

Spelling Reform Anthology edited by Newell W. Tune

§21. Illiteracy and Crime.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.1 p275 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1976 p1 in the printed version]

1. Guest column: Illiteracy: a shortcut to crime

By CHARLES M. PHILLIPS JR.

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 1975.

The writer is a circuit court judge in Pinellas County.

On a recent weekend of court duty I made some startling observations and primitive conclusions. Of 24 persons charged with crimes from tape to attempted murder, right on down to drunk driving, one was female, one was black and one was a white male over 25. All the rest, 21 of them, were white males under 25.

In the courtroom exchange of advice and questions, there is a time when each defendant is invited to read some basic documents, such as an affidavit that he is insolvent, if that be true. Each is asked of his background, including the extent of his education. On this particular weekend, 21 of 24 had this coincidence of characteristics: White, male, under 25, had not finished high school, could not adequately read and write, and was charged with a serious crime.

THERE ARE many causes of reading problems, some anatomical, some environmental and some are a combination. Improvement is possible in all of them.

But the frustration of being unable to read adequately and write is as universally deep and dismal and desperate as the depths of devildom.

To the bound and gagged non-reader, work applications are as mind-boggling as the cockpit of a jet airliner and today the reading of instructions and the writing of applications are necessary to survival.

It is unique torture for a man to have a good native intellect, and know that he has, and to know further that he is doing a good job, and be ready for promotion when his supervisor offers him advancement and says, "Send me a memo" or "Give me the usual weekly reports." Every waking moment he hides self-magnified ineptitude from everyone. Pressure seeks escape. Escape equals shortcut.

SHORTCUT EQUALS crime. No money – shortcut – steal. The taunt of a human impediment – short-cut – lash out with violence. Inferiority – shortcut – rape, or anything. It is called vicarious compensation; one sense is lost, the others are strengthened. A child who cannot read a road sign will be able to tell you that he has been on this road before because his powers of observation have been substituted for his powers to read. When he has to cope with in adult world his responses have already been patterned, impressed, stamped – the vehicle for crime – shortcut.

In Pinellas County the remedial reading program is high in quality, disastrously inadequate in quantity.

Young criminals sit in jail while their victims are in the hospital. Teachers recognize the problem, but have neither the time nor training to deal with so many. The problem is not with the individual teacher, it is with the program. More raw education is accomplished from level zero to 70 than from 70 to 100. Eighty per cent of the new criminals I see would not be there if they had graduated from high school and could read and write adequately.

Jail is no deterrent to the illiterate. Once when giving a young man a five-year sentence he smiled and said, "I thought you were going to give me 10." What he really meant was "I hoped you were going to give me 10." In jail he is in a more comfortable environment since he can better cope with the others who are there.

When society offers no fulfillment and when jail offers no threat, the nation is at internal war.

In every jail, penitentiary and road camp, there should be a representative of a school system to simply test and then educate each inmate in basic reading and writing skills. The inept will fear the school worse than they fear the jail. Those who are incarcerated anyhow and learn and leave, go forth with a rather brighter new outlook than is furnished by a baggy suit, a bus ticket and the skill to make license plates.

Other things can wait. The governor, the Legislature and the school board cannot permit society to remain deaf, dumb – and robbed blind.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.2 pp275,278 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 p20 in the printed version]

2. Our Readers Write

Charles M. Phillips, Jr, Circuit judge,
Pinellas County Courthouse,
Clearwater, Fla.

Harvie Barnard

Dear Judge Phillips.

In response to yours of June 17, I am still looking forward hopefully to receive your comments and appraisal of my essay on "Causes of Crime: 1; Illiteracy and Its Roots."

Your limited time for reading is certainly appreciated, as I realize your work load must be stupendous and exhausting.

I trust that reference to your thinking along the lines of illiteracy and crime and their close relationship is generally quite close to my point of view, and that you would not disprove of my essay. Several persons, including one editor, have expressed an interest in it, and I would like to feel in good conscience in releasing it for publication.

Trusting that I may have the pleasure of hearing from you further,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Dear Mr. Barnard:

The Judge's Reply

Judge Charles M. Phillips, Jr.

I indeed apologize for taking so long to respond to your kindness of Sept. 14 regarding your essay, "Causes of Crime," which is returned herewith.

Certainly I approve of the portions of your essay that refer to me, as being accurate, and you are certainly free to describe the experience that I had either in your own words, or in the type of quotations that you use.

Yesterday quite incidentally, I sat under a tree by a river bank with a group of casual young acquaintances, one of whom I discovered I had sentenced to the State prison a few years ago. We discussed illiteracy as a cause of crime. He heartily agreed and added that an inmate soon discovers which inmates have a chance of success after release and which do not. There is a direct relationship between literacy and opportunity for rehabilitation and success.

You have my profound best wishes for your campaign toward literacy.

Sincerely,

Dear Judge Phillips:

Emphasis on Communication

Harvie Barnard

I deeply appreciate your kind and appreciative letter of Aug. 23rd.

Thank you most heartily for your permission to use the quotes which I took the liberty to employ in my article on "Causes of Crime" which you read and returned.

Your latter paragraph describing your communication with the young man who had served time in a state prison was indeed a substantial piece of "evidence" (in a sense), supporting the concept of literacy as a basis for rehabilitation and success. I feel that truth of this belief – perhaps I could say "FACT" – should be spread far and wide, & should be taught as a fundamental concept of education!

Also thank you for your good wishes for my campaign toward literacy!

Perhaps I could prevail upon your good offices to support this program even further? As in scripture, "Be Ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

You might be interested in furthering the idea of placing greater emphasis on communication in *all* our schools, as well as in our rehabilitative institutions? Perhaps you may discover an opportunity and a means to do this?

It has been a true pleasure to correspond with you, and I trust that this relationship may be productive of some lasting good.

Yours very sincerely,

[Spelling Reform Anthology § 21.3 pp276-278 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin October 1962 pp7-9 in the printed version]

3. Reading, Spelling and Delinquency, by Jacob Chwast, Ph.D.

By now it should be fairly commonly known that the juvenile delinquent is usually also a poor reader and a poor speller. Indeed, given his generally deprived conditions of life, why shouldn't he be? That is: why shouldn't he do badly in mastering school subjects whose relationship to his pressing everyday needs is scarcely perceptible, to him at least? Of course, in thus noting the concurrence of delinquency with reading and spelling deficiency, it is important to stress that this is merely a general rather than a universal relationship. Not all delinquents are poor readers and poor spellers and, most certainly, not all poor readers and poor spellers are delinquent. To note such a relationship as this does not necessarily impute that this is a causal relationship, nor does it, for that matter, impute, that it is not.

In regard to this general difficulty in reading and spelling, the delinquent is very similar to his other adolescent peers who can also lay claim to membership in the lower socioeconomic stratum of our society. Being raised in an environment as sorely deprived as this hardly enables one to view the world through rose-colored glasses. For the child as for his parents or parent, if any, life is a "scuffle". It is a struggle for existence from day to day and from place to place. Seeking immediate gratification by the delinquent and his family can be quite realistic in the face of foreboding and capricious times ahead. From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand the delinquent's poor capacity to control his impulses, his low frustration tolerance and his primary concern with the concrete and the tangible. Because of the latter, that is, his concern with the tangible in the here and now, the delinquent usually manifests a lack of proficiency in dealing with abstract concepts. This is so marked, indeed, that the delinquent is usually much better in *things* than *symbols*, he prefers the deed to the word, the action to the verbalization. Other aspects of his experience augment the delinquent's tendency to become non-verbal.

If one considers delinquency as one mode of rebelling against authority, it will be no mystery to anyone that the delinquent's contacts with representatives of authority -- police, teachers, probation officers, etc. have customarily been unpleasant. Normally hostile, wary and suspicious, anyway, the delinquent becomes even more so in the presence of authority. For one thing, he will refrain from speaking because this will reduce his image of himself as being strong and brave to one of being weak and "chicken". Second, since he is probably a member of a gang, he does not dare run counter to its code by "ratting". Finally, he may fear that what he says might be held against him. The sad fact is that it often has. Perversely, the sad fact is also that what he doesn't say is often held against him. It seems as if he can't win. And he knows it.

Although other psychologists had noted in their clinical work the relationship between retardation in reading and spelling with delinquency, Margolin, Roman and Harari [1] were among the first to adduce objective data. These psychologists studied a large number of children referred to the clinic of the Domestic Relations Court of New York City. They found that these children who were between the ages of 7 and 16 and who had been adjudicated delinquent by the court, chiefly for repeated serious violations of law, were retarded in reading and spelling by over five years.

If I needed no other testimony on this matter, (but I have some and shall refer to it soon), I remember vividly the Monday morning I entered the office of an agency plunked in the heart of an area of dense delinquency. The senseless disarray of papers, mucilage-filled type-writers and destruction of other office equipment was appalling. More childish and thereby less appalling were the pornographic pictures daubed on the freshly painted walls. But most appalling were the obscene words inscribed under the art work: they weren't even spelled correctly. I must confess, however, that I really was not too surprised. My own experience previously as a psychologist in a police-juvenile service and as a therapist for the Association for the Psychiatric Treatment of Offenders had already considerably hardened my sensibilities.

I had also had the opportunity to collect some data on one hundred and fourteen delinquents known to the police and referred for investigation and follow-up action. This group consisted of seventy-four boys and forty girls. Their ages ranged from 7 to 17 years with a mean of 13.2 years. The mean Intelligence Quotient was 90.6. These children had been picked up for a miscellany of offenses: burglary, assault, fire-setting, stealing, malicious mischief, extortion, truancy and running away from home. These data revealed the delinquents in this sample to be three years retarded on the average in reading and spelling. The precise figures are 3.0 years retardation in reading and 3.1 years retardation in spelling. A comparison of these results with those of Margolin, et al is particularly fruitful since the same instrument, the Wide Range Achievement Test (by Joseph Jastak), had been used and the same reservoir of delinquents from New York City had been tapped in both samples. Because of the nature of official procedures in New York City, the children appearing before the courts have committed more serious offenses than those disposed of by the police alone. Hence, if the court delinquents are more serious offenders than the police delinquents, the two year difference between the groups in the amount of reading and spelling retardation seems to point toward an obvious conclusion: *the more seriously delinquent a youngster is, the more retarded in spelling and reading he is likely to be.*

This was not all, however for some other crucial data about my group was also available. Most significant were the recommendations of the psychologist. These were based on complete batteries of psychological tests plus the use of case history materials when available or collateral sources of information. The batteries, themselves, consisted of the standard individual intelligence scales and other non-projective tests and projective methods including the Rorschach Inkblot Test, Thematic Apperception Test (by Henry A. Murray) Bender Gestalt Test, Sentence Completion Test, House-Tree-Person Test, etc.

In all instances, the same psychologist, or others supervised by him, tested the children. The recommendations, averaging between four and five per subject, are most revealing in many ways. They amply illustrate the concomitance of other types of disabilities with those of reading and spelling.

Now, what about these recommendations? First in frequency was the recommendation for 93 children (81.6%) that some form of intensive work with their families be undertaken. Next came the recommendation in 71 cases (65.8%) that the child receive some form of individual psychotherapy. Adding the 28 other cases requiring a psychological and psychiatric follow-up, the total number of children who were seen as needing help for their emotional or mental problems was 102, i.e., nine

out of ten. To continue, in fifty-six instances, the recommendation was made that the delinquent become involved in a healthy group experience and for another fifteen it was recommended that the child receive group psychotherapy: all adding up to 71 or 62.3% of the cases. Another substantial group of 41 children (36.0%) were recommended for medical examination. Finally, the remainder of the recommendations although significant did not run high numerically. They covered referral to court, Big Brother or Big Sister assistance, foster home placement, residence relocation, school adjustment, advice to the worker, etc.

As one looks back on this group of delinquent children, delinquent within what might be considered the middle range of severity, one is impressed by the enormous amount of pathology in which they are enshrouded. It must be clear, if these data are accepted as valid, that the delinquent child who is picked up by the police for somewhat more than a minor offense encounters serious difficulties in most aspects of his life. He has trouble within himself, in his family constellation, among his peers, and otherwise in the community. His actual school misconduct apart, it is equally clear from his reading and spelling deficiencies that the delinquent must inevitably encounter difficulties in school as well.

If these conclusions are granted, I think that the relationship between delinquency and reading and spelling retardation is more correctly perceivable. Before proceeding further, I must decry a tendency to oversimplify complex phenomena such as these under discussion in the quest for easy, mono-causal explanations with universal application. Delinquency may conceivably be *an outcome of* reading or spelling disability, and I am sure that some cases can be found illustrative of this, or on the other hand, difficulties in reading and spelling may follow the child who has started to become a delinquent. In either case, truancy plays a pivotal role in reinforcing delinquency or impoverishing learning. Hence in the first case, it is possible for a child doing badly in reading or spelling to become bored in school and start to truant. Since these fundamental tool subjects are so generic to formal education, the child's frustration widens to most or all of his classes rather than remaining limited to reading and spelling alone. To avoid the chronic frustration he encounters, the child then begins to absent himself from school. Once on his own, with no creative task at hand nor adult supervision in sight, the chances for getting into trouble on the outside become very great indeed - so great that it is the unusual truant who does not wind up in the toils of the law.

As for the other possibility, if the child is already delinquent, the hold of school is lessened considerably for it cannot match the exciting world on the outside. Here, the pull of delinquent companions can be very strong and the child may begin to truant. The obvious aftermath of truancy is with rare exception, of course, damaged learning, reading and spelling are often early casualties,

Much more likely, however, is the possibility of both being embedded in a pathogenic matrix from which each may emerge as a symptom. If this is conceded, it would seem most desirable to approach the eradication of these forms of maladaptation more fundamentally by coming to grips with the underlying personal, familial and social root problems. Since this is a very ambitious undertaking, at best, it still remains urgent for us to cope with delinquency and to offset reading and spelling deficiencies by the practical, albeit limited, means we have at hand today. In addition, the reinforcing effects of delinquency and school disabilities in reading and spelling should act as a

spur for more vigorous efforts.

