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1. English Orthography: a Case of Psychological Child Abuse, by Abraham Citron, Ph. D.*

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*SR 1 used (Spelling reform, first step), see section V, p. 4.

At the portals of education we have laid, not a highway, but a labyrinth.

Brainwashed as we are, we do not perceive our spelling as difficult, irrational, deceptive, inconsistent, clumsy, frustrating and wasteful; but it is and especially so to children.

Our spelling devours hours of study for years, squanders teachers' energy, blocks and frustrates children, renders writing more onerous and reading more difficult, strings out our words and inflates every cost of written communication. Our child-defeating spelling is one of the basic sources of academic discouragement and failure, aiding in the transformation of many children into psychological or physical dropouts.

The large majority of elementary and high school students in this country are either very poor, poor or mediocre spellers; the big majority of adults are no better. Millions of student hours are spent on spelling, millions of dollars are spent in teaching time, yet results are quite poor. Most students

dislike spelling, many students abhor it.

Make no mistake about it, spelling is inextricably interactive with reading; our inconsistent spelling contributes greatly to reading difficulties.

Our culture is based on words and on power over words; our instructional system is built almost entirely of words. Every other power and expansion in academics comes through mastery of words. Even the artist, mathematician, musician, athlete finds his or her career stunted without power over words. Our system moves on words, runs on words, exists on and in words. At the narrow base of this immense system are 26 letters which we combine into hundreds of thousands of written words.

Much depends, therefore, on how we combine these letters. Note that we are working with an alphabet not at all designed for the sounds of English, but borrowed from the Romans, who had designed it to express the sounds of Latin. At the outset we are stuck with only 26 letters to express 41 (some say 44) phonemes of spoken English.

A second difficulty which has been gathering on our word system over centuries is that letters have been combined into words according to differing schemes at different times, letters have been stuck on just to justify lines of print, spellings have been borrowed from other languages. We have changed the sound of letters, we have changed the way we pronounced words while the spelling has often congealed on the old form. All this and more has evolved over centuries in haphazard ways.

The result is that we have inherited an orthographic system full of inconsistencies, irrationalities, quirks, exceptions and disorganization. And because, by the time we have become adults, we are accustomed to it, we unthinkingly force this "system" on our children.

We double-cross children in hundreds of ways as they struggle to master our unnecessarily difficult word forms.

We teach children a hard 'c' as in 'cat,' 'can,' 'candy,' and then double-cross them with words such as 'certain,' 'center,' 'cement.' In a word such as 'cease,' the first 's' sound is expressed with a 'c,' the second with an 's'; in 'civic,' two different sounds are expressed with 'c.' Observe what a complicated mess we make with 'necessary.' We teach children to sound 'k' as in 'kick,' 'kid,' 'klan,' and then confront them with 'knee,' 'knob,' 'knife,' etc. Further, if hard 'c' and 'k' are sounded alike, why do we need them both? We teach children 'p' as in 'poor,' 'put,' 'push,' then force them to handle 'photo,' 'phrase,' 'pneumonia,' etc.

We cross up children with our miserable 'ie' and 'ei' combinations as in 'believe' and 'receive'; and the "i before e" rule is little help since the exceptions are nearly as numerous as the examples. With 'craze' and 'haze' we use a 'z', but to express the same sound in 'please' and 'tease' we use an 's.' We cross up the kids by spelling 'lease' with an 's' and then 'fleece,' the same sound, with a 'c.' In both these words, the vowel has the same sound but in one we express it with a double 'e' and in the other with 'ea.'

We force children to drag along outmoded and useless 'ough' forms in words such as 'through,' 'bough,' 'plough,' 'though,' ; and useless 'gh's in a host of words such as 'light,' 'might,' 'bright,' 'night,' etc. Our spelling is literally laced with these inconsistent and meaningless forms outmoded in the long, long ago.

Godfrey Dewey, a lifelong student of our orthographical system, found that for the 41 distinguishable sounds of our spoken language (phonemes), there are 561 spellings currently used. The 26 letters of our alphabet are pronounced in 92 ways. Also we have 132 sets of two letters

(digraphs) such as 'th,' 'ch,' 'ie,' 'ea,' etc., and for these we use 260 pronunciations. [1]

What would happen in our educational system with numbers if we told children that a 2 was two except when it had the value of 4 or 7? Or take a more extreme example: what would happen to children if we used red lights for 'stop' only some of the time and green lights for 'stop' some of the time? Such examples highlight the cruciality of consistency in basic education. Yet we throw orthographic inconsistencies at children all the time and wonder why so many* find our written system difficult. [2]

II A Small Experiment

A seven word list was submitted to 621 sixth graders distributed in 9 schools and 20 classes in the metropolitan Detroit area, Nov., Dec., 1974. The words, in traditional and approximately phonemic form, were as follows:

| <i>traditional spelling</i> | <i>approx. phonemic spelling</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| believe | beleev |
| height | hyt |
| photograph | forograf |
| receive | reseev |
| through | thru |
| tongue | tung |
| weigh | wa |

In each class the traditional list was analyzed and discussed for seven minutes, then written to dictation; then the phonemic list was analyzed, discussed for seven minutes and written to dictation.

On the traditional list 1481 words were misspelled as against* 764 on the phonemic forms. This is an error reduction of 48%. Such a result would occur by chance less than one time in a thousand. The number of perfectly spelled lists jumped from 192 (31%) traditional to 332 (53%) phonemic. The poorest spellers, those who missed 3 or more words on the traditional list, numbered 248 or 39%; but on the phonemic list they were reduced to 109 or only 17%.

There is no question but that there is Hawthorne effect in these results; the students were playing an interesting game. (They were told at the outset that this experiment had nothing to do with their grades in spelling.) Even so, the phonemic forms were new to them, many were quite familiar with the traditional spellings before the tests, and exposure to the new forms was only seven minutes. They were enabled to do so well so quickly because they were familiar with the sounds of the letters of the alphabet, and, following the sound of the word, they could fit the letters needed. Any teacher who deals with spelling will report that children often fail back upon "instinctive" spelling, spelling the way a word sounds to them. These sixth graders were excited to find that they could spell "instinctively" and it would be "right."

III Reliability, Reliability, Reliability

Children learn most of the things they need to know, without formal training. If we look at the way they learn it "naturally" we see that, given motivation, they learn things most quickly and easily if they can rely on an environmental response, if they can discern a pattern that does not fail them.

Learning to walk is a complex matter, but doubtless one reason it is achievable is that the child can depend on the forces of gravity, distribution of weight and balance, which are constant. The child is rewarded every time balance is maintained and taught by a tumble when balance is lost. The child feels balance being maintained or being lost.

Learning to talk is enormously complex, but again surely one reason it is achievable is that certain sounds are always associated with certain objects, actions, ideas. The spoken word 'mother,' or 'mamma,' or 'ma' always means a given person in a given role, as does 'pa.' The spoken syllable 'milk' always means milk, 'jump' means jump and so on. The sounds are reliable hence learnable. We have little trouble teaching children to tell time because we are consistent on the differing jobs of the clock hands, and we are consistent on the numbers and their positions on the clock face. Learning always involves perception of a pattern – the simpler and more reliable the pattern, the quicker the learning.

A basic principle of all learning is that children need a perceived reliable and integrated world as a basis for learning. All aspects of socialization, including necessary skills, are much more readily acquired if the child has the confident feeling of being in a reliable, secure and therefore a trusted world. Such a world is integrated in that one aspect of experience builds into or reinforces another. For example, learning to walk builds into learning to run, which builds into participation in (social interaction) children's games requiring running. This means that learning to talk will build into learning to write and read. In an integrated world, writing and reading should be as closely and as naturally as possible linked to speaking.

The principle of reliability does not mean that a child never be surprised or shocked or puzzled or discouraged. It does not require a world of monotony. But it does require a regularity of pattern in the skills crucial to the culture.

IV From the Natural to the Less Natural (By Making the Less Natural More Natural)

Speech is primordial. Children speak as naturally as they walk and almost as naturally as they breathe.

Speech is so natural that we often fail to note that it is built on abstraction and on symbolization. In speech we endow vocal sounds with meaning, we clothe sounds with life, with human experience. In other words, speech, which appears so natural, really combines the sound apparatus of homo sapiens with a contrived system of symbolization. To make a sound is at one level of the natural; to contrive a system of meanings and assign given meanings to given sounds is a different level of the natural. If this can be done with sound, can we come closer to it in our written symbols?

These sounds, as received by the ear or voiced by the organs of speech, become an intimate part of our being. We do not experience them (usually) as sounds at all but as direct meanings. So much a part of us do they become that *we* get to feel the syllable 'dog' is inherently doggy and that water could hardly be called anything else. We cleave to our native tongue and dialect and feel that our speech must be the language meant by the universe.

Thus, the world over, all people speak, but only some cultures develop a written language; and in the cultures which do develop written forms, only some of the people learn them. It is necessary to conclude that speech is primordial and on a level of naturalness denied to written forms. Homo sapiens takes to speech like a duck to water but it takes effort and sustained discipline to learn to read. (Some children learn to read unaided or with very little assistance but they are quite exceptional.)

It is true that we have not tried to raise children from infancy using only written language for communication. Were we to do this we might find that written forms too can become very intimate and "natural." But the facts remain that we always find humankind with speech, that written forms arise only in some cultures and only at some points in the development of those cultures, that all people speak but only those specially trained read and write.

We are thus drawn to the idea, often repeated in the study of reading, that the greatest difficulty in leading children from speech to writing and reading is the gap between a natural activity and one more abstract, less natural, more artificial. If this approach is correct, we should hypothesize that the more natural the written forms can be made to be, the more easily children will learn to write and to read. What does "natural" mean in this context? This again is an hypothesis, but I take it to include the following qualities: (a) as close as possible to the forms of speech, (b) as simple as possible, (c) experienced so early (3, 4, 5 years of age) and so often and so normally as to be taken as a part of the natural world of the child, (d) directly related to the sounds of speech, (e) reliable, always related in the same way to the same sounds.

Social scientists often speak of "internalization" of attitudes, values, points of view, roles. By this they mean an individual has made his or her own possession, an aspect of behavior modeled in the social environment. In this way, mention has been made of the magnificent way children make the sounds of native speech their own down to the last intonation. Learning (or socialization) has been remarked to occur when some aspect of the world is emotionally assimilated (internalized) into the self. Freud, Piaget, Rogers, Montessori, Maslow, among many others, have noted an emotional internalization theory of socialization and of learning. That which is learned becomes a part of the self; if we "grasp" or "understand" something, an idea or relationship, it in some way has become a part of us. To learn means a flowing of the psyche into the world and a flowing of an aspect of the world into the self, which is a way of describing experience.

And if the sounds of speech are "natural" because they are so early and so thoroughly absorbed into the self, then we can make the written forms more "natural" by making them early more familiar, more friendly, more supportive, more a natural part of the child's environment. We should make the cultural arrangements to cause children to induct into their hearts with familiarity, friendship and delight the letters of the alphabet. (A child who knows his or her letters as friends, tried and true, as animated pals, as companions – a child who knows their shapes, voices, characters, quirks – a child, in short, who has adopted the 26 friends, is ready to follow them into writing and reading. Such a child feels they are a part of the natural world. "These letters are mine." just as a child develops favoritism for certain numbers, so may feelings of positive or negative valence be developed for letters. A child who feels "Good ole' A" and "Bad ole' Z" is more ready to write and to read than a child who feels next to nothing for the letters. In these cases a non-preferred letter is neither fearsome nor overlooked, but constitutes a doleful and friendly imperfection like the Cowardly Lion.)

Cultural arrangements should be made such as nursery schools with parental involvement, childrens' TV programs, childrens' product advertizing, toy emphasis, kindergarten and first and second grade emphasis. (Children should be able to experience the alphabetical letters not only pictorially, but with personalities as dolls, puppets, pillows, blocks, cut-outs, cartoon characters, crackers, cookies, cereal nuggets, etc. At an early age, children should be taught to arrange and read block letters making up their names, later to feel and draw and manipulate them in many ways.)

