

# Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972

**Dedicated to finding the causes of difficulties in learning reading and spelling.**

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## 1. Late News

### **China pushes the teaching of the phonetic Roman alphabet\***

\*from *The New York Times*, Sunday, Oct. 15, 1972.

Hong Kong, Oct. 14 – In a rural commune in China's Chekiang Province the peasants' management committee has called on all teachers to develop the ability to "render the Chinese language phonetically and to give lessons in standard Chinese."

The committee's action, viewed in the light of other recent reports from China on the question of language reform, indicates that the Chinese authorities look forward to a time when the present ideographic system of writing will be replaced by a phonetic alphabet based on the Roman letters used in writing English.

Commenting on the shortcomings of Chinese characters, an article in *China Reconstructs*, a monthly magazine printed in Peking said that using a phonetic alphabet to write Chinese was the "fundamental orientation for the reform of the Chinese written language."

*Even teachers don't know*

However, it said, Romanization is a long-range goal and could "not be realized in a short time." Nevertheless, the authorities are pressing for more progress than has been made to date. The Chekiang commune's action was reported over the provincial radio service in a broadcast complaining that many of the commune's teachers did not know how to render the Chinese language phonetically and did not speak standard Chinese in their classes.

The commune management committee organized study lessons at which the teachers were helped to understand "the great significance of teaching phonetic spelling of the Chinese language and promoting the speaking of standard Chinese," the broadcast said.

17 years ago a Chinese written language reform committee called for the simplification of Chinese characters, the standardization of the spoken language, and the Romanization of the written language.

Significant progress has been made in simplifying written characters and reducing the number in general use and some success has been achieved in getting Mandarin, which is the Peking dialect, spoken more widely throughout the country. Introduction of a Romanized form of writing Chinese has made less headway.

The existing system is championed on traditional, esthetic and practical grounds. It has the advantage of serving all of China's dialects, which one survey put at 1,800. One written character can have the same meaning in different parts of the country, altho it may have a different sound.

But phonemicization remains the ultimate goal because it could unify the nation with a common language. This was spelled out earlier this year by Kuo Mo-jo, a senior official who is also a leading literary figure. Writing in *Hung Chi*, the theoretical journal published by the party's Central Committee, Mr. Kuo gave this quotation from Chairman Mao Tse-tung: "The written language must be reformed. It is necessary to take the road of phonemicization, which is commonly adopted by other languages of the world."

Mr. Kuo said there would be a "transitional period of long duration" before the full introduction of the phonetic alphabet, during which Chinese characters would be further simplified.

However, he said, the Chinese characters would ultimately be "like ancient Greek, ancient Latin and Sanscrit in being" limited in use to a small number of specialists.

### **Simplifying the Arabic Language**

Prof. Fuad Hanna Tarazi of the Arabic and Near Eastern Language Department of the American Univ. of Beirut, has been conducting a research project on "Ways and Means of Simplifying."

The project is divided into three main parts: grammar, vocabulary and writing system. The part relating to grammar has been completed. It includes chapters on speech, word-structure, inflections and causation theory.

The main objective of the second part now underway is the study of the meanings of sample words as they appear in Arabic lexicons, and their relevance to their stem words on the one hand and the needs of modern life on the other.

The study of the writing system will be undertaken on the completion of the second part. [G.H.]

The *SPB* has been approved by the Internal Revenue Dept. to be classified as a non-profit, educational organization. This means that gifts and donations to it are tax deductible.

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[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972 pp2,3 in the printed version*]

## **2. I.R.A. Reports on: The National Right to Read Program**

The following are excerpts from a summary of the developments and accomplishments of the Right to Read Effort:

**The Goal:** The National Right to Read Effort is aimed at ensuring that by 1980, 97% of all people under 16 years living in the United States and 90% of all those over 16 will possess and use literacy skills. Functional literacy is defined as possession and employment of reading skills which enable an individual to benefit from the options American society has to offer.

**Basic Principles:** Right to Read operates under some basic principles, the first of which is that with the exception of the 1% of our population which is considered uneducable, all people can learn to read if they are given materials designed to meet their needs.

The second is that teachers will adopt effective methods if they are provided with a viable and challenging program within which to work. And third, that the United States now has the resources, research, human and financial power to cope with the reading crisis.

The National Right to Read Effort, then, places great confidence in students, in educational personnel, and in the quality of available research. If these resources are used and if people throughout the country are committed to working toward the elimination of illiteracy, then the crisis will be quelled.

In pursuing these goals and in acting on these principles, the Right to Read provides a delivery system which consists of information, technical assistance, and money.

.Right to Read is presently servicing a total of 244 school- and community-based sites. In establishing these sites, the goal was for each selected site to plan the best possible program for its unique needs, using the materials, information, and assistance furnished by Right to Read. Each grant was given in two parts: a percentage of the total grant was given for a planning period with the balance of the grant becoming available upon a work statement which reflected both site needs' and Right to Read goals and objectives.

Of the 170 school-based sites, 131 have completed the planning phase of their grant and have received the balance of first-year funding for implementation of their programs. This includes the 21 Impact sites which average two schools for each Right to Read program. The remaining 39 school-based sites and the 74 community-based sites were to submit work statements in August in order to become operational in September.

The school-based sites are designated in one of four categories:

- *Transition site* is without substantial federal funds earmarked for reading improvement but is willing to make the transition from existing ineffective reading programs to effective ones. It receives a grant of \$50,000.

- *Redirection site* has substantial federal funds, however, it still has an ineffective reading program and needs to use resources differently. It receives \$30,000.
- *Expansion site* has promising practices related to the teaching of reading and has students who are achieving in the 2nd and 3rd quartiles instead of the lowest quartile, as are the students in the first two types of sites. It receives \$40,000.
- *Impact site* has an exemplary program which can serve as a demonstration model regarding the application of reading methods, sound management, use of the diagnostic/prescriptive approach, and involvement of the community in its program. Has two satellite schools whose programs it must help to upgrade. Sites located in 21 large cities. Each receives \$100,000.

The community-based programs during the past year have been directed toward the out-of-school adolescent population, the young adult, and the older adult who are in need of reading help. Community based programs are much more diverse in type of location, population, and program intent and can be found, for example, in prisons, community colleges, the inner city, and on Indian reservations.

**Technical Assistance:** One of the basic beliefs of the Right to Read Effort is that it is imperative to offer federal aid in the form of technical assistance. The Office of Education is working with 24 reading consultants and 5 institutional teams to provide technical assistance to Right to Read programs.

The reading consultants are distributed throughout the states, and the five teams are based at Ball State Univ. in Indiana; Northwest Regional Lab of USOE; Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, Texas; City College of New York; and the Univ. of Georgia. Each of the teams has the equivalent of two fulltime members; one works with program planning and the other is a reading consultant. Funds for technical assistance amount to \$327,927.

**Materials Development:** The *Needs Assessment Package* was developed by the Right to Read staff and includes step-by-step instructions for gathering data on student achievement, faculty skills and training needs, and information on basic approaches to teaching reading.

### 3. Report on Education Research\*

\* from *American Education*, Feb. 16, 1972.

USOE Report. Most schools have a reading problem. 91% of the nation's 83,000 elementary and secondary schools have children with a reading problem, and nearly a quarter of these schools have no special instruction for those who need help, according to a recent report by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Based on the results of a survey of 456 elementary and secondary schools taken as part of a national sample of 700 schools, the NCES estimates that in 1968, 75,000 schools had at least one child – not mentally retarded – with a reading problem that would require special help. Of these, 77% had some specialized reading assistance for such children, but 17,000 offered no such programs, and in 2,000 other schools children had to go outside the building for help, sometimes to another district.

The NCES notes the commitment to the Right to Read and says this report can serve to provide "baselines" for measuring progress toward the goal of having every student read by focusing on "the numbers of schools providing . . . specialized reading instruction and the numbers of staff engaged in this instruction."

Copies of the report, *"Specialized Reading Instruction in the Public Schools, 1968,"* may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. for 25¢. Order catalog number HE 5.230: 30043.

#### **Assessment Finds Grammar no Obstacle to Creativity.**

All those years of sweating over the inconsistencies of English grammar and spelling may not have been a wasteful imposition on the youthful creative soul after all. The National Assessment of Educational Progress released its Writing Mechanics report recently, and its findings seem to indicate that young Americans who do well with basic writing, mechanics – spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure – also tend to write with the most ingenuity.

The National Assessment, which is sponsored by the Education Commission of the States, is surveying the knowledge and skills in various subjects of young people in the 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old and "young adult" (26 to 35-year-old) age groups. In its writing mechanics survey, the NAEP reports among other things, that 9-year-olds show almost no mastery of basic writing mechanics, and by age 17 a considerable number of youths still have difficulty with spelling and word choice. All four age groups chose simple sentences and common punctuation marks, but the better young adult writers tended to use precise, sophisticated vocabularies. Judges could not decide whether teenagers had only simple ideas to write about or whether they lacked the mechanical skills to express more complex ones. Finally, the problem consistently plaguing all writers in the assessment appears to have been – who would have thought it – spelling!

#### **4. Prejudice and Fear!**

Introduction by Ben D. Wood: In the matter of alphabetic modifications, we must remember what Einstein once said, it is easier to break up an atom than a prejudice; and we are dealing with a hydra-headed prejudice that is buttressed by more than one well-heeled political lobby in Washington, D.C., and in every state education department. Have you noticed that in all the rhetoric published by the Right to Read bureaucracy, not one single reference has been made to i.t.a. or W.E.S.? This despite the fact that at least three of the men who became top-dogs in that bureaucracy promised me on oath that they would see to it that i.t.a. would have a high place in their list of suggested reforms!! The only one who tried to honor that promise was quietly allowed to resign.

As another example of how that lobby works, see the following clipping about a California episode that is self-explanatory. It is only a minor bit of evidence that "the land of the free and the home of the brave" is not ruled by persons free from fear or brave enough to face the possibility of dramatic change.

#### **Political Intrigue in School Textbooks, by Russell Kirk.**

from the Fort Wayne, Indiana, News-Sentinel, Apr. 8, 1970.

Perhaps nothing in America needs improvement more than does the typical school textbook – which for the past three decades has been (with a few honorable exceptions, of course) dull, shallow, and unchallenging. One reason why it is difficult to improve textbooks, at least in public schools, is the unpleasant fact that political logrolling enters into the selection of public-school materials, too often.

Consider a current case in California. That state, like some others, requires statewide adoption of uniform textbooks in all public schools. This is an error to begin with, because it represses diversity and experiment. Also such a system of mass purchasing invites the abuses that attend state monopolies, and which afflict state liquor commissions, for example.

In California, the state Department of Public Instruction has recommended to the official commission, which approves textbooks, that California should adopt the social science program – including the sound textbooks – of the Educational Research Council of America. This Council, with headquarters in Cleveland, is an educational foundation (non-profit) that has been remarkably successful with its reformed mathematics program. Its social science manuals, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, stand head and shoulders above the textbooks that have been thrust, for decades, upon the unfortunate average American pupil.

At the urging of his professional staff, Dr. Max Rafferty, California's Superintendent of Public Instruction, recommended to the curriculum commission that the ERC's social science program should be adopted throughout the state. But a commercial publisher that already enjoys the lucrative California social-science textbook market, and political opponents of Dr. Rafferty, have vehemently opposed this improvement.

One way to block this change in textbooks is to blacken the reputation of the Educational Research Council. To this end, adversaries of the projected reform have resurrected a libelous series of articles about the ERC, published last year in an Ohio newspaper.

These defamatory pieces were written by disgruntled former employees of the Council, in association with certain New Left types. The Ohio newspaper was persuaded to publish them – until the paper's editor perceived their libelous drift, and abruptly terminated the series. The authors of the series then proceeded to denounce, in a little radical broadcast, the editor and his paper; doubtless he is a sadder and wiser man, nowadays.

Reprints of these Ohio articles were given to practically every newspaper in California, and to all members of the commission that approves textbooks. This ploy gladdened the hearts of the adversaries of Dr. Rafferty; whatever that gentleman happens to recommend, his opponents hasten to denounce, regardless of the objective merits of the textbooks.

At this writing, the question is not yet decided, and perhaps the powers that be will give fair consideration, to ERC's heartening and imaginative program. If they don't, the sufferer will be the pupils of California, rather than Dr. Rafferty. And the dreary subterranean connections between certain commercial textbook publishers and certain political opportunists will be reinforced by the success of their shameful tactics. Who cares what happens to children's minds. Alas, pitifully few.

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*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972 p3 in the printed version]*

### **5. The Etymological Barrier, by Frank T. Du Feu**

Most of those who object to spelling reform on etymological grounds make two mistakes. First, they give traditional orthography (T.O.) credit for being much better than it really is, and secondly, they fail to give any reformed spelling credit for being as good as it is. Thus, in their minds, T.O. is etymologically so superior to the most innocuous reformed spelling that they cannot consider without alarm the possibility that it might at some time or other be superseded.