This necessity to improve our remedial modalities is illustrated in Henry's case. An assaultive teenager, Henry had been referred for treatment to the Association for the Psychiatric Treatment of Offenders (APTO) by his probation officer. To the therapist, it seemed apparent that one of the first steps in successfully treating Henry, was to help him find a job. Henry had already left school. After much effort, a potential employer was found; Henry would become a mechanic's helper. As the therapist received the directions over the telephone, he wrote them down on a slip of paper and handed it to Henry. Without comment, the boy scrutinized it very carefully while the therapist repeated the directions orally and then placed the slip in his pocket. The boy did not show up for treatment the following week; neither did he show up for the job as the therapist later learned. What did happen was that Henry, who could not read beyond the second year level, did not know how to go to the place to which he was supposed to go. Also, and this is most revealing, Henry was ashamed to admit it. On the surface, this is a curious anomaly, for many delinquents who do not feel too manifestly guilty about their transgressions, feel gnawingly self-conscious about their inability to read and spell. It is for this reason perhaps that the delinquent is so proud when he overcomes this impediment. The simple fact is that many non-reading delinquents would like to learn altho they may have fought it all along. This inclination grows, especially as they grow older, since they begin to appreciate how concretely beneficial it can be.

One direct result of APTO's experience with many patients such as Henry, has been the provision of its own remedial reading services during the past few years. I should add that the offenders using these services are not only youthful but include adults also. This venture has proven successful in a double sense. It serves both as an educational medium and also as a treatment adjunct.

A similar result had been observed by Roman even earlier. [2] He studied the effects of what he termed "tutorial group therapy" on a group of delinquent boys who were retarded in reading. This group was compared to two other matched group of boys, one of which received remedial reading as usually provided, and the other of which was given interview group therapy. He concluded that the greatest positive change in psychosocial adjustment and the greatest improvement in reading took place in the group which had received "tutorial group therapy." It appeared that this method of treatment had two cutting edges. When the boys in the group refused to talk about themselves, they could show this resistance by reading; when they did not wish to read, they could resist by talking. In any event, improvement would occur simultaneously in two directions.

Finally, let me mention the tutoring which is being currently provided to gang-boys in a large community center in New York City, the Educational Alliance. This institution, situated in the lower East-side section of Manhattan, also became greatly concerned about helping delinquents-on-the-mend secure jobs. True, the trained workers in. Operation Street Comer could make contact with the gangs in their native habitats: street corner, candy-store and pool-room, and then continue from there by cementing good relationships with them. They could even eventually bring them into the usually avoided building to engage in move wholesome activities than would be possible in the streets, but this was still not enough. The boys needed help, and lots of it, in doing better in their studies at school, and in preparing for future jobs and finding present ones. The Alliance, therefore, opened up a tutorial service for children in the community. Since, however, it could not secure

remedial teachers skilled in a variety of subjects, it had to improvise. This it did by pressing into service some members of its group work staff. Again, somewhat similar to the APTO and the court experience, the worker was in a position to meet the youngsters at two levels of need: the first for increased competence in reading, for instance, and the second for enhanced socialization opportunities. As of now, aside from the direct benefits derived by the recipients of the service, this has been found to be an excellent vehicle for introducing a number of staff members, not otherwise in a position to do so, to antisocial youth in a positive and non-conflictual way.

In touching so briefly upon the complicated problems delinquency and disabilities in reading and spelling, I know that it is hardly possible to do justice to any. If I may, nonetheless, presume to generalize at this point, I would affirm that efforts to remedy ineffective responses to the total environment such as these must fulfill two conditions. The first is that the child must be provided with the *opportunity* to learn the appropriate response, whether it is to behave socially or to read and spell well. The second condition is that the child should have the *desire* to respond in these ways. Too often, in attempting to achieve these constructive ends, we tend to overstress one approach to the detriment of the other - that is, we focus primarily on increasing opportunities for achieving success in approved ways, whether in off- setting delinquency or a learning disability, or, on the other hand, we may focus primarily on the question of motivation which we will then see as one requiring some form of deeper working out within the individual.

Closing the gap between these two approaches: the external and the internal, is really the great challenge facing us. Opportunity systems and motivational systems must be made congruent; the *desire* to improve must be connected to the *chance* to improve. 'Taint easy.

Jacob Chwast, Ph.D., Director, Mental Health Consultation Service, The Educational Alliance, New York.

Secretary, American Society of Criminology.

Therapist, Association for the Psychiatric Treatment of Offenders.

Consultant, New York Community Mental Health Board.

Supervisor, Dept. Community Mental Health , Post-graduate Center for Psychotherapy.

Lecturer, the Graduate School of Social Work, New York University.

[1] Joseph, B. Margolin, Melvin Roman and Carmi Harari, "Reading Disability in the Delinquent Child" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, V. 25(25) 1955.

[2] Roman, Melvin, *Reaching Delinquents through Reading*, 1958, Charles C. Thomas Pub., Springfield, Ill.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.4 pp279-282 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1980 pp6-9 in the printed version]

4. Arson and other Crimes, by Harvie Barnard.*

*Tacoma, Wa.

*It will be apparent that simplified spelling is used frequently thruout this narrativ to illustrate that it is readable without eny appreciable difficulty.

Arson, which is the malicious and intentional setting of fires, is a criminal act or felony committed usually by one of three types of persons: "fire-bugs", "fire-for-hire" people (professional fire-setters), and grudge guys – people who are trying to "get even."

Fire-bugs, as well as the grudge guys, are often youngsters – teenagers fascinated by the roar of flames, the crackle of burning timbers, the whining of sirens and the clanging of bells as the fire engines roar to the scene of conflagration! To these pyromaniacs, its all a great thrill – much as a doper's "trip" is a "maxi" experience for the drug addict. Such characters are not doing it for the money, nor are they intent upon physical harm or injury to others. They are principally thotless and irresponsible, looking for excitement and anticipating the thrill of having done something "big"!

Such psychopaths, whether bugs or grudges, are certainly potentially dangerous people to hav around. They usually ignite vacated properties garages, public buildings – such as schools – usually during periods of non-occupancy, like during holidays and over week-ends.

Some, if not most of the young persons involved in arson, are teenagers, often dropouts who carry a specific grudge against a teacher, a principal, or hold a feeling of vengeance towards schools in general. They usually feel very strongly that they've been abused, unfairly treated, or that society has rejected them. And in some cases these perceptions of misuse, whether deserved of not, may hav some foundation of fact.

The considerable number of arson cases related to school fires warrant consideration of the background of persons who set fires of this kind. Consider the case of Jonny Jackson (not his real name), who was caught in the act of fire-bombing his junior high school for "personal" reasons: at age 13. Jonny was found to be functionally illiterate, did not read, could only rite his name with difficulty. He had been passed thru to 7th grade, had a record of being a troublemaker in the classroom, liked baseball, was physically normal for his age, and rated an IQ of 93.

On checking his school record, it was found that Jonny had entered first grade at age 7 without benefit of kindergarten, had been recorded as: "Unready" and "Slow" by his 1st grade teacher. Since his case was not unusual, Jonny had been passed "On condition," and "Needs help." In second grade, it was more of the same – still below average and not improving in the basics (reading and writing). Still Jonny "passed", and there is no record of eny help or special aid. When he entered 3rd grade, it was discovered for the first time that Jonny was a non-reader, and he was not alone. Achievement tests were administered, and little surprise was expresst when it was revealed that about a third of Jonny's class were "below grade level" according to nationally standardized achievement tests. All that Jonny knew had been learned by listening and observation – not by reading. But he also was a non-writer and had no idea of how letters were put together to form words. When he tried – which was rarely – his spelling was less than 50% correct, and he was definitely confused by the pronunciation of words. He usually spelled, or tried to spell,

according to sound (which was usually wrong), and his confusion led to frustration, which in turn led to non-cooperative behavior, which became more of a problem as time went on.

Jonny's 4th grade teacher classified him as a "typical Dyslexic"(simply did not read for any known reason), and that he should be placed in "Special Ed." But since the school levy had failed that year, there was no money for hiring a "Special" teacher or for setting up a class for retarded readers. Jonny's behavior went from poor to bad and from bad to worse. He was frequently sent to the office for a "conference" with the assistant principal who was the disciplinarian for the school. Jonny took his paddlings with appropriate stoicism, but as time wore on dismally, he vowed to "get even" altho he had no sure idea of just what he might do about it.

By the time our unhappy non-reader had passed along to seventh grade, he had become a confirmed scholastic failure, and in a kind of compensation, had become a standout as a "toughie" – a kid who wasn't afraid of "nobody." The "dyslectic" label had stuck, and Jonny was left pretty much on his own by the teaching staff. His only friend at school was the janitor, to whom Jonny was often assigned on his "bad days" for after school duty. Mr. Peters seemed to understand the lad's problem, and if Jonny learned anything in 7th grade, it was due to Mr. "Pete's" patience and shared work experience with our "problem boy."

Jonny's academic failure was not an isolated case. He had friends who were having the same or similar problems. Eduardo Perez, we'll call him Ed, and Jimmie Huertos, who would have to be Jim, because of non-English speaking backgrounds, were "dead-end-kids" as far as English was concerned. To them the alphabet was gibberish and the arts of communicate on spelling, reading and writing – a "never-never land", never to be learned, and probably never used. Both Ed and Jim had become truants at 4th grade, and as they were passed on, their teachers were relieved to have these unfortunates out of their classes. The "ass principal", as Ed and Jim designated the school disciplinarian, had broken his paddle on these lads in sheer frustration, and there had been several discussions at the administrative level about bi-lingual programs, but nothing had developed from such suggestions by the teaching staff.

There was a "dropout club" in Jonny's neighborhood which met informally and unpredictably on almost any day after school hours to "read" comics and to experiment – mostly with snipes (at first), and later with the "real stuff", grass, bennies, angel dust, or whatever they could beg, borrow, or steal. All three were in the beginning stages of delinquency and were learning fast – the life and language of the streets and back alleys. Of course they were being watched, not by anyone who really cared, but by "th fuzz." Their fathers were unknown to them; their mothers were busy and besides there were younger brothers and sisters to be fed and looked after. By the time a boy was 12, he was on his own, and seeking friendships in the out-of-the-way places.

The "Club", after a joint trip one afternoon, decided that the 7-11 Store across town would be an "easy lift" but in their euphoria of casing it out, neglected to note the automatic burglar alarm hidden behind the store's sign out in front. The result was pure disaster. While Ed was scooping up candy bars and Jim stuffing his shirt with cigs, Jonny inadvertently tripped the alarm while lugging a basket of wine out the back door.

At that moment, a neighborhood patrol cruiser picked up the beeps from the radio alarm system, and within 2 minutes had also picked up 3 young "break-and-enter" cases – all loaded with "the goods." Because of their ages, 12, 13, and 14, there was no court hearing and no trial. They "cooled off" overnight at the precinct station, were briefly questioned, and the arresting officers were instructed to deliver the kids to the school truant officer that same morning. It was useless to follow the addresses given – all were foney – which was later confirmed at the school office.

It was a routine pick-up for the police department, a nuisance for the school office, and a "bust" for the boys. Afterward they were secretly a bit proud of their "job." But they now had a "record," plus what they considered a real reason for revenge against the police, the school, and society in general. Following a discrete hide-out period of a week, the Club met in the alley back of the fast food joint where Jim's mother worked the late shift, and after cadging a couple of left over burgers, decided on a plan of action. They realized it was no good to be seen together after their "bust", so it was agreed that Ed would pick up a discarded beer bottle, fill it with gas at the corner station, and deliver same to Jim later that evening. Jim would rendezvous with Jonny, whose responsibilities included a medium sized rock, an appropriate paper sack, a rag for a wick, and a packet of safety matches.

The "gas bomb" would be passed on to Jonny while Ed and Jim were to take look-out posts at each end of the school block. After the nine o'clock cruise car had passed by, Ed was to whistle the "all set" signal; Jim would check out the situation at his end, and if all was clear, would give the "let's go" to Jonny who was waiting with the bomb in the alley.

All went as planned, except that Ed failed to note that the patrol car stopped a block away – even tho there was no "Stop" sign at the corner. Jim, on the run, heaved his rock thru the window of the principal's office, followed closely by Jonny who pitched his blazing fire-bomb thru the jagged opening left by Jim's rock. It was a "right on" pitch – but there was one serious mistake; the boys were running in the direction of the patrol car insted of away from it.

Officer Brown had been instructed to keep a sharp eye on school ground areas – especially those related to recent pickups, or where the delinquency rates were listed "High". Brown had turned his car around on hearing the first whistle, and met the trio practically hed on about 3 seconds after the bomb hit the rug under Dr. Robertson's walnut desk. After sending out an "Immediate Assistance" radio call, the officer sized up the situation at a glance. After giving his locations he went after Ed, who was the youngest, slowest, and somewhat overweight, and collared the lad after a chase of about 100 yards. He then locked Ed in the rear of the patrol car, turned in a fire alarm, grabbed his emergency fire extinguisher, and heded for the school office. Brown was met at the entrance by the custodian, Mr. Peterson, who had already doused the beer bottle bomb. The rug had softened the shock so effectively that the bottle had not broken on impact; the rag "fuze" had been stuffed in too tightly to fall out; the burn was minimal and the attack a complete flop. And the blubbering young arsonist, Edwardo, was only too redy to confess that he was not alone in the conspiracy.

Following the arest of Jonny and Jimminez, an unexpected turn of events occurred which might hav altered the course of school history in Central City. While Principal Robertson's rug was being cleaned and patched, the bareness of the floor caused the good man to take an ignominious pratfall, which most unexpectedly brot on an inspiration! On regaining his composure he put thru a call to the new chairman of the board of education to complain about the super-slickness of the wax which had been used to polish the office floors. But insted of sympathy, Dr. Robertson was surprised to receive a brief but pointed lecture on what might hav been a new and revolutionary idea about school problems – specifically, pupil problems and delinquency. When kids got into serious trouble, reasoned Mr. Fairley, there must be a reason. And the Board Chairman decided it *was* a matter of public concern to know not only *what* was going on, or not going on, in the schoolhouse, but *why* the dropout rate was going up, and *why* kids were having so much trouble with the "basics."