The next step is crucial, for as the letters are used to build words, each letter must remain true to itself, true to its sound. This reliability will enable the children to see and hear and feel how letters are put together to form words. And in "understanding" this they will be more able to assimilate and adopt (take into themselves) the words. [3]

Just as reliability of sound to object is crucial in learning to speak, so the reliability of grapheme (letter) to phoneme (sound) is crucial in learning to write and to read.

In an alphabetical system, a written word is a collection of letters directing a reader (speaker) to produce certain sounds. A written word is exactly like a brief musical score, only the instrument playing the score is not a violin or piano but human breath as formed by vocal chords, palate, cheeks, tongue, teeth and lips. Observe a perfectly spelled word, (our lexicon still has many of them), such as 'tip.' Here the speaker is directed to combine a 'T' a short 'I' sound, and a 'P' sound in that order – three distinct sounds (phonemes) and three letters (graphemes) exactly corresponding to the sounds required. This is the basic plan of an alphabetical system. Over the centuries our orthography has strayed from this basic plan. We need desperately, for the sake of our children in a complex, symbolic, technological culture, to return to it.

Will a child who learns to read by sounding the words aloud or silently be limited to always going from the print to the sound and thence to the meaning? Not at all. (Very few of us, as a matter of course, realize we only hear sounds when we hear speech; we go directly to meaning.) Altho some readers move their lips or imaginatively hear the sound before they can get to meaning, the vast majority of readers learn to go directly from the written symbol to meaning. Many readers, for example, can read much faster than they can speak. [4] With all reading there may be some residual cerebral activity corresponding to speech activity, but if there is, it doesn't slow us up or interfere. Once the words are ours, the phrases begin to hang together and soon, if the notion takes us, we can soar over the printed page, skimming several times faster than speaking.

This means that the phonemic construction of a word, to maximize its naturalness and ease of learning, in no way limits its symbolic function. 'Thru' can mean everything that 'through' can and still be much easier to learn and to use. 'Hed' can signify everything that 'head' can signify; 'litl' is just as small as 'little' and much more sensible; 'niṭ' (dots on both ends to signify long 'i') is just as dark as 'night,' etc.

V Step by Step Reform

It should be emphasized that with our 26 letters it is impossible to spell many of our words perfectly phonemically. Lack of perfection, however, should not stop us from making the vast improvements which are quite possible. For example, the Australian Teachers Federation has recommended Spelling Reform One (SR-1) which is to spell every word with a short 'e' sound with an 'e'; thus 'bread' becomes 'bred,' 'head' becomes 'bed,' 'friend' becomes 'frend.' 'said' becomes 'sed,' etc. This change affects only 120 out of the most commonly used 25,000 words of our lexicon and thus would be rather easily assimilated. Through a series of such steps, say one every four years for 40 years, we could, while reducing the shock and displacement of change, revolutionize our spelling. A second change, for example, might be to change all 'ph's pronounced as 'f' to 'f'; thus 'telephone' would become 'telefone.' [5] A third change might be to drop all silent consonants such as the 'k' in 'knee,' [6] the 'l' in 'could,' 'would,' 'should'; the 'p' in 'pneumatic,' etc.

VI Our Present System Constitutes Psychic Child Abuse

What is being insisted upon here is nothing other than we have all said repeatedly over the years as a basis for the education of children. We have said, "Don't lie to children." The position here put forward is that our orthography is deceptive – it is one lie after another and hence it constitutes, not education, but psychic child abuse. Unnecessarily difficult and confusing word forms which many children fail, are not helping them to "grow"- it is not "educating" them – it is child abuse.

It is no less abuse because the system is administered in the name of knowledge and culture, or because it is enshrined in tradition. It is no less abuse because the forms come down to us wrapped in the prestige of "English literature:" It is no less abuse because the system is standard throughout the land or because we all participate in it, nor because it is curricularized and blessed with the authority of every school board of every state. It is no less abuse because children cannot manage the perspective or the courage to cry out specifically against it. It is abuse because it traps children

in needless drudgery and frustration, detracts from their feelings of success and of adequacy, defies and negates their sense of logic, robs many of them of love of written forms, and forces them over a course which many fail.

VII For the children, we should have the courage to change

Why haven't we long ago shifted to a consistent phonemic spelling which was and is the intent of our alphabetic system? Despite high sounding "lexical" and etymological rationalizations, the real reason is that we are used to the forms and do not want to undergo the inconvenience of change. As one graduate student put it, "I've learned to operate in one system and I'll be damned if I'll learn another."

But tremendous educational and monetary benefits could be reaped through such a change. Before we opt for costly pie-in-the-sky gimmicks, we should reform our child-defeating spelling. Simplified spelling could be the most fundamental and far-reaching educational innovation since the introduction of the common school.

[1] Godfrey Dewey, *English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading*. Teachers College Press, New York, 1971, p. 6.

[2] It is well known that experimental psychologists have induced apathy and behavioral breakdown in rats by training them in behavior leading to reward (food) and then switching the reward to punishment.

[3] E. J. Gibson, A. Pick, H. Osser, M. Hammond, "The Role of Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence in the Perception of Words." *Amer. Jour. of Psychology*, 1962, v. 75, p. 554-570. "The results of this experiment demonstrate that a letter group with a high spelling-to-sound correlation is reproduced more accurately than an equivalent letter group with a low spelling-to-sound correlation. ('Vuns' was reproduced more accurately than 'nsuv,' 'besks' more accurately than 'skseb,' etc.) "Practically, this result suggests strongly that the proper unit for analyzing the process of reading is not the alphabetical letter but *the spelling pattern which has an invariant relationship with a phonemic pattern*. This may be of great importance for children's learning to read and write." (emphasis mine.)

[4] With the aid of strongly literate family and peer environments, letter cleverness, special interests or strong motivation, most of our children learn to operate at some level of efficiency in our present system. But millions of our children are discouraged and turned away by its difficulty, irrationality and unnaturalness.

[5] Since in an honest orthography, all 'o's would be long, the eventual spelling of 'telephone' would be 'telefon.'

[6] Some silent initial consonants cannot be dropped without other changes in spelling. For example, *know*, *knew*, and others such as *knot* become homographs when the silent initial letter is dropped. In many words with *gh*, this digraph cannot be dropped unless another way is used to indicate the vowel sound.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §2.8 pp26–30 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin, Fall 1978 pp5–9 in the printed version]

2. A Discussion of Spelling Reform, by Kyril Evans*

*Deceased.

I wish to discuss a subject in which we all should have been interested long ago. This subject has been kept in the philological ivory towers of learning and out of sight for us, the laymen. For this reason, we were not and could not have been interested in it in the past. We were not aware of its need, nor why we should be interested in it, nor of its effects upon our lives.

This subject is spelling reform.

The slave economy of Greece and Rome and the feudal economic system of the middle ages did not require universal literacy. In these economic systems, only those who were charged with the direction of the affairs of the state, and the very few who were motivated by learning for its own sake and had plenty of time, money, leisure and a strong desire for learning, became educated and literate.

The industrial revolution, however, changed all that mode of life. Ordinary people were needed to construct and operate machines. These people had to be able to receive and to give written instructions in regard to the construction and operation of machines. Verbal instructions were inadequate and impractical because of the difficulty in remembering the numerous, complex details.

However, the industrial revolution did not change our system of writing in order to make it more suitable for the machine age. From the time of the industrial revolution till today, the ordinary everyday users of the English language have to waste years of time in order to acquire the bare minimum of education, just the three r's, and to adapt themselves to the industrial way of life.

During the past, some of the high priests in the temples of religion, politics and learning, resisted any changes in the system of writing, maintaining that writing is sacred and immutable. In spite of all this resistance, changes in pronunciation and in spelling always take place, but take place in a haphazard manner, causing more confusion than simplification in our spelling.

We, the English speaking people, are practical in every respect, except in the matter of spelling and tradition. But the time has come for us, if we are not to remain the slaves of an outworn system of spelling, to take an interest and search for a solution to the problem of spelling reform, a solution which will be practicable and could be mastered in the shortest time possible.

Could anyone imagine that today a place exists in our society for illiterate people? No, there is no place for illiterates in our industrial way of life.

The more complex our way of life becomes, the higher the standard of education which will be required for every member of the community. We shall have no time to waste.

Our mal-phonetic system of spelling wastes from 2 to 3 years of every school child's life and much of the time of each adult in the English speaking world.

Did you ever stop to think of the difficulties of the adult wrestling with the spelling or the pronunciation of new and unfamiliar words with which he comes in contact every day? The ever-present question is: "How do you spell this word?" or "How do you pronounce that word?" The questioned person may be just as puzzled as the questioner.

If reference is made to the dictionary, the information is not always there, or is not easily available, for if the searcher has no idea of the spelling of the word and is not familiar with the explanatory words in the dictionary in connection with the word, he cannot find it. The compilers of the dictionaries are compelled to resort to various means in order to make you catch onto the pronunciation of the words. These means are: respelling, the International Phonetic Alphabet, the Greek, the Latin, or any of the other languages of the origin of the words. One is required to know thoroly all these means and a few other languages before one can understand and master English pronunciation and spelling.

How did this confusion in our spelling come about?

It is because our language is a polyglot language – it contains words from almost every other language in the world.

Its direct ancestors are the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman French Languages. The Webster International Dictionary of the English language states that neither the Anglo-Saxon orthography nor the Old French was distinguished for its regularity. But when the two were thrown together, the result was a mass of confusion and anomaly hardly to be paralleled, except, perhaps, in the spelling of the native Irish.

Our language is very young. It was born approximately six and a half centuries ago. The birth of the Chinese language is in the dim past of history – it is said to be more than fifty centuries old. The English language today is travelling the same road which the Chinese language has been travelling. The two languages have certain similarities. The English language, like the Chinese language, is fast becoming a functional language – the meaning of the words is determined by their function in the sentence. This represents a simplification in grammar. Its spelling, however, is becoming a word-picture spelling – one letter or a series of letters, unrelated to the sounds of speech, make up the lettered picture of each word. This represents a very serious complication in the writing of the language.

History tells us that during the fifth century, Celt-inhabited Britain was invaded by the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes. The Anglo-Saxons continued to exist as a free nation until the year 1066.

That year, William the Conqueror crossed the English Channel with large armies and subjugated the Anglo-Saxon nation. The conquerors brought with them the French language and made it the official language of the islands. The Anglo-Saxon language came to be regarded with contempt by the conquerors and was relegated to the countryside as the language of the peasants and the foreigners. This relation between the conquerors and the conquered continued until the 12th century when Normandy, the homeland of the conquerors, was invaded by her neighbors. The Normans in England needed allies. They began to fraternize with the Anglo-Saxons and to accept them as fellow-countrymen. By the beginning of the 14th century, the two people had merged as one people, with one language, the English language.

The reasons for the confusion in our spelling are numerous: First, in the merging of the Anglo-Saxon and the French languages, Anglo-Saxon words and French words were used together, without change in spelling, to form the beginning of the English language. Anglo-Saxon sounds of speech and French sounds of speech were retained for each of the letters of our alphabet. This resulted in multiple sounds of speech for the same letter and multiple spellings for the same sound of speech.

Latin words in the English language were inherited from both the Anglo-Saxon and the French

languages, since both of them used Latin as the language of legal documents and as the church language. Through the Latin language, many Greek words were introduced into the English language. The language scholars kept the spelling of the new words as close to the spelling in the original language as possible, but took the liberty to change the pronunciation of the words. This is what is called 'anglicizing' the pronunciation of foreign words in the English language. Thus, English spelling was made even more complicated.

