studies of English (Acta Universitatis Stockholmensis), xvi.

It is divided into two sections.

1. Discussions, and
2. A list of words affected by trademark spelling.

The chapters' titles are:

1. Introduction,
2. Spellings based on standard pronunciations,
3. Spellings based on regional pronunciations,
4. Spellings based on nonce or fancy pronunciations,
5. Spelling regularization and simplification,
6. Reduced number of graphemes,
7. Increased number of graphemes,
8. Merely graphemic variation,
9. Comparison between unorthodox trademark spellings and various reform proposals.

The purpose of this book is to give a detailed demonstration of how unorthodox American trademark spellings differ from standard orthography. Deviant trademark spelling serves a commercial purpose by distinguishing two or more similar trademarks from each other and by catching the eyes of prospective purchasers. It may also serve a linguistic purpose by paving the way for a future spelling reform. It is true that in many cases trademark composers, in order to be original, use all kinds of artifices, such as spelling based on substandard or regional pronunciations, or merely fancy spelling with extra letters or hyphens added or other letters substituted for those in standard orthography, and this has naturally an injurious effect on poor spellers. But the strongest tendency is undoubtedly towards simplification (involving in many cases also regularization), and as the simplified trademark spellings frequently coincide with changes advocated by various spelling reform proposals, they can be said to give these reforms support by their very existence. On the whole it seems as if the type of reform endorsed by trademark spellings is rather one on more moderate lines, than one of a more radical nature.

The need for distinctiveness in the commercial field has resulted in the use of a great number of irregularly spelt trademarks to supplement those with regular spelling. The law protects producers and consumers but there is a third party involved who is not protected and that is the poor schoolboy, or anybody else for that matter, who is trying to learn English orthography. He cannot open a newspaper, switch on a TV-set, walk along a street, or enter a store without being confronted by trademarks whose spelling he cannot trust as being orthographically correct. In recent years there has been a steady increase sale of pre-packaged goods with the trademark appearing on the outside cover, and here is a typical example of how this directly influenced a boy's spelling. At a scout training course for junior leaders in Connecticut the boys had to keep notebooks which were collected and examined by the staff towards the end of the course. One made a list of the equipment issued to his patrol, and among the items in this list he had included "8 kots." We on the staff could hardly blame him for this mistake for he had merely copied the

spelling he had seen on the cartons containing the camp cots where the words KUMFORT KOT appeared in conspicuous capital letters.

Another feature which may amuse some readers is the use of spellings based on substandard or regional pronunciation. In careless speech many phonemes which are retained in normal educated speech undergo deletion, and this tendency is often reflected in trademark spellings, e.g. *lectric shave, c-lect-n-load, jus-rite, protex-a-hand, han-kleen, cop-o-joy, bit-o-honey, kilz-um, tuf-ide*.

In not a few cases the use of simplifying methods gives rise to spellings which do not conform to present-day orthographic conventions of phoneme representation. This applies to the following trademarks in which the deletion of silent terminal e should have given another pronunciation than that intended: *Shutlbrak, Safti-flight, Fyr-fyter, Driv-gyds, Shyn-bryt, Sur-grip, Tuf-spung, Irn-eze*.

Though simplification is by far the strongest tendency in trademark spellings, we also find many cases where phonemes or sequences of phonemes are represented by more graphemes than in standard orthography. In not a few trademarks we find changes which are the exact reverse discussed in the previous section. An unnecessary e is appended to some trademarks, e.g., *Aire-flo, Syte-ayde, Chemiste, Faym-us, Super-Ray-Dium, Ezey-Flo, Tidey Bowl, King Zeero, Dunnglu, Hott-patch, Dura-Nett, Enna Jettick, Kon Krete, Wash E-z-y*.

In a great number of trademarks, phonemes or phoneme sequences are represented in such a way that the number is neither smaller nor larger than that which is used in standard orthography, but the graphemes themselves vary a great deal. The reason for grapheme variation is, in most cases, a desire or need to make the trademark distinctive, as when 'rain' is spelled *rayn*, and 'day' is spelled *dai*; sometimes, however, it is also possible to discern a tendency to greater regularity, as when 'shoe' is spelled *shoo*. Other examples are: *Cleervue, Tru-cleen, Eezy-stak, Heetgrid, Kantleek, Seel-screw, Quick-trey, Men-e-uses, Kristel-x, Kristyl-Kleer, Inamel, Sno Shoo*.