Fire bombing had also become far too common, and it was decided to zero-in on the problems of the three lads who had been detained for further questioning. Their problems were similar but not identical. Both Ed and Jim had language problems beginning at home – if it was fair to call their sleeping places "home." The parents were of Spanish speaking extraction, and both of the mothers

worked. The fathers had disappeared at about the time the boys entered school. There was little opportunity for the mothers to discipline the kids, altho they had tried. No English was spoken in the households, and altho their playmates had passed on a minimum of semi-English vocabulary, it was inadequate to prepare them for either kindergarten or first grade. Neither boy was "redy" for instruction simply because neither understood English well enuf to comprehend the teacher's attempts to "get thru" or communicate with them. The teachers were not bilingual, and in that regard were just as handicapped as their pupils.

During the course of several Board sessions it was decided that there were two possible solutions: 1) bilingual teachers could be hired, or, 2) special classes could be started in a kindergarten or head-start program planned especially for all children found to be verbally deficient in English, regardless of racial background. In either case, bilingual instruction would be needed for some areas if the preschool preparation plan was to succeed.

In addition to the rediness school, it was considered important that all primary pupils be encouraged to take advantage of the "early bird's breakfast" program in order that these children would have an incentive to get up in the morning in time for school and also have the energy for morning classwork. Altho there was some discussion of the effects of late TV watching on getting adequate sleep at home, it was decided that until there could be better cooperation with parents, little if anything could be done about this part of the problem.

Besides the bilingual problem, which did not apply to Jonny, there was still the matter of rediness for the first grade instruction, which did apply to all children coming from homes where communication was minimal at best. Unless these children could be brought up to certain minimum levels of understanding basic English – a basic vocabulary sufficient to follow simple instructions – kids from poor backgrounds would have little chance with any standardized program of normal primary procedures. Kindergarten was therefore a *must*, with a special section for those found to be verbally disadvantaged. And a "headstart" program with bilingual instruction was recommended for all children from homes where English was not the usual language. Furthermore, parents from non-English speaking homes were to be encouraged to attend evening classes for adults, taught by experienced bilingual instructors skilled in beginning English.

When it appeared that the school board was willing to support such a program, other concerns began to receive attention, such as text books, needed classroom supplies, and questions like, "Why were a lot of English speaking kids *not* learning standard 2nd and 3rd grade English? The answer to this latter question received response from an unexpected source, Jonny Jackson. It was probably the first time anyone had ever asked Jonny's opinion on something having to do with school or what he was supposed to be doing there.

When he had recovered from the shock of being asked what he thought, his answer set the text book committee back on its heels, altho the Board was really not too surprised. Jonny's "smack-on-the-kisser" answer was "A lotta stuff that they tell you don't make no sense!" When the murmuring had died down and he felt that a modest degree of academic dignity had been restored, the President of the Board asked the Principal what he thought of Jonny's reply. Dr. Robertson's response was equally surprising. "I would say, sir, that what Jonny meant, was that the stuff we teach, that is, I mean, our curriculum, our English program, is structured to. . . at which point he coughed weakly and began again; ". . . What we hope to accomplish in our language arts curriculum is to develop an appreciation, a sense of values, a comprehension of skills necessary to make communication in the English language. . . " But he didn't finish. At this point, the insurance salesman, who headed the Ways and Means Committee of the Board, cut in. "Our question to you, Dr. Robertson, is, does what Jonny says make any sense?" At this point he paused and spoke directly to Jonny. "You're O.K. kid, now what was it that you wanted to tell us about that doesn't make sense to you?"

When it appeared obvious that Jonny was confused beyond the ability to utter coherent speech, his former teacher - the one who discovered his non-reading problem in the 3rd grade - came to his rescue. She arose from obscurity and with a sudden release of pent-up emotion, decided the time had come to give all those assembled "both barrels."

"May I respond for Jonny?" she asked, and without waiting for a reply, continued, "I doubt that few if any of you concerned people have taught 3rd grade, or for that matter, any grade; but Jonny here happens to be very much correct. With our old, out-of-date readers, our spelling books based on 18th century dictionaries, and our methods just as ancient, it's next to a miracle that as many children learn to read, write or spell as well as they do. In 2nd grade we teachers spend more than half our time teaching spelling and spelling rules, and then in 3rd grade we are in the position of having to teach the exceptions to these same exceptions. By this time the kids have discovered that they must learn reading as well as spelling by memorizing each word individually - which is a slow and often discouraging process because it is complicated by having to unlearn rules which don't work; so that those who are already confused become frustrated and are about ready to give up, which is sometimes the way many teachers feel when spelling tests are graded."

A number of heads were nodded in sympathetic agreement, and Miss Rule continued, "Much of the 'stuff' and I use that term advisedly, thanks to you Jonny, is quite without rhyme, reason, or logic. Pupils spend many hours 'after school' writing misspelled words 10 or 20 times mainly because nearly half the words they are expected to know in order to manage 4th grade, readers are of the 'look-n-say' variety - which means that they are not phonetic and are not spelled the way they are pronounced!, and cannot be pronounced according to the sounds of the letters which they have supposedly learned in 1st grade. So because of these non-phonetic exceptions, the children must memorize much of their spelling by the sheer drudgery of endless repetition - like teaching a monkey to ride a bicycle, or to master some other form of tricks, which is a waste of time both for the teacher and the pupil - not to mention the years lost in learning literacy in our English language, of which 20% to 30% of our grade school graduates - not to mention high school finishers never quite manage."

"And how long has this 'look-n-say' or 'monkey say, monkey do' kind of teaching been going on?", asked a Board member?

"As far as I know, ever since you started school, and probably for a couple of hundred years before that," responded Miss Rule, somewhat acidly.

"Hasn't anyone mentioned this before? ", inquired the President of the Board. "Who's responsible, around this place?"

"Now that's a good question! Who indeed?" Miss Rule continued, "We teach according to the book and the curriculum. And who buys the books, sets the style, and calls the tune? The Board! That's who! And who carries out the orders? That's a good question, too! And I want you to, know that if I didn't stay up until 10, or 11, or 12 almost every night, planning, "cutting out" pasting up, and making things: ready for the next school day, there wouldn't be half of my class learning half as much as they do. And that's why teachers get gray hair a lot sooner than janitors, bus drivers, and stenographers in the front office - although they're rather busy too - at least during the day."

"You mentioned books and spellers, Miss Rule. What seems to be the problem there?"

"Most of the newer reading books are reasonably satisfactory, but they're more or less geared to the spelling, and that's where our basic problem begins. Our spelling, as G. B. Shaw, Mark Twain,

Hemingway, Ben Franklin and dozens of other intellectuals hav tried to tell the American and English public for the past 100 or more years, is just plain 'crazy', difficult for kids and adults alike. As Mark Twain so clearly sed, 'English spelling is an insanity, an almost, impossible confusion of irregularities to learn, and a ridiculous waste of energy time, materials and money to use.' The years we lose in requiring the rote memorization of illogically spelt English words ads at least a year, and usually several years to the time required for the average child to become reasonably literate in English. And worse yet, there are hundreds, thousands, probably millions of boys – just like Jonny, Ed and Jim from our community – who never will learn to read or write well enuf to get or hold a decent job! And what are our better informed professional teachers saying about it? What they are saying – if anyone will listen – will erase that know-it-all smile right off some self-satisfied faces. You wont want to believe it, but the frankly speaking professionals hav called it "psychological child abuse," and it's this kind of irrational teaching – perhaps it could better be called "programming" – which causes our pupil behavior problems. In fairness to the teachers who for the most part are doing their best with what they are required to teach, it is certainly high time that someone in academia recognized the basic causes of pupil failure and rebellion which is resulting in drop-outs; and flunking these kids out of school."

"As Jonny tried to tell you, 'The stuff they try to teach us kids just don't make, no sense!' Of course you wont believe Jonny and you probably wont believe me.

Miss Rule paused for breth, walked slowly over to Jonny who was staring rather dazedly at Dr. Robertson, and placing her hand affectionately on Jonny's shoulder, drew in a long breth and let go with her final blast.

"Jonny," she sed quietly, "these people seem to hav forgotten the meny years they spent slavishly memorizing English spelling and all that 'stuff' they call grammar. They hav good paying jobs now, and *that's all they're really concerned about*; and they put the blame on you, criticize the teachers, complain about lack of parental training, and try to place the blame on *everyone but themselves*. If you fail, drop out of school and, get into trouble, the Board says it's everyone's fault but theirs. This is the very first time anyone has asked my opinion on the real cause of the delinquency problem, but I dout if anyone here is honestly interested in the truth or the facts."

Agen Miss Rule paused. No one seemed able or willing to respond. After what seemed like several minutes, the President of the Board cleared his throat, and turned slowly toward the perspiring Principal. Dr. Robertson seemed to shrink to about half his actual size. He coffed twice, and blew his nose. Finally he spoke in a croaking voice, "Are you – are you asking for my resignation sir, or, . . ." he hesitated, and continued, "What do you expect me to do about Miss Rule?"

It was now Mr. Fairley, the Board President, who hesitated. It was clearly his move, and he turned toward the other Board members for some show of support. There was a stony silence. "Well," he began after scratching his nose thotfully, "Miss Rule has been with us for quite some years, and as I understand it, has been directing the primary department and is therefore responsible for what goes on there. It seems to me that the Bond is not redy at this time to arrive at a decision on, er, such short notice. Is there a motion that we adjurn this meeting and reconvene at our usual time and place a week from next Friday?"

Dr. Robertson appeared to be getting his color back, and so moved. The Board members shuffled their papers briefly, and without further comment departed in what might best be described as hasty confusion.

Mr. Fairley, Board President, lingered, looking rather fixedly at the floor. He then observed that Miss Rule was crying quietly while at the same time attempting to offer Jonny a little sympathy –

who sat uncomfortably kicking the legs of his chair and trying to appear unconcerned. It was obvious that Mr. F Fairley was just as embarrassed as Jonny, and when he finally spoke, it was with a kindly yet blunt sincerity.

"Miss Rule, in view of what has happened here this evening I am almost certain that the Board will recommend some changes, and in order to avoid embarrassment for the entire Board, I shall have to accept your resignation. I realize that what you have told us is not only true, but is an indictment of our whole educational program. But this irrational, ridiculous 'monkey look, monkey say' variety of teaching has been going on for as long as I can remember – and probably before that. It must have begun with the horn-books and continued down through the Blue Back spellers right down to the present state of spelling bees and semi-literacy. At least a year of schooling – and probably many more – has been wasted for every pupil who has attended public school over the past 200 years – which would add up to several hundred million years of lost time – utterly amazing, if anyone would stop to think about it. If a pupil's education is worth only \$100 per year – and I happen to know it's costing the taxpayers a lot more than that – the waste would be nearly enough to pay off the national debt!

Mr. Fairley paused, looked seriously at Miss Rule, who had stopped crying, and then continued, "It's worse than a sad situation – it's a damned shame, but I'm sure I can't change it – now, next month, or next year. Sometimes I wish I was a dictator! If I had the authority to do so, I'd change things tomorrow, or at least make an effort to start the wheels of progress turning!"

"I agree with you, Mark Twain, and G. B. Shaw; but the English lawyers robbed Shaw's trust until there was nothing left to work with, and poor old Sam Clemens was just getting started when he went broke, lost his health, and gave up. I also happen to know that our own Ben Franklin did what he could to get things going right back in the days of early education in this country. Even then there wasn't much real interest in children – except to keep them busy and literally hammer education into them. And when they gave trouble, which was probably a consequence of the psychological abuse you mentioned, the stock remedy was to 'beat the Hell out of them,' then kick them out of school as soon as possible."

Miss Rule was holding Jonny's two hands in her own and had started crying again, now quite openly. Even Jonny was becoming tearful and pent up tears were cutting little white channels down the lad's dirty cheeks.

Mr. Fairley continued, "That's the way it was, and that's pretty much the way it still is, and the way things look to me now, that's the way it's going to be – for how long I only wish I knew. It's a very sad reflection on our so-called modern society the way we operate our system of public education, yet I, as one who can see what's going on – and I was once a teacher myself – can't do very much if anything about it."

When he paused, Miss Rule quietly interrupted, "I believe I understand your situation. So you ran for the school board hoping to change things, and then this happened. I wonder, . . . have you tried working with the state legislators? Or what about the Dept. of Education in Washington, D.C.? Aren't they supposed to be interested in improving education – or is all that bureaucracy a kind of cover-up to preserve the status quo, or to make cushy jobs for political buddies – as many of the teachers seem to think? Have you ever written to Senator Woodhed, or Congressman Rockhard to see if they'd consider a change for the better?"

"Well, yes I did, and what do you think the Senator said in his reply? The response to my first letter, in which I proposed a bill to authorize a subcommittee to study the matter, was little more than a brush-off, saying 'It was good to hear from you; I appreciate your concern. Stop in and see me

sometime when you're in Washington. I'm glad you took the trouble to write, and thank you for your interest and support.' And my follow-up letter on the same subject resulted in the following: 'It's always a pleasure to hear from you. Let me know when you have made some progress with your interesting project.' And then, after my third letter asking what steps should be taken to get some action, . . . no response at all. So I realized that there was no interest in Washington, and so, the project died."

"The Senator has been in office for 4 terms now, and has a 'following' plus assured financial support, which means that no matter what happens, or what doesn't happen, he'll be reelected every 6 years until he dies or unless some unforeseen catastrophe occurs. The fact is, we're in the middle of an educational crisis right now, but we've become so accustomed to it, like oil on the garage floor, or, as Mark Twain said; 'like cockroaches under the sink, we've become so accustomed to them that they are now an established part of the household'."