During the period of the Reformation, language scholars maintained that English spelling should indicate the origin of the words rather than their pronunciation. This is the so-called historical or etymological spelling. By this method of spelling the etymologists sought to make easier their own task of cracking down the origin, history and development of words. In this they were not always successful, but the historical method of spelling made English spelling infinitely more difficult for the everyday users of the English language. For example, Greek, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, and French, among others, have all been assimilated into English. Their divergent spellings have brought about 10 different spellings for the sound of speech of 'k.' This would imply that one has to know all these languages before one can hope to master English spelling. This may be possible for one who is prepared to spend a lifetime, like the Chinese scholars of old, in the study of these languages, before one can hope to master the use of the English language.

Another reason for the confusion in English spelling is that, before printing came into general use, each writer spelled the words he wrote the way he thought they should be spelled, irrespective of how other writers spelled the same words.

The process of coining new words and borrowing words from other languages still continues today unabated. As long as English spelling remains non-phonetic, we shall be forced to continually add new sounds of speech to each of the letters of our alphabet, and to add new spellings to the existing sounds of speech. In time, we may come to the same impasse to which the Chinese have come today.

Today, the Chinese realize that they cannot hope to industrialize their country without the use of a phonetic alphabet. For this reason, a committee in the Ministry of Education at Peking, is working feverishly to devise such an alphabet for their language.

Shall we wait for fifty years before we stop wallowing in such a confusion? What has been done in the past to free us from this anarchy and tyranny in our spelling?

Yes, a few haphazard attempts have been made in the past in order to regularize English spelling. The author of a literary work in the 14th century used the device of doubling a consonant letter in order to indicate that the immediately preceding vowel sound is a short vowel sound. At present this rule is honored more in the breach of it than in its observance.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1, in England, several grammarians undertook the task of improving the quality of writing by reducing the multiple non-phonetic spellings of certain words which had more than one non-phonetic spellings each.

About the year 1837, Sir Isaac Pitman in England, advocated the adoption of phonetic spelling. He based his invention, shorthand writing, entirely on the sounds of speech and not on the non-phonetic spelling of the words. Every stenographer knows this.

During the last few years of his life, Benjamin Franklin became an ardent advocate of spelling reform. He devised a phonetic alphabet, but because of his advanced age, did not press for its adoption.

Noah Webster, a contemporary of Benjamin Franklin, advocated simplified spelling. He included some of these reforms in his dictionary. His reformed spelling today distinguishes American English spelling from the British English spelling.

During the second half of the last century, the Philological Association made the first organized attempt at spelling reform. However, the philologists found it difficult to agree among themselves as to what is to be done and how it is to be done. They held several conferences and finally a committee was appointed to devise a phonetic alphabet. After some hard work, this committee brought forth such an alphabet, but found no soil in which to plant it. First, because the philologists disagreed among themselves both on the alphabet and how to put it into use. Second, because many of the so-called educated people, having a vested interest in non-phonetic spelling, opposed any changes. Third, because the printers were death on any changes in spelling, or having anything to do with new and unfamiliar letters. Fourth, because illiteracy was very prevalent.

At the beginning of this century, The Simplified Spelling Society of Great Britain devised a system of simplified spelling which reduced considerably the multiple spellings of most sounds of speech and the multiple sounds of speech for the same spelling. But it did not go so far as to make English spelling completely phonetic. It adopted 31 rules for simplified spelling and then four years later adopted an additional 30 rules. These were so complicated that they were impractical. Then in 1934 the S.S.S. embraced the phonetic system of Prof. R. E. Zachrisson called Anglic but renamed it 'New Spelling.' In 1953 they brought a bill before Parliament for the adoption of their system of spelling for teaching reading and it lost by only three votes.

A compromise was reached in which the Minister of Education gave the government's blessing, but no financial support, to a series of classroom tests comparing the difference between teaching reading in out archaic spelling and teaching reading in a phonetic spelling.

During the twenties of this century, The Simplified Spelling Board in the U.S.A. undertook the solution of the problem of spelling reform. In its publications, the Board stated that its ultimate aim is to make English spelling completely phonetic. As a start, they made up lists of words which had more than one non-phonetic spelling. These lists were issued, one at a time, to the various educational institutions and to the various industrial and commercial establishments, with the request that the simpler of the more than one non-phonetic spellings be adopted officially.

In the past two or three decades, a number of individuals made attempts to devise a phonetic alphabet for the English language. However, these individuals were limited in their views. Because of this limitation, they committed certain errors in their alphabets. For example, one of them made the statement that the words *pin* and *pen* were pronounced the same and, therefore, they should be spelled the same way. His statement may be true for his local dialect, but it is not correct for the English language in general. In a phonetic spelling these words do not change their spelling. Another of these individuals, because of a strong influence from the Russian language, introduced in his phonetic alpha- bet the soft sign of the Russian alphabet. This soft sign is absolutely unnecessary for the English language.

All these organizations and individuals spent a great deal of time, effort and money to design a simplified spelling or a phonetic alphabet. For various reasons, they committed certain errors of judgement in designing their alphabets and in their approach to the subject. However, the pressure for higher standards of education and for a higher level of education for the general public, was not sufficient to arouse the public to the opportunities. Now, the machine age, the electronic age, the atomic age, and the age of automation demand a higher education for every member of the community. A spelling reform, therefore, is imperative. The only questions which remain to be

answered are: what shall be the extent of the reform and, how shall we go about implementing the reform? We really need to save the necessary time to apply to raising the standard and level of education.

Students in high schools and colleges are failing in greater and greater numbers every successive year. Reading, spelling and writing are basic to all other subjects of study in the schools. Failure in spelling foretells failure in reading, which in turn foretells failure in many other subjects of study. How can a student make progress in the other academic studies when they require a certain proficiency in reading? Our non-phonetic spelling, from year to year, becomes more and more complex, difficult and time-consuming, because of the tremendous growth of the vocabulary of the English language. This is at a time when science, industry and education are crying for trained men and women.

An immense number of new words are continuously cropping up in our language. Half a century ago, a person in command of 6000 words was considered to be an educated person and a fluent speaker. Now, he has to be in command of 20,000 words and to understand 100,000 words, in order to be considered an educated person and a fluent speaker, and to be able to handle all the subjects of study required of him. We have added immensely to our stock of words, but we cannot add to the time at our disposal, in which to master the use of these added words. We continue to flounder and muddle through with our non-phonetic spelling, not knowing that the time is fast approaching when we will no longer be able to afford to flounder. We shall have to be through with our muddling waste of time and energies. The greatness of the English speaking people in the fields of science, invention and literature has put us ahead of the rest of the world, and afforded us time in which to tarry on way and muddle through at leisure. However, the rest of the world is catching up to us, and, if we do not seize the opportunity to cease wasting our time with our non-phonetic spelling, we shall be passed by and left behind on the road to progress by the rest of the world.
(Editor's note – watch Japan and Germany.)

Science, industry and education are crying for qualified men and women to lead us on the road to progress. It has been admitted that we are lagging far behind in the training of such leaders. It has also been admitted that the financial barrier prevents many of our talented young people from developing their abilities to the fullest as leaders in these fields. But how many of us realize that we have young people in our communities gifted with every ability for learning, except the dubious gift of a rote memory? These boys and girls have an inherent sense of logic and love to exercise their intelligence by the use of common sense reasoning in the process of learning. But when we confront them with our illogical, confusing, historical, non-phonetic spelling, which requires a rote memory in learning some of it, but not all of it, we destroy that common sense – that sense of logic that science demands in its learning. These young people then feel frustrated and give up in despair early in their schooling. Their potential and valuable contributions to progress in science, industry and education are lost forever.

The traditionalists tell us that our non-phonemic spelling is based on a deep-seated tradition which makes it immutable, and therefore it cannot be changed. In order to prove that this traditional immutability of English spelling is incorrect, all one has to do is to compare Shakespeare's works in their original spelling with their spelling in today's issues. It is the vested interests in printing and in learning with non-phonetic spelling which hide behind the non-existent tradition. They attack viciously anyone who dares to suggest changes in our spelling for the purpose of simplification. Spelling is simply a tool with which we serve ourselves. It serves us efficiently or inefficiently according to the manner in which we fashion it consciously. The words spelled regularly are easy to remember. Those irregular words – those which indicate wrongly a pronunciation at variance with speech – cause trouble in learning and when we want to use them in speech. The floundering in our spelling forces us to flounder in our speech as well. If one pays careful attention to people speaking,

one cannot fail to note that many of the words are not carefully spoken, they are mumbled, because the speaker is not quite sure of their correct pronunciation. This mumbling, if not corrected early in the formative years, becomes a habit which is extremely difficult to correct. This is where our school teachers come in with their correct and clear speech. Anyone listening to President Eisenhower or Secretary of State John Foster Dulles speaking, cannot fail to notice the manner in which these statesmen pronounce the words 'international' and 'secretary.' They pronounce these words as 'inernational' and 'seketary.' Most probably, they commit this error unconsciously, by force of habit. An Irish medical doctor, speaking on the radio from Newfoundland on the occasion of St. Patrick's Day, pronounced the word 'voice' as 'vice.' Someone called at my door soliciting a donation for a charitable cause. When I asked what was her organization, she said that it was "The Multiple Serosis Society of Canada." She pronounced the word 'serosis' almost under her breath, whereas this word correctly pronounced is 'sklerosis,' a Greek word meaning hardening.

Oh, there is so much to learn and there is so little time in which to learn it! There is time – but we are wasting it in trying to learn our archaic, burdensome spelling. We are spending so much time asking each other: "How do you spell this word?" or, "How do you pronounce that word?" Or, run to the dictionary and, quite often, not be able to find it even there. It is impossible to find it in the dictionary, if you do not know the spelling accepted by the dictionary as correct, or the dictionary will not help you with the pronunciation if you are not thoroughly familiar with the explanatory words. Then, in despair, you say to yourself, "Oh well, I shall not use that word," or "I shall look for another word." Thus we are wasting our time and our vocabulary suffers.

We – the public – should have been interested in the subject of spelling reform long ago, if we were not so self-centered and selfish, so that, today, our mal-phonetic spelling would not act as a barrier to our talented young people from developing to the fullest their abilities for their own benefit and for the benefit of the community.

In order to interest and inform the public about spelling reform, I have published a small book entitled, "A Phonetic Alphabet for the English Language." It is available in many of the bookshops and in most of the university libraries and public libraries throughout Canada.

The phonetic alphabet presented in this book is not entirely new. I have studied most of the spelling reform alphabets offered in the past and have endeavored to correct the errors in them. In other words, I have built on the foundation laid down by others in the past.

A phonetic alphabet cannot wander too far from the present non-phonetic alphabet. If it introduces too many radical changes, it will place too heavy a burden on the transition generation, and on those individuals of the future generations who wish to delve into the literature of the past written in our old spelling. For this reason, in the formulation of my phonetic spelling system, I have taken the letters of the present non-phonetic alphabet and have fixed to each letter the sound of speech which that letter represents most often in non-phonetic spelling as at present. Thus, the student of phonetic spelling is already familiar with the relation of each letter and the sound of speech it represents. There are very few exceptions to this rule. These few exceptions are related to easily understood and remembered analogies. For example, a single vowel letter represents a short vowel sound of speech. The same letter doubled represents the corresponding long vowel sound of speech.

In regard to the consonant sounds of speech, the only changes are as follows: the voiced *th* in the word *then* is changed to *dh*. The *ch* in the Scottish word *loch* is changed to *kh*. The *s* in *pleasure* or the *z* in *azure* are changed to *zh*. The French nasal *n*, which is used in very few words in English, borrowed from the French, is represented by a small N of capital form as in the words *ensemble*, *encore*, *entree*, etc.

Thus the spelling of approximately 20% of our words is unchanged in this phonetic spelling system. These words do not change their spelling because they are spelled phonetically in our conventional spelling. (a pity there are not more) Examples of such words are: *at, get, hit, hurt, with*, etc. 60% of our words change their spelling only in such a way that the reader cannot fail to read them. Examples of such words are: *butn, faar, gaard, betur, butur, komfort, kuning, kwik, kwontiti, militeri, strateji, woz*, etc. Foreigners from Europe will recognize them as old friends from their mother tongues. Only the remaining 20% of the words change their spelling a little more radically – and these are the ones in conventional spelling that cause the most trouble in learning to read.