But in this day and age, when more and more foreigners are learning English as their second language, and eventual entry into the Common Market is an integral part of Government policy, a minimal-change reform like the author's Revised Spelling (R.S.), which is illustrated in this preface, can no more be rejected on etymological grounds than the Channel Tunnel could be rejected on strategic grounds.

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## **6. Basic Problems in Education: Reading, Spelling & Communication, by Harvie Barnard**

Communication, like education, begins at birth and takes many forms. Both are acquired in many ways and both develop in accord with environmental circumstances, some primitive, others formalized. They are closely related and have much in common, except that in a formal situation – school -, there is little or no education without good communication, while in a purely natural situation you can have plenty of communication without "education." In modern society, which is largely formalized, it is generally agreed that inadequate or underdeveloped communications constitute a fundamental problem in practically all educational processes. What, then, can be done to implement communication, to make it more effective and more readily learned by the developing child?

The learning process advances quite rapidly to a point where successful continuation depends upon two basic skills, (1) speech, and (2) reading. Many cultures have survived for thousands of years on speech alone, yet modern man has progressed beyond primitive living primarily *because of* his use of written language, and because of his ability to "decode" and comprehend the written word. It is the knowledge and discoveries which thoughtful men have set down in print which records, stores and thereby is made available to new generations. Thus there is a continually expanding volume of human knowledge which literate persons can read, and which we attempt to assimilate in obtaining an education.

Without this ability to "read," to decode and comprehend, modern man cannot keep pace with contemporary developments, cannot become completely communicative, cannot obtain an education. Without education he cannot master modern skills, cannot contribute to progress, may not even be able to support himself within the rules of present day society, (lawfully), and sooner or later becomes a social menace and a burden to the community of which he is an unhappy part.

Since the decoding process which we -call reading is such a basically essential skill in achieving happiness and success in every area of human living, it would seem reasonable that any methods, devices, steps or simplifications which would make this decoding process more easily and effectively learned would be quickly grasped and put into use. Unfortunately, apparently because of the indifference and reluctance of the "static status" to accept change such is not the case. It would appear that leadership is lacking, or that those we depend upon for progress are insensitive to the problems and the needs of the younger generation, the children who will eventually replace them.

Because *decoding* is so closely entwined with *encoding*, (composing, writing, and/or printing), our ability to read successfully is largely dependent upon the manner in which the ideas and observations of writers are expressed. This includes such controllable factors as the style and size of type, the language itself, and, for any particular language, the symbols used, (alphabet), and the manner in which these symbols are assembled into words, which we call "spelling." Unfortunately, our spelling is not simple in the English language in which most of the words are not spelled as they

are sounded – are not spelled fonetikally- thereby causing confusion and frustration for the beginning learner, whether child or adult. Because of the inconsistent relationship between spoken words and the symbols used to represent them, we have bewilderment, frustration, failure to learn, and often "dropouts."

For those more fortunate children whose early environment has prepared them for the problems and complexities of beginning reading, there will be much less confusion and frustration, and therefore less chance of failure. There will, however, be more or less slowing of the reading process and a more tedious difficult job for the teacher. What could have been learned in a year or less will require two or three years for the average pupil, while the less well-prepared, (those lacking "readiness"), may require much longer and will often be placed in "special ed" groups or in classes for the "slow" or retarded.

This lack of pre-school preparation has been greatly helped by Head Start or pre-kindergarten teaching, without which many disadvantaged children would have extreme difficulty because of lack of readiness. At one time it was believed that being ready to read was purely a function of age, but this concept has been proven false. We now know that environment is the real conditioner, and that given a healthy, happy, well-nourished situation during the pre-school years, from birth until good coordination is accomplished, many children are "ready" to read at 3, 4, or 5 years as compared to a previously established age of 6 or 7.

For those not reached by Head Start, by the most favorable environmental circumstances, or otherwise gifted, a considerable percentage will be destined to become bewildered, confused, frustrated, and perhaps fail in an academic situation because of reading problems. The non-reader is usually a poor communicator, poor in spelling, retarded in writing, and limited in vocabulary. At least 50% of these will be functionally illiterate, if not literally so. At best these children will read very slowly, with little understanding and derive little knowledge or pleasure from the effort expended.

There are several explanations for this situation beyond the elements of initial readiness. These include the specific school situation, teaching efficiency, size of classes, teacher experience, and parental cooperation. But the basic stumbling block is the material being presented, the language itself.

After being taught the sounds of the letters, the child becomes confused when he is told that the word which he has always heard "sed" is spelled quite differently, "said," and there are many others.- *kat* is spelled *cat*, *siti* is spelt *city*, *kake* is *cake*, *kandy* is *candy*, *iz* is *is*, *waz* is *was*, *sirki* is *circle*, *fone* is *phone*, *aut* is *ought*, *tho* is *though*, *thot* is *thought*, *thru* is *through*, and *noomoniam* is *pneumonia*, and in general there are too many inconsistencies for our young pupil to absorb. Too much is not "what it sounds like," and therefore does not "make sense" to the child, – or to anyone else, unless you consider tradition more important than literacy. Our children's future is being sacrificed to the false gods of tradition and etymology.



Because English is only partly fonetik, there is no consistent relationship between the *name* of a symbol and its *sound* as used. Children are taught their Aye Bee Cee Dee's, etc. only to discover a few dayz later that "A is for apple, ape, arm, ant, and apron," "that B is for bat, big, bug, and bus," which is a far different sound from BEE. C is probably the most confused and/or konfuzing of all because it is for "cat, car, cent, and city," not to mention *circle* and *concise*. C has no definite sound of its own since the Romans started substituting the "c" symbol for the "k" about 3000 years ago!

The little people are also faced with the confusion of the "g" and "j" sounds, as in *game, germ, gill, go, gee* (as in "*Gee whiz*"). The "s" and "z" sounds are also badly mixed up as in "as" for *az*, "was" for *wuz*, while we do use "buz" for *buz*. In the proper noun and name category we have George and Gordo, Gene and Jean, Gerald and Jerry, Geoffery and Jeffery, but since names are often quite illogical and would require court action to be changed, we will have to contend with inconsistencies in this area and continue to rely on memory without lojik for most of our "proper" nouns.

Yes, tiz pretty sticky stuff, and at times not easy for even the experienced teacher to avoid the pitfalls, traps, and roadblocks of speling and reeding.

Let's not criticize the teacher or blame, the pupil. Often those with the better minds – the most lojikal – have the most trouble with speling. It's the language – ye olde Englishe tradition of Bunyan, Bacon, Shakespeare, and Wycliffe which we've been hitched to for too long. There's a faint ray of daylight penetrating the gloom of 16th century tradition. The English have finally abandoned their ridiculous "system" of weights, measures, and coinage for the Metric System which became standard in the rest of Europe nearly two hundred years ago. Fortunately for US we adopted the French system of money, (the Metric), at the time of the Revolution, altho for "reasons" that didn't make sense, we clung to the English non-system of weights, measures and volumes until 1972.

And so, "The King is ded!" Let's hope he stays that way, and while we're in the process of mumifying his majesty – perhaps it should be spelt "magesty" as in logic, magic, and genetic; perhaps its hi time for a simplification and modernization of our goode olde Englishe language?!!! Isn't a better means of communication worth it – especially when we already know quite positively that illiteracy, dropouts, delinquency, and criminality go hand- in-hand!!!!

A change to simplified spelling is long overdue, and legislation has already been recommended to the U. S. Office of Education, Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare to implement this forward step. Educators who are fully aware of the seriousness of illiteracy with all its attendant problems, costs and consequences, will certainly support this effort toward real progress in education. What to do? You can: (1) use the simpler form of spellings. (2) spred the word for simplified spelling, and (3) write your Congressman, (a) acquainting him with the tremendous costs of the illiteracy-crime tie-up, and (b) asking his support of language simplification legislation now in the Congress.

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972 pp5,6 in the printed version*]

[Letters in green should be joined. Green z = reversed z.]

## 7. sliŋz and arrœz by JOHN DOWNING\*

[These extracts from the i.t.a. transliteration of Hamlet's soliloquy are from the anthology of English literature printed in i.t.a. in Downing (1964).]

\*Reprinted from *Reading*, vol. 6, no. 1, March, 1972. UKRA.

If teachers of reading are to make a balanced judgment of the value of i.t.a. for their pupils, they need to know, not only the criticisms which have been levelled against it, but also the answers which have been offered in defence. Also new evidence has been brought to bear on some of these issues. The recent article in *Reading* by McCann tended to dwell on the criticisms without the replies and it was not up to date with regard to the evidence.

Indeed, McCann's criticisms read like a historical list of the sliŋz and arrœz of i.t.a.'s outræjus fortuen. Professionally, reading researchers and teachers cannot accept that 'tis næbler in the miend tō suffer them. They must tæk armz agænst a see ov trublz and bie oppœziŋ end them. This is the professional way to resolve McCann's question – tō bee or not tō bee? – in the best interests of young children learning to read.

Sir James Pitman (1969) has likened these criticisms of i.t.a. to a series of defence works dug by the conservative forces preparing for the siege of t.o.:

*Ditch 1* – i.t.a. is criticised as being 'unnecessary and harmful, because children must find it (i.t.a.) equally difficult to learn to read'.

*Ditch 2* – Here the t.o. defender falls back to the position that, even if i.t.a. is easier, 'the child will then need to *unlearn* the new skill and to learn afresh to read orthodox texts; that the process of unlearning will be harmful and that in any case he will lose more time in the lengthy transitional processes of relearning than he could possibly have gained in the initial stages'.

*Ditch 3* – Even if i.t.a.'s success at the transition is admitted, then 'the damage to the child's spelling will be devastating – and permanent'.

*Ditch 4* – If ditch 3 is yielded, it is claimed that 'the child would anyhow and in due time have become literate and therefore gains nothing from learning to read and write at an earlier age'.

*Ditch 5* – Children who fail to learn to read 'do so because of lack of intelligence'. Therefore i.t.a. will not take them far and this cannot 'justify such a disturbance to the more intelligent majority'.

*Ditch 6* – When the ability to read orthodox print is acquired through i.t.a. 'it may recede at a later stage; i.t.a. children are unlikely to make the further progress which they would have made had they learned with the orthodox alphabet(s) and spelling from the beginning'.

*Ditch 7* – The evidence of i.t.a.'s success is 'not to be relied upon because it is merely the consequence of unusual pressure and enthusiasm of the teachers rather than the change of medium'.

*Ditch 8* – Finally, i.t.a.'s adoption 'should be postponed for a number of years until it has been established by a further series of researches that it cannot be further perfected' (Pitman, pp. 257-8).

Although McCann does not include criticisms related to all eight of Pitman's ditches, most of them from *ditch 1* to *ditch 8*, are present in his article.

*Ditch 1* – Against the overwhelming evidence that t.o. is a serious cause of failure in learning to read, he cites the study by Lee (1960). Lee's investigation comprised several sub-researches related to this problem. His survey of the relationship between the regularity of a language's orthography and the methods (look-and-say versus phonic) by which children are taught to read it has the highest validity. A new investigation of the same problem in the study of reading in fourteen different

nations by Downing *et al* (1972) has confirmed Lee's conclusion: there is no connection whatsoever between teaching methods and the regularity with which phonemes are coded in the orthography. The new research has found the reason for this lack of relationship. That is, that other educational considerations of higher priority influence the methodology of teaching reading. But Lee's experiments on the question – is t.o. a cause of difficulty? – were invalid and inconclusive. Quite apart from serious errors in his research methods, the tiny samples studied made Lee's experiments inadequate for providing any useful evidence on this issue.

In actual fact, the research evidence is unequivocal as regards *ditch 1*. Warburton's (1969) review of seventeen different experiments in Britain and the United States could not find one single test result in any of them which showed t.o. to be easier than i.t.a. The new cross-national study of reading in fourteen countries mentioned above has provided further reinforcing evidence (if it were needed). Any mismatch between the child's prior linguistic experience and the requirements of the task of learning to read causes cognitive confusion, and one source of mismatch is the irregularity or complexity of t.o. in English.

*Ditch 2* – Here McCann cites the present author's research findings. He writes of 'the difficulties Downing admitted were being encountered at the transition stage.' While it is true that the original report (Downing 1967) to which McCann refers was cautious about the effects of the transition stage, much more definite findings in favour of i.t.a.'s success in this transfer process have been published subsequently. In particular, Downing and Latham (1969) have reported the results of testing the children in the original British i.t.a. experiment in their fifth year at school. All showed that the i.t.a. pupils were significantly superior in t.o. achievements than children who has used t.o. from the outset. The lack of difficulty in the transition stage is emphasized by Southgate (1969): 'Of all the verbal evidence collected in this inquiry, the fact most frequently and most emphatically stated was that children did not experience difficulty in making the transition in reading from i.t.a. to t.o. Teachers and those experienced visitors to schools who had observed the transition taking place had no doubts whatsoever on this score ' (p. 168). Although it was written before the publication of the follow-up report by Downing and Latham, Warburton had sufficient evidence to conclude in his part of the Schools Council's report: 'There is no evidence whatsoever for the belief that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in traditional orthography. It would appear that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in the initial teaching alphabet ' (pp. 234-5).