And so, to satisfy the conscience of the Board, Jonny was shipped off to the state reformatory for a year, escaped after the first month, and two weeks afterward was arrested for car theft. He was promptly acquitted by a sympathetic court, had no job and no skill to obtain one, and after "playing the street" for awhile, stole a gun and was again in trouble – this time for a real "stinger" – armed robbery, with a 10 year sentence.

Miss Rule, after 20 years with the school system and no provision for retirement, gave up teaching and promptly found herself a position with the personnel department of a large retail store where she has no homework to correct and no lesson plans to prepare every day – or night.

Dr. Robertson "graduated" to become state Superintendent of Education, and the manager of the local Chrysler agency is now heading up the school board.

Almost everybody seems to be back in the same old groove and appear happy, except for one peculiar happening. Fire broke out at the Junior High School, and altho arson was suspected, no one knows who might have been involved. So the Board fired the janitor who had, contrary to school regulations, been seen smoking a cigar that afternoon.

Nobody seemed to recall that the previous week three 7th graders had been given an especially "bad time" by the assistant principal, and had been truant for several days before the fire. "Good riddance" the Board members agreed, and proceeded to read and approve the minutes of the preceding meeting.

How much longer must we wait for our legislators to take some action on this problem? Shouldn't every concerned parent and teacher write to their congressman demanding action on this much needed legislation?

[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.5 pp283-286 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1973 pp2-5,18 in the printed version]

5a. Reading Failures, Dropouts, Delinquency & Crime, by Newell W. Tune

Introduction

Even tho the education of out children has been improved over the years, the quality of education in American schools is still inadequate. Too many pupils are not getting sufficient education. Bert Greene [23] states: "Never before in our history have so many governmental community, social, and educational agencies been so concerned over the problems of youth who leave school before graduation - the dropout. And yet, for all the urgency and public concern, the dropout is not a new or rare problem. It has been, and is, one of the facts of our educational process and it will undoubtedly continue to be a fact until high school graduation becomes compulsory." But forcing students to remain in school when they can't learn anything or keep up with the learning rate of their fellow students is not a proper solution to the problem.

The school dropout problem has been said to be, "The nation's number one headache." Certainly it is the concern of every educator. Even our legislators seem worried about it. Senator Edward Kennedy [36b] writes: "325 years ago, the Colony of Massachusetts mandated the establishment of the first public schools in this country and ordered these schools 'to teach such children as shall report ... to write and read.'

"Yet today, our educational system has so badly failed us that more than 18 million American adults cannot read a newspaper.

"The cost of this failure is not solely personal. It is tallied on the nation's welfare rolls, prison logs, and unemployment files. Studies reveal that more than half of the welfare recipients in Chicago cannot read. In New Jersey, more than half of the prison inmates cannot read. In our largest cities, more than half of the young people under 21 who are unemployed cannot read.

"Every taxpayer pays for our failure to teach children to read and write well enough to function as adults in our society. Yet the treadmill continues to send illiterates out of the schoolhouse door. One quarter of the children attending school today have serious reading disabilities, according to the late Dr. James E. Allen, former U. S. Commissioner of Education."

But let us go to the source for this information. Dr. James E. Allen [1] writes, "When I came to Washington a year ago I knew that our schools and their 45 million pupils were in trouble. Statistics on school dropouts, teacher strikes, rejected school-bond issues and assaults on teachers spelled out the severity of the crisis. As I pored over reports from across the country, however, I began to realize that one of the most critical problems seldom made headlines: 25% of our pupils suffer from significant reading deficiencies; of these, 3 in 5 have problems so severe that they cannot be corrected in today's ordinary classroom.

"The shocking presence of 11 million crippled readers contaminates virtually every aspect of education. Quite obviously, it is at the heart of our nation's inability to educate the deeply deprived child of the ghetto, the backwoods or the isolated reservation. But it also strikes hard at children of our privileged middle class. Regardless of social or economic status, unless a child acquires

essential reading skills by the end of the third grade, or is given intensive remedial reading instruction later, he is doomed to fall further and further behind his age group. The chances are that such a child will eventually either drop out to join the ranks of the under-21 unemployed (half of whom reportedly read at less than a fifth-grade level) or find some way to get into trouble (3/4 of all youngsters referred to juvenile court in New York City, for example, are two years or more below grade level in reading)."

Byron Chapman [8] also calls attention to the need for reading skill, "The progressive refinement of our culture has brought reading skills into sharp focus. Once it was easy to earn a living by physical exertion alone. Today practically all jobs require the ability to read. Those adults who for one reason or another have not learned to read face almost unbelievable obstacles in making a living in our literate technological society."

William Armstrong [2] also continues along the same vein, "The most important thing happening in American education today is what is being done at school and in the home for the elementary school child. Upon this foundation the whole future of our education rests. It is becoming quite evident that the elementary school years can no longer be wasted. Today the child who finishes the eighth grade without intellectual stature and a good basic foundation in the primary subjects finds himself in serious trouble. If we, the school and the home, have required only 1/5 of capacity learning from our children in lower elementary school, we have demanded even less from the years which comprise the 5th, 6th and 7th grades. The qualities of the mind which develop during these years give lasting and enduring influences to 'the beginnings' which are sponsored, or should be sponsored, during the earlier years.

"The inability of American boys and girls to read, even when they have finished high school, had been made shockingly plain; first, by the great percentage of reading illiteracy uncovered by the examination of American youth during World War II; and secondly, by the fact that many colleges have had to introduce reading courses to save their freshmen classes. Tests have shown that although a person has been reading two or three hours a day for 12 years before he enters college, he simply does not know how to read well. The great majority of students entering college read too slowly, and still do not learn or understand as much as they should of what they read." It is precisely because they read so slow that they frequently fail to get much of the meaning. They forget what was at the beginning of the sentence.

We must get at the crux of the problem. New and better *methods* of teaching the same old status quo are not going to remove the basic cause of the trouble. Books, magazine and newspaper articles have been written by the hundreds - nay, thousands - about reading failures. One such book of 500 pages lists 538 references for its 29 authors, only one of which evinces any idea of the cause of reading failure. Most of these books seem to confine themselves largely to gathering endless statistics and making numerous tables of irrelevant data, most of which, instead of helping us to solve the problem, only create more confusion by its very ponderosity. How can one hunt thru the haystack to find the needle if one doesn't know what to look for? Very few worthwhile conclusions can be drawn from reading most of the books now in our libraries on reading failures and dropouts. (The two go hand in hand, yet you'd never guess it from most such books). And most of these conclusions are not clearly indicated because the authors themselves usually seem confused or do not have the power to analyze and logically deduce reasons for the causes.

Donald E. Smith [78] castigates those in the education field for not solving the problem of reading

failures: "The nonreader has been with us since the dawn of literacy. No other educational problem has been so persistent, so frustrating, so rich in opportunity for scientific investigation, so prone to unscrupulous exploitation as reading disability.

"More than 15 thousand articles on the teaching of reading have appeared in professional journals in the last 40 years; failure in reading is the *largest single cause of school failure* during the grade-school years. With so much attention devoted to the teaching and learning of reading, it seems anomalous that the problem of the nonreader remains with us.

"It has been suggested by one investigator that clinicians are like a small group standing beside a river full of drowning people. The victims are being swept sea-ward by the current of time. The clinicians can pull out a few, but the rest are lost. Few of the group are willing to go upstream to find out how the victims got into the river in the first place.

"With respect to reading disability, many do go up the river to find the cause, but most get lost in the marshes of correlation."

Correlation - the bugaboo that is so invisible to most acceptors of the status quo of the irrational nature of our English spelling - the major cause of inability to learn how to read.

While it is true that there have been some improvements in teaching reading as evidenced by Eli Ginzberg and Douglas Bray [\[17\]](#), they wonder why our system of free education has not accomplished more: "In 1890 there were approximately 19 million gainfully occupied male workers. Approximately 14% of them, or one out of every seven, were unable to read and write in any language. These 2½ million illiterates were not distributed proportionally among the different regions and groups in the nation. As might be expected, the totals in the North and the South were strikingly different. Although the male labor forces of the North and the South were about equal in numbers, the South had 1.7 million illiterate workers as compared to only 370,000 in the Northeast. This made the illiteracy rate for gainfully employed males about one out of three in the South as compared to only one out of fifteen in the Northeast.

"It seems strange that the serious shortcomings inherent in the population revealed by these examinations had gone unnoticed in previous years, or if noticed, had failed to lead to remedial action. This question has particular pertinence with respect to the large number of young men in the country who were rejected for military service because they were adjudged to be mentally deficient. The United States has long been recognized as one of the richest countries in the world as well as one of the most democratic. One reflection of this economic well-being and democratic orientation has been the emphasis that has been placed for many generations on education, particularly free education, for every boy and girl in the country. Yet at the outbreak of World War II more than 4 million men on the labor force had less than five years of schooling; about 1½ million were totally illiterate.

"During World War II more than 5 million men liable for military service were rejected as unsuitable because of physical, emotional, mental, or moral disability. Since about 18 million men were examined, this implies that almost one out of every three young men was considered so handicapped that he could not serve his country in uniform during a major war. In the year following the outbreak of hostilities in Korea about a half million of the 1½ million men examined were rejected. Once again, the number and proportion of handicapped men were very large.

"Hidden within these startling figures is the still more startling fact that during World War II, 716,000 men were rejected on the grounds that they were mentally deficient: At the peak of mobilization the Army had 89 divisions. Those rejected for mental disabilities were the equivalent in manpower of more than 40 divisions. In the year following the outbreak of fighting in Korea, more than 300,000 were rejected on this same ground of 'mental deficiency.' Some were truly mentally deficient; many were only educationally deprived."

The facts about illiteracy should be upsetting to us. Harry Lindgren [47] writes from a British magazine, "An article on illiteracy in Britain in the October, 1972 *Nova* paints an appalling picture. According to it, one expert claims that of the 8½ million children in school today, half will never read well enough to enjoy a book, one in five will never be able to read more than comics, and one in ten will leave school virtually illiterate . . . After leaving school many people will lose what little skill in reading and writing they do have. . . After five years, up to 50% in some areas will be virtually illiterate."

This is also echoed by Hunter Diack [12], who quotes: "A member of Parliament, Mr. J. Pitman stated, 'Some 400 thousand to 500 thousand 5-year-olds begin their schooling every year, and some 120 thousand to 150 thousand are destined to come out of the school system unable to read properly. He referred to the Ministry of Education pamphlet (1947) entitled, *Reading Abilities*."

The very expressive team of Sibyl Terman & Chas. C. Walcutt [84] pose this challenging question: "Why is it that children find our English a difficult language to read?"

"Every fall millions of five- and six-year-olds go to school with sharp pencils and bright eyes - eager to learn to read. Three months later they are bored, frustrated, and either listless or disorderly, for they still have not started reading. Instead, they are being subjected to unnecessary exercises in hearing, noticing, and 'experiencing' which are presumed to ready them for reading but which in fact only tire, confuse, and disappoint. Three years later the majority of them still cannot read."

And Fred Schonell [73] continues: "Most children come to school eager to learn to read, but too many of them lose this initial enthusiasm through early failure and discouragement. Why is this so? The question can be largely answered in one sentence – because insufficient care is devoted to creating the correct type and amount of preparatory background for learning to read."

M. F. Pollack & Josephine Pierkarz [67] complain about the teaching of reading in English, "Teaching people how to read English is not easy. Even adults who are already fluent in reading another language often find written English arbitrary and baffling. And American children, when first faced with the necessity of associating the spoken with the written language, also find the task confusing and difficult. As a result, the teaching of reading has been a controversial issue in the United States ever since compulsory education became effective. Since that time, our schools have been expected to teach all of the children of all of the people how to read. This is a large undertaking." (Especially with such a capricious, unreliable spelling as a handicap.)

How the educators tried to accomplish this goal in the past is explained by Charles C. Walcutt [92], "There followed the reform movement, called progressive education, which accompanied, in the United States, a further enlargement of the public school system. The population was growing rapidly and the prosperity of the country inspired it to create the free public high school. The hope

was that every citizen would be not merely literate but also educated.

"After a half century of this undertaking (p. e.), we who run businesses, carry on professions, work for the government, or engage in teaching itself are forced to admit that illiteracy is still with us. The Army and the draft uncovered an alarming percentage of genuine, Simon-pure illiterates, and the worlds of employment and of learning come upon a discouraging number of schooled illiterates - men and women, often greatly gifted, who have passed through the public school system and into college and yet who cannot read accurately or write intelligibly. Speaking for myself, I can say that among the highly selected graduate students in the university where I teach I find about one in ten who needs coaching in the elements of literacy - spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and diction. And these students cannot write because they cannot read. The origin of their plight is confirmed by the occasional would-be scholar who does not know the order of the letters of the alphabet and is unable to copy the title page of a book without error.

"The sheer inertia of a machine involving professional reputations, course offerings in colleges and universities - indeed whole curricula in schools of education - and great financial investments in textbooks is tremendous. Add to these the psychological resistance of people who have been defending a system whose theory and justification they *do not themselves understand*, and you have perhaps identified the most important causes of our national plight: that considerably more than half (probably 75%) of our young people do not read as well as they could, and that at least 35% of them are very seriously retarded."

Just what proportion of our school children are retarded readers has been the subject of several researchers besides Walcutt. Florence Roswell & Gladys Natchez [71] say, "The number of children who cannot cope with school has been increasing. Authorities have variously estimated that children with inadequate reading skills measure as high as 33%, 28%, or as low as 11% of the school population. Whatever the percentage, most educators agree that the number of children who read less effectively than they should - and could - is far too high."

And Katherine de Hirsch [31] concurs with, "One of today's major social problems is the enormous number of children who, as a result of severe reading, writing, and spelling disabilities, are unable to realize their intellectual and educational potentials. The incidence of reading difficulties has been reported to be as high as 30% of the school population; more conservative estimates put the figure between 5% and 15%. According to the National Council of Teachers of English this would mean that *at least* 4 million elementary school children in the United States are disabled readers. 'The magnitude of the reading problem and the shattering impact of reading disability on personal and vocational adjustment should accord proposals for its correction a major position in mental hygiene programs,' states Leon Eisenberg, professor of child psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, in highlighting the urgency of the problem."

