

Spelling Reform Anthology edited by Newell W. Tune

§5. Countering arguments against Spelling reform

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This section is devoted to showing rebuttals to some articles in Section 2.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §5.1 pp77-78 in the printed version*]

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp14-16 in the printed version*]

1. The Case Against Spelling Reform, by Godfrey Dewey, Ed.D.*

*Lake Placid Club, N.Y.

*Being Appendix C of a monograph presented at the 4th International i.t.a. Conference, Oct. 1967, McGill Univ., Montreal.

The principal arguments against spelling reform, with their corollaries, are summarized, with appropriate comments and quotations:

1. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would obscure the derivation of words.

From the Corollary: To memorialize historic facts of a language is a legitimate or primary function of a current orthography.

Comments

The primary purpose of spelling is to record speech, which *is* the language.

"The true and sole office of alphabetic writing is faithfully and intelligibly to represent spoken speech" American Philological Assoc., 1876 report.

The etymologist is the first to repudiate the argument in the corollary.

"In the interests of etymology we ought to spell as we pronounce. To spell words as they used to be pronounced is not etymological, but antiquarian." *Walter W. Skeat*.

Phonetic spelling would give a continuous picture of the whole history of each word, whereas fixed conventional spelling gives, at best, only a single picture of one episode.

"The real etymologist, the historic student of language, it is wholly independent of any such paltry assistance, and would rejoice above measure to barter every 'historical' item in our

spelling during the last 300 years for a strict phonetic picture of the language as spoken at that distance in the past." *William Dwight Whitney*.

Even such etymologic information as is suggested is often in error; the result of some superficial wrong assumption, e.g.,

comptroller, debt, delight, haughty, island, sovereign, sprightly

Such accurate information as present conventional spelling gives is now securely preserved in innumerable books, regardless of present or future spelling. The scholar does not need, and the average layman does not appreciate or understand such information.

2. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would cause serious confusion between words of like sound (homophones), now distinguished by different spellings, e.g.,

right, rite, write, wright	buy, by, bye
cent, scent, sent	hear, here
road, rode, rowed	hour, our
sew, so, sow	knew, new
to, too, two	one, won, etc., etc.

Corollaries: A spelling *is* a word. Such distinctions are an intentional and desirable feature of English spelling.

Comments

Context makes clear such distinctions in speech, which has no spelling to give help; still more so is it used in the more deliberate processes of reading, with opportunity to glance backward or forward if necessary.

As against a few hundred homophones now distinguished more or less fortuitously by different spellings, there are in traditional orthography many thousands of words of like sound *and* spelling (homographs), and there is no demand to create artificial distinctions for these. A few suggestive examples are--

bay (a color, a tree, part of a building, a body of water, a dog's howl)

fair (good weather, impartial, an exposition)

right (a privilege, opposite of left, opposite of wrong)

sound (a condition, a noise, a body of water)

spring (a season, a leap, an elastic device)

state (to express in words, a condition, a unit of government)

can (to be able, a container).

down (a direction, soft feathers)

note (a musical tone, a monetary obligation)

pool (of water, a game)

present (a time, a gift)

well (a state of health, a hole in the earth)

Fries reports that for the 500 most used words of English the *Oxford Dictionary* records 14,070 separate and different meanings - an average of 28 different meanings for each word.

There is another group of homographs, spelled alike but pronounced differently, occasionally confused in reading, which phonemic spelling would clearly distinguish, e.g.,

bow (boe, bou); similarly, *mow*, *row*, *sow*.

close (cloes, cloez); similarly, *excuse*, *house*, *use*, etc.

aged (aejd aejed); similarly, *blessed*, (*blest*, *blessed*), *beloved*, *learned*.

lead (leed, led); similarly, *read*

live (liv, liev); *tear* (taer, teer); *wind* (wind, wiend);

wound (wuund, wound); *primer* (primer, priemer), etc.

3. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would require all existing books to be reprinted.

Comments

Most current reading matter is ephemeral. Books of enduring worth are constantly being reprinted in current spelling.

No one but the linguistic scholar today reads Chaucer, or Spenser, Shakespeare, or even Milton, in the original spelling.

Compatibility makes a *reading* knowledge of traditional orthography relatively easy.

4. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would require a fixed standard of pronunciation, which does not exist.

Comments

Accurately *phonetic* writing is neither necessary nor desirable. At the phonemic level, there does exist an acceptable standard, increasingly established by national and international radio and television. As early as 1935, the British Broadcasting Corp. had successfully established a standard, *Broadcast English*, for announcers. [1]

So far as regional differences are concerned, the individual tends to project on to the phonemic symbol his own interpretation.

The few broad differences in pronunciation between British and American usage, i.e., *either* (iether, eether), *clerk* (clark, clurk), *leisure* (lezher, leezher), will be no more confusing in phonemic spelling than in speech, or than differences in choice of words such as *lift* for *elevator*.

Phonemic spelling would be a strong conservative factor in preventing deterioration or corruption of language. Present lack of any clearly discernible relation between the written and the spoken word conduces strongly to variation.

5. *Statement*. No one has authority to tamper with the language. "The language of Shakespeare and Milton is good enough for me."

Corollaries: The written word *is* the language.

The language (or spelling) used by past masters of English has remained substantially static, or

Language (or spelling) evolution is a natural process, independent of human control.

Comments

Our language is speech, not spelling; the spelling is, or should be no more than a picture (now too often it is a cartoon) of the spoken word. Change, both in language and, until recently, in spelling, has been continuous, both before and after Shakespeare and Milton.

Phonemic spelling would conform to and record actual change and, incidentally, would tend to reduce change by giving guidance as to pronunciation, now wholly lacking.

All evolution in spelling, thus far, has resulted from conscious, deliberate, individual choice or action.

6. *Statement.* Phonetic spelling is ugly, uncouth, grotesque.

Comments

No one would seriously claim that the particular configurations of traditional orthography, the succession of ascending, descending, and middle letters, possess any intrinsic esthetic value. The true charge against phonemic spelling is its strangeness.

Many proposed phonetic alphabets have been esthetically unpleasing, due to diacritics, wrong fonts, inverted letters, non-Roman characters, etc., but there is no inherent reason why a phonemic alphabet cannot be made as esthetically pleasing as the present Roman alphabet, if it observes the same canons of design; e.g., the Simpler Spelling Association Fonetec Alfabet.

The i.t.m. technique, which accustoms the eye to rational reforms, is one important element in breaking down the next generation's resistance to spelling reform.