The main objection to change to phonetic spelling is the fear that we will be required to start learning the language all over again. This fear is really unfounded. The present generation already knows the language, as far as it will know it by means of the non-phonetic spelling. All phonetic spelling means is that we are asked to spell the words correctly as we pronounce them correctly. It has been pointed out above, the student of phonetic spelling will already be familiar with the phonetic sounds of the letters of the alphabet.

Another objection, which opponents of spelling reform over-stress, is that we will lose contact with the literature of the past written in non-phonetic spelling. This disadvantage is more fancied than real. Shakespeare did not write his works in today's spelling – his was more nearly based on pronunciation, but it was also inconsistent. The student who becomes master of phonetic spelling will have some difficulty in reading non-phonetic spelling, but context and the regular words will help. As time recedes, only the few research scholars in literature will pore over books in non-phonetic spelling and will be likely to wonder at our obstinacy in continuing for such a long time with our illogical non-phonetic spelling. In time, all important literary and technical literature will be published in phonetic spelling.

The third disadvantage, which is also not formidable, is that the transition generation will have to be able to read both the non-phonetic and the phonetic spellings, but will need to use only one of them. The transition generation will already know the non-phonetic spelling, as much as it will ever know it. To learn to read the phonetic spelling will be a very simple matter, as this is the very purpose of phonetic spelling – to enable the student to learn reading and spelling without wasting any time.

A fourth disadvantage is the fear that, with phonetic spelling, the English language will disintegrate into a group of languages because of regional dialects. Such disintegration can happen only if the various English speaking peoples were completely isolated from each other. But today, science has developed the means of communication to such an extent that such isolation is impossible. Radio, television, talkies, exchange of school teachers, speakers, trade, travel, and many other factors favor the unity of speech of the English speaking people. Phonetic spelling will actually tend to prevent the spread of regional dialects by offering a standard of pronunciation which is desired to be emulated.

The advantages of phonetic spelling over non-phonetic spelling transcend by far the disadvantages.

The school children in the primary schools will be able to learn in six years what they now require eight years to learn. They will save approximately two years of schooling time. We will not take the children out of school at the end of the six years. But we shall transfer some of the high school subjects to the primary schools, some of the college subjects to the high schools, and we shall add to the university curriculum subjects of new developments. Thus, we shall give to the youths of the future generations two years more education than they are now getting without an increase in the cost of education-without raising school taxes on this account. And by making it easier to learn to read, we will reduce the number of school dropouts.

The second advantage will be that the frequent search for spelling and pronunciation information becomes unnecessary with phonetic spelling.

The third advantage will be that the English language will become one of the easiest languages to learn. It is the most useful language now. This will enhance the possibility of the English language becoming the international language of the world.

A fourth advantage will be that many more millions of non-English-speaking people will learn to speak, read and write the English language. Thus the influence of English culture and literature will spread ever wider in the world.

A fifth advantage will be that speakers of the English language will be sure of the proper pronunciation of their words. This will enable them to speak more deliberately and clearly without mumbling.

A sixth and a great advantage of phonetic spelling will be that writers will be able to put down on the printed page any of the existing sounds of speech of standard English or any of its numerous dialects. This is impossible with non-phonetic spelling. Various systems to indicate dialects have been shown over the years – chiefly by humorous writers, many of whom were weak on the phonetics of English speech. But their endeavors have spurred spelling reformers to devise better phonetic systems.

The lack of the sixth advantage was felt very keenly by the late George Bernard Shaw. For this reason, he said that he was making the most serious proposition in his life when he asked that a phonetic alphabet be devised for the English language. He tried to leave a good portion of his fortune in quest of such an alphabet, but a faulty will resulted in a compromise which only allowed a small portion of his estate for the project. He thought that the staggering savings in time, effort, material and money, which will be affected by the adoption of a completely phonetic alphabet – one letter for each existing sound of English speech – should be sufficient to shock and to convince all the sceptics in the English speaking world of the necessity for a phonetic alphabet for the English language. He is correct in his estimate. With a completely phonetic alphabet, these savings will amount to as much as 18% in the cost of labor and material in writing, typing and printing. This saving would be in addition to the saving for the schools and the universities.

The problem which Shaw sought to solve is a two-fold problem. The first part of the problem is to devise a completely phonetic alphabet for the English languages single character for each sound of speech. There are many alphabets which fulfill the solution to this part of the problem.

The second part of the problem is financial. The courts need not argue that Shaw's will requires a change in the law of the land. The right to change the law belongs to the people of every democratic country. However, in order to inform the people of the great advantages to themselves from the adoption and understanding of phonetic spelling, money is needed to use the channels of communication and information. When the people realize the great benefits to be derived for themselves and future generations from the adoption of phonetic spelling, they will demand that the governments act to change the law to implement spelling reform.

The implementation of spelling reform requires the co-operation of the general public, of the educators, and of the educational authorities in all English speaking countries. Otherwise, spelling reform will remain like a gold mine in which the gold is undeveloped and unused. A thorough public discussion of phonetic spelling as compared with non-phonetic spelling, is necessary in order that English speaking communities may realize the great financial and cultural benefits to be derived from the adoption of phonetic spelling.

School teachers are limited to the teaching of the system of spelling laid down by the educational authorities. Teachers as individuals can further the reform by discussion, but they cannot implement the reform, unless they are so authorized by the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education in each English speaking country authorizes the system of spelling used and taught in the schools of his particular country.

Spelling reform need not create an insurmountable gap between the past – non-phonetic spelling, and the future – phonetic spelling. It should enable the present generation to read the reformed spelling with ease. It should enable future generations to read the non-phonetic spelling with little difficulty, provided it is taught properly. It is very essential that there be no complete break between the two systems of spelling. A gradual introduction of the reform will make it easier to be accepted and assimilated.

In all English speaking countries the form of society and government is democratic. If the general public, the voter, is convinced that a given reform would benefit it, it tells the government, by means of the ballot, to implement such a reform by legislation.

The following methods of gradual implementation of the spelling reform are suggested.

1. The general public to be given an interest in the subject of spelling reform by holding contests for the best ideas on spelling reform and how to put it into use. Thus the public will become self-informed about the need and advantages of reformed spelling, and may come up with some good ideas on the process of utilizing the reformed spelling.
2. High school and college teams to debate the subject. Spelling reform is a lively subject for controversy.
3. School teachers to be permitted to carry out voluntary experiments in order to test the advantages to be gained by the adoption of the phonetic system of spelling and to report the results of such experiments.
4. Individuals to acquaint themselves with the subject of phonetic spelling and to challenge friends to correspond in phonetic spelling with them. Such correspondence will provide them with entertainment and education in phonetics.
5. The appropriate grades of the public schools to be introduced to phonetic spelling, as a special subject, as soon as possible, so that the present generation of school children be prepared for the change when the reform is implemented by law. This may even assist in the learning of non-phonetic spelling by showing the contrast.
6. Phonetic spelling clubs to be formed for the purpose of leading public discussions on the subject through public meetings, writing letters to the press, discussions on the radio, television, etc. The formation of the clubs to be based on the electoral tidings for members of parliament which has the jurisdiction over educational matters.
7. Finally, when a large section of the public becomes convinced of the great financial and cultural benefits to be gained for itself from the adoption of the reform, it can require that the members of parliament introduce bills to call upon other governments for legislation to establish phonetic spelling as the official spelling system for each English speaking country.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §20.2 pp265,266 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1978 pp9,10 in the printed version]

3. Spelling Reform: Not only Why, but Which, When, How, Where, and by Whom, by Newell Tune

Spelling reformers have been telling us for years, even centuries, that we need a reform of English spelling – and doing a fairly good job of telling why we need it. Now we must consider the other adverbs that modify spelling reform. To quote from another article on this subject written 17 years ago by this author, "Many people seem to think that the reason why the English-speaking people have not reformed their spelling is because a satisfactory system of reform has not been devised. However, this can hardly be true, for when one reads the many books on the problem, literally hundreds of systems for reforming our spelling will be found to have been proposed. If they were all listed and counted, there may be over a thousand different systems. Surely amongst so many solutions to the problem there will be found one that is satisfactory?"

But all these books were concerned solely with the academic solution to the problem, that of devising the best method of spelling to represent the spoken English language.

Almost all of them ignored the most important aspect of the problem – how this reformed system of spelling shall be put into use. They are all trying to put the cart before the horse. They seem to think that if a perfect system is devised and agreed upon by the educators of this country, it then can be adopted and put in effect. They do not seem to know that this was done in 1883, when the American Philological Soc. and the Philological Soc. of England agreed upon rules for changes in spelling. They petitioned Congress to adopt this system. When the congressmen looked at it, they decided the country was not ready for such a change. This result should prove quite clearly that the academic solution to the problem and the legislative solution to the problem are separable and should be independent. It should also prove that no academic solution to the problem, no matter how well-devised and agreed upon by our educators, can be put into effect *until* and *unless* the legislative solution to the problem is first devised and put into effect.

No one person, organization, or group has any authority to make any changes in our spelling, unless it is our government. No one has any means of putting them into effect but our government. And no one among the hundreds of societies, newspapers, and educators' groups has ever succeeded in establishing the changed spelling of more than a few words. Hence, no important or worthwhile change in spelling will ever be established unless it is backed by the government as the official government spelling. Since Congress is the part of the government to institute all laws, and since it would require a law to make such a change "official," it behoves us not to waste our energies solving the academic problem, when it is the legislative problem that is stalemating the attempts at spelling reform.

Legislators must be convinced not only that spelling reform is desirable, practical and is badly needed, but also that the public and our educators are ready and willing to accept some drastic changes in our spelling needed to make it consistently regular and to conform to a set of rules. Unless and until we can convince the public and the educators of the many benefits of a reformed spelling, we cannot hope to convince our congressmen that the public and the educators will back

us in demanding the necessary changes in spelling so as to make spelling and reading as regular and as easy to teach as our system of mathematics.

There is a Bill now pending in Congress which intends to establish a National Spelling Commission, which will have the authority to reform our spelling and publish a dictionary in the new spelling for the use of government employees in their official duties – correspondence, reports and news releases. No one else will be required to use the new spelling, but it is hoped that the precedent established by the government will be accepted and adopted gradually by the newspapers, magazines and taught in the schools, once it becomes the official spelling. We must now put the horse before the cart, by organizing all our efforts to demand that Congress pass this Bill to solve the legislative problem first. Whether or not Congress ever acts on this Bill, will depend upon the forceful united efforts of every frustrated parent and dissatisfied reading teacher in demanding action on the spelling reform Bill. It all depends upon you! Don't expect Johnny to do it for you.

Now, about the attitude of the public about spelling reform, I saw a letter written nearly a century ago that is still appropriate now. Here it is:

If the average American is to be classified on the basis of his knowledge about the inconsistencies of our spelling, it is easy to see that they could be grouped into four classes, which would include most of them with tolerable thoroughness.

First, there are those who do not *know* anything about the question and *do not care* anything about it. These are in the great majority.

Second, those who know all about it, and consider it to be the one main vital aim in education – who look upon it as the most important reform not yet accomplished – as the chief panacea for most of the educational ills from which our English spelling suffers. These are the generous class, who are ready to sacrifice time, money, themselves, in order to build up in the minds of the American people an understanding and a just appreciation of the virtuous principles of spelling reform. They are people of one-aim, one-hope, and possessed of that faith, courage and enthusiasm which is necessary for pioneers in thought in any direction. They should be listened to, for only they can show you how to save two years spent in needless toil in the lower grades by students who yearn for simplicity, regularity, and logic. But this is a small class as reformers are always in a minority.

Then there is a third class: the very large intermediate class who may have caught some glimmerings of truth from the occasional literature on the subject, or from the frequent times they have to consult the dictionary for the spelling of words, or from the confusion they find in themselves when they sit down and try to write a letter or a composition, or when they have to help their children with the inconsistencies of our spelling. Even then, if someone were to tell them to do something about it, their answer would be: "What can I do about it?, when hundreds of reformers before me have failed to make a dent in Dr. Samuel Johnson's erratic spelling!"