Some of our more logically minded teachers have drawn conclusions from these appalling statistics: for example, Arther Trace [86], "There are compelling reasons why the reading problem commands the attention of everyone who is interested in the future of our children and of the country. One of these reasons is the simple fact that reading is not merely a basic subject in school; it is *the* basic subject. If a student cannot read, he cannot learn history or literature or science or geography or any of the other basic subjects. He cannot even attempt to solve story problems in arithmetic if he cannot read. Upwards of 75% of what a good student learns in high school he learns through reading. It is estimated that a high school senior must read 42 million

words a year merely to fulfill his assignments. So that if a student can read well, he can learn much, and if he reads badly he will learn very little." And if he is not learning, why should he want to stay in school?

Ruth C. Penty [65] in her book written in 1955, found among her 68 references, "Factual data relating to reading ability as a factor in the school dropouts are extremely limited. In fact, only four brief studies of this nature have been located." Most books do not even mention reading ability as a necessity for higher education and the lack of it as a possible cause of dropping out of school. But in the intervening years educators have gradually become aware of the correlation between reading retardation and dropping out of school.

Pearl Herlihy [29] writing in *Social Dynamite* from the Conference on Unemployed and Out of School Youth, brings up the importance of the dropout to society, "By 1960, public school authorities, guidance and employment service personnel, welfare agencies and informed citizens in general realized that school dropouts and unemployed youth constituted a problem of grave potential. Three-fifths of the state reports to the 1960 White House Conference treated the dropout question in some detail. Some state committees, such as Iowa's and the District of Columbia's, submitted special studies."

That we are aware of the dropout problem can be seen by the quantity of written material. Bert I. Greene [23] says, "Published material on the dropout is voluminous. However, many articles which have been written merely exhort us to do something about the problem or tell us that there is a problem, but add little to help us understand the problem." Most of these articles and books are devoted to gathering endless data about the characteristics of the dropout, interviewing him, trying to find out why he wanted to leave school when in fact he doesn't know himself. He is only unhappy with the situation. How can a person describe a color he has never seen? Or one he has seen, if he is not trained in color systems. It's another case of the blind interviewing the blind.

One such exhortation is worthy of note, T. J. Bond [3b] "The dropout problem is a crucial one for our country at a time when a more adequate supply of better educated and trained manpower is required. We can ill afford to lose the potential capacity possessed by the many students who withdraw from school before graduation. The failure of the dropout represents a failure of the American people. The primary function of the high school is no longer that of a college preparatory institution. More provision must be made to take care of those students whose completion of high school terminates their formal education." Quite true - but why not devote more effort to finding the cause of dropouts and eliminating it? (That is, assuming that there is one main cause).

That there is some relation between dropouts and delinquency and crime has not been ignored but yet not fully explored either. Bert I. Greene [23] says, "Part of our concern for the dropout is due to our uneasiness and inadequate methods of coping with the problem. We do not know what to do about a youth who wants to leave school before graduation. We have no place for these youths in our society. They are the 'tween agers,' between child-hood and adulthood, between school and employment. Parents, educators, and employers find it difficult to cope with some of these youngsters. Thus, the feeling that these dropouts will become delinquents is frightening to us. Altho these fears may be justified by our concern over the role of youth in our society and the fact that many delinquents are dropouts, we must not allow ourselves to make the assumption that all dropouts will be delinquents. By doing so, we do our youth a great injustice. In reality, only a small percentage of these youngsters get into trouble with the police." Or get caught.

"Even if all delinquents are dropouts, the percentage would not even come close to the percentage of youth leaving school before graduation. If it were true that delinquents and dropouts are synonymous, we would not have enough law enforcement officers or jails to handle the problem. However, our apprehension that delinquency could increase is intensified because a greater number of young people are leaving school before graduation than in the past.

"It is somewhat ironic that those who are least ready to accept adult responsibility are the first to have this responsibility thrust upon them. The dropout, who leaves school at 16 or 17, is not prepared to meet the challenges of the world of work. He has demonstrated his inability to adjust to his school, his work, his teachers, and his peers. By the very act of dropping out of school he reveals his inability to cope with challenging situations."

And Judge Lester Loble [48] points out that there are more young criminals than ever before: He quotes J. Edgar Hoover, "It wasn't 1/10 of the crime in this country that was being committed by people under 20 - *half of this country's crimes were being committed by people under 19.* (And 90% or more of these J. D.'s are dropouts.)"

In August Kerber & Barbara Bommarito's book [37], there is a chapter by James B. Conant, which starts, "I submit that the existence in the slums of our large cities of thousands of youth ages 16-21 who are both out-of-school and out-of-work is an explosive situation. It is **Social Dynamite**.

"I do not have to remind this audience of the fact that the fate of freedom in the world hangs very much in the balance. Our success against the spread of Communism in no small measure depends upon the successful operation of our own free society. To my mind, there is no question that a healthy body politic necessitates a sound economy and high employment. The history of Communism shows that it feeds upon discontented, frustrated, unemployed people. The present unemployment rate nationwide is roughly 7% for all age brackets, but the unemployment among youth under 20 years of age is 20%, or 3 times greater than the nationwide rate for all workers.

"In a slum area where over half the male youth are unemployed and out of school, we are allowing a grave danger to the stability of our society to develop. A youth who has dropped out of school and never has had a full-time job is not likely to become a constructive citizen of his community. Quite the contrary. As a frustrated individual he is likely to be anti-social and rebellious. Some of this group of youth will end up as juvenile delinquents.

No one would claim that providing full employment for youth in the large cities would automatically banish juvenile delinquency, for we all realize that the causes of this problem are complex and there is no one solution. However, I suggest that full employment would have a highly salutary effect."

Too few writers on the subjects of this thesis seem to have noticed any correlation between reading failure and juvenile delinquency and crime, but the few who did do not equivocate. Terman & Walcutt [84] said, "The idea that failure in reading is a contributing cause of juvenile delinquency is widely accepted. The school people agree but claim that they have tried their best to teach reading and that the delinquent boys are *incapable* of learning.

"To account for the greater number of boys than girls fail at reading, let us consider some findings

about sex differences. They will explain also the tendency for the non-reading boy to become delinquent. It has been observed that, at primary-school age, girls are more docile, more willing to learn, less inclined to ask questions, more easily satisfied with purely formal activities. Boys are less docile; they are better than girls at problems that demand 'restructuring' rather than the application of simple techniques; they are more aggressive, less patient, more inclined to conduct that emphasizes their individuality. The brighter the boy, the less willing he will be to conform to a situation that does not appeal to him as reasonable." They are more logical in their thinking and resent being forced to accept as correct our illogical, irrational spelling. If you will notice, spelling errors among boys are often attempts to spell phonetically. But girls seem to be blessed with a photographic memory and usually do better with our erratic spelling.

Terman & Walcutt [84] quoted from Richmond Barbour in the *Palo Alto Times*, "A college professor studied the reading ability of successful men. Can you guess what he found? He found they almost all were very good readers. Doctors, lawyers, businessmen, engineers, scientists, teachers. They read rapidly. They comprehended what they had read.

"I've been comparing the reading ability of that successful group with the reading ability of a gang of unsuccessful adults - both men and women. They all are delinquent. Their crimes run from petty theft to murder.

"Can you guess what I've found about their reading? My group members are all poor readers. Some of them are bright, some are dull. Some are fat, some are lean. Some came from rich homes, some from poor ones. They have but one characteristic in common. They read slowly, stumbingly, without comprehension and without remembering what they've read. The difference between the groups is clear-cut and decisive. This does not mean that good readers don't ever become delinquent. A few do. And it doesn't mean poor readers are bound to become delinquent. Not that. Many poor readers are good citizens ' "

"But the comparison does point up the importance of reading. I am convinced that poor reading ability is one of the things that cause people to go bad. They fail at school. They get rebellious. They play hooky. They gang up. Then they turn to crime as their natural outlet. It's a cause-and-effect relationship in many cases."

Again from Terman & Walcutt [84], "Juvenile delinquency has been receiving a good deal of attention in New York City, where the concentrated population has made its incidence more alarming than it is elsewhere in the country. Over and over again those in authority have pointed out that reading retardation goes hand in hand with truancy, school failure, and juvenile delinquency. A report to Mayor Wagner by Deputy Mayor Henry Epstein, 1955, says that 'failure in reading accounts more than any other single factor for behavior problems, truancy, and general school failure.

"To end this on a brighter note - all the teachers using the new and better methods of teaching reading, have made a special point of describing the happiness and good behavior, the alertness, respectfulness, and responsibility of children in their classes. It seems highly unlikely that such happy and productive children will become delinquents. They certainly will not become nonreaders, because they are reading in the first grade. It does not seem extravagant to expect that better teaching of reading will cause a substantial reduction of juvenile delinquency."

[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.5 pp287-290 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1973 pp6-9,20 in the printed version]

5b. Reading Failures, Dropouts, Delinquency & Crime, by Newell W. Tune. Part II

2. Costs of Education

Very few people realize the vast amounts of money spent each year on the education of our children. George Bernard Shaw [96] said that if only one year were saved in their education, the sum saved would pay for the cost of more than one battleship, an aircraft carrier and a dozen of our largest airplanes. A tremendous sum such as this should cause concern in all of us.

Lawrence A. Pervin [66] in *The College Dropout* quotes N. Malleon, the chapter on "Great Britain" in Funkenstein, A. (Ed.), *The Student and Mental Health*, N. Y. (World Federation for Mental Health, 1959), "In England, where only the intellectual cream has been admitted to the universities and 75% of the students are grant aided, 20% leave college without a degree. Malleon notes the increasing interest in the college dropout at British Universities as pressure upon university places increases. But the quotation that follows raises the question whether in England also, the dropout is too readily consigned to the category of failure and waste, and whether the assumption is too easily made that whatever time he spends in the university is worthless if he does not go on to qualify for a degree: 'Since they all stay at least one year at \$1200 per head, the cost of failure to the British community is about 20 million dollars a year.'" What must it be to the U.S.A. with three times the population and three times as high percentage of dropouts?

Lee R. Steiner [80] (p. 164), in *Understanding Juvenile Delinquency*, says, "Since about one-fifth of our nation is in school at any one time, this would seem to be the facility through which we could reach all our children to indoctrinate them with the standards of behavior that conform to our way of life. Nearly 40 million pupils are in the public schools at my one time, at the cost of over 12 billion dollars a year."

Earl C. Kelley [37] has this to say, "The cost to society and to individuals of so many leaving our schools is hard to calculate. Some of the dropouts, having nothing to do, become delinquent; others withdraw into mental illness. The economic loss to society for delinquency and mental illness is staggering, and getting worse every year. The loss in self-respect suffered by those who find no place in our culture may cripple them for the rest of their lives. Who can compute the cost of a life wasted in comparison with a life well lived? How to calculate the damage done to family and friends?

"The *Saturday Evening Post* (Mar. 12, 1962) published an article by Kohler and Fontaine entitled, 'We Waste a Million Kids a Year.' Some of these live in your own home town. Human waste is our greatest extravagance."

Byron Chapman [8] says, "Undereducation among adults and school dropouts is one of the most serious problems facing the U.S. today. Illiteracy has even more sobering statistics in its "hidden strata." The 1962 Cook County study in Chicago revealed that 51% of the people receiving public assistance had reading ability below 5th grade. About 10% of the laboring force who have not completed 5th grade are chronically unemployed. (Only one of 50 college graduates is chronically unemployed.) Cook County pays 8 million dollars a month to functional illiterates."

James E. Allen [1] puts it quite well with, "Primary responsibility for reading instruction, however, belongs to the schools - and the schools must accept this fact. U.S. taxpayers foot a \$36 billion

annual bill for public education. What a tragic waste to spread this kind of educational banquet before 45 million children, and then fail to provide 11 million of them with the reading skills - the knife and fork, if you will - essential for sharing in the feast!"

Robert E. Weber [94] in "A Dollar and Cents Look at Reading Failure, gives us some sobering facts about the costs of producing illiterates and semi-illiterates: "According to the National Commission on Civil Disorders, 39.9% of our non-white population and 14.8% of our white population over the age of 25 are functional illiterates. That means that 18 million persons, or a population % of 9.5 cannot read. However, given census error (the failure to count over 5 million persons, most of them non-white, inner-city residents), and the accumulation of over 7 million dropouts between 1960 and 1970, as well as the two to five million high school graduates who perform on a functional level, we arrive at a total figure of *23 to 30 million functional illiterates*.

Staggering Costs

"What do these facts mean in terms of our society? At the very least, they mean that staggering dollar costs accrue to both the individual (in unrealized income), and to society (in lost productivity and expensive social programs). It is difficult to estimate the exact costs to our society and economy of total and functional illiteracy (and the costs, if they can be reckoned in dollars, of human degradation, are far higher). However, assuming that the most conservative estimate of the incidence of total and functional illiteracy is correct, four million persons are illiterate. If the cost of remediating 80% of these persons is \$1,000 per individual (\$3.2 billion) and the cost for remediating the remaining 20% is \$4,000 per individual (another \$3.2 billion), the total remediation costs amount to \$6.4 billion.

"But the increased productivity over the course of the lifetime of the individuals involved would now amount to at least \$10,000 per person. This adds up to \$40 billion. Subtracting the remediation costs then yields a profit of \$33.6 billion! Using a higher figure of 20 million functional and total illiterates, the remediative investment would be \$32 billion and the profit \$168 billion (\$32 billion subtracted from \$200 billion).

"Literacy remediation produces value for the individual in terms of increased self-esteem and earnings. It also provides value in the form of increments to the GNP and in taxes paid. But these are just part of the monetary picture. Another consideration is the reduction of such expenses as welfare (\$1,500 to \$3,800 per family per year); training costs (\$1,500 to \$4,700 per person annually); crime costs (\$25,000 for each individual involved in a crime); and the costs of institutionalization (\$7,000 to \$10,000 per individual per year).