7. *Statement:* It's too much trouble. I have learned to spell.

Comments

This, the inertia which dreads the effort of the change, is the main reason why the present adult generation should not be expected to change.

"It is the generation of children to come who appeal to us to save them from the affliction which we have endured and forgotten." *William Dwight Whitney*

[1] For American, see Bender, James F., *N.B.C. Handbook of Pronunciation*, New York, Thos. Y. Crowell Co, 1944, 289 pp.

Our Readers Write Us

2. "The Folly of Spelling Reform", an attempted answer, by Donald, L. Humphries

Dear Sir:

Since the author of the above essay concluded that "The Folly of a Phonetic Alphabet" would have been a more proper title, the following attempted refutation of his arguments is based on this latter thesis.

1. "*Proper pronunciation*" makes phonetic spelling difficult. This assumes that there must be a 'proper way' - and one and only way - of saying, and hence spelling, a word. But this insistence on orthodoxy has only grown up in our language since the advent of printing and of dictionary making. Prior to that people tended to spell as they pleased, i.e., more or less phonetically as the language allowed, even using four or five different spellings for the same word in one piece of prose. It would seem that dictionaries originally only recorded the commonest, or suggested-best, way of spelling a word, and that all other options were omitted for lack of space. The prime aim of dictionaries was to tell us the meanings and origins of words. The idea that they should also give us the 'correct' spelling seems to have arisen later. But should we now revert to 'free-n-easy' spelling? This would make writing phonetically so much the more possible, but would not different dialects tend to establish themselves in writing as well as in speech? Would this result in Babelization - often feared by opponents of spelling reform? Perhaps but the alternative is more frightening.
2. "*Adequate symbolism*" to cope with the variety of dialects, etc. The belief that a new phonetic alphabet may not be able to cope with this problem, ignores the fact our present alphabet presumably copes even *less* - otherwise reform would not be needed. But with the use of the mass media of communication (radio, television) and the greater world and inter-state travelling nowadays occurring, it seems to be likely that dialects and accents in the English-speaking tongue will gradually be ironed out into one more-or-less uniform speech. Hence, phonetic symbolism could then cope (also a 'proper' pronunciation would be much more easily established - see 1, above). There seems to be common agreement that some 40 symbols would make English into a phonetically-spellable language. A minimum of half-a-dozen new vowel symbols would be a necessary major step forward.
3. "*Typewriters, printers, investments, vested interests.*" The new symbols could be devised by acknowledged experts in the field of phonetic spelling, so that agreement is the more likely on what such symbols should be. Once derived, the symbols could be added *around* the present letters on the typewriter keyboard - rather than replace any of them. The Russian alphabet has many more letters than does the English. How are these accommodated on present Russian typewriters? If only the aforesaid minimum 6 new letters were involved, our problems are that much the easier. With printers, little trouble is caused either way. Countries that recently changed over to decimal currency had to scrap or modify existing accounting machines, cash registers, etc. Yet the expense was considered worth while in view of the long term benefits. Vested interests are *always* being upset by changes in various fields, so there is nothing

unique here.

4. "*Indexes, filing systems, teaching, names.*" By adding the new symbols to the *end* of our present alphabet, we would only have the problem of discarded letters (c, q, x) to consider. Old books need not become obsolete entirely provided the new alphabet did not diverge *too* greatly from our present one. Could proper names be altered *en masse* by government decree?

Conclusion: The above four points are an attempted answer to the essay on the possible impracticability of utilizing a phonetic alphabet. In making this attempted answer I have used certain suppositions:

1. That rigid orthodoxy in spelling is neither desirable nor necessary. I advocate a return to '*free-n-easy*' spelling.
2. That the intended phonetic alphabet will take the form of an *Augmented Roman Alphabet*. That is, that it will not be an entirely new set of symbols to replace our present alphabet.
3. That *only* some *40 symbols* will be needed (inclusive of our present ABC's), and that a minimum of about 6 new ones will suffice if needs be.
4. That the bulk of reforms to our present spelling to make it more phonetic would simply involve a *proper re-use of present letters* (so that words like '*of, use*' were then spelt '*ov, uze*', or the like).
5. That *experts* would decide just what the new symbols would be like, and that *governments* would participate in the change-over.

(NOTE: My main query in respect to any new symbolism is the difficulty of devising both a printed and written form for any one letter.)

There seems to be some general agreement that World English Spelling, and the Initial Teaching Alphabet, are the most sensible basis on which to campaign for spelling reform.

Some of the ideas expressed from time to time in your Bulletin by individual reformers are either too extreme (being comprehensible only to themselves) or too trivial (as Harry Lindgren's SR1).

The basic problems of spelling reform seem to centre (center) around

- (1) *what* is to be the nature of the reform and
- (2) *how* is it to be introduced. Insofar as (1) is concerned, the problem then further subdivides into
 - (a) the vowels,
 - (b) the diphthongs,
 - (c) the triphthongs, and
 - (d) the consonants - in order of difficulty.

Insofar as (2) is concerned, the problem consists of

- (a) step-by-step reform, or
- (b) all-at-once reform.

Of course, there are other problems, such as clashes in spelling between the reformed and old spelling, the problem of homonyms, the need for modified typewriters or remote printing machines, type, etc. But none of these are really insurmountable.

The major difficulty is, it seems to me, the modern insistence on spelling *orthodoxy*, this contrasts with earlier times (e.g., 18th century) when *all* citizens paid no heed to 'correct' spelling; indeed, a person would even boast that 'he spelt like a gentleman, and not like a pedant.'

In probably no other field of learning is there such hide-bound resistance to *any* change in the status quo. Even in the closely related field of *words* themselves innovation is permitted. Americanisms such as 'know-how' and 'think-tank,' not to mention all the 'beat-nik' expressions, find their way into our language. Yet imagine what it would be like if we could not coin new words as occasion demanded? This does not mean that such words are immediately or universally accepted. Or that they are the only possible way of conveying the same meaning - alternative words can be used. But at least a degree of tolerance exists, and they are not rejected out of hand.

To translate this same tolerance into the field of spelling reform, I would like to suggest that while WES and i.t.a. could well form the *basis* of a reformed program, that even here a degree of latitude could exist. For example, if I prefer to write the vowels: *ae, ee, ie, oe, ue*, using *the macron* over the letter instead of the added 'e', then this could be permitted as an alternative spelling, understood by all. (Some brand names use the macron, e.g., APECO, No-Doz). Continued use of the letters 'c, q, x' could be allowed provided 'c' was always used with 'h' as 'ch', 'q' was always 'qu' and 'x' was always 'ks/gz.'