The fourth class are those bitter opponents of any change whatever, Often they are the ones who have a *vested interest* in teaching out erratic spelling. They are the ones whose books, now being used to show how difficult it is to teach spelling and reading, would be obsolete if our spelling were

reformed, and made easier to learn and to reach. They are the ones who fear the loss of their jobs if spelling were made too easy! Fortunately, these are a very small minority.

Perhaps we should say there is a fifth class: those innocent victims who are too young to do anything about it – the inarticulate children now facing the difficult task of learning to spell after the easier job of learning to speak English. Unfortunately, they cannot talk back to grown-ups. They cannot voice their objections to the unknown, inconsistent mess of the spelling confronting them. They must suffer needlessly simply because their parents are too lazy minded or don't know what to do about it! What will you do about it?

Yours truly, *Miss S. G. Stewart*. Aug. 1887.

Editor's note: Almost a century ago, all of the most important educators in this country were enthusiastically backing the spelling reform movement. They petitioned Congress to do something about it. But Congress did not think the American people were ready for such a reform, nor could start this because the United States was not a leader – only a follower of Great Britain and the English-speaking countries. And at the time Great Britain was too conservative to make such a change, but by 1953 the position was reversed. A bill in Parliament to establish a commission for spelling reform failed to pass by only three votes. The consensus of opinion as to why it failed was the argument that they could not do it alone without the help and agreement of the United States.

Now it is up to us. If there is to be any real improvement – any real progress in education, it must start with the fundamental basis of all learning – the three R's. Two of these R's depend upon our spelling – the most unscientific system on the face of the earth (with the possible exception of the Chinese), and the one which has had no worthwhile improvement since the advent of the printing press. Education, if it ever expects to make any real progress, must throw off the shackles of this Johnsonian handicap, and be modernized like everything around us.

It is really up to the people, and especially the parents. They are the ones who have the greatest interest at stake. They are the ones to whom Congress will listen if they show how they feel. If there is to be any change in the fundamentals of spelling, it must be done by Congress. No one else has enough influence or authority to do anything about it. The Education Sub-Committee of Congress *will act* if they feel that the parents and the teachers are backing them in their efforts to pass the Bill to establish a commission to consider some kind of a reform of our spelling.

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An Apology

We inadvertently omitted giving credit to the United Kingdom Reading Assoc. when reprinting in our Summer issue Dr. John Downing's article, "The Probability of Reading Failure in i.t.a. and t.o." from their publication *Reading*, vol.11, no. 3, Dec. 1977.

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[*Spelling Reform Anthology §7.5 pp115–118 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1978 pp11–14 in the printed version*]

4. The Key to Better Education, by Brenda M. Johns*

* Sacred Heart Girl's School, Gulu, Uganda, or (Summer) Cambridge, England, U.K.

The Aim

To make the written and spoken forms of this important tool of communication, the English language, more accessible to-

- (1) the 25% to 30% of our population classed as *backward readers*,
- (2) the 500,000,000 or so *hungry people* of the world who may really need it to gain the assistance needed to develop their countries,
- (3) the 500,000,000 or so *extra people* who are expected to swell the world population in the next 35 years,
- (4) the other peoples of *Europe* with whom we must develop closer ties, Common Market or no,
- (5) to save 1½ to 2 years in the education of all children,
- (6) to give a *better foundation* for all subsequent learning.

It will probably be desirable for our brighter children to use some of the time saved for learning foreign languages, including Russian, German, French and perhaps even Mandarin. Many will need to use these in the course of their work and travel., For the others, even a mere smattering of a foreign language could be a valuable, stirring, and subtle adjunct to the influences of geography, history, current affairs, sociology, religion, etc., giving a more intimate insight into the lives of other people.

The Advantages which we may confidentially expect:

- (1) A child or foreign student knowing the sounds of the alphabet will be able to write any word he can properly pronounce and will be able to read (pronounce) any word he sees written.
- (2) His reading and writing will reach the standard of his speech vocabulary in a minimum of time.
- (3) He will then be able to read independently getting a good idea of pronunciation of new words which he has never heard.
- (4) The quantity and fluency of his reading will enable him to better appreciate sentence patterns. As one cannot do this when listening to the spoken word, he will be able to look back over difficult sentences and ponder over the grammatical links which embody the links in meaning.

Later, with much experience reading the works of many authors, he will begin to appreciate the innuendoes and the interplay of the words and phrases with the subtle emotional implications which cannot be obtained from a dictionary or learnt by grammatical study.

- (5) He will have access to all the knowledge he wants and needs and not be dependent on the whims of a syllabus designed by someone who, however well-meaning, cannot possibly have insight into his unique inheritance of bents and foibles, or the play that his experiences have on these, or the multitudinous variety of interrelated personality-circumstance situations through which he may live in the future. Not only will he be able to look for the knowledge or entertainment that he wants; an unexpected, unlooked-for phrase may jump from the page and occupy his thoughts for an entire day, cause an inspiration, or even influence the whole course of his emotional, philosophical, or practical life.

The advanced student, wishing to study the Traditional Orthography (pre-spelling-reform) books, will be able to do so with very little extra effort and help. His experience of sentence pattern, vocabulary, and idiom, and his knowledge of the letters, seasoned with a pinch of logic, will see him through as with a following wind if he is just tipped off about the changes that have been made.

The Situation Now, in

(1) The World

UNESCO is favoring Esperanto as a first international language as opposed to English, owing solely to the difficulties of English spelling. This in spite of the already wide-spread use and understanding of English, and the availability of *more teachers of English* than of any other language. (However, many teachers in foreign countries do not have good pronunciation of English, consequently their teaching is faulty and the results deplorable. A stabilized alphabet with proper pronunciation assigned to each letter and rules for their use will greatly help teachers to know at least their local English dialect).

This deplorable retrogressive step will take time to implement but could be reversed if the English people themselves would modernize their ideas and fling off the chains with which they are strangling themselves 'Themselves,' yes, for there is no authority, no law which attempts to enslave us to our present spelling. The prefaces to dictionaries by their compilers are openly critical of our present spelling. They admit freely to differences of opinion as to what is the best or the most popular spelling. They recognize also that they are partly out of date before they are even published. It is laughable for anyone to say "This word is being used wrongly nowadays. It should mean so-and-so; because it says so in the dictionary." (date of publication 19?) Dictionaries soon get out of date. Their compilers do not attempt to pretend that a word necessarily means what it meant a few years ago, or what it meant to a Greek in the good old, old, old days. Indeed, they seem to delight in the fact that the language is alive, and changing.

Nor do they give, in most dictionaries, the spellings of Greek sources in the Greek alphabet! And even 'Alphabet' was more like (tho not actually, of course!!) more like 'Alephbeth' in the days of the Phoenicians.

Another mistaken notion that acts as a chain is that we normally read Shakespeare and Chaucer in the original spellings. Normally we do not. But if you are genuinely interested in this sort of thing, why not go back to the Anglo-Saxon? You'll find books in your County Research Library which will enable you to do this, even if we take one more big step sensibly forward in the right direction to make English a better "medium of exchange and bond of union," as H. W. Fowler called it in his Acknowledgements in the preface to Complete Oxford Dictionary.

(2) England

Most small children come to school eager to learn. They are very suggestible and work very diligently. But the task of learning to read and spell, the very necessary means of access to knowledge, is probably more *difficult to master* than any other they will have to learn up to the age of fifteen. How important it is! How frustrating to those who fail! Many people are barred from knowledge that they want, not from any inability to understand it, simply because they have no access to it because they cannot read adequately, i. e. master the anomalies of English spelling.

Nowadays, it is not claimed that even intelligence tests such as those of the 11+ exams eliminate cultural background and attainment – this, again, largely means reading ability and reading experience.

Very early in their school lives, a largely unnecessary divergence takes place between those children who quickly improve their reading up to the standard of their speech vocabulary and those who lag behind. Many never reach this standard

This divergence is a frustrating experience. It is a prime and note-worthy cause of the educational rifts about which there is so much controversy.

I do not suggest that we could all, ever, have equal skills. But this reading skill depends as much on the simplicity of the system to be learnt as on the qualities of the learner, and it is a skill fundamentally essential to all one's educational advancement, one's contribution to the community, one's social prestige, and one's personality.

It is little wonder that the confidence of backward readers tends to deteriorate as they go on (progress?) through the school, in spite of the teacher's efforts to discover morale-building tasks they can do for the class, and their own efforts to be class-room window-openers or wags. Nor is it surprising that our prisons hold a rather higher proportion of backward readers than the average.

Frequently it is suggested that deterioration in morale sets in among senior pupils as a result of their 'failure' to pass the 11+ exams. This may be so for a few children whose parents have misjudged their children's ability and have made too much of the need to pass. These are the 'borderline' children. On the whole, however, I think that this tendency to blame the 11+ is a very unfortunate red-herring. Even these brighter children are affected by the general attitude of their class. General despondency cannot be blamed on the 11+ failure as most of the children had not expected to pass, and indeed, had not hoped to, knowing that dedication to homework would be demanded of them. Much of the despondency is, I believe, due to illiteracy.

For the primary school stages, there is a plentiful supply of carefully graded reading material and of copiously illustrated general knowledge books. Only the most incompetent readers fail to glean some information from these. In the secondary stage, however when the vocabulary should be expanding rapidly with so many subjects being studied, reading lessons are drastically fewer; any pupils still dependent on word-shapes (look-say), cannot even check that they have heard a word aright, never mind learn its spelling, on seeing it. Moreover, the language of some pupils is so undeveloped that they do not understand an eighth of what is said to them.

The Transition to New Spelling

The Simplified Spelling Society was founded by 'a group of eminent British scholars,' to quote from its enrolment prospectus form, as long ago as 1908. I think its slow progress is due to the modesty of its suggestions. To anyone not very interested in spelling, the new forms probably look rather like spelling mistakes, particularly if the writer has tried to introduce some of the less startling spellings into his writing gradually.

That will not do. A reform needs to be introduced far more dramatically and everyone must know what is taking place and why it is necessary.

To appreciate the easiness of the new spelling, people must have the opportunity to use it as much as they do the old. How can they if they cannot read it in their newspapers and dare not write it to addresses where the new spelling may not be known. Again, it should be apparent the need is for widespread dramatic introduction so that even those who disapprove will at least know what the new spelling is like, and what is happening.

Consequently, the chief propagating agent must be the press – newspapers, magazines and books. Besides using the system they could print educational sections to tide schools over the period of shortage of books in the new spelling for the infants and juniors. Older children would continue to read their old books, tho writing the new spelling.

The greater demand for books, there being a larger reading public, both here and abroad, might absorb a few of our out-of-work citizens. The books would be paid for by those who read them.

In schools, the expense would not be very great. There is already a great turnover in school text-books, and modern methods of teaching would require modernized books. The older children who are already using the old books would go on using them, even using up those at present in the warehouses. They would continue to read both systems but would gradually develop more proficiency in writing in only the new, unless their need for research in the old books showed a need for practice in the old spelling.

For young children, new books would be needed as soon as possible, but many infants' books are very thin and do not last long anyway. They should be thin and small so that a child can read a book in a short time and have a sense of accomplishment. The new books would give greater incentive to learn because they would be easier and read more rapidly.

Stages of the Introduction thru the Press

The change will never be accepted unless the vast majority of a significant population can write the system fairly confidently in about two weeks. They have other interests and cannot be expected to apply themselves wholeheartedly for any longer. They will fall back on the old familiar system unless it is swept aside swiftly by an overwhelming tide of change.

The introduction would need about six stages, for example: Stage I: one or two major vowel changes; Stage II: several minor consonant or suffix changes; Stages III & IV: the other easy vowel and consonant changes; Stages V and VI: the remaining more difficult changes.

Newspapers would publish (1) a summary of the new system; (2) an explanation of the need for change and the advantages of simpler spelling; (3) examples and other encouragements for readers to practice *writing* in the new spelling (This is vital); and (4) columns or articles in the various stages.