Thus, the research evidence makes *ditch 2* quite indefensible. *Ditches 4 and 6* must also collapse in the light of the fifth year results of Downing and Latham. Also *ditch 5* is untenable in the light of the research data in the original report (Downing 1967) which showed that the average and superior pupils showed the highest improvement in comparisons of i.t.a. and t.o. Although that report was very cautious about i.t.a.'s effectiveness with slower learners, subsequent evidence has shown how drastically the failure rate has been reduced through the use of i.t.a. A great many children who would have failed to learn to read in t.o. have become successful readers through beginning with i.t.a. (Downing, 1969).

*Ditch 3* – McCann comments that it 'has not been satisfactorily proved' that 'pupils taught through i.t.a. would become better spellers of t.o. than those taught through t.o.' Again, this information is out of date. In the original report (Downing, 1967), the results of only two spelling tests were available. After 2½ years, i.t.a. and t.o. pupils were equal in t.o. spelling ability. A year later the i.t.a. pupils were superior to the t.o. pupils. Subsequently, Downing and Latham found that the i.t.a. pupils' superiority in t.o. spelling attainments was still maintained in their fifth year of schooling. Hence, *ditch 3* falls.

The greater part of McCann's article relates to *ditches* 7 and 8 which Pitman regards as the final reserve lines of defence.

*Ditch 7* – Teachers' enthusiasm is not mentioned by McCann. After more than a decade of use, the chicken or egg problem of i.t.a. and teachers' enthusiasm appears to have been resolved. Instead McCann uses another version of this ditch: the improvements are not caused by i.t.a., but by the phonic methods used to teach it. It is incomprehensible how McCann can assert that 'Downing ... suggests i.t.a. should be arrogated to the role of a phonic method ' (p. 24) and 'it is not untrue to say that like Diack (1967), Downing now believes a phonic approach is superior.' On the contrary, *it is completely untrue*. Both Sir James Pitman and the present author have stated quite clearly and consistently that i.t.a. is not a teaching method. It is a medium. Method and medium are two distinct dimensions of learning to read and must be clearly differentiated in research. It is meaningless to state that 'a phonic approach is superior to i.t.a.'. McCann's 'phonic approach' could be in i.t.a. or t.o. 'i.t.a.' could refer to i.t.a. with phonics or i.t.a. with look-and-say. To compare 'phonics 'with' i.t.a. 'is therefore as meaningless as comparing a gas stove with grilling to determine which is the best way to cook fish.

As a matter of fact, i.t.a. is being taught successfully with both look-and-say and phonics and with many other methods which have been described systematically in another previous article (Downing, 1968). Southgate (1969) has given the research answer to this version of *ditch 7*: ' It would be a grave error to assume that the use of i.t.a. had brought about an increase in formal phonic training' (p. 53).

*Ditch 8* – McCann concludes that: ' It seems an inescapable conclusion that ... Downing has ' come to ' reject what were claimed as (i.t.a.'s) significant virtues.' This is a reference to the numerous tentative suggestions for future experimental work to improve the detailed design of the i.t.a. alphabet which were put forward at the end of the original report (Downing, 1967) on the British i.t.a. experiments. It is the proper duty of a scientific educational researcher to report all the limitations to his findings and to indicate what future research needs to be done in the hope of possible further progress. This was the only intention of those proposals. McCann misinterprets this part of the report by suggesting that it means that i.t.a. must be rejected. As a matter of fact the item to which he refers is number 8 in a list of recommendations in order of priority, of which number 1 was: ' *The initial Teaching Alphabet, as at present constituted, should be introduced into more schools so that it can become more generally available to beginners learning to read and write*' (p. 298).

McCann also claims that 'Children have experienced considerable difficulty formulating:

fh, th, ω, ch, η, ee, au, œ.' This is not so. All that was proposed in the 1967 report was that other forms *might* be tried which *might* be easier for children to write. Southgate's (1969) research provides direct evidence on this question. She found that teachers were generally unconcerned about any problem of letter formation. But what was emphasized in her report was that free writing in i.t.a. 'begins at a much earlier age; it is greater in quantity; and the quality has improved in content, in the flow of ideas and in the breadth of vocabulary used ' (p. 68). The statistical research of Downing, Fyfe and Lyon (1966) confirms her findings. Thus McCann's assertion that children experience 'considerable difficulty ' in writing i.t.a. characters is contradicted by the results of all the research.

More accurately, McCann states: 'Downing (1967, pp. 305-6) has gone on to state that these augmentations may not be essential to the success of i.t.a.'. This was another proposal for future research, which in this case, has since been conducted. During the past year, experiments in Canada have indicated quite clearly that the augmentations do indeed have an important function in the initial stages of learning to read (Oliver, Nelson and Downing, in press). Specifically, this latest

research on i.t.a. finds that one particular source of confusion in t.o. is the lack of a clear demarcation of the boundaries of phonemes in their graphic representation. For example, the word *shooting* contains eight letters for five phonemes. There is no way of knowing from the t.o. spelling that *sh* belong together and that *oo* and *ng* each represent a single unit. This is because the seven spaces separate letters and not phonemes. In contrast, each space in the i.t.a. spelling of this word does fall precisely on the phoneme boundary, viz: *ʃhøtɪŋ*).

These new experiments show conclusively that the child's perception of phoneme boundaries is significantly superior in i.t.a. to what it is in t.o. These results lend support to Pitman's view that his design of i.t.a. does not need improvement in the immediate future.

What is more to the point at issue, these findings represent a breach in the final defence ditch of t.o., for they indicate that any modifications to i.t.a. are likely to be of minor, if any, importance in increasing i.t.a.'s superiority over t.o. There seems to be no escaping the conclusion from the consensus of a wealth of research findings. Beginning with t.o. means poorer achievements in reading, writing, and spelling than can be obtained with i.t.a. Beginning with t.o. means that a significantly higher proportion of children will fail than they would with i.t.a. Every year that the adoption of i.t.a. is postponed means that many children will have been needlessly led into failure. Surely the time has come to take action on the results of all the research of these past ten years. McCann's quotation of Hamlet's opening words *tō bee* or not *tō bee* should lead us to consider how that soliloquy ends:

thus conſhiens duz mæk couardz ov us aull, and thus the nætiv hue ov rezolueſhion iz sicklid o'r with the pæl cast ov thaut, and enterprizeez ov græt pith and mœment with this regard thær currents turn arie and lōz the næm ov acſhion.

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## **8. Reading Instruction: Chaotic or Utopian?, by Emmett Albert Betts\***

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My approach to this discussion of the pros and cons of reading instruction emphasizes "feed forward" rather than old times revisited – identifies significant trends in contemporary instruction that appear to validate optimism for the future.

Is reading instruction chaotic or utopian? The point of view – optimistic or pessimistic – depends to no small degree on the situation. It may tend to be chaotic when the administrators (superintendent and/or principal) neglect their *instructional leadership* function. It may tend to be chaotic when the school system is in the black shadow of a university diploma mill. It may tend to be chaotic when an anomalous reading consultant is appointed or anointed without benefit of preparation via demonstrations – laboratory courses. It may tend to be chaotic when regimented procedures for differentiating instruction and for teaching reading are imposed on reluctant teachers by authority. In these situations, a pessimistic parent, teacher, or pupil is an optimist with experience. About all they can do is to follow the example of A. A. Milne's old sailor who:

. . . in the end did nothing at all,  
But basked on the shingle wrapped up in a shawl.  
And I think it was dreadful the way he behaved --  
He did nothing but basking until he was saved!

### **Right to Read**

As a preface to this presentation, I wish to make an important point.

In recent years, a Commissioner of Education, from HEW, raised the hopes of dedicated parents and teachers by his promise to give every child, within the United States, the "Right to Read" within ten years. Unfortunately, this commitment was supported by neither plan nor staff. Since then, millions upon millions of dollars have been spent on behavioral objectives, performance contracts, summarizing researches that had already been critiqued, comparing one initial teaching alphabet with the traditional one rather than with other proposed alphabets, and so on. A very limited prescience would have permitted a dim view of these abortive and frantic approaches to a complex problem. So this question appears to have at least pragmatic validity: How many learners – children or adults – have profited from this ferent activity to guarantee the "Right to Read"? In short, has a single practice been changed to escalate reading instruction in your classroom or in your school?

The "Right to Read" idea, altho conceived with considerable equivocation and overlaid with a strong political odor, was and is a worthy goal for educators rather than politicians. However, in only a few short years the so-called "Right to Read" program has become a mere cliché – a concept lost in a bureaucratic jungle of petty politics. Instead of working up a full-head of steam, the politicians have generated a heavy ground fog over the "Right to Read" program and brag about how many projects have been funded with millions of dollars. But there remains the possibility that it is an educational blessing in a temporary political disguise.

There is indeed a very urgent need for inter-disciplinary research on reading processes as a basis for methodology. Yet, there is enough scientific evidence available today to insure a significant escalation of reading achievement at all school levels.

Yes, there is an important statement regarding "Right to Read" to make in 1972: *This program will become a reality rather than a mirage when a special authority is legislated into existence – an authority that makes use of resources in diverse but relevant disciplines.*

One final word on "Right to Read": Parents hold the keys to their children's motivations, to learn. Hence parent education is the keystone to any program for the escalation of reading instruction.

### **Focus on Progress**

As stated above, this discussion of reading instruction is focused more sharply on what lies ahead rather than on the past revisited or the status quo – on the promising future beginning with the status quo in each classroom or school. As merely a take-off point:

What next steps are necessary to improve *parent* and teacher programs which, of course, don't exist in some communities.

What new dimensions of individual differences are being discovered and what are pragmatic approaches to differentiated instruction?

What motivations of different children and different adults can be identified and captured to escalate their achievement?

What is the role of phonics in word perception?

What types of perceptual learning are required to decode traditional orthography (spellings)? What crucial psychological factors in word perception (e.g., need and feedback) are essential to rapid and fruitful reading?

What are crucial components of comprehension – of decoding the content message?

### **Status Quo**

At this point, let us take a quick look at the variegated status quo of reading instruction. This status quo is our launching pad for today and the tomorrows.

In 1931, during the not-so-comfortable economic depression, Amos and Andy were discussing the status quo. Finally, Amos asked Andy, "What do you mean by the status quo?" Without hesitation Andy replied, "I mean the mess we're in."

To parents and businessmen, the status quo of reading instruction may appear to be an enormous mess of ambiguities and contradictions – a profusion of confusion. This is only a surface impression, because the foundations of reading instruction are being identified and studied *for the first time* in the history of education; for example, motivations for reading, speech sounds and the letters used to represent them, word perception, grammar, and comprehension. On these foundations, preparations are being made for more nearly scientifically constructed and streamlined programs differentiated to meet the vocational and recreational needs of learners. In short, the status quo of today's reading instruction is an educational renaissance to which productive scholars from many disciplines are contributing, ranging from linguistics to psychology to engineering to optometry.

Today's reading instruction beggars all description, for it is characterized by diverse instructional materials, different methodologies, contrasting emphases on differentiated guidance, disparate attention to motivations for reading, significant divergences in approaches to word perception, and too often, an unforgivable lack of attention to comprehension, to cognition! This neglect of comprehension is based on the highly fallible and limited concept of "reading as a simple decoding of spellings (orthography) into speech sounds." In reality, decoding of writing into speech and decoding the message is a dual function of differentiated guidance and the motivated perceptual and cognitive processing of graphic signals at the phoneme-grapheme and higher linguistic and

cognitive levels. These are the crucial concepts requiring positive use to improve reading instruction in home and school.

To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw: "If all the, so-called reading specialists in this country were laid end to end, they still couldn't reach a conclusion."

### Short Cuts to Utopia

For every problem dogging reading instruction there is and has been a very simple and easy short-cut to utopia – usually clear, understandable, believable, and probably WRONG. To illustrate this observation here are some examples of headlines in the popular press used in "literature" being mailed to educators:

1. "Teach and Lo," the title of an article on the Fernald-Keller laborious V-A-K-T technique in the *Reader's Digest*. But if you wish to read a fallacious recommendation (and untenable delineation) of this Fernald-Keller tactile approach to word perception, turn to one of the popular professional works on the teaching of reading. Dr. Albert Teller has stated this situation very ably: "He who imitates doesn't do it very well."
2. The *Child Centered School* was a professional textbook, with some strong points but based on fallible interpretations of John Dewey's philosophies. This was touted by zealots as the answer to educational needs.
3. The linguistic method solves the reading problem. Is there in the professional literature a description of THE linguistic method? Or, are there as many different ideas about the linguistic approaches as there are linguists or schools of linguistics? Is linguistics one of the foundations of reading instruction or is it a *method*?

Linguists are given credit for scholarship in phonology and grammar. Not one of them is known for scholarship in psychology or education. For this reason, some of them via polemical efforts and turgid writings convinced a few educators and publishers to produce some very silly instructional materials. For example: a linguist's "Nan ran to the can" is in our opinion far more fatuous than "See Dick. See Dick run." The first example is an attempt to write with closed syllables and, therefore, is in direct violation of intonation patterns which linguists claim to understand. Furthermore, these linguistic approaches are based on the paralogism that reading is merely decoding writing into speech and, therefore, decoding the *content* of the message is irrelevant to reading instruction. This simplistic notion, of course, is naive, illogical, incredible, and fraught with danger.