As further alternatives to the long vowel notation, the 'at' sign could be used to denote 'ae,' with similar encirclement used for the other vowels. Since vowels occur more frequently in spellings than do consonants, undue elongation of many words by the use of digraphs should be avoided if possible.

The problem of the two 'oo' sounds and their spelling has always been a source of contention. The current decision to use 'oo' for the long sound may be all right, but use of 'uu' for the short version can result in such awkward spellings as: *wuulf, wuul, wuud*. Myself, I prefer to differentiate completely: using 'ew' for the long sound and 'oo' for the short.

Examples of my ideas on these are available from: Melbourne, Vic. Australia.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §5.3 p78 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1974 p7 in the printed version]

3. Tuward a Moer Piktueresk Speech, transliterated into a modified W.E.

Mobster testifieing befor an investigaeting comitee: "ie refuez too anser, on the ground that it miet tend too eliminaet me."

Man in resterønt: "This chicken aa laa king taests liek the chicken abdicaeted."

Sien up! On scool blackboerd during egzamz: doo yoor oen think.

"If yoo lurn too reed buuks, yoo ar never aloen. (Kay Starr)

"The oenly tiem marrej iz 50-50 iz when thae ar boeth that aej. (Bill Balance)

"Ie hav graet respect foer the trooth - and uez it froogaly. (Bill Balance)

"Deturminaeshon regardz a faeluer az oenly a step on the roed too sukses." (Newell Tune)

"Free advies iz jeneraly regarded az not wurth whot it costs." (Newell Tune)

Reeding iz a gesing gaem in which the winerz stae in scool and the loozertz drop out." (Samatha Jitters)

It's beter too hav bliend feer than blind cueriosity." (Chris Tune)

"Noebody can jump doun yoor throet if yoor mouth's shut." (Graffiti)

Speling iz lurning aul the inconsistenseez Inglish wuudn't hav if it wur riten foeneticaly." (Newell Tune)

"Perfoermans iz az much a mater ov persistens, practis, and paeshens az it iz ov perfecshon." (Newell Tune)

An ouns ov "keep yoor mouth shut" beets a tun ov eksplanaeshon.

Noe wunder wee ar aul dizzy -- with revolving credit, spieraling priesez and soering taksez.

Sins the former ruelerz ov Rushya wer cauld the zar and zareena, thaer children shuud'v bin cauld zardeen.

Halloween. kook's niet out. Friet niet: this iz the tiem too plae it gool.

Ekspens account: det ov a saelzman. Victim ov fortune-teller: seersucker.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §5.4 pp80-83 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1976 pp6-9 in the printed version]

4. The Scholarly Case Agenst Spelling Reform: Does it Exist?, by Mark O'Connor* (Some Comments on the views of George Turner.)

Mark O'Connor is a graduate in English and Classics from Melbourne Univ. and has tutored in English at the Univ. of Western Australia and the A.N.U. He held Literature Board Fellowships in 1973-74, has won a number of awards for plays & verse, and edits *Canberra Poetry*. His first book of verse, *Reef Poems*, has been published, in SR-1, by Queensland Univ. Press (USA- Prentice-Hall). '75.

*Reprinted from *English in Australia*, No. 32, August, 1975.

* Canberra, Australia.

Spelling note: At the Author's request, SR-1 spellings in this article are printed according to his manuscript. Editor.

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It is generally conceded that the main case for regularization of English spelling is the educational one. This is not to deny that other important arguments exist. For instance, there are theoretical and practical disadvantages in a spelling where the *K*-sound can be represented by K, C, CK, CC, KK, KH, GH, QU, QUE, CQUE, CH, or X, and where 18 vowels and diphthongs are represented in at least 99 different ways. [1] English spelling is certainly a major problem for the forener, who must, for instance, when learning the word-pair *woman/women* remember that none of the three vowel sounds to be pronounced corresponds to eny of those written, and that the vowel that does change in the plural is the one that stays unchanged in the spelling. For that matter, spelling is a distinct problem to the native-born, who find that, because neither sound nor analogy with other words is a reliable guide, thousands of spellings must in effect be memorized individually - a difficult, and for meny, impossible task.

In addition, English's irregular spelling undoubtedly diminishes its usefulness, and hence its prospects, as an international language - a function for which its simplified grammar might otherwise ideally suit it. Finally, there is the issue of cost. A passage in conventional form is some 25% longer than one in a fully-reformed spelling might be; [2] and the possible saving in typing and printing costs, plus time, labor and materials, represents, as eny newspaper editor would recognize, a substantial margin. Recently, the step-by-step SR-1 Proposal, put forward by the polyglot British-Australian mathematician Harry Lindgren in 1969, has promised total phonemic reform of English spelling over a couple of generations without major cost or disturbance of reading habits, and made the economic arguments more than ever plausible. [2]

Nevertheless, the main thrust of the reformers' argument is educational. The English-speaking countries today face a literary crisis. For instance, the British Association of Settlements' recent report *A Right to Read* estimates that there are some two million adult illiterates in England and Wales alone, most of them in no sense mentally defective. In Australia, as anyone who reads the press is aware, reports of massive illiteracy in the schools are almost a weekly affair; and it has been claimed that up to 40% of students are leaving our secondary schools virtually illiterate.

The cost of such illiteracy around the world is of course to be mesured not only in the personal tragedies of millions of illiterates and tens of millions of imperfectly literate people, but also in such

corollaries as delinquency, increasing philistinism, and indifference to public affairs, which indirectly affect the entire community.

There is no serious doubt that the inconsistency of English spelling is a major cause of illiteracy and semi-literacy. Despite the attempts of education-researchers to design alternative teaching techniques like the debatably-successful "look and say" method, word-attack for beginners inevitably involves the sounds of words. Indeed, two of the most widely successful methods involve the complicated double-maneuver of first offering the child a especially designed phonemic system, and later persuading him to transfer to ordinary spelling. [3]

Even so, the difficulties, especially for the child who is in any way slow or non-verbally orientated, are formidable. As Mr. Joe Elliot, a retired Headmaster, recently pointed out to the Parliamentary Committee on Specific Learning Difficulties:

His (the child's) ear tells him that there is a *W* in *ONE*, but not in *TWO*. His teacher tells him the reverse. He finds that *GAS*, *HAS*, *WAS* are quite disparate words. . . . The sound *E* may be represented in thirteen different ways; the sound *EI* in twenty-three ways. Not one sound or symbol can be relied on to conform to its assigned function. . . *BREAK* rhymes with *BAKE* not with *BEAK*; *CURD* rhymes with *WORD*, *BIRD*, *HEARD*, *PURRED*, *STIRRED*, *ERRED*: *EASE* rhymes with thirty different spellings of that syllable; *ROW*, *WIND*, *LEAD* each spell two different words; some spellings are governed by meaning, others by grammatical function.