Each section should be headed with a key showing which changes occur in it. During the fortnight, the proportions using the earlier stages would be decreased and those using the later stages increased. Careful assessment would be made of the amount needed in each stage to give enough practice to make mastery easy and yet to give the maximum in the intermediate stages because of the importance of word shape and speed.

In publishing, articles should not be split into parts on separate pages with different stages of spelling.

Timing of the Introduction thru the Press

The time taken for the stages suggested would depend on reader's reactions and how many of the ideas the public would readily accept.

There is, however, *a minimum time* during which it would not be fair to judge the effectiveness of assimilation of the system. I suggest readers' letters should not be given too much credence during this time and that the public should be asked to hold their horses till they had had some practice and then send in cards with collected, signatures using separate squares for signatures for and against.

There is also *a maximum time* for the transition. In the early stages people will still rely on their old word image to help them get used to the changes so far. But in later stages some of the word shapes will be so different that the reader will have to learn to use phonetics to decipher new word shapes – until such time as they have become accustomed to seeing the new word shapes. For the new word shapes to be learnt quickly, they need to be settled as soon as possible, not staggered. A dictionary in the new spelling should be made available at the onset. And a book of instruction for teaching the new spelling should be available right from the start. People should be encouraged to see how easy the words are to read if tackled phonetically. The schools will soon find this out. Progress in learning to read in the new phonetic spelling system should be compared with rate of progress of pupils learning to read in our chaotic T.O. No doubt some of the University of London's experimental teaching of reading projects will give the evidence needed to prove the increased speed and accuracy of pupils reading in a phonetic system.

Some Points that may be Worrying You

(1) *People who speak differently will spell differently.* Will this really matter? It will not matter if the writing is in a dialect which, when spoken, is readily understood by the readers for whom the writing is intended.

Publishers would probably want to change unusual spellings to the more common ones – more common locally or more common internationally – as judgement indicates.

Deviations, both personal and local, will tend gradually to fade out. The mass media of radio and T-V are already having an effect on local dialects. With a closer relationship between sounds and spellings, people will become more aware of their deviations. It is a known fact that a child's first attempt is to try to spell phonetically and to expect to find words written phonetically. Children and foreigners learning to read at the same time as they are extending their speech vocabularies, will be most likely to say words as the spellings indicate, rather than according to some local or family deviation.

(2) *Phonetic spelling will be difficult.* If you haven't yet tried this out on a large scale, you haven't found out that this fear is unjustified.

(3) *Phonetic deviations* – slightly different ways of making sounds within one phoneme family of sounds will not show at all in the spellings. Simplified spelling ought to be based upon broad phonemic grouping so as to keep to a minimum vowel symbols and sounds. In this respect, dialect will not affect spelling, nor spelling, dialect.

(4) *Spelling reform may cause distress.* But simplified spelling is intended to make spelling and reading simpler, not to cause distress. It is not intended to be precisely phonetic, but it must be a good guide to pronunciation; nor is it intended to be permanently and universally fixed – changes may be made as experience shows possible weak points.

(5) *Homophones*, words spelt the same because pronounced the same, but of different meaning, will be more common than before. Will this matter? If words of this sort that we already have do not

seem to cause much trouble in our speech, then they should cause no trouble in print where the reader can go back and review the context to be sure of the meaning. As we must already try to avoid such ambiguity in our speech, however, it will be a good thing to have spelling which will help to make us aware of these dangers. We have more time to think, when we are writing, and this gives us two opportunities: the first, to avoid trouble there and then: the second, to store up a mental note to avoid the same trouble in our speech – e.g. the words 'accept' and 'except' could easily be confused over the telephone or at a booking-office.

How about the present homographs: minit, minute, bo, bau? These will be spelt differently because pronounced differently. Clearer enunciation and better phrasing will be aided and abetted by the new spelling.

(6) *A word may be spelt differently in different contexts*, e.g. 'and' or 'nd', 'thi', 'the', 'thee'. It will not matter if someone prefers to keep always to the same form; but the different forms may well be found to be useful in indicating the emphasis in the sentence.

When the first of the new dictionaries (truly dealing with diction) begin to be compiled, it will probably have become clear whether different forms should be encouraged or discouraged.

(7) *Dictionary compilers will have a tremendous task!* However, machines to scan for a particular spelling and count the number of times it occurs and then do similarly for a 'rival' spelling, will probably be available. In any case, dictionaries will probably not need to be consulted so often, for they will be required mainly for meanings rather than for spellings which is probably not so at present. The new dictionaries will have both the phonetic spelling and meaning of words. Probably some will be available arranged like foreign language dictionaries, so one can find the old spelling knowing only the pronunciation of English words.

(8) *The new spelling obscures some word associations* in which the words were formerly spelt similarly but pronounced differently, e.g.:

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| machine | masheen | know | no |
| mechanic | mekanik | knew | nu |
| mechanism | mekanizm | knowledge | nolij |

But, from my observations of children's spelling, I do not think these associations are of much use to us – except perhaps in helping older and brighter students to spell these difficult words! We know the meanings and uses of these words long before we ever learn to spell them. The meanings and derivations help us with the spellings; the spellings do not help us with the meanings.

(9) *Derivations will be lost.* These are not going to be lost, as there will be even more space than at present available for them in dictionaries, owing to the fact that the words themselves and their explanations will take up less space in the new spelling, and it will not be necessary to show the pronunciation, except to mark the stressed syllable. Even now, derivations are not readily discernable in the spelling of a majority of words. So what is to be lost? Some derivations will however, be obscured, e.g. 'ante' and 'anti' will be spelt the same because we do not distinguish them in our speech.

Altho many of us find the history of the language and derivations very interesting, I submit that the usefulness of them is much over-rated. I believe that almost invariably we learn the words from their contexts and only rarely does a dictionary definition and still less a derivation really help us. Biology? Yes, probably. Geography? Yes, perhaps. Topics? Hardly. Topography? Hm! Well, I doubt it. "'Over' is a comparative form of the root in the second syllable of 'above'." Well, now! So it is! But one can get along very well without knowing that fact. Nevertheless, let me repeat, derivations will still be available for those who wish to search thru the dictionary. Moreover, we are providing those who are genuinely interested in the history of the language with even more history to study! So why should they complain?

(10) The value of words will be destroyed. This is a misleading accusation. It was partially discussed under homonyms. The meanings of spoken words cannot be destroyed – and the simplification of spelling cannot adversely affect ordinary words other than homophones.

Our language is reputed to be very rich in useful words. Indeed, it is so; but more than that, it is cluttered. The dictionaries are cluttered with words which have been put there because some famous writers used them once each in some famous writings. I think we are over-zealous in preserving these slender nooses with the past. Clinging to links with what should be dead, we are partly dead to the *present*. Surely our lives are short enuf! It is an insult to the people and wonderful things around us NOW, to be preoccupied by the useless relics of the past. Studying the mistakes of the past is only of value to us in the future so far as they help us to live better in the present.

Our daily language also is cluttered with clichés. We all disentomb the Dodo occasionally. This one which I thought had died a lingering death in my vocabulary, was resurrected and laid a golden egg: I teasingly accused a Chinese Malayan friend of 'shooting a line', for he had told me that he had been junior Badminton Champion of Malaya. He understood exactly: "I'm sorry, in a way, if you don't believe me; but, in a way, I'm flattered too, because you would not accuse me of "shooting a lion(!) if you did not think it was something worth bragging about." – which just goes to show, doesn't it? In speech and spelling as in other matters, what you lose on the swings you may more than compensate for in the roundabouts. There are limitless permutations of words available to us and if some few of the familiar combinations are rendered ambiguous or otherwise useless by modern spellings, man's inventiveness and ingenuity will rise to the occasion with a freshness which will be welcome.

The more direct relation between spelling and speech will make us better acquainted with words and they will seem more personal and less formal, which in itself will stimulate us to more vigorous, more honest writing. We shall write more nearly as we speak and not cloak our words in formalities. We shall speak more nearly as we write, always practising the same language, tho allowing; as we would in speech, for the style used for different purposes, e.g. conversation, lecture, worship, and for the register used between people appropriate to their social relationship. We should use different forms not just because we are writing; only to suit the subject matter and the readers whom we expect our words to reach.

We shall have more time in schools for foreign languages and shall enrich our speech by borrowing from them.

Four Rules or Attitudes

1. Spell each word as you would normally say it in careful deliberate speech, unless you know your pronunciation needs correcting and intend to make an effort to correct it. Your accent will be consistent thruout your work and people will soon adjust to it. If necessary, put an identification description at the head, e.g. "Mid-Western American." This must identify your speech dialect, not your place of birth or present home.

Chaos will come if people (during the transition years particularly) begin to spell words according to other people's speech instead of their own, as they will fail to learn the right sound-symbol matching. If they pick up some words from one author and others from another, and then concoct yet more words of their own, their words will be a mixture of several accents and perhaps unreadable. Those who must learn their words from other people must learn all of them from the same dialect. They should choose the most widely accepted speech of the people with whom they associate – one which is easily understood by most English speakers.

2. Spelling should not be regarded as fixed and holy. It should be allowed to evolve according to universal changes in pronunciation.

3. Don't be pedantic; tolerate the writer's spelling just as you do his speech.

4. Give yourself sufficient time to be accustomed to the new spelling. Practice makes perfection. You will find it easier than you expect.

Editor's comments: While the editor thinks the above article is an excellent idea or plan for the utilization of spelling reform (and one of the very few proposed by spelling reformers – most of whom are only interested in self-aggrandizement), it is incomplete in at least three respects: motivation, authority, and enforcement.

While it touches on motivation to a slight degree, we have had these arguments presented to us for nearly a century – to no avail. Authority is the subject really over-looked. No one of the public has the authority nor wants to start such a project without the backing of the governments of the English-speaking peoples involved. The Chicago Tribune tried for 30 years to introduce and actually used some 30 words in simplified spelling. Colonel McCormick finally gave up and went back to the old spellings when the schools would not follow him.

Enforcement of a system of spelling would be distasteful to most of the English-speaking public. But if the English-speaking governments empowered representatives to an international commission to seek agreements on a means of simplifying our spelling and putting it into use, it could be done. At first, the governments would publish a dictionary in the new spelling, and then after a waiting period of one year for publicity and learning it, if they started using it in all government reports, news releases, Post Office materials, the newspapers would have to quickly follow. So would the schools, because there would be motivation. There would be a great demand for stenographers trained in the new spelling, and this would make obsolete those who did not know the new spelling. By this time it would be well on its way to acceptance at home and then shortly afterward abroad.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §20.4 p274 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1978 p14 in the printed version]
[It was also in SPB Summer 1967 p16 in the printed version]

5. Quo Warranto (By What Authority).

The cadaver of Socrates
In his sepulcher at ease,
Might perform a quick rotation,
Could he hear the sick quotation,
"Grammar is on logic founded,
In the syllogism grounded."

There are no grammar books which state
An axiom or postulate.
To conceal a dark confusion,
They reveal a stark conclusion.

Some grammars lamely make excuses;
Claim a base in writer's uses.
Chaucer, Shakespeare, Kipling, Burns,
All wrote in ways our grammar spurns.
So, their logic is not inductive,
And their project is not constructive.

James C. McGhee, San Francisco, Calif.

Now, let us look some other place
And try to find some other base.
Can grammars find just any source
To give their fiats any force?

May we our rules and models seek
In ways two hundred million speak?
No! Grammars have no truck or trade
With language "We the People" made;
It has no other use to them
Than simply something to condemn.

Many a grammar book I've stood,
Tho they never did me any good.
Truth, at last, I'm forced to land on:
Grammars have no leg to stand on -
Not even one of wood.