4. Other short-cuts to utopia – too numerous to mention here – include:
  - a. Open classrooms
  - b. Performance contracts
  - c. Experience approach to reading
  - d. Language arts approach
  - e. Meaning approach (Meaning is the goal, not the process of reading.)

Too many educators in positions of authority have always been looking for short-cuts to the improvement of reading instruction. In the 16th century, for example, Valentine suggested phonics as the answer. Since then, this one palliative has been exhumed periodically as the way to solve all reading problems – for the so-called normals, for individuals with garden-variety disabilities, and for the emotionally/neurologically handicapped. And so reading specialists trot from one fad to another – looking, always looking for THE short-cut to utopia.



## Just Imagine!

Let us take a 1972 view of a reading utopia for a few moments:

1. Just imagine reading materials written with consistent spellings for all words rather than irregular spellings; e.g., *one* (numeral) spelled o-n-e, *won* (a triumph) spelled w-o-n, and the *un of* fun spelled u-n. But unlike these can you imagine an alphabet that represents sounds with such high fidelity that *most* children can learn to read at an early age almost as easily as they learn to talk?

Over the centuries the gap between sounds of speech and the spellings used to represent them has widened for many reasons. As a result, English spelling has been labeled illogical, hectic, contradictory, and make-shift with multitudinous defects and obscurities producing muddledom and hopeless chaos. Any poor speller and most beginners in reading would agree with most of these denunciations.

But there is no sugar-coated pill for every problem in reading instruction, including the need for regular spellings. Unfortunately, there are more phonemes (i.e. significant speech sounds) than there are letters of the alphabet. In our research laboratory, we have analyzed 32 different simplified spelling proposals, usually with the designer. In general, there are three different types:

- a. All new symbols; e.g., G.B. Shaw's contest alphabet.
- b. Augmented alphabet; e.g., Pitman's i.t.a. (initial teaching alphabet)
- c. Revised use of traditional Roman alphabet by assigning sounds to letters and digraphs (e.g., *th* of *thin*), e.g., World English Spelling, which Dr. Godfrey Dewey has researched so painstakingly.

Orthography was a basic school subject in the grammar schools (7th and 8th grades) 50 years ago, but today too many educators have never heard the word and too few can spell or define it. Furthermore, relatively few pennies have been spent on experimental research, as contrasted to the billions of tax money given to schools to perpetuate the status quo. There is evidence that some proposals for an updated alphabet are better than T.O. (traditional orthography). On the other hand, there is practically no evidence that one proposed alphabet is a more efficient symbol system than another. Moreover, studies of the discriminability of proposed characters (symbols for sounds) are just getting under way in our Reading Research Laboratory.

At this time, we may imagine how consistent spellings of words would escalate reading instruction. However, years of research by scholars in related disciplines are required to produce an appropriate alphabet. In the meantime, we need to imagine what to do to get this research under way and to take action. (This is the purpose of the Phonemic Spelling Council.)

Unfortunately, too many of the commonest words are irregularly spelled: e.g., *have* /'hav/, *of* /'ov/, *though* /'tho/, *you* /'yü/. Adding to this dilemma, especially for beginners, are the homophones: e.g., *to-too-two* and *so-sew*. But the use of different letters to represent the same speech sound, or phoneme, introduces more confusion: e.g. /sh/(sh)ip, (s)ure, o(ce)an, na(ti)on, so(ci)al, pen(si)on, mi(ssi)on, (ch)ic. Then, too, the same letters may represent different sounds: as the *ou* in *out*, /au/; *bought*, /o/ *young*, /u/; *group*, /u/.

Some, was asked his stand-up friend how to spell *psychotic*. His friend replied with standard usage of letters to represent speech sounds in that word: *p-s-y-c-h-o-t-i-c*. To which the wag replied, "Brother what a weirdo trip through the alphabet! You are a crazy speller!"

2. Just imagine a meaningful approach to word perception that serves a dual function: (a) a systematic means for identifying the pronounceable units of a word and (b) for embedding meaning via recognition of factors in the perception of symbols for sounds.

What are the pronounceable units of a word? Does the *ch* of *chop*, *chute*, *choir*, or *chorus* represent a sound that can be produced with fidelity in isolation? Unfortunately in some extant programs, rhetoric has triumphed over reality with the result that little children are supposed to believe that the sounds in *bad* are *buh-/a/-duh*.

Just imagine a classroom in which pupils are taught to identify three types of pronounceable units:

- a. Consonant-vowel (e.g., *sou* of *sound*) or vowel-consonant (e.g., *ound* of *sound*).
- b. Vowel, as the *er* of *her*, or glide, as *oi* of *oil*.
- c. Stressed syllable, as the *bubb* of *bubble*.

These three types of situations are recognized via phonic countdowns:

1. Long countdown; e.g., *man*, (Meaning of word in context from which it is taken), *man*, *man*, *man*, *man* (Meaning in context).
2. Short countdown, *ran*, *ran*, *man*, *man*.

Traditional orthography requires four types of inter-related perceptual learning:

- a. Category learning: About 25% of the commonest words fit in the (consonant)-vowel-consonant category, or spelling pattern. \*D.-C. – Dale-Chall. \*\*R – Basic Reader (beginning program).

Sub-Pattern	*D.-C.	**R
<i>at, bad, glad, (can)dy</i>	26	34
<i>get, neck, (sec)ondary</i>	25	19
<i>big, bit, (in)dicat</i>	32	25
<i>not, job, trop(ic)</i>	8	9
<i>bug, scrub, (cus)tom</i>	<u>9</u>	<u>13</u>
Total	100	100

- b. Cue learning: Spellings (e.g., *oo* of *moon*) and sequence of letters (e.g., *ind* of *kind*) offer keys to the identification of written words. The final *e* is the cue to the vowel sounds in *like-hide*, *same-made*; *the ind* to this vowel sound in *kind-mind*. Learning the (consonant)-vowel-consonant spelling patterns, therefore requires both category and cue learning. Since about 65 to 70% of the commonest words do not fit the (C)-V-C spelling pattern, or category, (e.g., *saw-draw*, *ball-call*, *find-kind*), cue learning becomes essential.

- c. Probability learning: This type of perceptual learning is the acquisition of information for making decisions regarding two types of situations:

- (1) Contrasted *sounds* represented by the same spelling, as *oo* in *look* and *moon*.
- (2) Contrasted *spellings* representing the same sound, as the *er* in *her* and *ir* in *bird* for the sound /ar/.

Because of the irregularities of spellings, probability learning is another essential to word perception in beginning reading. At successive levels, it appears to be increasingly crucial. But this type of learning increases the pupil's independence and versatility in word perception, being far superior to the rote memorizing of questionable vowel rules.

- d. Alternation learning: When suffixes are added to a word, as Carol Chomsky has said, a vowel or consonant alternation results, as in *r(a)tion-r(a)tional* and *revi(s)e- rev(i)sion*. Hence, alternation learning is another essential in word perception.

Phonics, a dangerous sedative, has been touted by sincere educators, kibitzers, charlatans, and foreigners to scholarship as THE answer to most of all reading problems.

There are still innocents on the educational scene who recommend the memorizing of so-called phonic rules, such as "when two vowel letters (e.g., the *oo* of *boot*) go hippity-hoppity in the word, the first says its own name and the second is silent" like a henpecked husband. More than 20 years ago, Ruth Oaks and Elsie Black presented the facts regarding application/exception ratios for vowel

and consonant rules. One finding was that the hippity-hoppity rule applies only 50% of the time. Theodore Clymer later found it to be true only 45% of the time.

It doesn't take the imagination of a donkey to observe the word-by-word readers and other types of readers disabled by the memorization of phonic rules and other gimmicks to "break the sound barrier."

3. Just imagine the comprehension (decoding the message) facet of reading instruction based on these premises:

- a. Reading is thinking that results in comprehension; i.e., reading materials are concepts of time, space, cause, self, etc. rather than word forms and white spaces between them.
- b. Reading is thinking in a language; i.e., interpreting levels of abstraction, relationships between parts of sentences, punctuation, figurative and referential language, and so on.
- c. Reading is a relationship with the author; i.e., a two-way communication regarding the author's purpose, attitudes toward topic, the validity of what the author says, and so on.
- d. Reading is the use of skills for a specific purpose; e.g., to skim a directory, to read rapidly "light" material, and to shift to power, or depth, reading for separating facts from opinions, for evaluating relevance, for validating conclusions, and the like.

4. Just imagine an educational institution in which prospective teachers of reading bring to a course on methodology a *working knowledge*, or fundamental understandings, of

- a. phonemics and orthography (spellings) as bases for phonics,
- b. motivation and perception as bases for word perception,
- c. motivation, grammar, and thinking as bases for comprehension, and
- d. sociology, educational psychology, and linguistics as bases for differentiating instruction.

Can you imagine how much more easily pupils will learn to read when they are no longer confused by teachers and the authors of instructional materials who insist on pronouncing *cat* as *cuh-a-tuh* or by teachers who encourage each pupil to free wheel at his own *independent* reading level.

5. Just imagine an educational institution with demonstration-laboratory facilities for methods courses similar to those facilities used for generations to "train" nurses, chemists, physicists, engineers and doctors. Then, too, just imagine the department head as a national, if not international, leader who is often overwhelmed by a host of graduate and post-doctoral students who wish to intern under this great personality and his equally capable staff who demonstrate before jawboning them. Perhaps we have been brainwashed by pseudo-scholars so long we cannot envision preparation for teaching on any rational basis. But this reading millenium will come and millions of children will be happy, avid readers rather than crippled, reluctant, retarded, or non-readers – because their teachers have been prepared in demonstration-laboratory sessions.

6. Just imagine a local, state or national department of education staffed by top specialists in reading, English, physics, and so on rather than by generalists who got that way by degrees in education courses or by political appointment. We must imagine a leadership that places a premium on dedicated, top-notch scholarship in each discipline rather than a pseudo-leadership that counts credits in terms of the *titles* of college courses rather than their *substance*. To pull ourselves out of the quagmire of despair, it is imperative that we approve educational institutions for teachers in terms of their laboratory facilities and the scholarship of their faculties rather than on political considerations. So long as state governments and our national government shovel out billions of dollars to *subsidize the status quo*, they are maintaining the ever present mediocrity that perpetuates the crippling of child minds. But when we are bold enough to dream up and to make drastic revision of moldy and outmoded institutions and procedures, we can begin to revolutionize classroom practices and insure productive *change* for the only people that schools are for: **the learners**.

7. Just imagine a utopian school situation in which the superintendent or principal takes seriously his instructional leadership function, with perhaps only acceptable virtuosity in the area of pupil learning and teacher learning. What happens in the state of Maryland or the city of Portsmouth, Virginia when the superintendent and his staff have first-hand experiences in demonstration-laboratory sessions on the use of informal inventories of reading levels, motivations, word-perception mastery and comprehension achievement? What benefits accrue to the pupils when in-service leadership programs begin with the top administrators and are transmitted to principals and superintendents who in turn conduct serendipitous demonstration-laboratory sessions with the teachers? just imagine? No, this has been a reality – a tremendous success story!

8. Just imagine a supervisor or a specialist in reading who, in a few minutes can pinpoint a pupil's reading problem, and demonstrate how to help him. Or, imagine this person demonstrating individualized and/or group reading in a class – after an assessment of the teacher's level of professional competence. How many happy and successful teachers and pupils there are when a mirage of expert help is replaced by a professionally competent supervisor or reading consultant who sharply reduces the distance between words and practice.

9. Just imagine a school situation in which each teacher is encouraged to estimate her own level of professional competence and to begin her improvement at that level. Can the administrator or supervisor issue edicts for all teachers to substitute individualized instruction for all group instruction? Can they suddenly announce that a given initial teaching alphabet will be used for teaching all beginners? And so on.

Differentiated supervision for teachers is about as illusory for teachers as differentiated instruction is for children. This concept of differentiation is a reality in some schools. But in too many schools teachers have not dared or cared to imagine a wholesale emotional climate for their pupils.

10. Just imagine an approach to Utopia via mandatory testing of the vision and hearing before entering school and annually thereafter. And I am not referring to Snellen chart tests of vision, but modern tests of visual skills, including color vision. Then, too, I have in mind pure-type audiometer tests (individual) of hearing and a screening test of stereophonics rather than a group-audiometer or a watch-tick test. Here again, these tests are routine in a very few oases of learning; hence, it is unnecessary to imagine the value of this requirement.

### **Imperatives in Utopia**

Our discussion of chaos or utopia in contemporary reading instruction begins and ends with the teacher – especially his attitudes. Hence, we come to the realities of three imperatives – three facets of a dedicated and competent teacher that vitalize all successful approaches to escalation of reading improvement.

Love and understanding open the doors of the mind. These two marks of a master teacher give reality to the attitude that only the school, not the child, can fail.