"Clearly, total and functional illiteracy is costing us a great deal - both in terms of anguish and dollars. Obviously, we must make a much more intensive effort to eradicate it."

Some of our legislators are aware of these problems and are trying to do something about them. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy [36b] recently wrote in *Parents Magazine*, "Our federal government was first unwilling to recognize the problem, then unwilling to commit the resources necessary to remedy it. When finally Pres. Nixon promised \$200 million annually to provide better reading programs, his message to the Congress establishing the Right to Read was not followed by a request for adequate funding. Now, four years later, the budget requests total less than \$30 million instead of the \$200 million a year that is needed.

"I cannot conceive of a program more important to the national interest than one to teach all our children to read. And I cannot conceive of a program that will pay back more to the Treasury in

taxes and lower welfare costs. Now is the time to rewrite national priorities and place the Right to Read at the highest rung of the ladder.

"New legislation must be introduced in the 93rd Congress. The need is clear. The resources are available. What has been lacking is the political will. Beyond the expenditure of funds, other things have to be done both at the national and community level."

By this it is meant that if all children were to be able to advance faster in their education - complete a 4th grade education in three years - a year would be saved. In order to do this we must make the task of learning to read much easier. And to do that, we must go to fundamental principles: our English spelling must be made so regular and simple that everyone can easily learn to read. Then there would be only a small percentage of dropouts due to reading failures. This can be done if our spelling is made so that it is spelt as it is sounded: in other words, spelt phonemically.

3. Concern about Dropouts

It will come as no surprise that there is great concern now over the dropout problem. Thomas G. Pullen (Ed.) [69] in "Our Dropouts - what can schools do?" says, "School dropouts have become a national concern. If the present rate continues, a great loss in human production and societal deterioration will seriously affect the security and prosperity of America."

A school principal, T. J. Bond [3b] puts it, "Simply to state that we have a dropout problem of major proportion in our high schools is to presuppose a concern for the problem. Our public high school is purely an American institution. Its counterpart is not found in any other country of the world. Values received from our high-school graduates through their contributions to our society have far outweighed the services rendered them when they were high-school students. No other country in the world attempts to educate its masses on a scale comparable to ours. The dropout problem is a crucial one for our country at a time when a more adequate supply of better educated and trained manpower is required. We can ill afford to lose the potential capacity possessed by many students who withdraw from school before high-school graduation. The failure of the dropout represents a failure of the American people. The Primary function of the high school is no longer that of a college preparatory institution. More provision must be made to take care of those students whose completion of high school terminates their formal education. Perhaps, when that is done, the curriculums will become more attractive to the potential drop-out."

A college professor, Earl C. Kelley [36a] says, "There is much interest presently concerning the young people who are leaving our high schools before graduation. This is known as the "dropout problem." Concern with this problem is not confined to school people, but appears throughout our mass media-newspapers, magazines, television. Especially at the close of summer, newspapers often run articles exhorting our young to go back to school. They quote statistics to show how much better off the holder of a high school diploma is than one who does not have one. The appeal seems to state that if a young person will just hang on grimly until the band plays *Pomp and Circumstance*, doors to the good life will swing wide open." But this approach seems to have little effect on the potential dropout because it fails to tackle the problem at its fundamental aspects.

He continues with, "Some of those who decry the dropout situation are the same people who tell us that we give out too many diplomas to students who do not deserve them, and complain because, they say, the diploma has no meaning any more.

"Nevertheless, the problem of having so many of our young leave school is a serious one, and I, for one, am grateful for the increasing interest of lay people in it.

The problem is quite humiliating to school people, because these youths leave us with thing else in mind. If there were plenty of jobs for our young, this would constitute a choice, but when they leave us for nothing else, it is hard to take. I question whether any commercial enterprise could continue as a going concern if it lost over a third of its business every year.

"But we are also concerned with the large percentage of our young who have dropped out but are still in school. If we visit a secondary school class and look at the faces of the young people, we will see that in many cases the outstanding characteristic of the members is that they are not involved in what is going on. Most of them are going through motions to please their elders. Some are just sitting. Some are engaging in behavior which can only be interpreted as a protest. The latter are our "discipline problems."

"While we have many studies of dropouts, we do not know much about the matter, because we have no way of including the *dropout who stays in school*. All we seem able to do is to count bodies, but physical presence does not mean presence of the whole person. These young people are doing very little, learning very little; at any rate they are not learning very much from the curriculum.

"It is concerning this group that we get complaints of employers and college teachers about the youths who hold diplomas but do not know anything. These are the ones for whom the curriculum has been "watered down." It seems never to have occurred to adults that if a soup does not taste good in the beginning, no amount of water will improve the flavor. The need is for a fresh and more palatable soup."

Another who has a good understanding of the problem is Bert I. Greene [\[23\]](#) who says, "in the history of public education in America, the dropout has not been viewed as a major educational problem. To be sure, there was always some concern for the students who did not complete their education, but this was a minor concern as compared with other educational issues. Why then has the dropout suddenly become a major educational problem? How can we explain the fact that this was *not* a problem when we were losing 80% of our students? Why was this not a problem in the midst of the depression when 70% of our youth walked out on us without any hope of finding a job? Why is it that as late as 1955, when 40% of our students were quitting school, this was not a problem? Why is it a problem today when we are doing the best job we have ever done in holding students in school?" Is the answer: we have suddenly become concerned? And why?

Greene continues, "The dropout problem can best be understood in respect to a particular period in history. Many of the factors which are associated with the dropout problem today were of little concern even a few years ago. For example, the population explosion of the 1940's means that the number of youth now ready to enter the labor market is unprecedented in our history. This was not a problem several years ago when anyone who wanted to work could find employment. Today however, our ability to absorb these citizens into the labor force is both challenging and frightening. The fact of the matter is that it is not the dropout who frightens us, for we have generally survived and prospered when we had more dropouts than graduates. Rather it is the sheer number of dropouts and the facts of our economic life coupled with great technological advances which cause us to view this problem with alarm.

"The dropout *is* a problem today because of the following factors:

1. Altho the proportion of dropouts is decreasing, a greater number of young people are leaving school now.
2. Our present and developing economy requires a far greater degree of skill than was previously required of our labor force.

3. The age at which a person enters the labor force is rising.
4. Too great an experience of frustration and failure deprives the student of the incentive to succeed.
5. The dropout may become a candidate for every program of social welfare throughout his life.
6. There are few places in our society for the dropout.
7. The dropout represents a major educational and social failure."

Continuing along this same vein is Arther Trace [86]: "Can anyone really believe that in the late 1970's greater job opportunities will be open to our millions of high school dropouts such as have never been seen before? Does anyone really believe that a new age will soon be dawning in America for the ignorant, the illiterate, and the semi-literate? Or that in the 70's we will need more unskilled and untrained workers than we do now? Yet it is certain that at the present rate we are going to have more ignorant, more unskilled, and untrained people entering the labor market in the next decade than ever before, and with fewer job opportunities for these people than ever before. These are facts which must now be faced up to, and it would appear that the success with which this problem is solved will depend heavily upon the success with which we reduce the number and percentage of the intellectually unfit and raise the educational level of the country generally."

Just how extensive is the dropout problem? What proportion of the entering class in high school fails to graduate? Well, it varies considerably according to social conditions. Bob Novarro [63] in a T-V interview said, "In the East Los Angeles High School, which is predominately Mexican-American, more than 80% of the pupils entering dropout before graduation."

Some of the other communities are more successful. Gordon P. Liddle [46] writes, "Between 30 and 35 percent of Quincy, Illinois' children fail to finish high school, while from 20 to 25 % begin college. The large Catholic population and the city's industrial wealth allow the community to run an average school system with the lowest tax rate of among the 30 downstate cities. The per pupil expenditure for education is about average for Illinois.

"In this type of community there is less social mobility than in a rapidly growing urban area. The area of town a child comes from, the house he lives in, and his parent's occupation are all rather well known and profoundly affect the community's educational expectations for him. When the potential high school graduating class of 1958 was divided into four social class levels based upon these criteria, it was found that 76% of the children in the upper middle class went on to college, along with 2% of those in the lowest social class level, a group comprising the bottom 28% of the population. The corresponding percentages of dropouts from these two groups were 5% and 66% respectively."

Ralph W. Tyler, in *The School Dropout*, by Daniel Schreiber [76], writes, "Approximately 40% of American youth drop out before completing high school. This is a large figure, though considerably smaller than those of earlier periods (in this century). When I was in high school, only 11% of my class succeeded in graduating. In other countries, a very small percentage of youth are in school after age 15. It is not, then, the sheer, magnitude of figures which arouses concern. Nor is it the problem of juvenile delinquency. There are many delinquents among the dropouts; yet the great majority of dropouts are not, and are not likely to become, delinquents." But he fails to mention the converse data: that very few delinquents come from the graduates or the stayins.

Schreiber [76] writes, "Increasingly, it is a world where the high school diploma assumes the function of both a certificate of employability and *carte d'entrée* to those occupations less susceptible to unemployment. In part, this is a regular feature of the old shibboleth of the correspondents between educational background and occupational qualification. But the

unemployment problem is indeed a prime sponsor of the dropout problem"

More statistics come from the Calif. State Bulletin, by Donald E. Kitch & Wm H. McCreary [38a], "In any case, the figures seem to indicate that on a state-wide basis California public schools lose approximately one third of their students as dropouts between eighth grade completion and twelfth grade graduation. The loss is comparatively small between the spring of the 8th grade and the spring of the 10th grade, amounting to only 3 or 4%. The major percentage of the loss comes after the completion of the 10th grade.

"School officials in Los Angeles also speak of this problem: It is apparent that the dropout problem in post high school institutions is one to give guidance workers much concern. No wonder! The percentage of boy high school graduates there who were enrolled in university or college work had shrunk from 21% to 9% at the end of six months; the percentage of girl graduates, from 18% to 8%. 'This would point toward improvement in counseling and guidance services in the post high school institutions as well as in secondary schools,' the report concluded."

Again from T. J. Bond [3b] we here, "How great is the problem? Studies have shown the compulsory school attendance laws have little, if any, effect on the total number of high-school dropouts. They merely postpone the time. It is estimated that by the end of the present school year we could have one million new high-school dropouts, ages 16-17 years. Projecting this figure into the future shows that by 1970 we may have a total of 12 million persons who failed to be graduated from high school. Dr. Conant in *Slums and Suburbs* states: 'In slum areas, teachers do fairly well with children until they get to be 10 or 11 years old, then the 'street' takes over. Progress in school work ceases. In one of our largest cities, 59% of the male youth between the ages of 16 and 21 are out of school and unemployed.' He recognized the inability to read as a major factor."

4. Concern about Reading Failures

The natural consequence of having concern about the dropout situation is trying to find out the causal courses. For many years teachers and sociologists seem to be sifting thru the haystack and looking for the needle that would point to the cause. They both seemed to be unaware of any causal relationship between dropping out and failure to learn how to read. But their concern was real, as shown by these quotations:

Constance McCullough, in a chapter from Nelson B. Henry [27] writes, "We are forced to the conclusion that, despite their sincere concern and efforts, our schools have not succeeded in liquidating functional literacy or in awakening a love for reading among the majority of pupils."

Sibyl Terman and Charles C. Walcutt [84] have this to say, "The reading problem concerns more Americans today than anything else but the H-bomb and major-league baseball. Millions of parents are worried; controversial literature on the subject appears every month; and the last word has certainly not been said. Rudolf Flesch has spoken in *Why Johnny Can't Read*, published in 1955, for which he continues to be attacked upon a wide variety of counts. Scores of articles have assailed him, and more recently a whole book has appeared whose authors admit that Flesch is their main target and inspiration."

Arther Trace [86] agrees, "Hardly anyone nowadays thinks our schools are doing a good job of teaching reading. Parents don't think so; employers don't think so; the armed services don't think so; high school teachers and college professors don't think so; and even the students themselves eventually don't think so. Most significant of all, an increasing number of elementary school teachers and school administrators don't think so either.

"The reading problem is rapidly emerging as the gravest of all academic problems which our schools face at the present time. It is more serious than the shortage of classrooms, or of money, or of genuinely educated teachers and school administrators. It is even more serious than the pitifully watered-down curriculum of our schools or of the hard-core anti-intellectualism in current American educational theory."

Robert D. Hess wrote a chapter on educational retardation in Daniel Schreiber [75], in which he says, "The problem of semi-literacy in adults in the United States, is not new. Our method of dealing with adult illiteracy has been through education of children in the public schools so that illiteracy would gradually and eventually disappear from our society. However, our attempts to raise the general level of education of populations in economically depressed areas of this country are, at the present time, inadequate. Altho it is difficult to get firm data (primarily through the reluctance of school boards to release achievement test results and other performance indices on schools located in culturally deprived areas), there is reason to believe that *many if not most*, of our high school students in economically disadvantaged areas *are semiliterate* when they dropout or graduate from high school."

However, there are some professors who realize what reading deficiency does. Paul Goodman, in the same book [75], says, "There is widespread anxiety about teaching reading. And indeed, reading deficiency is an accumulating disadvantage that results in painful inferiority, truancy, and dropout. Reading is crucial - by the standards of the school and because of the kinds of success that schooling brings to a student."

Byron Chapman [8] brings us some sobering data: "In spite of our strong educational system in America, millions of Americans cannot read well enough to earn a living in today's world."

"Statistically, the 1960 census shows 21 adults of each 1000 in the adult population 25 and over have had no schooling at all. Another 26 per 1000 have not more than fourth grade education. Add to these figures those who have dropped out of school because of failure and those whose reading skills have deteriorated for lack of use since school days, and we have a grand total of great proportions who may be classed as functionally illiterate. They cannot read well enough to keep up with the ever-rising educational requirements necessary to get a job or to hold the job they have in the face of rising job competition.