-o0o-

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1978 p15 in the printed version]

6. TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

What would math be, if our numerals were as fickle as our letters? Conversely, what would our orthograpy be if letters were as stable as numerals? . . . Lands having basically fonetik alfabet do not hav the problems that we hav. They dont even hav reading teachers per se. – just ALFABET teachers. Thus, the pupils stop right into 'instructional' lesson materials, – instead of spending three years just "practicing" decoding boresome trivia, – as Anglo beginners do. But there isnt one letter in our alfabet but what has two or more sounds of its own, – shares one or more sounds with one or more other letters, – or is sometimes silent. Nor do we hav any dependable spelling rules. Thus, it is obvious that stabilizing the alfabet offers the only solution to our reading problem, which is a SPELLING problem, instead. Anything else is but a dubious elixir for coping with the problem, – rather than a positiv innovation for solving it.

SPECIAL PRIMARY ORTHOGRAFY – Tests conducted in Waltham, Mass. In the 1850s, – in St. Louis in the 1870s, – in Britain 1916-24, – and the current Pitman "i-t-a", – hav all demonstrated that stable and/or basically fonetik primary orthograpy enables the normal beginner to read traditional literature a year or mor ahead of those struggling with it from the beginning. Thus, it is suggested that top-level educators endorse some given system of simplified spelling as being most suitable for primary reading instructions. Under such, a "green light", progressiv educators would soon come up with a variety of primary lesson materials in various degrees of revised spelling.

PERMANENT REFORM – It must be expected that if and/or when any special primary orthograpy does come into general use, there will be a growing tendency to tolerate continued use if the revised spellings beyond primary levels, and that tolerance will accelerate as more-and-more rational spellers become teachers and/or authors of lesson materials. Further, students, who first learn to work with such notations as 'wun, tu, ate, laf, enuf, flem, sluf, slu, etc.' will be reluctant to trade them for such as 'one, tu, to, too, two, sight, laugh, enough, phlegm, slough, etc." Altho some of them would, grudgingly spell traditionally while in school, most of them would revert to the rational spelling after leaving school. POINT – Any special primary orthograpy would eventually become standard thru "common usage", which is final authority for language in any form, – therefore any special primary spellings should be such as would be acceptable for permanent reform, – at the option of the writer, – whether pupil, teacher, layman, journalist or text-book author.

COMPROMISE – Altho most Anglos are in favor of basic reform in this field, they are averse to radical change,- therefore the new spellings must be a compromise between the erratic and the ideal. The new and old orthograpy must be so near alike that anyone who reads either can also read the other with practical fluency, – without any rules or instructions. The two notations must co-exist over an indefinite period of 'optional' spellings, during which irregularities become obsolete with the passing of current users, – and the preferred forms become standard thru common usage.

NO LOSS OF CURRENT LITERATURES – Inasmuch as up-coming youngsters would be reading traditional literature just as fluently as youngsters of the past, there would be no need for transliterations. Nor would there be the destruction of books that thotless reactionaries predict. All existing literature would be just as useful as originally expected. Further, extending revised spelling to the upper grades need never be a specific issue. That may well be left to up-coming rational spellers, as they become executive and/or text-book authors. Thus, the change-over should be on a 'replacement' basis only, rather than an arbitrary 'all-at-once' policy , There would be little if any bona fide literature published in the new orthograpy, – until rational spellers dominate the printing industry.

OPTIONAL SPELLINGS – Inasmuch as our orthograpy has been changing constantly, from the beginning, 'optional" spelling is a traditional policy that may well be exploited. POINT – Altho 'common usage' has effected constant improvement thruout the centuries, the changes havn't followed any given pattern, – leaving many words fonetikally incomplete, – in need of further adjustments. Thus it is only proper that we establish a pattern for guiding the voluntary changes that are going to take place in spite of the die-hard traditionalists.

AUTHORITYS – Contrary to prevailing opinion our dictionaries do NOT dictate our orthograpy. They merely RECORD how most of us were spelling and speaking, when that edition went to press. When John Public changes his spelling of a given word, the dictionaries, eventually, follow his lead, – as witnessed by the many common words that hav both old and new spellings that are in current use, at the option of the writer (grey-gray, plough-plow, labour-labor, thresh-thrash, theatre-theater, catalogue-catalog, programme-program, sulphur-sulfur, calcimine-kalsomine, charivari-shivaree, etc.)

SAMPLE – Az hir-in demonstrated, our alfubet iz quite sufishunt for elimunating most ov the kunfuzhun – IF established partuns and "jenral" rules ar respekted – IF the letturs du not "pinch-hit" for eche uthur without arbutrary rules – – IF final-silunt-e olways menes a long vowl in the last silubl – IF dubl konsununts olways indikate a preseding short vowl. In short, stabilizing the alfubet ofurs the only sulushun tu our reding problum. Why not triy it ? Whot hav we tu luze ?

Reulistikly, Leo G. Davis, Pionir techur. PALM SPRINGS, CA.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §12.9 pp178–180 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1978 p16–18 in the printed version*]

7. The Essential Requirements for a Reformed Spelling, by Walter Gassner, L.L.D.*

*Randwick, Australia.

*Presented at the First International Conference of the British Simplified Spelling Society, London, Aug. 1975.

The purpose of this paper is to present, in order of importance, various aspects of spelling reform which would provide a maximum of benefits to future users and entail a minimum of inconvenience to those accustomed to the traditional spelling system. It is designed for the English language but the principles stated also hold for other languages.

(1) *Only the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet should be used* – with no augmentations and no diacritical marks which are not in use at present.

The introduction of a new system of spelling will, of necessity, impose a burden on everyone who uses the English language, no matter whether English is his native language or a language that he has acquired. To this burden, no further burden should be added, and a weighty additional burden it would be if it should become necessary to learn new letters or to acquire the habit of putting written accent signs over letters. Indeed, if it were not for these considerations, the most reasonable thing to do would be to adopt the International Phonetic Alphabet, which is widely used for teaching the pronunciation of a large number of languages and is known to scholars throughout the world. This alphabet contains, in addition to the letters of the Roman alphabet, a number of specially designed or adopted signs to provide a sign for each sound (or, to be precise, for each phoneme, a phoneme often encompassing a family of similar sounds whose exact nature in each instance is determined by its phonetic environment).

The deficiencies of the Roman alphabet can, however, also be overcome by continuing the practice of using groups of two letters – so called "compound symbols" or digraphs – for certain sounds, such as *sh* for the initial sound in *ship*, or *th* and *ng* for the initial sound and the final sound in *thing*. The use of compound symbols does not contradict the phonetic principle as long as these symbols are used in a consistent manner and as long as a separation mark (say, an apostrophe) is inserted where letters that usually make up a compound symbol are pronounced separately – e.g. as in *mishap*.

(2) *Writing should be so designed that speech can be deduced from it* – or rather, so that there can never arise any doubt regarding the pronunciation of a word.

The emphasis is on "word" -, for there are limits to the things which an orthography can indicate. An orthography cannot, for example, do justice to sentence stress or allow for alternatives for certain short words usually referred to as "weak forms." Every other aspect of the pronunciation should, however, be clearly indicated, and thus it becomes necessary to have available an appropriate symbol for the Neutral Vowel (i.e., the initial sound in *about*) and two distinct sets of symbols for the majority of vowel sounds, so as to make it clear which syllable is stressed and

which syllables are unstressed. The last point is extremely important, for a word wrongly stressed is a word wrongly pronounced – and indeed, often misunderstood.

If this principle is applied, the difficulties of those who have to deduce the spoken form from the written form will disappear. Those who will benefit most from the implementation of this principle will be foreign learners who study from textbooks. Such persons, once they have mastered the significance of the symbols, would be in a position to read any text – even if they do not understand it – almost faultlessly, the only shortcoming being that their speech might appear slightly pedantic.

Foreign learners would of course, not be the only persons to benefit from this principle. Native English speakers, too, including highly educated ones, are at present, frequently in doubt as regards the pronunciation of a word – say, a scholarly or a technical word, or a proper name or just a word they happen to not have heard before. To clarify these cases, pronouncing dictionaries are available, and the entries in such reference works should supply the basis for the written forms under the reformed system. Obviously, once the new system is implemented, pronouncing dictionaries will no longer be needed.

(3) *Nothing should be introduced that would impair clarity by obliterating the individuality of words.* Hence, provision should be made for the distinction of homophones which are distinguished at present.

Opponents of phonetic spelling claim that clarity would suffer if homophones – words with the same pronunciation, but different meanings – were spelt alike; they might use the existence of homophones to discredit phonetic spelling and to justify the traditional system with all its inconsistencies and archaisms. Whilst their other arguments can be ascribed to prejudice, this particular argument is a sound one. For, if homophones were merged, there would be no way of distinguishing a "mail clerk" from a "male clerk", or the "fore legs" of an animal from all its "four legs." The passage in Shakespeare's Hamlet: "I scent the morning air" would have the same written form as "I sent the mourning heir"; and, as there is, indeed, a "mourning heir" in the play, such an interpretation is by no means strained.

The author of this paper has devised a system of spelling in which provision is made for the distinction of homophones wherever such a distinction is considered desirable. He cannot agree with the argument which alleges that since spoken language can afford to use like forms for words with different meanings, written language can do so likewise. The answer to that argument is: in spoken language there exist numerous ways of making the meaning of an ambiguous word clear, such as differences in intonation, pauses, gestures – all of them devices which written language lacks. Moreover, through habit we instinctively make a choice when hearing a word that allows for alternative interpretations, and this choice would usually be the right one, no matter whether we are aware of having made a choice or of the very existence of homophones. For written language, this habit of making a choice does not exist and such a habit would take a long time to develop. Even where there is no danger of an actual misunderstanding, there is still the possibility of a ludicrous effect – for instance, if "reign" were spelt the same way as "rain." On the other hand, the fact that in spoken language homophones do not create a ludicrous effect unless such an effect is intentionally brought about in a pun, demonstrates that what is tolerable in spoken language is not necessarily so in written language.

(4) *Writing should be made so that it can be deduced from speech* – subject to the limitations imposed by the alphabet and the need to distinguish homonyms.

This principle is complementary to the principle stated in the second place. The beneficiaries of it are those who know the pronunciation and are supposed to deduce the written form from the sound. They are chiefly native English speakers, schoolchildren in particular, but of course, also adults, and by no means only illiterates or semi-literates; foreigners only to the extent that they have "picked up" the language without at the same time learning how to write it.

In the minds of most people who give some thought to spelling reform, this principle should rank first. That it has fourth place, not first, is of course, due to the limitations stated above. If it were not for these limitations and for uncertainty regarding the standard pronunciation where the speaker's pronunciation is a regional variant – there would never be a need to memorize the spelling of a word. Under the author's proposed system, the spelling of *some* words would have to be memorized, but the proportion of such words would be small, and learning to write would no longer be the drudgery that it is today, because in every instance there will be a reasonable explanation for an exceptional written form.

It goes without saying that the exceptional written form would in no instance suggest a pronunciation other than the correct one; indeed, the device for clarifying the stress position – availability of two sets of symbols for vowels – is also the device for providing distinct forms for homophones.

(5) *Continuity with the traditional system should not needlessly be disturbed.*

The choice of symbols should, whenever compatible with the basic principles of phonetic representation, follow current English usage, not only for single letters, but also for letter groups such as *sh, ee, ai, oa*. This is proposed not in deference to tradition, but with the sole motive of making transition from one system to the other as easy and as smooth as possible and to allow for the probability that for a long time to come documents written under the traditional system will call for an interpretation, so that many persons will be required to have a *reading* knowledge of the system at present in use, which will then have become an obsolete one.

The occurrence of a particular written form for one word in the new system which is identical with the written form of *another* word in the old system, is particularly objectionable. Whilst such a situation cannot entirely be avoided (for example, *warm* will have to be spelt *worm*), the symbols have been selected in such a way that cases of this nature have been reduced to the unavoidable minimum.

It is not an unwarranted disturbance of continuity if letters, which otherwise would be redundant, are allotted to sounds for which there is no suitable way of representation under the traditional system.