Apart from the destruction of his basis of understanding, the assault on his reasoning faculty and offence to logic, the new task is too enormous for the child with specific learning difficulty. . . Yet the phonemic principle is a splendidly simple one and, if observed, would ensure literacy, without further teaching, merely by practice, confidence, and success.

Especially when it is added that much of what passes for "specific learning difficulty" may be simply the dawning voice of reason prompting the child to resist such a "dumb, stupid" system, it is clear that the educational case for reform is very strong; and indeed educationalists opposed to spelling-change sometimes seem to have their backs (and perhaps their consciences) to the wall.

However, a new and interesting case has recently been appearing on their side. This is that modern theories of linguistics, especially those connected with the name of Chomsky, have demonstrated an essential fallacy in the spelling-reformer's position. (At least in English, one presumes - since most other European languages, even the conservative French, have long since accepted some scheme of reform). Sometimes it is even asserted that spelling-reformers are relics of an earlier age, when the nature of language and the process of learning to read were generally misunderstood.

That I am not exaggerating this trend would be clear from a quick glance at the collection of scholarly opinions which were assembled by Des Ryan and Jill Scott for their anti-SR-1 case before the Victorian Teachers Union State Council, and subsequently printed in the *Teachers Journal* of March 25th, 1975.

For instance:

Spelling reform might make words a little easier to pronounce (sic), but only at the cost of other information about the way words are related to each other, so that rationalizing words at the phonological level might make reading more difficult at the syntactic and semantic levels. (Frank Smith, *Understanding Reading*, 1971).

Our traditional English writing system seems to be a near optimal one for learning to read. . . (W. B. Gillooly, *Reading Research Quarterly*, 1973).

. . . orthography is optimal for its purpose (R. E. Hodges, in *Elementary English*, vol. 49, no. 7).

It will be obvious to anyone who peruses the Scott-Ryan anthology that the basic position advanced is remarkably similar to the familiar "etymological argument" against spelling reform, which is, in essence, that it is more important to express a word's ancestry and kinships with other words than its precise pronunciation.

However, the etymological argument in its conventional form has proved of limited service because it is itself open to numerous objections. For instance, if you have the possibility of a straightforward spelling based on sound, reformers ask, why confuse it with an alternative and conflicting principle? Secondly, what percentage of unphonemic English spellings really contain important etymological facts? Would not the remainder offer huge scope for reform? Thirdly, in any case, so long as a word resembles its ancestors or kin, the facts will show even in a phonemic spelling - one need only to think of Italian *filosofia* or *fonografo*, Russian *futbol*, Spanish *sicología*, or, for that matter, English *hound* and *sister* as against German *hund* and *schwester*. Fourthly, the argument embarrasses the dedicated conservative by "proving" that spellings based on faulty etymology like *scant*, *rhyme*, and *island* should be reformed, and perhaps that such unetymological phonemic forms as *beef* and *boss* should be changed to *boef* and *baass*. Finally, of course, it is fouled at its source, because conventional spelling probably conceals linguistic relationships as often as it reveals them. For instance, the spellings *said* and *read* for the past tense of *say* and *read* are not merely unphonetic; - they also conceal an important point of English grammar.

Nevertheless, variants of the etymological argument are still on occasions confidently advanced. One reason for their popularity is clear: the many years of discipline and self-discipline required to gain and retain mastery of conventional English spelling beget in most people a strong will to believe that "correct" English spelling is entirely right and natural, and worth whatever trouble it costs. Such a proof of the etymological argument, with its suggestion of a mysterious traditional wisdom buried in the structure of English spelling, superficially seems to offer.

The question therefore to be asked about scholarly claims such as Ryan and Scott have assembled is: are they merely a recrudescence of the etymological argument, perhaps in a more safely recondite form, or do they indeed constitute a new and compelling case against reform? Does spelling preserve a core of semantic richness that is absent in the spoken language? Is English unique, or have languages like Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish that updated their spelling suffered irreparable loss? Finally, and above all, is there any theoretical justification for the suggestion that conventional spelling may actually be easier to learn and teach than a phonemically reformed one?

Answering these questions is harder than one might think. The scholars in question conceal their "working" in airy jargon, and constantly refer one to Chomsky for fuller details. Chomsky himself is little better. Even the famous statement (echoed by two of those cited above) in his and Halle's

Sound Pattern of English that "English orthography, despite its often-cited inconsistencies, comes remarkably close to being an optimal orthographic system for English" occurs in a poorly-substantiated passage heavily marred by obscuring jargon. [4] Indeed, Harry Lindgren has brusquely remarked that this claim boils down in plain English to nothing more than "English could hardly be better," when in fact "it could hardly be worse." [5]

This is an oversimplification of course. Nevertheless Lindgren, who writes in a lucid elegant style that leaves all his arguments open to scrutiny, has every right to object to scholars who make pretentious pronouncements in passing; and there is much to be said for his refusal to treat the conservative scholars seriously until they manage to put their case concretely.

However, an article has recently appeared, in the May issue of *English in Australia*, which does attempt to explain in direct concrete terms just how the Chomskian theories show spelling-reformers to be in error and prove the present system to be nearly ideal. The author, George W. Turner, Reader in English at the Univ. of Adelaide, is a distinguished linguistic scholar who has published three well-known books. He is eminently qualified to offer such an explanation; and I welcome the opportunity to examine his arguments and conclusions.

It is worth considering, first of all, the attitudes Turner professes. Unlike some more wishful opponents of spelling change, he is prepared to concede, though with some reservations, that most practical problems (including agreement on a standardized phonemic spelling) could at need be solved. Indeed, notionally his stance is quite impartial and academic. "This study," he insists, "is not a polemic." Turner's air is that of a man honestly, reluctantly, even sorrowfully, recording the negative verdict of modern scholarship upon the worthy but amateurish schemes of spelling-reformers. He is concerned only lest reform "be approached without reference to current linguistic knowledge and without understanding of the social results."