"It may be that as much as 25% of our adult population is seriously handicapped by reading problems. Reading skills were once for the upper classes only. The nature of our job world today makes reading skills mandatory for all. For Americans it is 'read' or depend upon a welfare check! Once poor readers could find something to do. Today 'something to do' is disappearing."

In the introduction to the book by Florence G. Roswell and Gladys Natchez (71), we see, "Today both laymen and professionals are concerned about the large numbers of children who, because of their difficulties in reading, cannot cope with schoolwork. Authorities have variously estimated the number of children with inadequate reading skills to be as high as 30% of the total school population, (1) over 15%, (2) or between 10 and 15%. (3) Whatever the %, most educators agree that the number of children who read less effectively than they should - and could - is far too high."

In a very dynamic book, Arther Trace [86] says, "There are compelling reasons why the reading problem commands the attention of everyone who is interested in the future of our children and of the country. One of these is the simple fact that reading is not merely a basic subject in school; it is *the* basic subject. If a student cannot read, he cannot learn history or science or geography or any of the other basic subjects. Upwards of 75% of what a good student learns in high school he learns

through reading. It has been estimated, for example, that a high school senior must read 4.5 million words a year merely to fulfill his assignments. In short, reading is the base upon which virtually all formal learning rests, so that if a student can read well he can learn much, and if he reads badly, he will learn very little.

"This particular concern for the quality of the reading program in our schools has, of course, always been with us even when there was every reason to believe that it was a good program, for there is nothing new about the fact that the ability to read well is the first requisite to obtaining a good education. But the reading program in our elementary schools now has a special significance that it never had before, not only because there is every reason to believe that it is an extremely poor program, but also because the national interest, including the national economy, is now more closely tied to our educational system than it has ever been before in this country's history. And since the reading program in our elementary schools is the very heart of our educational system, the reading problem is rapidly emerging as a problem which effects the interests of the entire country."

Another writer, Harrison Bullock [6] concurs, "Much has been written on the improvement of reading in the secondary school. Books, pamphlets, and articles exist in abundance to guide teachers in ways of improving the reading skills in secondary pupils. Most such materials recognize that a pupil retarded three to five years in reading ability is seriously handicapped in the secondary school; they usually attempt to meet the pupil at the 4th, 5th, or 6th year level of attainment because so many of them belong there."

Charles C. Walcutt [92] goes even farther, "that considerably more than half (probably 75%) of our young people do not read as well as they could, and that at least 35% of them are very seriously retarded."

Going back to Arther Trace [86], "Dr. James B. Conant reports that he visited some schools where as high as 30% of the 9th graders are reading at the 5th or 6th grade level. Other estimates indicate that the number of poor readers in the junior high school grades is far higher than 30%.

"Similarly, senior high school teachers complain that students coming from junior high schools still have not learned to read well, and college instructors know that to bear the typical college freshman read a page of English prose aloud is a melancholy experience. The fact that so many junior high school and even high school students and college freshmen are still having trouble reading underlies the horrible but increasingly realized fact that, in most instances, if students have not learned to read well by the end of the third grade, the chances are overwhelming that they will never learn to read well."

How much more evidence is needed to show our legislators of the importance of learning to read and the fact that all out present reading programs and methodology is ineffective in trying to cope with the anomalies of English spelling in learning to read. It should be obvious that there are many compelling reasons for making it easier to learn to read by simplifying our erratic, unreliable, confusing spelling - the fundamental cause of failure to learn to read.

[The following references were in SPB but not in the Tune anthology. The numbering is a mystery. Perhaps the article was an extract from a longer text.]

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6. Causes of Crime - 1: Illiteracy and its Roots, by Harvie Barnard*

*Tacoma, Wa.

Editorial note: Crime is costing US - personally, industrially, and society in general - approximately \$100 Billion per year, about ¼ as much as our entire federal budget. (This is one hundred thousand millions!!!). Of this, nearly 20 thousand millions goes into "crime control", a never-ending, ever-increasing annual expense. It is time that the CAUSES of crime are better understood and positive steps taken to eliminate or reduce the *criminality at its sources*. Only in this approach can crime be curtailed-a long range program! A crime reduction of only 10% could result in a savings of 10 thousand millions per year. This would not happen immediately, but it is certainly a reasonable objective, certainly justifying an expenditure, (an investment), of a portion - if only 10% - of the funds spent annually for "crime control" which does nothing to eliminate the BASIC CAUSES of our greatest social failure. This discussion relates to one of the principal causes of criminality. It also proposes a practical remedy, a change in teaching material requiring little more than the acceptance of a minor yet basic innovation in educational policy.

When the clerk of the Circuit Court of Pinellas County, Fla., handed his daily summary of cases to Judge Charles M. Phillips, the Judge studied the detailed report carefully for a few minutes, drew a long breath, and sighed. "What we have here," he concluded ruefully, "is a serious indictment of our whole system of education, our public schools. This report tells me very convincingly that we have failed to provide a substantial portion of our children with the basic tools for earning an honest living."

The facts before Judge Phillips were not only startling, [1](#) - they were shocking! Of 24 young men brought before the Court charged with serious crimes - from attempted rape to murder - 21 were white males under 25, more than 80%! Of these 21, none had finished high school, (all dropouts), and all were functionally illiterate. None could read competently, with full understanding, and could not express themselves in understandable written English. All had attended schools, and all had failed, or would it be more nearly correct to say that the schools had failed? [2](#), [2a](#), [3](#).

These young men were now about to be committed to so-called "correctional" institutions at a cost to the taxpayers of more than 820,000 per year per inmate, about 20 times greater than, (in some states, 30 times as much), as had already been spent to give them an "education," which had been a total failure as far as they were concerned. Each of these men, instead of being a social asset, had become a public liability, a sorrow to their families, a financial burden to society, and a tragic failure in their own estimation. If committed, their chances for rehabilitation were not good - at best, according to the most favorable statistics it would be about 30% - and of these few none would really succeed without intensive retraining, specialized school, and patient, watchful supervision. This too, would cost the taxpayers more money, and again would have little chance of success. [4](#)

If, after doing a "stretch," the ex-con was paroled, given another chance, the probability of getting a steady job at honest, (legal) employment, would be very poor. Why? Even with a new point of view - a corrected attitude - the inability to read, write or to follow written instructions would

continue to be an insurmountable handicap. The first step in applying for a job is to respond satisfactorily to the questions asked on an employment application, which for the illiterate, would be impossible.

So where does this leave the drop-out from either a correctional institution or our public school system? [4a] His answer to the question, "How do you plan to earn a living?" is, "I got as much rights as anybody; I'm gonna live, and I'm gonna get what I gotta have, regardless!" And so, as soon as "the law" catches up with our unemployable unfortunate, there will be another arrest, another trial, another commitment, and the sad story begins all over, and over, again. The only form of self-employment available to the repeater is illegal work - crime - not because he wants it that way, but because he has no other choice, no "options." His "work" is justified, in his opinion, by the normal animal urge to live -to exist by any means available. [5]

As Judge Phillips expressed it, "Illiteracy is the short-cut to crime," because the illiterate cannot compete successfully in the job market. The logical question then becomes, "What can we do to reduce illiteracy?" Illiteracy is not, of course, the only cause of crime, but statistically there is a very strong positive relationship. About 2/3 of our delinquents have been found to be functionally illiterate, and more than half of those arrested for criminal acts are illiterates - at least for all practical purposes.

And what is the cause of this illiteracy? As far as the public schools are concerned, deficiencies in reading show up very early, often in the first grade, altho standardized reading tests cannot be properly evaluated much before the latter half of the second grade or the first half of the third. At this point, the "slower" pupils may be as much as a full year behind their "reading at grade level" classmates. But long before this the experienced teacher has spotted the potential non-reader or likely dropouts Such cases can frequently be identified even in kindergarten, and almost invariably by the end of the first grade. In some schools these slow starters can be given special help - when the teaching load is reasonable, when there are not more than about 25 pupils per class - but when there are more, and particularly when the teacher is new and inexperienced, there is little time for special treatment for anyone. In crowded classrooms - 30 to 40 and sometimes more young children - it will be difficult to identify those who are falling behind, so that by the time such children are clearly in need of remedial help, their plight may be very serious indeed. [6]

In its broadest sense, education begins at birth, or very shortly thereafter. From the moment of birth the five senses begin to operate. Hearing and feeling become subconscious acts, and the brain starts recording these feelings and sounds much in the manner of a computer. The input into this natural mechanism - this organic computer - is no more nor less than the accumulation of what we call knowledge, learning, experience - in a word, "education."

Very strangely, the importance of this primal, formative, introduction to pre-school learning is little appreciated and deserves much greater consideration Knowledgeable psychologists and teachers estimate that 50% of a child's learning capacity is developed prior to formal schooling, (kindergarten). [7] By the time children are 8 years old their learning potential has become about 80% of its eventual development. In view of these truths, a much greater emphasis should be given to the early phases of human development.

Perhaps no one better appreciates this fact more than Dr. Wilson Riles, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of California since 1970. Dr. Riles has taken positive steps to implement

the education of children as early as possible to reach them thru the public school system. His program is known as "E.C.E.", Early Childhood Education, and under his enlightened guidance and experience is meeting with enthusiasm and success, not only by parents and teachers, but more importantly by the children themselves! [8]

A basic objective of the E.C.E. program is to raise the level of achievement in the basic skills, especially the communicative skills - reading and writing, as well as speech and listening. By means of individualized instruction - made possible by the assistance of trained volunteers - many children are rescued from frustrating situations before their confusion develops into an irreversible failure condition.

Those working closely with the Early Childhood Education program, such as Marilyn Shmaeff, chairwoman of an E.C.E. advisory committee, are gratified with the progress being made and is especially enthusiastic over the extent to which community involvement has contributed to the overall success of this new approach to teaching and public instruction implementation. Richard H. Rioux, an active participant as a member of the Community Advisory Council's Committee on E.C.C. evaluation, has been consistently impressed by the stimulating atmosphere which prevails in the classroom. "The change over what existed last year, (at the Lorne Street Elementary School), has been dramatic!" [9]

While it may be a little early to analyze the success of the program in terms of test scores and similar data, those who have worked with the program closely feel that it is a genuine success and should not only be continued but also expanded, and should have the full support of the California Legislature.

But what connection, if any, exists between all our efforts to improve early childhood education and the causes of crime? What is the basic or underlying reason for all the difficulties our educators have been having in the schools thruout the United States? In spite of heroic efforts by dedicated teachers and experienced school administrators, there have been falling test scores, failing students, semi-literate high school graduates, dropouts, and hordes of incompetent students turned away from our colleges and universities because of communication problems. They simply have not learned to read or write well enough to assimilate the essentials of "higher education." The basic question remains, "why are there so many failures, so many dropouts, so many who simply have not mastered the essentials of grammar school education?"

Is there an answer? Yes, there is, and to nearly all concerned, from the bewildered first grader to the superintendent of schools, the answer is a real shocker!! Few will believe or accept the plain truth! In a word, the answer is so simple that no one will believe what serious students of language and linguistics have been trying to tell our colleges of education for the past 200 years! The answer is

S P E L L I N G !!!

No language on earth is as badly spelled or as confusing to those who are in the beginning phases of learning English, our potpourri of many tongues - Greek, Latin, French, German, Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic and Middle English - plus at least a dozen additions from several other hybrid languages borrowed at random as our language developed over the last 900 years. [10] Altho many have mastered it, millions have not. At present we have in the U.S. at least 20 million who are functionally illiterate - read very little, and with poor comprehension - and perhaps twice as many

who are actually afraid to try for fear of criticism or ridicule of their defective grammar or confused spelling.

"To most children," says Abraham F. Citron, Professor of Educational Psychology at Wayne State University, Detroit, "our spelling is a house of horrors." [\[11\]](#) Dr. Citron became interested in spelling difficulties when his students, (most of whom were teachers), reported wide-spread classroom problems with reading and spelling. Citron says, "So accustomed to it are we that we do not perceive our spelling as irrational, difficult, deceptive, clumsy, frustrating, wasteful. . . , but it is, especially so to our children. . . Our child-defeating spelling is one of the basic sources of discouragement and failure, aiding the transformation of many children into psychological failures or physical dropouts." He goes on to point out that, "Millions of student hours are spent on spelling, millions of dollars are spent on teaching time, yet the results are quite poor. Most students dislike spelling, many students abhor it:" And he could have added: most adults are afraid of it, preferring not to write rather than be subject to ridicule, rather than become the objects of mockery and endure the derision of those pedants and academicians who insist that spelling, per se, is proof of an educated person.

The writings of prominent authors and men of literary renown attest to their difficulties with English spelling, including such illustrious greats as Wm. Shakespeare, Robert Burns, G. B. Shaw, and Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). [\[12\]](#) The latter strongly urged the adoption of simplified spelling, and implored the educators of his time to remove the burden of our confused and inconsistent spelling from our children as well as those who sought to master "our confused and inconsistent spelling of common English words."