In addition to love and understanding, the master teacher has faith in his pupils. His faith in their desire to learn, in their ability to achieve, in the inherent goodness of their intentions, brings repose and expands the intellect of his scholars.

Yes, the escalation of reading instruction begins with classroom teachers who are truly educated by life and in life. Those of us who teach at a high spiritual level and a reasonable level of professional competence insure utopia for those with whom we share the goodness of learning.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972 pp11–15 in the printed version]*

## **9. The Problems Before us in Reforming our spelling, by Thomas R. Lounsbury, L.L.D.**

\*Spellings of the author, President of the Simplified Spelling Board. Address at the second annual meeting, April 7, 1908. Edited from: Simplified Spelling Board Circular no. 19, June 6, 1908.

I doubt\* if anyone can recall a movement of modern times, apparently so unknown and unpopular with the mass of men, and to some so exceedingly distasteful, which has unexpectedly found arrayed behind it so great a weight of highly educated opinion. It shows conclusively that the seed sown by the great linguistic scholars of the generation before our own, most of whom have passed away, has found soil fit for its reception in numerous places where no one had supposed that it had even fallen. The truth of this statement is fully borne out by the number and character of those who have given their adhesion to this organization. On the roll of signers are now more than twenty thousand names. Every day brings in accessions. Furthermore, these come not merely from our own country, but from every part of the world where English is spoken.

Mere numbers are in themselves no criterion of progress. Far more remarkable than the aggregate of adherents is their character. On the list appears names of men eminent in every department of scholarship, in every line of scientific or linguistic research, and in every form of human endeavor. Leading institutions of learning throughout the land are represented in large numbers. This itself is one of the most encouraging of signs, for it brings to our support a body of men who will not be in the least disturbed by the chatter of the ignorant or the shrieks of the hysterical. I venture to say that there is not either in this country or in England a single scholar in English, to whom other scholars would feel that deference is due, who is opposed to this movement in itself. He may, perhaps, think it inexpedient, though even of such I know none personally. He may think it useless to attack practices so strongly entrenched behind a barrier of ignorant belief and prejudice. But he will not condemn it on the ground of justice or right. If attacks of this sort are made upon us by men of eminence, it will be by those of them who have attained eminence in some other field than that of English scholarship.

More significant, perhaps, for the ultimate success of the movement is the enthusiastic adhesion of a large body of teachers in our preparatory schools, especially of those engaged in the work of primary instruction. These have constantly brought to their attention the perplexities and obscurities of our present system of spelling; the hindrances of all sorts which it places in the way of education; the waste of time and effort which it involves; the imposition – in both senses of the word – it forces upon the learner of mastering distinctions which have not the slightest foundation in reason, and therefore, instead of clearing the mind, serve simply to confuse it. More than any other class do teachers appreciate the unnecessary hardship which the labor spent in the acquisition of knowledge in itself really useless, compels the child to undergo, and the barrier which it raises in the way of any rapid acquisition of our mother-tongue.

There is still another way in which we have reason to congratulate ourselves upon the advance which has been made. A subsidiary, though by no means unimportant, function of this organization is the propagation of intelligence among the educated classes. This is a task peculiarly trying and difficult. It is no easy matter to enlighten the illiterate. But with them, after all, you have a blank page. They not only do not know anything of this particular matter, they are aware of the fact that they do not know anything. This self-consciousness is denied to the educated. In consequence, with them a stubborn crust of misapprehension and misinformation, with the violent prejudices engendered of their combination, has first to be removed. It is only by slow degrees that it dawns

upon their perceptions that they know little about a subject of which they fancied they knew everything. But men have come at last to hesitate, as a short time ago they did not hesitate, about displaying publicly the nakedness of their ignorance. When they do it now, they take care to shelter their personality behind a bulwark of type, either in the shape of anonymous contributions to the newspapers or of editorial articles in them. They no longer venture to put their names to the pieces in which they seek to fortify general ignorance by the inaccuracies of circumstantial detail. This is a distinct advance. In truth, the shamelessness with which the defenders of the existing orthography were not long ago wont to parade before the eyes of the public the scantiness of the intellectual raiment with which they were clad partook almost of the nature of indecent mental exposure.

Indeed, we got a startling glimpse of the all-prevailing, all-pervading nudity of knowledge, which once used to flaunt itself in open day, in the remark of the English writer who asserted that the spelling of Shakespeare was good enough for him. Now, personally, I do not care to be held down by the authority of the past in matters which concern the present. Still, our knowledge can here coincide harmoniously with the ignorance of the proclaimer of this view, in declaring that the spelling of Shakespeare is at present generally good enough for us also. No more, to be sure, than his contemporaries, did the great dramatist consider that he was bound to restrict himself to a particular form of a word; but, so far as his published writings may be taken to reflect his actual usage, he had clearly much sympathy with what the semi-educated call American spelling. The word "honor" occurs in his plays about 700 times. Both ways of spelling it are found; but that in *-or* appears twice where that in *-our* appears once. The devotee of Shakespeare's spelling is therefore bound to use *honor* twice to where he uses *honour* once. Reluctantly, I say, for the reason that our cause seeks no accessions save from those who base their adhesion to it on the ground of knowledge and not on the accident of ignorance.

The utterer of this declaration has doubtless learned by this time something of the way in which Shakespeare spelled or rather did not spell. But even if he himself has not yet been rescued from the pit of ignorance out of which cries of this nature proceed, many of those sympathizing with his views have learned from his fortunes either to put complete restraint upon their utterance or to modify its character. Our assailants, whom we are engaged in the thankless task of educating against their will, have generally learned at last that they do not spell as did Shakespeare. They have consequently abandoned the 17th century and betaken themselves to the safer ground of the 19th. Now they tell us that they do not want any better spelling than that of Tennyson and Thackeray. Of course an argument of this sort is by its very nature absurd. Still, as in this matter we are dealing with intellectual babes, it may be well to remark in passing that it can be applied to any change for the better that human ingenuity can devise. Shakespeare and Milton got along after a fashion in traveling about the country on the poorest of roads. Therefore let us be content with the poor roads.

Our forefathers had neither telegraph nor telephone; therefore let us all deliver our communications in person or transmit them thru the mail. The shifting to the 19th century enables opponents, indeed, to display less ignorance than in the case previously considered; but it itself does not exhibit too much knowledge. Several of the spellings recommended by this Board had already been regularly employed by Tennyson. If our critics will go so far as to adopt the reformed orthography he used, there is hope that the embryo intelligence thus brought into being may gradually gain a larger growth, and in the, course of time-that is if time continues long enough-may reach an absolutely full development.

We have now made enough headway that it seems to me the time has come to take a general survey of the field, to discuss what is expedient to attempt, to ascertain what in the present state of public opinion we can do, and what we can not do. I have never disguised from myself the difficulty of the

task that lies before us. I am not here referring to the hostility of unenlightened public opinion, tho that is formidable enough. What weighs upon me is the inherent difficulty involved in the undertaking itself, and which would remain were the public to become as generally favorable, as it is now presumably hostile. That difficulty, it sometimes seems to me, many of our organization have not yet learned to appreciate fully.

Before discussing this specifically, let me state as briefly as I can the situation which confronts us. We have a large number of sounds in the English language, say 42. To indicate them we have nominally 26 letters, but really only 23 not counting duplications. Even with the combinations which can be made of these, each combination to have an absolutely fixt value of its own, the condition of things would present one of the most perplexing of problems. We should still be undertaking to do a great deal with very inadequate resources. But this initial difficulty has been made infinitely more difficult by changes which in the history of our speech have taken place in the pronunciation, but which after a period have ceast to have their representation recorded in the orthography. Each one of these various combinations of letters, which at one time had more or less a distinct value, now lost it largely, if not altogether. In some cases these combinations have assumed other and different values. The petrification of the orthography which has taken place in consequence of the uniformity fixt upon it by the dictionary makers has been attended by the result that while the sounds have changed or are changing, their representation has become fixt and still remains fixt. The consonants indeed have continued fairly subservient to fonetic law. They have not been materially affected by the havoc which has over- taken the vowel-system, tho the advocates of the existing orthography are doing all that lies within their power to fasten upon us permanently, and to extend still further, whatever divorce exists in them between spelling and pronunciation. Had this been affected as thoroly with the consonants as it has been with the vowels, the acquisition of our orthography would not have been protracted, as it is at present, merely for some years beyond its natural limit; it would have been the work of a lifetime – just as with Chinese.

One manifest result of the situation of things has been to create the widely prevalent belief, which has to be taken into account, that there is no vital connection between the sounds of our language and any particular method of representing them. On every hand we see symbols surviving of a pronunciation which has died. By many persons this dead weight is cherist not for what it once did – for of that they know nothing save what we tell them – but for its uncouthness and absolute uselessness. For example, in the history of our speech there came a time when the sound indicated by the *ugh* in *though* disappeared from the pronunciation of the word. For the past 300 years at least, it has probably never been heard anywhere. During all this period the language has been struggling to free itself from dragging about the useless burden of these three silent letters-the unnecessary half of the word. It is fairly certain, indeed, that the disposition to discard them, which made itself distinctly manifest in the 17th century, would have eventually succeeded in getting rid of them, had it not been for the tyranny of the printing-office and the dictionary makers; and the fortune of this word has been essentially the same-with numerous others.

As if this were not enough, there have been added to these survivals a number of words in which derivation, real or fancied, has been brought in to add its confusion to the existing chaos. The classical scholars of the country are now largely with us. Indeed, they ought to be, in order to repair the damage inflicted upon the orthography by their predecessors. Take one illustration out of the many injuries wrought by these. There is in existence a word denoting a certain form of pulmonary disease. Our ancestors not only pronounced it as we do, but they spelt it *tisic* or *tizic*, according to their pronunciation, as we do not. This form of the word, it was felt, would not do in days when deference to derivation became rampant. So some of our forefathers felt called upon to import from the Greek the high-polite form *phthisic*, spelt after the pattern of the original. In doing this, they

contrived to erect as a portal before the word in common use, the same combination of letters, which we could not pronounce if we would, and would not pronounce if we could. Milton contented himself with representing the initial sound by the simple *t*. But do you suppose that a man who has painfully learned to master a spelling which requires that this sound be indicated by *phth*, is going to give up willingly such a proof of the long and arduous struggle which he has been required to carry on with common sense? There are plenty of huge derelicts like this floating about on the stormy sea of our orthography, by which the younger navigators are frequently wreckt, and with which the experienced narrowly escape at times from coming into collision. There are many by whom these unwieldy hulks—these unnecessary silent letters— are regarded as positiv additions to our orthographic marine. With such persons, the test of desirable spelling is that it should get away from pronunciation as far as possible. The addition of useless or inappropriate letters to a word gives it in their eyes a character distinctly aristocratic. If, furthermore, it conveys an utterly erroneous impression as to its origin, their happiness is complete. Do we not constantly meet with people who cherish such forms as *comptroller*, because on the one hand it does not guide them to the right pronunciation, and on the other does guide them to a wrong derivation?

Now, personally, I confess I have a liking, and indeed a certain respect, for this particular sort of irrationality, and for the body of irresponsible persons who profess it. There is no sham about them, unlike those who profess to clothe their notions and prejudices with the garb of reason.

They cherish all these undesirable citizens of an unregulated orthographic commonwealth, because they avowedly act from sentiment, and not from sense. With them a particular method of spelling is dear to the heart in proportion as it is repulsiv to the intelligence. But to intelligence they lay no claim. They make no pretense that they have any real ground for their attitude beyond the beliefs in which they have been brought up and the traditions which they have inherited. Hence they take a sort of race pride in the unfitness of the spellings they prefer, than to do any work properly belonging to spelling, just as we know of countries whose inhabitants take a sort of national pride in the sultriness of their summers, the severity of their winters and the general uncomfortableness of nature.

Projects to reform English orthography have in the past been largely the work of men who sometimes possess learning but were always devoid of influence. It is a task indeed far above the power of the individual to accomplish. But had there been behind them concerted action and adequate support, the schemes proposed and the measures taken would have generally failed because of their impracticability. Too frequently their devisers followed wrong paths. Were I askt to single out the rocks on which attempts of this sort have been mainly wreckt, I should indicate two in particular. One is the effort to elevate derivation— that bee which is forever buzzing in the bonnets of the educated— as a ruling principle in determining the spelling. Belief in this has wielded great influence in the past. It is responsible for no small number of the erroneous and clumsy forms with which we are confronted. Now derivation is a good servant. Its aid in determining the proper form of a word is sometimes valuable. But it is the worst of masters. Even when we can resort to its aid properly, it must always be made subsidiary to higher objectives. It was the undue deference which he paid to it that brought deserved ridicule upon some of the changes which Webster attempted, and naturally cast discredit upon all of them. He wanted us, for illustration, to go back to *melasses* for *molasses*, because the word is derived remotely from the Latin *mel*, Greek *meli*, meaning "honey." He might as properly have insisted upon having some honey in the article itself, as a no longer recognized *e* in the word denoting it.