However, a critical reading of the article reveals much that is peculiar in tone. Turner is at his most characteristic perhaps in a passage where he concedes the possibility that a more regular spelling, similar to that of German or Russian, might save "a year or two" (reformers claim somewhat higher figures, up to two years overall educational advancement), but finds the idea unappealing. ". . . would the saved time be reinvested in language work?", he asks!; but adds, like a good academic, "it might be possible to investigate what is done with the time saved in Germany or Russia." He does not pursue the possibility that time saved in learning to read might lead in turn to savings in other subjects, and thus to more time for all; nor does he mention the fate of the slower child who never does become fully literate. Rather he prefers to speculate on "whether there are any compensatory gains in the longer time English children spend in learning to read."

He is a master, too, of the technique of differential standards of proof, whereby awkward facts are admitted with the reluctant air of a sceptical philosopher courteously conceding the possibility that other entities may exist. For instance:

It is true that a pure 'look and say' approach with some children has led to an uncertainty in word attack still discernible in advanced university students. . .

It is widely thought (but perhaps needs detailed research to confirm it) that German, Spanish or Russian children learn to write their language more quickly than English children. . . .

Perhaps not all English spelling practice can be justified in this way. Reforms would still be possible. . . .

But his last paragraph is the most revealing:

It is not that I do not welcome an interest in language from politicians and the public. It is not that I do not sympathize with the amateur who can afford to be daring in another man's subject. . . (However he would) rather direct a welcome public interest in language towards projects of more undeniable value, such as, to name an obvious one, a full historical dictionary of Australian English. [**]

It is a little difficult to know what to make of this rich conclusion. However, as the final sentence follows a couple of lines of mildly self-deprecating humor it may be fairest to read it as a piece of light-hearted self-satire - perhaps a parody of the academic scheme of values at its most disinterested.

Mr. Turner's prejudices, therefore, are conspicuous, and can be allowed for. What is the substance of his case that modern linguistics shows spelling reform to be a mistake? The initial connection between the two issues might require some caution, since the reformers' case that phonemic spelling facilitates learning to read has never rested on the intricacies of linguistic theory but on supposed "common sense" supported by practical experience, including of course the successes of systems like I.T.A. and Words In Colour.

Here the problem is solved through a brief history of spelling reform down the centuries, which ends bluntly and somewhat after the manner of a non-sequitur: "The success of metrication . . . has revived the hopes of reformers, though it is doubtful whether any serious linguists now lend them support."

This leads to a schematic account of alternative linguistic theories. Broadly, Mr. Turner distinguishes three options. Firstly, the view of Swift and others that written words are the "real" language, and the spoken a mere shadow. Secondly, the "Bloomfieldian" view, fashionable in the 1940's and '50's, which swings to the other extreme and makes the written language a mere description of the spoken; and thirdly, an essentially intermediate view. The second is stated to be the "most helpful in providing a (somewhat dated) linguistic theory for reform."

Unfortunately, on Mr. Turner's own admission, there is no evidence that reformers (those unscholarly cads) took any note of this school - indeed they inconveniently reduced their activity during its *floreat*. Hence we have to be content with the somewhat artificial continuation:

But before spelling reformers caught up with this theoretical justification and learned to change their complaint that English spelling is "irrational" to one that rational (sic) processes . . . interfere with phonetic truth, a new wave of linguistic theory subverted the Bloomfieldian linguists and promoted a view resembling our third theoretical possibility.

The third wave is of course the view of Chomsky and others that neither speech nor writing are primary systems - both may be in a sense "realizations" of a third and more abstract system of language.

It is difficult, however, to see what a spelling-reformer could find to object to in such a position, since so long as the writing system is learned after the speech one, the practical advantages of close correspondence between them will remain. No doubt, of course, Chomskian theories offer a professional linguist who is opposed to spelling reform greater rhetorical space in which to maneuver: Mr. Turner shows the possibilities in his contemptuous reference to the notion (of spelling reformers) that writing "should reflect surface phonetic phenomena mechanically, without intrusion of etymology, deeper knowledge of the connections of words and other interference by

the reasoning mind with the raw phonetic facts." But supporters of conventional spelling (as mentioned earlier) have always been prone to use such terms and arguments; and it is doubtful if they were much inhibited during the brief "Bloomfieldian" era.

The real core of Mr. Turner's argument consists not in such generalities but in three examples which he offers as typical of the way English spelling works. For instance, he concedes that the spelling *said* (rather than *sed*) is phonemically inaccurate. But, he asks, even for the sake of ease of learning, should we deny the child that possible "sense of enlightenment when *said* turns out to be a fairly regular past tense of *say*? . . . 'Who is to measure the value of such sudden insights into the connectedness of language and its role in training a critical intellect?' (A similar argument was used earlier this year by the writer of a letter to the *Melbourne Age* who maintained that the SR-1 spelling *sed* would obscure the word's relationship with *say*).

But in fact the spelling *said* only clarifies what was quite clear enough already. Far more important, what it obscures is the fact that the past tense of *say* is irregular (!) and involves an internal vowel-change. Clearly any "enlightenment" the form *said* offers a child would be bogus indeed. The only fact it reveals is that an alternative and regular past tense of *say* did once exist, at least in some areas of England. However, even Mr. Turner, one imagines, can hardly deny that it is more useful for words to be spelled the way they are pronounced now, rather than the way they were once.

As usual in such cases, the plain sense of the matter is best disentangled from the inevitable prejudice in favor of an accepted spelling by citing a case where we do the reverse. The verb *tell*, like *say*, has an irregular past tense, which, however, is accurately spelled: *-told*. Would Mr. Turner suggest that it might be as well spelled *telled* (or for that matter that *meant* and *felt* should become *meaned* and *feeled* in order to offer children the spurious enlightenment of recognizing "a fairly regular past tense"?)

Another example, offered specifically as illustration of the Chomskian claim that conventional spelling preserves deep relationships which would be lost in phonemic spelling, is the following:

Consider the words *critical* and *criticism*. It is clear that suffixes *-al* and *-ism* have been added to a stem *critic-*, or, more generally, to another suffix *-ic*. How should we represent this suffix in writing? Phonemically it varies between /ik/ and /is/, but we feel that these forms are variants of a single linguistic element. It would be useful to be able to spell it with an /i/ followed by another symbol representing something which sometimes appears as /k/ and sometimes as /s/. Since this is exactly the function of the English letter 'c', the letter 'c' might well be used for this. And so a traditional butt of spelling reformers, the letter 'c' which 'uselessly' duplicates two more precise symbols 'k' and 's', proves to be justified by our deeper awareness of our language.