Hundreds of more recent writers, linguists, publishers, editors, and teachers have urged spelling reform. To cite a few examples: Wm. D. Whitney, Professor and Chief Editor of the Century Dictionary, voiced a general feeling when he said, "It is the generations of children to come who appeal to us to save them from the affliction which we have endured and forgotten." And E. O. Vaile, Editor and Publisher, Chicago, (1901), ". . .Our accursed spelling, what to do with it?". More recently, Dr. John Downing, who conducted the experimental teaching project at the London Institute of Education comparing the teaching of reading with our Traditional Orthography and with a regular spelling system, Pitman's initial teaching alphabet, says, "The unequivocal conclusion is that the traditional orthography of English is a seriously defective instrument for the early stages of reading and writing instruction. As long as this traditional orthography is used in the early years of schooling in English-speaking countries, children's learning of reading and writing is bound to be much less efficient than it can be with a simplified and regularized writing-system such as the i.t.a. Of this there can no longer be any doubt." [\[12a\]](#)

The list of those who have advocated spelling reform is endless, and continues to grow. [\[13, 14, 15, 16, 17\]](#)

"So why hasn't something been done about it?", any reasonable person might fairly ask? In fact much has been done and more is being done to modernize and improve spelling in various parts of the English-speaking world - except in the United States! Also, in recent years several enlightened countries have reformed and simplified their spelling, including Holland, Turkey, Norway, Finland, the U.S.S.R., and China. [\[21, 22\]](#)

In some English-speaking areas, notably Australia, there is *Spelling Action*, a thoughtful publication promoting the reform of spelling in English by means of a gradual and reasonable step-by-step process. This introduction by simple conservative steps, is called "SR-1," meaning Spelling Reform, step 1. Harry Lindgren, Editor and publisher of *Spelling Action*, is successfully demonstrating - at least to open-minded readers - that spelling progress can be made and accepted without disrupting either the teaching of reading or the usual reading process. [\[18\]](#)

Lindgren's success, altho not wholeheartedly accepted by the least progressive elements of the Australian educational hierarchy, is meeting with enthusiastic acceptance by forward thinking educators and government officials. [\[19\]](#) And even more importantly, the teachers who voluntarily voted to use SR-1 and the students who are adopting this simple reform are not only happy with the change, but are looking forward to subsequent advances which will implement better communications and simpler spelling as a major step towards improved literacy.

Lindgren's SR-1 involves only very minor changes, affecting the spelling of less than 350 generally used words. The initial spelling changes relate only to the sound of the so-called "short e" sound, as in *bed* and *bet*, so that such words as *head*, *spread* and *ready*, would be written as they are sounded. The unsounded 'a' would be omitted, so the spelling would become *hed*, *spred*, and *redy*. This minor change would be applied to many commonly used words, such as *said*, *any* and *many*, which would be spelled as they are sounded, (phonetically): *sed*, *eny*, and *meny*. More truly phonetic spelling could be one of the many advantages of reformed spelling, so that "if you can say it, you can spell it," without hesitation, uncertainty, or the loss of time in going to the dictionary.

Unfortunately we have thousands of English words which are spelt one way and pronounced quite differently. Small children and foreigners are greatly confused, if not harmfully frustrated, by the queer spelling of such words as: *enough*, *though*, *thought*, *bough*, *cough*, *dough* and *plough*. Then there are the various silent letters - the "dumb b", as in *crumb*, *dumb*, *numb* and *thumb*; the "kooky k", as in *know*, *knee*, *knob*, and *knife*; the "woozy w", as in *write*, *wrong* and *wrestle*; the "confused c", as in *cat*, *kitty*, *city*, *candy*, *center*, *sender*, *certain*, *curtain*, *bicycle*, *icicle* and *cement*, *science*. There are thousands of others to confuse the kindergartner, the primary pupil, and the many others who would like to learn English if it were not so illogically spelt and inconsistently pronounced. In addition to the few examples cited above, there is an almost infinite number of vowel variations, combinations, digraphs and diphthongs, homophones and homographs to confuse and frustrate the students of English.

To effect a complete reform of spelling in a single step or one "great leap forward" would be difficult, ff not impossible. Altho quite logical and certainly very desirable from many standpoints, a total or general reform would be about as difficult to accomplish as an overnight switch to the Metric system-. Yet, we are converting to the Metric system of weights, measures, volumes, lengths, temperature and all scientific units, and this will be accomplished according to an orderly plan and schedule. Metric values and measurements have been taught in the public schools far many years, and altho we will work with a dual system for many years to come, there will eventually be a complete changeover or "reform" of our system of measurements and numerical expression of values. Our school children will find metrics easier to learn than the cumbersome English system, and much easier to use. By the time the new generation becomes adult, in another 10 or 20 years, the new system will be established in general use, and the die-hards who have opposed it will have come to appreciate its simplicity and common sense application to their daily lives.

The step-by-step SR-1 approach to spelling reform, like our gradual changeover to metrics, seems the most practical and reasonable process of accomplishing acceptance by the reading public, the writers, and the teaching profession. Where it has been tried, (in the Australian schools), [20] SR-1 has already achieved the enthusiastic support of teachers and students alike. By eliminating spelling problems, (tho not all of them by any means), the teacher's work is made easier, and by avoiding illogical inconsistencies the learning process becomes less frustrating for the children. Hopefully there will eventually be fewer illiterates, improved literacy, better readers, and many less dropouts. But all this will require time, and the first put of the process will be to prove that spelling reform is not only logical and reasonable, but that it is a possibility in terms of practical change. [\[21\]](#)

In summary, what is the connection between spelling, reading, literacy, and the *causes of crime*? First, it was shown conclusively that personal literacy, the ability to read and write effectively, is essential to getting a job. It was then made clear that getting an honest job is essential to earning a *legal* living. And since communicative ability is an essential element of literacy, a satisfactory knowledge of spelling -which is basic to both writing and reading - is the basis upon which we build the foundations of communication beyond simple speech. It has been pointed out that many poor spellers have become successful, and in certain spectacular instances this is acknowledged to be true. But in a great majority of cases, poor spelling is related to, if not the cause of, a low level of literacy and generally poor communicative ability. And both contribute to difficulty in obtaining and holding acceptable and legitimate employment. We have, therefore, a definite connection, a direct cause-and-effect relationship expressed in the words of Judge Charles M. Phillips of Pinellas County, Florida, "Illiteracy, A Short-cut to Crime." [\[1\]](#)

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.7 p293 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 p16 in the printed version]

7. Scenes on a Playground - English Orthography Illustrated

A letter addressed to: John Sharp, Friends' School, Park Lane, Croydon, 7th Mar. 1844.

'Twas a fine winters day – their breakfast was done
And the boys were disposed to enjoy some good fone;
Sam Sprightly observed, "'tis but just ½ past eight
"and there's more time for play than when breakfast is leight,
"and so I'll agree that so cold is the morning,
"We'll keep ourselves warm at a game of stag worning;
"I'm Stag" - with his hand in his waistcoat he's off,
And his playmates are dodging him round the pump-troff.
Sam's active but still their alertness is such
That 'twas not very soon ere one he could tuch.
The captive's afrailed with jokes, buffets laughter
By a host of blithe boys quickly follows aughter.
But joined hand in hand their forces are double;
Nor for jokes or for buffeting care they a bouble.
All's activity now, for high is the sport,
Reinforcements arrive from the shed & shed-cort.
More are caught & their places they straightway assign
At the middle or end of the lengthening lign.
To break it some push with both shoulder and thigh,
But so firm is the hold that vainly they trigh;
Oh! 'tis broken at last, now scamper the whole
To escape their pursuers & get to the gole.
All are caught now but one of the juvenile hosts
And he, a proud hero, vain-gloriously bosts,
But hark! the clock's striking & then by the rules
They must quickly collect for their several schules.
We'll leave them awhile at their books & their sums
And join them again when the afternoon cums.

..-o0o-..

Now dinner is over - "Sam Sprightly," says he,
"Let us form a good party for cricket at thre;"
Says Joseph, "I wish you'd begin it at two,
"For after our dinner I've nothing to dwo."
But Thomas would rather 'twere fixed an hour later
Because he's on duty as dinning room water;
And so they agreed to meet punctual at four,
On the green just in front of No. 1 dour,
& they thought they should muster not less than a scour.
Sam goes on recruit, "Will thou join us my hearty?"
"Yes" says Richard. "I'll gladly make one of the pearty."
"And William must join, he's a capital bowler,"
"He'll have finished his work by that time as bed-rowler."
"Come Joseph, thou'll join" - but Joseph languidly said,
"I can't for I've got such a pain in my haid,
"I think I should find myself better in baid."

"There's Alfred", says Sam, "I know he will choose."
He said he was sorry the pleasure to loose,
But he was appointed to black the boy's shoose.
They next ask a boy of more sober demeanour,
But he too's in office - they call him knife-cleanour,
"Well Jim thou'll go with us." "No, asking thy pardon,
"I'd rather by far go and work in the gardon,
"For there we get pay - perhaps a nice root,
"Or what I like better - a handful of froot.
"So you'll not enlist me - I'm not a rectoot."
"There's Charles." but alas! poor unfortunate wight,
He's confined to the lodge, - he regretted it quight.
Tho' Frank's a long lesson of grammar to learn,
He'll set it aside not to miss such a tearn;
Some join in the party - but some are too busy.
One does not like cricket, it makes him so dusy.
But now there's enough - so says Sam, "Now my boys,
"Just listen to me - don't make such a noys;
"The High field's the place - & I do not despair
"If the teachers we ask, they will let us play thair,
"So while I get the bats & the ball I propose,
"That Alfred or Richard or somebody gose,
"And presents our request - making this a condition,
"We'll all be good boys if they grant us permission.
"Here's the ball & the bats - just look what a beauty.
"Well Taff, what reply from the master on deauty?"
"Oh! granted" - "That's right - that is capital news;
"Indeed I knew well they would never refews."
So now they're at play - and I think you've enough
Of such spelling, such rhyiming, such whimsical stough,
And therefore lest you gained from my verse should inveigh,
I'll bid you farewell, leaving them to their pleigh.

John Smith, Akworth Yorkshire
from the library of Sir James Pitman, K.B.E.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.8 p195 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1977 p19 in the printed version]

8. Salutatory (skool daze) by Elmer Stevens, from Boken, by Geo. Shelly Hughs, 1903.

A harty welcum our clas extends
Tu parents, patrons, tu all our frends,
On this occasion, hwen study ends,
Hwen skool life yeelds tu the life that trends
Tu riper thauts and with biznes blends.

Almost as infants we came tu skool,
Tu yung and tender tu keep a rule,
The childish mind, in its plastic state,
Had not a chois but tu stimulate
The acts and wurds ov the more sedate.
As strength ov mind and ov body gru,
We took on habits, began tu vue
A wurd in natur, and tu constru
The laus ov life, and ov matter, tu.

A helping sole with thautful ame,
At home, in skool and in plaful game,
Restrained, encurajd and savd frum shame
Hwen yuthful spirit was wild or tame.

Tu lern the leters we furst adrest
Our buding minds, with but fitful zest;
We sau no reason in form or sound,
An wunderd hwy tha wer not all round;
Then wunderd hwy ther wer five in *pound*,
And hwy thre leters wud not spel *drowned*.
Our harts wer broken hwen techer fround,
Hwen leters tu fue or tu meny wer found,
And sumtimes thaut that *he* was aground.

Hou slo and tedious wer those long daze,
The time we lost in the speling maze;
Hwile lerning *baize* in its *hazy phrase*,
Hwile chusing fonics for *yeas* and *raise*,
And forming *phrases* with *weighs* and *Hayes*.
With *these* and *seize* and with *frieze* and *frees*,
And the uther forms, hwich yu find in *frieze*,
In *fleas* and *freeze*, we cud hav no ease.

And hwen we sighed, in the later times,
For longer wurds to make up our rimes,
The contumatius, and the orthodox
Alike made trubble, and *Sioux* an *Sacs*
Mor fractius never wer than the *blocks*
Ov variant leters in *lochs* and *loughs*
Then *tension*, *cession*, *mention*, *fence*,
Defense, *pretension*, *prevention*, *sense*,
Quintessence, *Crescence*, the verb *incense*,
Creataceous, *session*, like *slough* and *slough*,

An *cloud* and *dough*, *brough* their own *rebuff*.

Hwen languaj lessons we recht in corse,
We lernd the use ov the wurds, their sorce,
Their place in sentence, their groops and force,
Ov all the sorts ov our nativ speech,
The verb, the adjective the adverb, eech
Can rais mor dout than the uther six.
Tha seem to laf as the careless fix
Adverbial forms tu anomalus verbs;
As, 'Safely came the refreshing erbs.'
But 'drinking deeply' or 'drinking deep'
Has causd grammarians tu luz their sleep
Since Pope rote both in a qatrain vurse
And berrid the ke tu the skolar's curse.

Sum common wurds hav engagd us much,
As *one & only*, *some & such*;
Then *should*, *shoulder*, *shudder*, *again*
Hav causd a dout as tu hu is sane.
If *a* is *uh*, then shad *way* be *wuh*?
If *the* is *thuh*, then shud *he* be *huh*?

A dozen wurds shud be dropt from boox
Or qite reformd in their sense or loox,
Their sound and uses, and luz their croox.

Ov all the studys in children's qest,
Arithmetic is in practis best.
Here all the facultys cum in use
In mental effort without abuse.
The wurk is dun along lojical lines,
All staikt and pointed with practical sines.
The uther studiz ma help us out;
Tha brauden vues and mov meny a dout;
But figurs tel us hou biznes stands,
The values needed tu meet demands.
Tha mark the difference in length and hite,
And size up matter that's not in site.
Exact themselves, tha make us presize;
Tha hold tu truth and dispel surmize.

Hou littl lerning we wud hav dun,
Had not our techers, with purpos nervd,
Shone much mor patiens than we deservd.
Tha helpt us over the hardest parts,
Inspird our minds, made bold our harts.
Tha sumtimes punisht hwen we playd freek,
Hwen lessons lagd becauz wud or creek
Was mor atractiv than book or slate.
Then lame excuses made wurse our fate.
But hooz tu blame if we not concentrate
On onerus wurds made so by senseless spelings
That drive the lojic frum our minds
And our thauts tu far awa climes.

We leev tu children just starting out
A corse much wider, a longer rout,

Along hwich jenius ma bud and sprout.
But tru we take it that every aj,
Hwat'er its portion, hwat'er its gaj,
Givs room for acting on life's oan staj.
Hwen boox and skools wer uncommon, deer,
Did Hevn instruct thru the i, the eer,
And bild up karacter thru hope and feer?
The deeds in ajes illiterate
Wer qite as grate and wil sintilate
As far as eny ov modern gate,
Hwen lerning promises tu consumate,
We'll be satisfyd with our time and gait.

Written in a careless or unplanned system of minimal change.
Presented merely to show ideas from three quarter of a century ago.