One consonant is often replaced by another more readily identified with the desired sound, as *Kab Kool, Kanvas-Kote, Klean Klay, Koffee Kake, Kold Skuttle, Kolor Kote, Bar-B-Que, Se-ment-seal, Privasee, Bestuvall, Jimshirts, Majic Suds, Recharjer, Rijid, Cheese Kist, Mar-Pruf, Digz-all, Oilzall, Hoze-Lok, Sawzall, Ruff & Tuff, Rinzoff, To-wauk-on, Reddy-go, Onliwon, Justwun, Kwik-Kupel, Fyer-Wall, Bo-Kay, Kleen Kwality Kloths, Krispy Kake Kones, Kwik-Bilt, Likwid, So E Z, Gard-N-Gro, Kook-E-Mix, Nu-C-Ment, N-Dur-All, Vin-L-Kote, Ad-a-Lite, Pres-To-Seal*.

In section 5, Haschka was referred to as propounding the thesis that the fact that people have begun to accept deviant trademark spellings as a natural thing may make them less opposed to further changes and thus pave the way for a future reform of standard English orthography. The many reform proposals so far put forward vary a great deal both in their attitude to details and in overall thoroughness and consistency. (The same may be said of the trademark spellings). Thus in 1920 the American Simplified Spelling Board gave some "rules for simplified Spelling," by which, according to Wijk, "the problem was only scratched on the surface." Scratching on the surface seems, however, to suit trademark composers very well, and it is interesting to note that altho most of them have probably been ignorant of the Board's rules, they have in many cases conformed to some of the changes recommended. Among these may be mentioned:

(A) deletion of

- (1) the last two letters when a double consonantal occurs before mute e, as in *palette, etiquette*,
- (2) one of two identical final consonants, as in *add, cell, dull, egg, glass*,
- (3) final mute e in certain cases where it is unnecessary, as in *give, have, freeze, serve, stabile*,
- (4) mute a in *dead, head, heavy*, etc,
- (5) mute b in *crumb, plumb*,

- (6) mute *u* before *l*, as in *shoulder*, or before a vocalic, as in *build*, *guard*,
- (7) *ugh* in, for instance, *doughnut*.

(B) substitution of

- (1) *d* or *t* for the ending *-ed* in the case of such verbs as *couple*, *fashion*, *fix*, *kiss*, *press*, but not when the change would suggest a wrong pronunciation,
- (2) *uf* for *ough* in words such as *tough*, *rough*,
- (3) *f* for *ph*, as in *siphon*, *photo*, *phono*.

Some of the Board's rules were not new but have since Noah Webster's time been accepted in standard American orthography, e.g. the dropping of *u* in *colour* and the transposition of final *r* and *e* in *theatre*, *centre*, etc. The Board was not willing to suggest changes which in their opinion would violate the phonetic principle, as *nite* for *night*.

Wijk says, "it is far more important to adopt such changes as offer better guidance to the pronunciation than to adopt such as may only make it somewhat easier to spell or may only save some space. Tho deviant trademark spelling and Regularized English differ in this and in many other details, it is possible to discern as a certain tendency in the former the principle adopted by the latter, namely "the preservation, as far as possible and convenient, of *all* the various sound symbols of the present orthography in their regular, i.e. in their most frequent usage or usages. Wijk asserts that his principle only occasionally conflicts with that of simplification for on the whole there are many more occasions for dropping than for adding letters."

One conclusion that may be drawn from this pamphlet is that a reform based on phonetic principles (i.e. one phoneme-one symbol) would mean the end of using deviant trademark spelling to achieve distinctiveness or to attract commercial attention, but it would bring regularity and stability to a situation in commerce that is most confusing to learners.

Another is that the whole idea of this book is that, while the tendency of trademarks is toward simplification, in many cases those persons writing the newly coined words are unqualified to do the simplification, knowing nothing of linguistic principles. The result is no systematic kind of changes, and another mess is made, whereas the idea of such changes should be toward simplicity and regularity. This does not occur when unqualified persons and bunglers have the job. A true reform would bring phonetic regularity to a situation in commerce that is most confusing to learners.