The second and more subtle danger consists in changes which disguise themselves under the name of reform without really advancing a step upon the road to it, and not unfrequently moving in an



opposit direction. It sometimes contents itself in substituting a formal regularity for a real one. At other times it makes changes to fit small classes of words without any regard to the great general changes which must precede, to prevent the pronunciation of one class from conflicting with that of another.

All such schemes must fail because they are not based upon the fundamental principle which must underlie any reform that can be expected to succede permanently. As I look at it, the ideal which is to be kept in view is that the spelling of every syllable should carry its own pronunciation. I say syllable, and not word, because accentuation is something that lies outside of the usual province of orthography. It is a limited field with which we reformers should have nothing to do. Whether we say *decor'ous*, as is frequently heard in England, or *dec'orous*, as is generally heard in America, in either case the spelling would be the same. The ideal therefore we ought to hold in view is that the moment a person sees a syllable, he shall know precisely how to pronounce it. That is carrying into effect the very purpose for which the alfabet was invented. To a certain extent this ideal has been reacht in our own tung, barbarously spelt as it is, and *inferior* in this particular to *all other cultivated languages* in existence. When for instance, anyone meets the word *fed*, he knows precisely how to pronounce it, just as when he meets the word *read* he does not know how to pronounce it, until he has ascertained whether it is an infinitiv or present, or a preterit or past participle, and in neither case does the spelling indicate the pronunciation.

It follows, therefore, from what has been said, that any alteration of orthography, if it is to be of value, must follow the plan of having the spelling of any word indicate its precise pronunciation. This means, in short, that it must follow the line of fonetic reform. By this I do not mean the subtle distinctions which would enable us to detect the variation in the speech of different individuals, or even in that of whole regions of the country. It is a working norm that is to be kept in view, which is suffic- ently close to exactness to enable every man to under- stand what his neighbor is saying, while sufficiently broad to give full recognition to the play of individual or national peculiarities. But the ideal that every man, the moment he sees a syllable, if not a word, should know just how to pronounce it, is the ideal which ought to be kept in view.

I hardly expect that ideal ever to be reacht, at least in our tung, tho it is doutless easily achievable in some others. Still, if we shoot at the sun, our arrow will attain a far greater height than if we direct it at something on our level. Any other aim than to represent pronunciation by spelling, in accordance with pure fonetic principles, is sure to fail eventually, even were it to meet for a time with temporary success; for, not to speak it profanely, such attempts, not being of God, can not stand. It is because previous efforts have largely followed the false lights of derivation or of fancied regularity, that they have failed to command respect, and often not even attention, and never conformity on any scale worth considering: for, after all, the public in this matter is not made up of such fools as one who limited his reading to newspaper comments on spelling, would conclude that it must be.

Now to me it seems a fundamental principle that before change is made in classes of words containing different vowel-sounds, a decision ought to be reacht as to the precise form by which these sounds are to be indicated universally. If changes are recommended and carried out be- fore this position has been secured and fortified, we are more than likely to substitute a new form of confusion for that which already exists. This view of the course to be adopted rules out, as a determining factor in the settlement of the questions under consideration, the opinions of the miscellaneous mass of educated men, including that of the more highly educated. It further involves the acceptance, after full consideration, of the recommendations of a body of trained linguistic experts, to whom the special questions are to be submitted. Were the projectors of a great business

enterprise proposing to build a bridge over a mighty river, destined to carry the traffic of a continent, no one of them would think of entrusting the plans for its construction to a general body of the most thoroughly intelligent men in the universe, who, while sympathizing with the object in view, had no special training for the technical problems involved. The promoters of such an undertaking would have a great work of their own to perform. They would have to make clear its desirability and even necessity, the convenience of all sorts it would bring to the public and the country itself. They would have to determine the nature and size of the system to be built, to consider the character and extent of the business with which it would be called upon to cope, in fine to decide on a thousand points upon which its success as a means of communication would depend. But when these matters were perfected, and it came to the question of actual construction, the work would be turned over to the engineering experts who alone would know how to deal with the technical problems involved.

Such is really our position today. Few analogies, to be sure, hold good in every particular: but in those which are essential it seems to me that this does. The judgement of this collective body upon the wisdom and expediency of general courses of action, and even of many particular details, is of greatest weight. It is to my mind, so conclusive that I should defer to it even when its decisions overrule my own fully formed opinions. But there is always danger that this body will attempt to do what cannot be done successfully by any organization constituted as is this; and if not done successfully, it had better, not be done at all; for in that case, while inviting fresh attack, it will not be done permanently. This association as a whole has legitimate work enough on its hands to task its energies to the fullest extent. But when it sets out to deal with questions for the proper consideration of which special linguistic study is essential, it is traveling out of the province in which the voice of the collective body is, and ought to be, supreme, into one in which but a very few of its members have either the requisite knowledge or the requisite training to enter. It is only when I read the attempts of our assailants to write what they call phonetically, that my own superficial acquaintance with the subject begins to assume in my eyes colossal proportions. I can pick out only a few men in England and America whose agreement on any given point on the proper representation of sounds is well respected and will outweigh the conclusions of any number of the rest of us who take a different view. There are paths in the field before us which can be followed only under the guidance of the leading phonetic specialists of our body. If any plan is here adopted that fails to meet their approval, our case is ruined before it is well under way. Delicate problems which involve long study of the proper representation of all the sounds of our speech, *can never be solved by a plebiscite which allows the votes of a large body to overrule the decision of the few who have devoted to the subject years of investigation and carefully considered judgement.*

I have felt it of first importance to bring out as strongly as I can the desirability of referring all disputed representations of sounds to a committee of specially trained phonetic experts of this body. The avowed objective of this association is the simplification of spelling. It has carefully avoided the use of the term phonetic, not from any aversion to it, but because the general public, even of educated men, as one can easily discover from newspaper comment, has not the slightest conception of what the word means. It seems to me that the time has come that it should be enlightened. Every genuine simplification of the spelling which has ever taken place in our language has been of the nature of an approach to the phonetic standard. It *must* be such, in order to have any good reason for the alteration. If in any given case the change made is an adequate and unambiguous representative of the sound, it is phonetic spelling pure and simple. If the alteration does not carry with certainty its pronunciation, it is either partial or spurious phonetic spelling; and when you have got it you may be no better off than you were before, and possibly not so well off. When you have taken the *b* out of *debt* and the *u* out of *build*, you have made a reform in obedience to phonetic principles; and, what to some is of great importance, it is in perfect accord with the derivation of both words. The change, once adopted universally, is therefore likely to remain permanent for all time. On the other hand,

take the *b* from *doubt* and it removes one stumbling-block in the way of proper pronunciation. So far, so good. The change is in accordance with the derivation. But after all it is only a partial reform, because *ou*, as I shall have occasion to point out presently, has a number of distinct sounds. The altered form therefore does not necessarily carry with it its pronunciation.

To make perfectly clear my idea of the course of action which ought to be adopted, what can be decided properly by this organization as a whole, and what ought to be left by it to a committee of its trained experts, let me ask your attention to what seems to me the proper treatment of two propositions for reforming the spelling which are now before us. From my point of view the first is one in which this body as a whole cannot act properly; the second is to me not only more important in itself, but it is one with which the collective body is fully competent to deal. It further agrees with a professed aim of this board, which is to drop silent letters which have intruded themselves into the word in defiance of its derivation, or which render the pronunciation doubtful.

One of the propositions strongly pressed upon us at the present time is to reduce to correct or approximately correct spelling that extraordinary list of words English possesses ending in *-ough*. They stand before the public as peculiarly horrid examples of our absurd orthography, of its absolute unfitness to perform its proper work of indicating pronunciation. As a matter of fact, there are a large number of combinations that are just as bad, but which escape the attention of most, because they are not so aggressively prominent. None of them therefore has made so much impression on the popular imagination as the words in *-ough*. These furnish evidence that cannot be gainsaid as to the anomalous condition of our spelling, which the most self-blinded cannot help seeing. They force upon the attention of all the existence of the burden which is placed upon the learner of ascertaining the pronunciation and spelling of each word by itself, instead of having it fall under the sway of certain and positive law.

To bring out this point distinctly, let us take as an illustration the word *bough*. How are you going to represent the sound denoted by *-ough*? There are two ways that naturally present themselves. Suppose the two final letters are dropped, giving to the combination *ou* the sound heard in *thou* and many other words. But it soon comes to our attention that this particular combination of letters with an entirely different sound value is found also in *you*, *double*, *journey*, *should*, *shoulder*, *bought*. Which one of these seven sounds is *ou* destined ultimately to carry, and which way is the person who sees the word for the first time expected to pronounce it? Or the spelling *bow*? How is the *ow* to be pronounced? The learner well may ask. In *bow*, as an inclination of the head, it has one sound; in *bow* and *arrow*, it has one distinctly different. Whatever you adopt, you are sure to be confronted with a contradictory pronunciation of another word in which these same combinations appear. When a particular letter or letters have been fixed upon definitely to indicate the sound heard in *bough*, only then are we in a position to insist upon the spelling which is to be adopted. In the present condition of things it seems to me a waste of time and effort to make changes which may have to be unmade in the future, so that the work will all have to be done over again, beside the prejudice against the whole movement which both the temporary change and the reversal of the change will create.

Here, then, there is one proposition before us, which, as I look at it, the collective body is not competent to take action upon until it has heard the conclusion at which its committee of specialists has arrived. But there is another proposition before us where no such delay is needed. It has, besides, the advantage of being applicable to a whole class of closely associated words. Furthermore, it carries out perfectly a professed object of this organization, simplification by the dropping of useless letters. I refer to the digraph *ea*, which is found in a large variety of words in our tongue. Of course, in different ones it is pronounced differently, otherwise we should not recognize it

as the cause of confusion and the need for change. One of the most common of its sounds can be heard in the *ea* of *each*, *heat*, *read* and the noun *tear*. This is usually called 'long e.' Other sounds are exemplified in *break*, *bear*, *heart*, *heard*, *head*, and the *a* is silent in *vengeance*, *sergeant*, and both letters sounded in *reality*, *realty*. What a mess to present to the innocent, unsuspecting learner.

Here are more than six different sounds which the digraf carries. In only one of the classes of words which have been mentioned could changes be now safely made without encountering the risk of being compelled to undergo further alterations in the future. The only one, which is an important class of words where this combination appears, is in which it invariably has the sound of short *e*, the exact representation of which its first letter supplies. Here therefore, is the superfluous letter *a*, the dropping of which will make the spelling precisely accordant with the pronunciation. In some cases the unnecessary vowel found in the word belonged to it originally; in others it is an intrusion which took place in the later history of the language. Take, for illustration, the *a* in *leather* and *endeavor*. The Anglo-Saxon original of the one and the French original of the other were without it. The *a*, giving us the present form, did not make its appearance in these words till the 16th century. Or, take the word *head*. In the course of its history it has been spelt between 30 and 40 different ways. The form *bed*, which is in accordance with the modern pronunciation, and would be purely fonetic, was more or less in use from the 13th to the 17th century, and possibly later. But, like the others just mentioned, it assumed in the 16th century its present form. Probably, if not certainly, the *a* following *e* was introduced into these words, and a number of others, to represent a drawling pronunciation existing then but which has now past away. But while the pronunciation has past away, the symbol which was introduced to indicate it has not been allowed to go with it. Yet it not only serves no longer any useful purpose, it interferes with the proper pronunciation of the word. Having long ago died, there is no reason why the corpse should not now be decently buried. There are plenty of similar cases. There is no more use of spelling *bread* with an *a* than there would be of spelling *fed* as *fead*, or *bed* as *bead*, or *hence* as *heance*. There must be in our tongue in the neighborhood of a hundred words of this class in which the dropping of this silent letter, not only useless for pronunciation but actually injurious to it, would result in making orthography and orthoepy precisely concur. In taking action here, we have to ask ourselves, not what it is right to do, but what in the present state of public opinion it is expedient to do. This is a point upon which the judgement of the collective body outranks that of any of its individual members.

Here before us then, are samples of the two sorts of change proposed. From my point of view the decision as to the desirability of entering upon the first can safely be entrusted only to a committee of the best-trained linguistic experts we have with us. But the second question for us here is not how we shall act, but how far it is desirable for us to act. In the decision on that the weight of the collective body ought to override the dissenting opinion of any of its members, no matter if among them are some of its most eminent specialists.

I have urged these points strongly because there is no question in my own mind that attempts at reforming the spelling which are not based upon purely fonetic principles will invariably result in complication instead of simplification. It is all-important that in the early days of this cause, we should make no mistakes, that we should enter upon no path in which we would have to retrace our steps. The unexpected favor – at least to me unexpected – which the movement has met with from many of our fore-most scholars, the sympathy it has received from many others who do not care to be identified with it publicly, is conclusiv proof that the talk of the average man, even of the average educated man, and the comments found in the columns of the average newspaper, in no way reflect the feelings which already prevail to a large extent in the minds of nrm of the highest learning and intelligence, and tend daily to prevail more and more. By entrusting the solution of

doutful problems to those among our number best fitted to solve them, we shall retain and strengthen the confidence we have already earned.