Perhaps not all English spelling practice could be justified in this way. Reforms would still be possible. . .

On a quick reading by someone seeking to rationalize a prejudice against change, this argument might just pass muster. On analysis it disintegrates. One need not waste time pointing out that the common element *criti-* would be quite sufficient to identify *critical* and *criticism* as sister words, for Mr. Turner's argument is even more deeply flawed.

It would be marvellous to think that English spelling possessed the almost mystical wisdom with which he credits it, but alas, a much simpler explanation exists. The words *critical* and *criticism* are originally derived from the Greek *kritikós*, which in Latin (where *c* is used invariantly for the hard *k*-sound) became *criticus*. In English they were originally learned coinages, formed, according to the Oxford Dictionary, by adding the English suffixes *al* and *ism* to the Latin stem *critic-*. However, the

latter case created a clash between the etymologically correct pronunciation (with a k-sound) and the fact that one of the more consistent inconsistencies of English spelling is its adherence to the French rule that *c* before *i* is pronounced *s*. (A good example incidentally of the complications caused by failure to Anglicize words borrowed from languages with incompatible spelling-conventions - the French solved it here by using the *qu* spelling, as in *critiquer*). In other words, so far from English spelling being the harmonious force that reconciles discordant pronunciations, it is in fact in Mr. Turner's example the very cause of their discordance!

The case of the silent *d* in *handkerchief*, which he mentions parenthetically, is nearer to being a valid example. But it still suffers from the fatal objection (even supposing one agreed that the derivation is essential to the modern word), that a phonemically accurate spelling without *d* would not greatly obscure the etymology, whereas the present "etymological" spelling (quite apart from being a problem to beginners) does seriously misrepresent the pronunciation. And while a scholar can doubtless use the derivation to *remind* himself of the present spelling, one can hardly doubt that the child would find a phonemic one easier, and the derivation of no great value to him.

Certainly, if these are the sorts of conclusive argument modern linguistics and transformational grammar can be expected to offer, W. Turner is simply wasting our time. There is nothing in any of these examples that would be new to someone familiar with the etymological argument.

Finally, his least flawed argument, which he claims that even a "Bloomfieldian" might well support, is that perhaps in any case the best spelling

would be not merely phonemic but morphophonemic. We spell the plurals *ships*, *shoes* and *cabbages* by adding an *-s* in each case, and this seems sensible enough, but phonetically we pronounce 's' in one case, 'z' in another and 'ez' (or, in England 'iz') in the third); and a purely phonemic spelling would have to record these usually unnoticed variants. In technical language, /s/, /z/ and /iz/ are 'allomorphs' of the 'plural morpheme' in English. . . Presumably all pleas for 'phonetic' spelling would, if precisely stated, turn out to be pleas for morphophonemic spelling.

But once again, for all his technical apparatus, Mr. Turner has got his facts wrong. Spelling-reformers do not accept his argument for retaining the invariable *s* in plurals; and even such a conservative reform as the proposed *New Spelling* of the British Simplified Spelling Society includes regularization of *s* and *z*. Moreover Mr. Turner exaggerates the variations involved in a phonemic spelling. It is true that the obscure vowel (ə) occurs after certain consonants (like *j*, *s* and *z*) to which the plural *z* cannot be added directly; but the resultant phonemic spelling is certainly not *ez*, and probably not even in Britain *iz*, but *əz*. Thus *buzzes*, in the revised *New Spelling* which includes 'ə', would be *buzəz* - a perfectly straightforward spelling whose analogies with other plurals in *s* and *z* are obvious.

All that his argument establishes in fact is that some forms of phonemic inaccuracy are less troublesome than others. The fact that the plural *s* in *dogs*, *shoes*, or *cabbages* is really a *z* hardly ever confuses native English-speakers, because they subconsciously appreciate that *s* becomes *z* after a vowel or voiced consonant. Much the same applies to the *-ed* ending of verbs, which are sometimes not *d* but *t*. But all that can be said for such present spellings is that they are at least fairly consistent in their irregularity, and thus cause less trouble than cases like the *-ough* group or the vowels. It would require all of Mr. Turner's prejudice against reform to make us believe that we positively *benefited* by spelling these *t*'s and *z*'s as *d*'s and *s*'s. (Would even he see advantage in having *meant*, *dwelt*, *felt* and *dealt* 'morphophonemically' respelt - even if no ambiguities resulted - as *meaned*, *dwelled*, *felled*, and *dealed*?)

In any case, these grammatical endings are hardly typical of the problem. One need only cast one's mind back over a school spelling-list to remember that an immense number of spelling-irregularities follow no such reliable rules - for instance: *affable, fallible, visible, culpable, piece, seize, receive, concede, proceed, recede, precede, succeed, convey, inveigh, deceit, receipt, fancy, phantom, etc., etc.*

It will be clear that I am not much impressed by Mr. Turner's arguments. I do not see how one could be. Some, perhaps, might form talking points for persons determined to oppose reform, but none in their present form is conclusive, and most are nugatory. Overall, one can only conclude that his article shows the worthlessness of the much-vaunted Chomskian arguments against spelling-change.

I should emphasize, however, that this refutation, though blunt, is not to be taken as a general indictment of Mr. Turner's reputation as a linguistic expert. Obviously he has been misled by emotion; and no doubt, like all of us he is the victim of an early indoctrination that sets up powerful prejudices. (It has been remarked that if the subject-matter of a conventional 'spelling drill' class were political instead of linguistic, one could not hesitate to call it brainwashing). And after all, 'experts' have been making fools of themselves since time began on issues where prejudice outran expertise.

Certainly, in other European countries where reform has been introduced, the initial cry of prejudice, including all sorts of dire prophecies, has rapidly diminished as people became used to the new system and came to see the old in its turn as strange and "impossible." In English some day the story may well be similar.

Meanwhile one must concede that eventually some form of spelling-reform is a real possibility, and perhaps a desirable one. In view of the present educational crisis and also the National Teachers Federation's much-publicized decision last January to favor teaching the SR-1 spelling-system (which incidentally, is used throughout this article), the issues involved in reform urgently require intelligent and informed debate in Australia. Such a debate needs to be honest, and it must not be let slip into the hands of those concerned merely with rationalizing childhood prejudices or carving out for themselves a new area of academic expertise. Rather, let us consider the advantages, the drawbacks, and the practicalities.