Let it not be fancied that this course will not give the body as a whole work enough to do. Even the preliminary task of clearing the ground by uprooting ancient error is very far from having been accomplished. From year to year the same old blunders will have to be corrected; the same old misstatements of fact will have to be exposed; the same old fallacies will have to be refuted; for however it may have been said poetically of truth, it is in reality falsehood, that crushed to earth invariably rises again. Even when the time-worn absurd arguments have been stripped of their plausibility so completely that they no longer dare show themselves in public, fresh ones will be devised to take their place; for there is little limit to human ingenuity in devising new irrationalities to take the place of those annihilated. For we have to bear in mind that there is *no subject upon which the mass of men*, even of highly educated men, throughout the whole English-speaking world, *are more densely ignorant than of the deceitful nature of English orthography*, of its history, of how it came to assume its present lawless character, and of the means that should be taken to bring order out of the confusion in which we are floundering. Furthermore, with no small number it is not merely that there is no disposition to learn, there is an inflexible determination not to learn. The apparent ambition of some of our critics is to know as little as possible of the subject upon which they express the most positive views.

I do not believe that the English race, once fully awakened to the deceptive nature of English orthography, will cling forever to a system which wastes the time of useful years in the acquisition of knowledge really useless but conventionally of first importance, and in so doing develops the memory at the expense of the reasoning powers. But, beside the difficulty inherent in the matter itself, we have also to recognize the immensity of the work that is before us in enlightening public opinion. The superstition as to the sanctity of our spelling is so strongly entrenched behind a barrier of ignorant belief and violent prejudice, and this is so fortified by use and wont, that even to carry its outworks will require the time and effort of years of struggle. I do not know that this is much to be regretted.

There is nothing worth living for that is not worth fighting for. But the task before us is no light one. We shall have to overcome not merely ignorance and prejudices, but what is far worse, stupidities, against which, the poet tells us, even the gods fight unvictorious. Even when we have gained over, as we are already gaining over rapidly, the highest class of minds, there is little limit to the endeavor that must be put forth before any impression can be made upon that inert mass which prefers to remain content with any degree of error, however great, in preference to making any attempt to correct it, however slight. But we have this recollection to encourage us, that the efforts of men in the past engaged in far harder enterprises than that which confronts us, have after long years of struggle been carried to successful completion, because the combatants themselves have been sustained by the hope, and have acted under the inspiration, *that what ought to be, is to be*.

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972 pp16-19 in the printed version*]

## 10. Book Reviews

### DISERRONEOSPELLINGITIS dissertations

*Elementary English*, an official publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, in Feb. 1972 reviewed some doctoral dissertations on the subject of spelling. These reviews appeared under the title of "Diserroneospellingitis or the Fine (Language) Art of Spelling." Daniel J. Dietrich gathered this material and wrote the brief resumes for the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC).

The full report, and information on how to secure copies of these dissertations, may be found on pages 245-252 of the above mentioned issue of *Elementary English*. The following are abridgements of four dissertation abstracts. [H.B.]

*The Applicability of Phonic Generalizations to Selected Spelling Programs*, by Lillie Smith Davis, Ed.D. Dissertation. The Univ. of Oklahoma, 1969, 220 pp.

Forty-five phonic generalizations were applied to 5,431 words selected from six spelling programs. Major findings were (1) the applicability of the generalizations ranged from zero to 100%; (2) the majority of the generalizations were introduced in grade 2; (3) generalizations on syllabic division and accentuation were inconsistently introduced and maintained; (4) the individual percentages of applicability of the generalizations to spelling vocabulary and to reading vocabularies were similar.

The following conclusions and recommendations were made: (1) Phonics instruction in reading and spelling should be coordinated; (2) Phonic generalizations about single consonants, consonant elements, and pronunciation of vowels in accented syllables are defensible in spelling programs; (3) Generalizations regarding accentuation and syllabic division are less defensible; (4) The generalizations, as a whole, are only moderately useful to spelling.

*A Study of Two Approaches to the Teaching of Spelling in the Seventh Grade of a Bicultural School System*, by James F. Hemm. Ed.D. Dissertation, North Texas State Univ. 1969, 301 pp.

This study attempted to determine the relative effectiveness of the conventional teacher-directed approach to spelling instruction when compared to a self-directed student-centered approach for 7th grade students, many of whom spoke Spanish. Spelling achievement was measured by two forms of the same test, while language I.Q., non-language I.Q., and the total I.Q. were measured by a mental maturity test. Information on the language spoken at home, class group, sex, date of birth, and previous experience with "S.R.A." reading and spelling materials was gained from student records. Data collected from treatment revealed that (1) students in a conventional classroom show greater spelling achievement than those using an "S.R.A. Spelling Laboratory"; (2) language spoken in the home, sex, chronological age, the relationship of language I.Q. to non-language I.Q., and prior "S.R.A." experience have no significant influence; (3) homogeneous classroom grouping has no consistent effect; (4) low-ability or below average intelligence students make significantly greater gains through a conventional classroom approach; (5) students of average and above-average intelligence are not affected by the approach to the teaching of spelling; and (6) significant factors in spelling gains are correct pronunciation and a knowledge of word meanings.

*A comparison of the Effectiveness of Three Programs of Elementary School Spelling*, by John Grottenthaler, Ed.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1970.

In this study, three programs of elementary school spelling instruction were compared to determine which of the programs produced student achievement and favorable attitudes and whether the effects of the several programs differed for pupils in different I.Q. ranges. About 495 fifth grade children were randomly assigned to three treatment groups of 6 sections each which met for 27 weeks of daily spelling instruction. One of the groups followed a word-list mastery approach to spelling, one was taught by a multi-level sight-sound program, and one followed a spelling-principle mastery approach. Student achievement was measured at the end of the experiment by the Stanford Achievement Test and by a 100-point spelling test which used words taught in all three programs. Student opinions regarding spelling instruction were surveyed both before and after the experiment, and the entire sample was given I.Q. tests, results of which indicated that no one program was more effective than the others in fostering achievement of children at one of three ability levels (116 I.Q. and above, 100-115 I.Q. level, and 99 I.Q. or lower). The analysis of test data indicated that no significant differences in either fifth grade student attitudes or achievement resulted from any of the three programs of spelling instruction.

**(Ed. note:**

You will notice that no consideration or attention was given to the anomalies – the aberrations – of English spelling, therefore one could not expect any difference in the effectiveness of methodology.)

*Cues for a New Spelling Curriculum*, by Kentucky State Dept. of Education, Frankfort, 1968, 18 pp.

A recent study was conducted at Stanford Univ. to determine the degree of correspondence between phonemes and graphemes in English. In past attempts to achieve universal literacy, language reformers have proposed a revised alphabet of one grapheme for each phoneme, a change which anti-reformers have insisted would be costly. Modern linguists, on the other hand, have suggested that the key to spelling consists in understanding the system that determines the orthographic sound-symbol relationship. The computer in the Stanford study classified and sorted 17,310 commonly used words according to a set of rules devised by the researchers for defining the regularities and irregularities of the American English language. The results indicated that 49.3% of the words could be spelled correctly by the computer using phonological clues, and that another 36% could be spelled with only one error. Utilizing the findings of the Stanford study, educators can develop a new sequential, structured spelling curriculum that will help students understand the basic relationship between sounds and orthographic symbols in English.

**(Ed. note.** An unbiased report would not have omitted the fact that the computer was given 203 rules and exceptions to the rules for manipulating 77 graphemes (one to four letter combinations) in order to achieve a score of less than half correct. Learning and applying these 203 rules is a feat impossible to attain, even for a linguistic Ph.D. Yet would teachers accept the spelling of their pupils that contains less than half spelled correctly?

This should dispel for once and all time the ridiculous assertion that English spelling is more than half regular.

## 11. Our Readers Write Us

### This and That

Dear Mr. Tune:

Reg Deans

I am not sure that this (nonsense prose) is the best way of testing the efficiency of systems of spelling. So many of the words are un-English that pronunciation is a matter of opinion. The stuff is very difficult to read even in T.O. It is inevitable that a really phonetic system of spelling will be very different from T.O. but if every sound is represented by an invariable letter, learning to read becomes quite simple. W.E.S. claims "substantially one spelling for each sound" yet spells "remember" in which *e* has 3 different sounds. (I prefer rimembur).

I can never understand why so many reformers write "shood." To me, *oo* is as in "moon" and I have never heard "should" anything but "shud." I have several American friends but they don't say "shood." (that is for horses). Shouldn't often becomes "shunt" in normal speech. Logical spelling is impossible if the visual impression is to differ as little as practical from T.O. Books now printed would be unreadable if pupils were trained in any other system – i.t.a. for example. They would have to be taught old spelling just as they are now. But they would at least have the advantage of knowing, with certainty, how to pronounce their words.

The prison department here has published its 1970 report. As in previous reports, it states that "nearly a quarter of the young offenders in prisons, borstls and detention centers are having to be taught to read and write. Among adult prisoners, 15% are taking elementary lessons in reading and writing." The Home Office spokesman said this was probably only a modest estimate.

People are indifferent to any sort of learning because they can live quite comfortably without it. Wages and handouts are now beyond the dreams of avarice.

You are quite right to transcribe my letter into T.O. I am writing this in Britic because I don't think you will have any difficulty in reading it. (but I did, Ed.)

I will let you have a more lengthy article on the use of abbreviated caps, in T.O. of course, or an any subject you like to name. Do you know anyone who is advocating simplified English language and grammar? Which reminds me that there is something to be said for putting the question mark at the beginning of the sentence, as they do in Spanish. It is very helpful to know that a question is being asked before you get 2 or 3 lines lower down on the page. ¿Is this question worth discussing in your columns?

Yours sincerely, Reg Deans, Leeds Eng.



## Some Notes on Afrikaans

Dear Mr. Tune:

Cecil R. Moore

It is time I let you know that I am still alive and as keen as ever on English spelling reform. The last few issues of the *Spelling Progress Bulletin* are very good.

No one can accuse you of not trying to do your best under difficult circumstances. The present age is not a fruitful one for spelling reform as the public is more concerned with the ideological struggle than anything else. You asked about methods adopted by countries who have simplified their spelling. I know of only one at first hand, the Afrikaans language in South Africa. Since about 1880 they have been working to build up their Afrikaans language, which was not officially taught in the schools; instead English and Dutch were taught, so that in school textbooks one would read in an account of a family who had gone to town to buy birthday presents for Mother that the youngest child on their return, unable to contain herself, said, 'Ma, wy hebben niets voor U gekocht', whereas the child actually said, 'Ma, ons her vir jou gekoop nie.' It was only after World War 1 that Afrikaans came to be taught in the schools and that the Bible was translated into Afrikaans. I well remember that there was some opposition among the older generation to using a Bible other than their Holy Dutch Bible.

In reducing a language to writing, its spelling has to be decided, and to this end a Language Academy was formed on a voluntary basis. When the Afrikaners finally gained control of the government of South Africa in 1910, progress was accelerated by Government financial assistance in compiling a dictionary, for instance. In this way, when the jubilee of the Great Trek was celebrated in 1938, they were able to write of 'the wonder of Afrikaans.' From a non-existent language around the turn of the century as far as writing was concerned, it had become the premier language in South Africa, so that there is some doubt whether English will still survive as an official language in South Africa in 50 years from now.

The result is a spelling which truly represents the spoken language: one has no difficulty whatever in pronouncing any word correctly, and one need never consult a dictionary for this purpose. There are no 'spelling bees' in schools, or spelling 'dictation' to teach children how to spell. They learn that once and for all in the grades as they learn to read. It is when I regard Afrikaans that I realize the utter folly of the spelling mess which is English. I notice nowadays that most children are unable to consult a dictionary, and that university graduates are poor spellers. Are they the products of the John Dewey educational system, which appears to have made illiterates of our scholars?

I feel that English spelling reform can only start in Britain or the U.S.A., but leadership is lacking in the government.

Marlborough, Rhodesia

## "SR-1 Used"

Dear Mr. Tune:

Robert Mayhew

I am sure you will find the enclosed book, *Escape to Elysium*, by Dr. L.J.J. Nye to be of interest. It is written in what I believe to be the most advanced English spelling ever used in a work of fiction intended for the general reading public. A perusal of the Foreword and of the specimen of completed reformed spelling found on page 19 should convince you the Spelling Action Society is not out to undermine the efforts of other spelling reformers. The afore-sed specimen is compatible with and part of WES, and Dr. Nye is one of the three prestigious sponsors of the SAS.

I agree that SR-1 doesn't satisfy our hunger for a thoro reform, but it's about all we can realistically hope for at this stage of the game, what with the apathy of both the public and legislators. If we can't get the whole loaf, let's at least have *some* of it! As far as I'm concerned, 1/41 of the loaf is better than no bread at all. As I may have sed before, if you dont like SR-2 you certainly don't have to go along with it, but since you agree in principle with the short-e spelling, why not get in the swim and cooperate? To do otherwise is to hold back progress, in my opinion, however unintentional this may be. SR-1 is the only spelling reform movement that is now making eny headway at all, as far as I can see. This is because it's a practical idea that anybody can put into practice who has the will to do so. Most people are either unable or unwilling to adjust to rapid and deepgoing changes in their spelling and reading habits. Some get downright hostile about it. Step-by-step reform is therefore the only answer, tho most reformers, including myself, are impatient and try to push things faster than the public can or will go along.

You know, one reason I feel optimistic about SR-1 is that it started in a British Commonwealth country and not in the United States. For reasons of false, national pride, the British have historically been quite reluctant to go along with American spellings, even tho these are generally simpler and therefore better. One British philologist once wrote that the *-or* ending (labor glamor, etc.) would long since have been adopted by the British if the Americans hadn't made the change first. He bases this assumption on the fact that by 1800 the *-or* ending was alredy well on its way to superseding *-our* in England, but as soon as the *-or* ending became identified with American spelling, all good Englishmen rallied behind the *-our* ending agen. This won't be likely to happen with SR-1 since its deviser is an Englishman by birth. It's my conviction that the American simplified spelling movement of the 20th century (*tho, thru, catalog, center*, etc.) would now be much further along if the British hadn't rejected such spelling innovations. I also believe that if SR-1 makes the grade in Australia – and it's alredy well on its way – it will soon spred to America and eventually to England and other countries. Then the time will be ripe for us to decide what SR-2 should be.

I think it behooves spelling reformers to be working toward their goal primarily in three ways:

1. To use a number of simplified spellings in their own writing, but not to be too innovative in this respect.
2. To support the use of I.T.M.'s and to encourage the spread of such techniques in every way possible.
3. To work on publicity campaigns that will in time make the public aware of the *importance* of spelling reform. This propaganda must be continued without letup until the actual completion of the reform. Otherwise inertia will set in and many people will continue to use the old spellings. Some will anyhow, of course, but for the reform to be completed, the public will have to be reminded frequently that changes are being purposely carried out, and that these changes are worthwhile.

Obviously we need to get a lot more people interested, and somehow a lot of cash is going to have to be forthcoming to implement point no. 3. I very much doubt that Government backing can be obtained until there is a great deal more public interest and support.

If our Australian friends can manage to get their reform movement going on a large scale, it will certainly arouse interest in spelling reform in other countries too, and therefore make our task easier in America and Great Britain. This is why I think we all should back the Australians by supporting SR-1.

The Resolution which you sent me is, I think, much more appropriate than the Congressional Bill you had in the Fall, 1972 issue of *SPB*. (and easier to pass).

Cordially yours, Bob Mayhew, Calexico, Ca.

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## Where and How?

Dear Friends

Harry Lindgren

We have had some questions asked of us about SR-1 which need answering. One of these is: where does it lead?

"You don't take a trip unless you know *where* you are going and *how* you are going to get there." (*Spelling Action*, 2/72, p. 8). *Where* refers to the particular kind of reformed spelling to be ultimately achieved. If we insist on knowing this destination before we set out, *which requires agreement on it*, we'll never set out. But if we don't insist, we can set out with confidence, knowing that we are getting nearer our destination, even though we don't know what it is.

*How* refers to specific proposals for SR-2 to SR-10, etc. These are premature, but it is reasonable to expect some general remarks about their nature and about the procedure for deciding on them. The details that follow are merely suggestive, enough to show that the matter has been thought about, and that we can set out quite confident of reaching a destination. On the whole they are supplementary to what is set in *Spelling Reform, A New Approach*, sec. 3.3, page 69, and sec. 7.3.

### Acceptability

As mentioned on page 29 of SR-ANA, supporting SR-1 implies commitment *only to spelling reform*, irrespective of one's views on its ultimate form, unless this is something way-out such as Kingsley Read's worm-dance. To retain wide support, future SR's for several years must *be non-committal as to the ultimate form* for some time to come. Any politicking to evade this will have to be stamped on.

My hope is that over this long period the less radical people will change their views. I hope they will come to appreciate the overwhelming value of a spelling so simple that it hardly needs to be learned; that they will realize that this end can be achieved, but only by drastically changing the present spelling; and that they will therefore espouse drastic (but gradual) changes. Such are my hopes. But if the next generation thinks otherwise, then so be it.

There is another and wider aspect of acceptability: *the reformed spelling must be acceptable to as many as possible of the 300 million English-speakers*. One would think this requirement absurdly obvious, yet it has been proposed for instance, to denote the sound of the *au* in *August* by *or*. 200 million Americans and millions of others would regard the *r* in *Orgust* as a letter to be pronounced, but this is blandly ignored by the proposers. They don't look an inch ahead of their noses. Nor do they realize theirs is a dialect not used by the majority. Such variant pronunciations will need to be examined.

## **Simplicity**

Everything in the garden would be lovely if every SR could be of the form "this sound is written thus," like SR-1. But trial soon shows that it is not that simple. Such a rule can always be readily grasped, but will not always be readily applied.

Where the simplest form is not possible, an effort should be made to find a rule relating to sounds rather than to the current spelling. This is because we, meaning nearly every English-speaker, must gradually learn to be sound-conscious. (An ability largely destroyed by the present spelling. An extreme example: my grandmother was firmly convinced that if you pronounced *t* as in *tank*, then *h* as in *hank*, you got *th* as in *thank*.

Here we begin to need ingenuity. The troublesome words that preclude the simplest form of rule may have some common feature that the straightforward words do not, or conversely. If such a feature can be found, then a narrower rule can still be worded so as to be both readily grasped and readily applied.

Merely listing the troublesome words as exceptions, like any list as part of a rule, is to be avoided like the plague.

Failing rules relating to sounds, there may be one relating to the current spelling. Such a rule is not vastly inferior, is not a desperate last resort, for all but the youngest have learned or are learning the current spelling with more or less success. Two drawbacks are that the latter's chaos makes such a rule hard to find, and that the rule won't further the learning of sound-consciousness.

The discussion in this and the preceding sections is of necessity abstract, but it does show that before any SR is proposed, the proposer must go through all the 1500-odd pages of the Concise Oxford Dictionary or one of similar size, and list all words affected. For without this, how can the rule be assessed?

## **Suitable frequency**

An SR affecting only one word in 1000 would be no good; for one thing we'd forget about it. An SR affecting as many words as 1 in 10 would be no good either; we'd have to think too much about spelling when writing, and our reading speed would be noticeably affected. The frequency needs to be somewhere in between, perhaps one in 40 to 70.

It would be ridiculous to be strict about this, and reject an otherwise excellent SR because it affects one word in 30 or 80. But something we must be strict about is to know with some confidence what the frequency is. To find it, the proposer should count the words affected in a passage of modern prose, chosen from a readily available source and containing about 25,000 words.

"25,000 words! Aren't you making it too hard?" This question may be asked, and an answer is ready.

In using SR-1 you will have found that the words affected are distributed rather irregularly; sometimes two or three in a single line, sometimes none at all in a page or two (to your annoyance). The irregularity shows that a reliable frequency-count requires quite a large sample.

By way of experiment, I once counted the number of words affected by SR-1 in a newspaper article of about 1000 words, and found 24. As this frequency is so much larger than the 6 per 1000 found in SR-ANA, the conclusion is that a 1000-word sample is far too small, a much larger sample is needed. One could find how large by probability calculations based on several sample counts, but it suffices to use one's judgement and fix on 25,000 words.

### **Procedure**

I repeat, what follows is only suggestive.

Imagine a Spelling Action Society with worldwide membership. The Society appoints a committee whose function is to assess SR proposals. These are invited from any member (including a committee member), they are published in *Spelling Action*, and discussion of them is invited. In the light of the discussion the number of proposals is whittled down by the committee with the approval of those interested, culminating in a single one that has gained the most support because it is the most meritorious.

This procedure is meant to be participatory, and could hardly be more so. A consequential advantage is that it offsets the well-known tendency of a committee to choose the feeblest, most commonplace, most pushed, least imaginative alternative – they may set out to design a horse, but end up with a camel. Imagination is called for, and this procedure opens the way for it.

The requirements for a proposal – list all words affected and try it out on 25,000 words – are deliberately but not wantonly made onerous. There is no place for facile, half-baked proposals supported only by two or three favorable examples, e.g. "Let's drop silent letters as in *gnaw*, *heart*, *lamb*, *taught*" and nothing more. Argument at this low level will naturally degenerate into wrangling and get nowhere; it may give the participants the pleasant feeling of being so progressive, but they're nothing of the sort.

If you're really serious about a proposal, you'll try hard to find what's *wrong* with it, and that means going to a lot of trouble. 'We don't want shallow, amateurish thinking. Leave that to the sceptics and opponents, in whom, whatever their professional status, it is so amply documented.

Yours sincerely, Harry Lindgren, *Spelling Action Society*, Narrabundah, ACT, Australia.

## Challenged!

Dear Editor:

Kingsley Read

Our exchange of letters in the last issue leaves me in effect challenged by your sentence: "While it is true the learner" of an enlarged alphabet "will be using *for the rest of his life* what should take only *a short time to acquire* (my italics). . . we must not forget about the adults who *so arduously* acquired a proficiency in reading our T.O." To this I reply that substantial progress is impossible until we do forget about *today's* adults.

You refer me to the case for *no change* made by Benedictus Arnold in last issue representing the adult viewpoint. But I no more intend to persuade him than he intends to be persuaded. Why need unwilling adults change in the least their reading and writing habits? My case is that simpler spelling with reduced writing should be taught in schools first, and cumbersome T.O. later; that both should be used in written school-work: that only when a whole generation of *already convinced adults* is itching to drop T.O. can we reasonably look for a general and worthwhile change in spelling. And in my view, a continuing use of digraphs is no worthwhile change. It saves no writing and is only somewhat less ambiguous. We must enlarge the alphabet.

Before educational authorities will consider anything so effective, they need more than academic theory. They need prolonged trials of a new spelling by organized experimenters thruout the English-speaking world. They want strong practical evidence that it works with great advantage and economy -as it does if mono-graphic instead of di-graphic. It will take many years to carry out this conviction that schools must teach two alphabets, old and new, for the sake of an unborn generation and of the English language. So let our progress be thoro-going.

The short-term case for di-graphic rather than simple mono-graphic spelling assumes that today's adults can be persuaded to tolerate them and that schools can be relieved from teaching T.O. – a grudging acceptance of a minimal reform which saves no lettering space and lacks simplicity. I see no evidence for this assumption. No, I am all for patience and a thoro 40-letter alphabet.

Yet what I itch to see is less chat and more attempted decision. It occurs to me that while we wrangle about the ideal alphabet, we could at least consider in much detail the *phonemic* requirements of the language and much of its vocabulary – apart from any specific means of expressing them graphically. Any old alphabet of 40-odd characters will do that.

This may be a bad move in your estimation. It is at least an attempt to decide something. Perhaps my history as a graphic designer encourages the habit of asking where you want to go before devising the vehicle which will get you there easiest.

Re-reading all I have written, I am fully aware there is much left unsaid. But take my word for it: I have already satisfied myself that 18 new letters can be devised (a) to be reminiscent of my majuscules but (b) unmistakably distinct from them and (c) typographically reconciled to Roman minuscules, and (d) no more complex to pen, no more cramped into evenly spaced typewriting, no more labour to use, than our present Roman.

I need not add that *Quicksript* saves twice as much with a wholly different and simpler lettering, that is my unhoped-for ideal. But monographs of any sort are better than digraphs or than i.t.a.'s paired and ligatured letters on one typeface, designed for a different job. When all's said, any change is a bit of an upheaval.

Yours, Kingsley Read, Abbots Morton, Worcester, Eng.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1972 p20 in the printed version]*

*Inviting memberships*

## **12. PHONEMIC SPELLING COUNCIL SUCCESSOR TO SIMPLER SPELLING ASSOCIATION**

The Simpler Spelling Association, formed in 1946 by a merger of the Simplified Spelling Board, founded in 1906, and the Spelling Reform Association, founded in 1876, has been merged with the Phonemic Spelling Council, chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York in 1971. Publications of the earlier organizations will continue to be supplied, so far as available.

This merger represents a shift of emphasis from an essentially propagandist organization, aimed primarily at influencing the reading and writing habits of the present adult generation, to an essentially research organization, investigating thru an inter-disciplinary post-doctoral Reading/Writing Research Institute, under appropriate university auspices or otherwise, all aspects of phonemic spelling of the English language, more especially as influencing the reading, writing, and learning of English, whether by English-speaking peoples or as a second language as an international auxiliary medium of communication.

For information about the Reading/Writing Research Institute write to Dr. Emmett A. Betts, President., Phonemic Spelling Council, Univ. of Miami, Coral Gables, FL.

### **ASSOCIATES**

Persons sufficiently interested to devote time and effort and/or money to the purposes of the Council may become Associates by paying annual dues of \$5. Associates receive one copy of all publications or releases of the Council, with the right to purchase additional copies at reduced cost.

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To: Dr. Helen Bonnema, Denver, Co.

Please send me information about associate memberships in the PHONEMIC SPELLING COUNCIL.

Name: Address: *No. Street City State Zip*

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