Notes

- [1] For tabulation of these 99 variants, see H. R. Thomas' article "The Step by Step Method of the Spelling Action Society" in the *Tasmanian Journal of Education*, Nov.-Dec. 1974, pp. 76ff.
- [2] See Harry Lindgren's discussion of *Phonetic B* in the final chapter in his *Spelling Reform: a New Approach*, Alpha Books, 1969.
- [3] Pitman's i.t.a., and Gattegno's *Words in Colour*.
- [4] Chomsky, Noam & Halle, Morris, *Sound Pattern of English*, p. 49.
- [5] Letter to the Melbourne Age, Jan. 15, 1975.
- [6] On this see especially Robert Mayhew's article, 'The Historic Portuguese Spelling Reform,' reprinted from *Spelling Progress Bulletin*, Spring, 1975, in *Spelling Action journal*, May, 1975, pp. 3-4. These sweeping reforms, which affected some 100 million people, were internationally agreed upon in 1943 after 58 years of debate on their desirability.

[**] One of those on-agen off-agen projects for which many Australian academic linguists are vigorously lobbying funds.

Limericks

It might take a bullet or tu

When reformers have nothing to du
They might take a shot at the Gnu.
 To knock off the G,
 Would fill them with glee
And wouldn't embarrass the Nu.

What a commocean

A young lady crossing the ocean
Grew ill from the ship's dizzy mocean.
 She said with a sigh
 And a tear in her eigh,
To life I have no more devocean.

(from *Rimes without reason*)

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §5.5 pp84-85 in the printed version*]

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1976 pp19,20 in the printed version*]

Our Readers Write

5. An answer to: The Folly of Spelling Reform

Dear Mr. Tune:

from Arnold Rupert

Here is a belated answer to the 2 page article attributed to Benedictus Arnold 3rd (The Folly of Spelling Reform). If this is a real person, in spite of the unlikely name, he is not an unfriendly critic, for he does not bring up the frivolous objections about the need for homonyms or the loss of meaning alleged to result from less exact retention of root spellings in word families. Instead, he lists the *real* difficulties that will be met in the actual transition to a more phonetic spelling with a full, phonemic alphabet, altho I would hasten to add that reform with the 26 letters we already have & digraphs, would have different, but just as serious, problems.

As I don't think digraph reform to be permanently satisfactory, & only useful, perhaps, in an i.t.m. system, I will not dwell on these other problems of word length & inter-code confusions, but point out how the problems related to new letters (or strokes) may be lessened. Most would only be serious if a new spelling were adopted by all age groups at once as seems to have been the case in Turkey, but which would be unwise in our case, even if possible. Only the teacher adults & textbook writers would need to learn & use the new spelling quickly, so as to bring the reform into practice reasonably soon. Primary grades would start with it next & continue to operate with it as they moved up thru the other grades, but meet with a lot of T.O. in public print & learn to read it but never need to spell it. Dictionaries with words in the new alphabetic order would be needed for these pupils in 4 or 5 years, but the new letters could be added at the end with least disturbance of order (as was done in the Scandinavian countries). Order of filing, directory & other such uses would not be changed for at least 20 years, when a large number of young people would be actively using the new code & only for the libraries & offices operating with the new spelling, books, etc. Telephone & personelle directories would only change as spelling of names was changed & that would be one of the last phases of transition altho the phonetic form might be added after the T.O. name much sooner, like the pronunciation key in dictionaries, useful information in its own right, but becoming familiar thus, until the day that the old pattern was declared obsolete.

There *would* be some added teaching costs, but mostly during the first few years, as the teachers of each grade, at a grade a year rate, would need some retraining to operate as required, & many new texts, as needed, would have to be written & printed, but the number of pupils & classrooms would not increase more than normally. T.O. spelling would be dropped & replaced by study of the

nature & indication of diction, which would rule the new spelling moving up thru the grades, while T.O. reading skill would be picked up by incidental contact with the public print & old books that would continue much longer than needed by the reform age students. Unlike i.t.m. programs, there would be no directed shift to T.O. reading, & certainly not to T.O. spelling. Educational costs would rise only a little at first; the noticeable change would be in what the new students gained or lost in literary & other abilities. The changed new program might steal a bit of student time from the 3rd R in primary grades but very little from more advanced math in higher grades. The regularly spelled language would soon prove that it could enable much faster & easier learning in all other studies, & personal, individual instruction by teachers would become far less necessary. This saving of teacher time would materialize in about 5 or 6 years & reduce educational costs rapidly.

I agree that one standard dialect should be chosen as most widely known & used, & most public print be in a spelling as nearly phonemic as practical for this standard, but speakers of all other & minority dialects would be no worse off as regards the words they speak differently (perhaps 10% in the worst cases) but enjoy a new ease with the great majority of words, as well as having a dependable standard to aim at. In order that the standard could lead them into more uniform diction, it is advisable that their primary teaching material be keyed to their local practice, so that they would attach the right (majority) sound to each symbol & then find, in later grades, that their local speech was not the standard one. This rules out the use of language wide primary reaching aids, which enable subsequent close matching of any code to local dialect, but makes the standard dialect harder to acquire.

An alphabet of 42 symbols plus q & c, or 41 plus q, c & x for T.O. & the new code, all in lower case, would force the numerals & punctuation into upper case position & rule out use of capitals with a transition typewriter, but again, this would only be necessary for the few teachers & set-up people in the textbook trade, for up to 20 or 30 years. That is a long time for people to forget about capitals or for keyboards to grow wider. Upshifting for punctuation would be little more frequent than now for capitals, but learning to type the new spelling would take some effort by those set-up experts. This is not done nearly as rapidly as normal office typing anyway, tho, & the reform age students would learn it as easily as any other, & work into office practice at the same slow rate as demand for reform code business communication & record grows. It will not be necessary to provide duplicate forms or messages in old forms, as the new generations will be able to read the old T.O., & the age groups who narrowly miss reform education will be exposed to much reform literature for 20 or 30 years before the old form is entirely dropped.

Now, the *important* question must be met & decided. Is literature in 42 symbol spelling close enough to the erratic T.O. to enable fast, easy reading after only an acceptable amount of practice, or must we accept an i.l.m. more compatible with T.O.? for bi-codal switching in either direction as with Pitman's i.t.a. or WES i.l.m. Testing to solve this question is the research priority most suitable for the new Phonemic Spelling Council, not the testing & comparison of i.t.a. & WES i.l.m. alone, valuable as that may be. If governments are reluctant to risk all-out primary teaching of a reformed spelling, they might be induced to fund such research & get dependable answers instead of conflicting personal opinions.

The size of the English speaking community is always brought up by critics of reform & it does have a bearing on the issue, but not on one side of the debate only. A satisfactory solution must first be devised; design & tooling is necessary before new typing machines can go into mass production, effective reaching programs must be planned, reform literature must be written, reform publications set up & content compiled, edited & prepared for the printer. All such activities & their costs have a practical minimum size, below which they don't just happen, while the gains possible by reform depend, in gross effect, on the size of the group affected, just as most of the application costs do.

It *is* true, that if reform had come sooner, it would have been cheaper, but it would also have had the handicap of less study & less expertise in the process. And it is also true that it will cost less now than a decade in the future.

Have reformers overlooked opposition from vested interests? How can they? All opposition to desirable change is due to fear of real or imagined loss by those comfortably in control & profiting by that happy situation, from the millionaire publisher & college don to the teacher, typist & file clerk. It is the reformer's task & duty to convince these nervous creatures that they have little to fear & far more to gain from the increased activity of a period of growth & reform, & that they will get more satisfaction from joining & helping to guide the course of progress in this most stagnant backwater of civilization.

The reformed spelling should be reasonably compatible with T.O. -- that is, to T.O.'s regular parts. A public test of compatibility should, then, consist of a number of T.O. words in an otherwise suitable reform orthography & exceptions be totally lacking in the first material presented to beginners, so that they can develop a faith in the logic of the code & a lasting knowledge of symbol-sound relations of a full phonemic code. This would rule out grammatically compatible words, such as homonyms, the plural *s* ending for a *z*-sound, *ed* for *t* where *t* is the sound, etc. Others, such as the *ally* ending where a simple *ly* sound is normal, are too wasteful of space to be of use at any stage. Otherwise, a gradual introduction of T.O. spellings at monthly or weekly intervals, always equated with reform equivalents & accepted in written work, would make the reading of T.O. easier. Use of a digraph code, as such a variable i.t.m., would be impractical, as so many reformed words would have very different meanings in the old code. The new letters of an augmented alphabet would clearly mark the words as new & avoid that confusion. Introduction of the commoner T.O. homonyms such as *read* for the participle of *read*, instead of the phonemic *red* that would have served for both the color & the verb part, up to this stage, would bring a confusion of de-coding, in exchange for an unnoticed confusion of meaning, and be a good introduction to the vagaries of T.O. & a partial justification of why they should be learned (if we are going to keep T.O. for a while).

Educational costs would not be more nor less by any program of i.t.m. or i.t.m.-plus-reform intermixing, because such cost depends upon the number of students, the number of teachers & the size of the classes, & these are likely to remain unchanged by curriculum change. Any increase of cost would depend on teacher re-training cost & the cost of re-writing, but not the printing, of texts. Savings by use of an easier code could only come later if an earlier transfer of students to the workforce is thus possible or acceptable. The expectable advantage is in *quality*, rather than cost of literacy, & the quality, both of literacy & oracy, would improve most rapidly & cheaply as well, by use of a new, *full, phonemic* alphabet to make a discussion & learning of dialectal & standard speech patterns possible, the written language interesting & easy to acquire, instead of boring & difficult, & all a better base for improved education & living.

I.t.m. materials, teaching aids at the primary level, should be prepared locally, so that it can be matched, exactly, to the local dialect. If not, wrong values would be attached to the reform alphabet symbols & this would tend to prevent adoption of a standard English diction as advanced English print was met with later, which must be spelled according to a single standard of pronunciation. This standard should be a widespread dialect that includes *all* of the sounds of English speech & is easily understood by speakers of other dialects. This agreed upon standard is often presented as a desirable way in which it can serve all the various dialects to bring them together. It is not an advantage now, nor will serve in that way with any kind of spelling. But it could be if this standard were a desirable goal to attain. These dialects are just another result of the deplorable confusions of T.O. & would have to be actively prevented from confusing or delaying the application of a reform code. Dialectal variation would gradually disappear, but a record remain for those who

value & enjoy a study of quaint disadvantaged areas.

All this discussion concerns a progressive application of an ideal *new letter* alphabet & ignores the keyboard problem that can wait for about 20 years or more for solution, tho that would be some help in education if done sooner. The system must be perfected & accepted as a complete lexicon of reformed spellings, allowed in primary grades &, hopefully, higher grades in order, before it can get a start at all. If a no-new letter alphabet is the best we can hope for, there is another plan of application, SR-1, by which a single vowel, the vowel in *bet*, always gets that same indication, & I have tried to use it thus in this writing. Reform of other sound indicators can be delayed until this one is generally used, after which more agreement & reform can happen at any rate until complete. Progress can be made thus with only partial & slow agreement & application. Why not try it? If consistently used, a reader can't misunderstand or think you made stupid mistakes.

There *is*, however, another viable reform option that does not involve a disruption of T.O. letter spelling & its practice in the adult & business world trained to operate that way, & does not require full acceptance by the nervous establishment or the apathetic public. This is the *individual* acceptance of a typeable, & so printable, shorthand by a growing number of teenage students, first for steno purposes, but also with displacement of the faulty T.O. letter practices stressed as an added incentive to win acceptance by these young students. Typeability is essential so that practice reading to standardize word pattern can develop instant recognition familiarity with such patterns. This can take a long time; we now need up to 5 or 6 years before T.O. word pattern is familiar enough to make reading informative or pleasurable, rather than just a decoding chore. That will not change, tho the decoding will be simpler & less confusing with a consistently applied phonemic code. T.O. luvurz in the educational world will have less reason to fear & oppose such a plan & may even learn to like it, if the individual acceptance grows & printed shorthand literature loses its strangeness in time.

I am developing my RIT to prove that such a typeable shorthand *is* possible, but I do not contend that it is the only or best typeable shorthand. In fact, there are so many ways to explore that deciding on symbol choice & structure of wordform is a slow & confusing process, & I have made many changes in the system I have been offering under the same name. If you don't like some of the details, help me change it, or offer some competition. I'm always glad to hear from someone in this fascinating field of endeavor.

Arnold Rupert, Lunenburg, Ont. Canada.