(6) *The existence of variant pronunciations, to the extent that they are pronunciations used by educated speakers, should be taken into account.*

The new system should be suitable for use throughout the entire English speaking world, despite differences in pronunciation. Where a particular sound used in one speech variant is, in some other speech variant, consistently replaced by some other sound, the key-word given will automatically

be variously interpreted, but the allotted symbol will be applied in exactly the same manner by the different types of speakers. Thus, if a symbol (no matter which) is allotted to the "a as in paper," this description would appear to speakers of Southern British and many other types of English as referring to a certain diphthong (phonetically *ei*), whilst to Scottish speakers it would appear to refer to a certain long vowel (phonetically *e:*), and to some Australian speakers as referring to a different diphthong, similar to but not identical with the *i* in *time*. These Australians think they are saying long-A, and would not confuse it with the diphthong *i* in *time*.

Where sounds overlap, the system should, in principle, be based on Southern British speech (Received Standard) as recorded in pronouncing dictionaries that use the International Phonetic Alphabet, such as that of Prof. Daniel Jones, but other pronunciations should be taken into account in cases where a great many speakers make a distinction which is not made by speakers of Southern British and which is supported by the written form of the traditional spelling.

This is so with certain vowels for which cases "with r" and "without r" are being kept distinct from each other, the cases "with r" being those where the letter r-silent in Southern British speech, but pronounced in Scottish speech and phonetically significant in American speech – occurs before a consonant or at the end of a word, as in *farm* and *farther*, as contrasted with the word *father*, which has the same sound "without r." In Rec'd Standard, *farther* and *father* are homophones.

In situations which do not come under any of the above descriptions, alternative written forms should be permissible, as with the words now written *either* and *clerk*. The word *clerk* should be written *klark* in England and *klirk* in the United States. Such written variants do not constitute a threat to uniformity any more than the use of different words for the same concept, such as *autumn* and *petrol* in England and *fall* and *gasoline* in the United States.

There are also differences in pronunciation depending on the style used. Pronouncing dictionaries often give more than one pronunciation of a word. In such cases, the written form should reflect the most careful variant – assuming that though only a small proportion of speakers actually use it, most speakers would have an opportunity of hearing it. However, spoken forms that exist only in the minds of those who allow themselves to be influenced by the written form under the traditional spelling should be ruled out. This would apply chiefly to unstressed vowels.

(7) *The system should be economical* – achieving a saving of time and space.

This issue is not a fundamental one. Elimination of silent letters and of needlessly doubled letters will evidently bring about the shortening of a large number of words. The lengthening of certain other words should not detract from the overall effect, since cases in which a word is shortened occur more frequently than cases in which a word is lengthened.

(8) *The suggestion that spelling should reflect etymology is to be rejected.*

The ordinary user of words (reader or writer) is not interested in etymology and cannot be expected to be an expert on it, and the scholar has other means at his disposal. Spelling is often incorrect in indicating the true origin of words, as these who were involved, along with Dr. Samuel Johnson, in finalizing the spelling were often badly informed of the origin of some words.

However, the choice of symbols for the sounds on the principle of continuity and preference given

to a "more careful" pronunciation where several variants exist might result in preserving etymology in some instances.

(9) *Some observations relating to other languages might have a certain relevancy.*

Whilst, in theory, it might appear desirable to have the same orthography for all languages, limitations of the Roman alphabet and the need to preserve continuity with traditional usage rule out any suggestion of devising reformed English spelling in such a way that letters are given particular values solely on the strength of compliance with usage in other languages or international phonetic practice. Thus, it goes without saying that the letters *a* and *u* must, in English, be allotted to sounds which are quite different from the sounds which these letters represent in most other languages. It stands to reason that similar considerations also apply to compound symbols, such as *au* and *eu*.

If thought is given to spelling reform in languages other than English, the principles applied should, broadly speaking, be the same as those applicable to English, but different approaches are needed for each language to do justice to different situations. Such diacritical marks as are used at present, e.g., the acute, grave, and circumflex accents in French and the umlaut sign in German, would continue to be used (and, of course, like everything else, in a consistent way), but no new written accent signs should be introduced. Stress presents no problem in French, but there are other factors that complicate the issue, such as the large number of instances in which up to 5 or 6 words have the same sound, and the words with consonants at the end which are normally silent, but pronounced when the next word begins with a vowel. The stress problem is satisfactorily solved in Spanish and Portuguese, but not completely in Italian; it leaves a lot to be desired in German, and still more so in Russian, where there is the additional complication that in an unstressed position, certain vowels merge and become obscured.

Spelling reforms on a minor scale have been carried out in the last few decades in a number of languages such as Russian, Polish, German, Dutch, Norwegian, Portuguese, Malay and Indonesian (both of which derive from the same stock, & have now the same system of writing). These reforms were usually designed to take into consideration the needs of native speakers, but not those of foreign learners, and were needlessly concerned with etymology. (Thus, in German, *th* has been replaced with *t* in native German words, but has been retained in foreign loan words).

For the Mandarin dialect of Chinese, now the National language of China, a romanized orthography has been devised, which has received official sanction. This orthography has not superseded the traditional ideographic notation. It is merely used as a means to teach the National Language with the correct pronunciation to speakers of other dialects and to overcome illiteracy, or rather as a first step to do so. Now, there is the fact that Chinese abounds in homophones – to a far greater extent than English or French – and by using the ideographic notation, the meaning of a word is always made clear, whilst this would not be the case if the romanized form were used. It is this aspect which explains why it must have appeared unreasonable to abolish the ideographs altogether; and since the situation with regard to homophones allows an analogy with English, these observations should strengthen the argument in favor of maintaining a distinction of homophones in English.

(10) *Some thought should be given to the idea of introducing reformed spelling gradually.*

The concept of a gradual approach is championed by W. Harry Lindgren of Narrahbundah, Australia. He proposes that the first step (termed SR-1, short for *Spelling Reform Step 1*) should encompass one single sound: the short vowel sound in "*bet*." This sound would invariably be

rendered by the letter *e* -thus *frend, helth, eny, meny, sed, etc.*

Campaigning for this modest reform is supposed to create awareness of the desirability of a more logical system of spelling, without interfering to any sizeable extent with established usage. A decision on subsequent steps is left in abeyance and is not supposed to be made a subject of discussion until SR-1 is well established.

The author of this paper is not very much in favor of the gradual approach, but is prepared to concede that such an approach might be the only way to get something done. It might be feasible, first to introduce SR-1 in all English-speaking countries, and after this step has been achieved, to proceed further. To be sure, future steps will, on each occasion, have to cover a more extensive field, otherwise implementation of the ultimate reform would take a century.

A succession of steps, numbering more than, say 4, is bound to create confusion, not only because at any point of time documents would come into existence which have to be meaningful for future generations, but also because after each step dictionaries and reference works would have to be revised and reprinted. A succession of a large number of steps would cause a strain on schoolchildren, on the teaching profession and, of course, on the general public, not to speak of the confusion it would create in countries in which English is taught as a foreign language, with the result that even among those teachers and students who are in favor of phonetic spelling, many would give up in despair and revert to the system now in use, pending total implementation of the ultimate reform.

If an opinion regarding a gradual introduction of reformed spelling is required, it would appear that four steps should make up the maximum needed. The steps following SR-1 as described above would be the following:

SR-2: covering all the consonants. The letters chiefly affected are *k* and *s* (replacing *c*), *i* (replacing *g*), *z* (replacing *s*), and the groups *sh*, *hw* and *zh*.

SR-3: covering the remaining short vowels *a*, *i*, *o*, and *u*, and abolishing silent letters that serve no useful purpose. This would produce such written forms as *prity* (for *pretty*), *gluv* (for *glove*), *wosh* (for *wash*).

It stands to reason to assume that disagreement among spelling reformers on any of these points would be unlikely.

SR-4: would be the reform that produces the ultimate shape and would encompass the long vowels and diphthongs, the Neutral Vowel and a device to indicate the position of the stress. This step can evidently be taken only when agreement has been reached among spelling reformers, and it should be the task of interested persons and organizations in all English speaking countries, as well as certain instrumentalities of the United Nations Organization to prepare the ground for such an agreement.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §2.6 pp23,24 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin, Fall 1978 pp18,19 in the printed version*]

8. Simplification and Photo-Typesetting, by Edward Rondthaler*

*International Typeface Corp, New York.

... the new road to a quick changeover.

The history of spelling simplification shows us that the writers and the typesetters were the ones who always scuttled simplification. It never reached the readers – they never had a chance to pass judgement.

Sometime around 1910 several magazines and 20 important newspapers agreed to try simplification on a piecemeal basis: 12 words this year, 30 next, 300 the year after, and 1500 or more eventually. It may have been a great idea, but it was very bad psychology. Nobody wants to change his writing habits – least of all journalists and typesetters frantically trying to meet daily deadlines.

As for readers, we can't say how much resistance they would generate because we do not know. We might be agreeably surprised. If the spelling were close enough to present-day English so that almost anybody could quickly "catch on", the resistance might fade away rapidly – as it has in England with the recent change to decimal coinage. The truth is that we'll never know how much reader resistance we'll get until we try it on a large scale, and up to now we've had no good way to try it.

If, at the outset, we limit our use of simplification to new printing and new public signs, we can completely eliminate the writers' and typesetters' resistance. They need make no change. Why not? Because we can program computers to convert their typewritten *oldspel* into typeset *nuespel* – at fantastic speeds.

Take a look at what is happening today in the typesetting revolution; and bear in mind that more and more type is being set this way:

1. The author types his manuscript as usual.
2. The typesetter keyboards the manuscript into punched tape or an Optical Character Reader scans the manuscript, reading the letters about the same way that scanners read numbers on bank checks, but doing it visually at the rate of about 40 words per second. As the optical tube reads the manuscript, it converts the letters into codes on punched or magnetic tape.
3. The codes on the tape are then converted back into letters and projected, a paragraph or two at a time, onto a proofreading screen resembling a TV screen with a typewriter keyboard attached to it.

4. As the proofreader reads the copy on the screen, he can type in corrections, additions, etc. As he types, the errors magically vanish from the screen and the corrections take their place.
5. When the proofreader is satisfied that the paragraph is correct, he presses a button and – presto – the letters on the screen are converted into codes on a new tape.
6. The new tape is fed into an even more fantastic printout unit with dials that may be set at will for type style, size, line width and leading.
7. The printout unit is turned on and begins to photo-compose lines at the rate of 10 to 10,000 letters per second! A computer attached to the unit figures out the correct hyphenation for words breaking at the ends of lines, and justifies each line as it is set.
8. Out comes a film positive or negative that may be developed conventionally and used in offset, gravure or letter-press printing!

None of this is a dream any more. It is in daily successful operation. While the sophisticated equipment is still pretty expensive, we must remember that photo-typesetting machines, in general, are getting cheaper every day. Fifteen years ago, the least expensive photo-typesetter was \$75,000. Today you can buy a simple one for \$5,000.

It takes very little imagination to see that the computer behind the typesetter's keyboard or the OCR tube could be programmed to read *words* rather than *letters*, and that it could transliterate *oldspell* input into *nuespel* on the tape. This means that authors and journalists could continue to write in oldspell, but when their words appeared in print they would be in nuespel. And the author could write either "through" or "thru", and both would go onto the tape as "throo." The same applies to homophones. Homographs and author's typing errors become a little more difficult. These would show up on the screen IN CAPS in their oldspell form and the proofreader would then type in the correct nuespeling.

And all of this will be practical *long before simplification is accepted*.

The important thing to remember is that the resistance shown to previous attempts at simplification has been *writer-resistance* – not reader-resistance.

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin, Fall 1978 pp19,20,1 in the printed version*]

9. A Fairer Opportunity for English-speaking Pupils, by Peter B. Stolee*

*Write to: Mr. Peter B. Stolee, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. (paid advertisement)

Statistics show that over 20% of English-speaking children end up with less than a good score in reading. What is to be done about it?

A child not yet able to walk is considered an infant, but when he can both walk and talk he is well on his way to becoming a person in his own right. Most parents are extremely solicitous of their child beginning to walk and talk. They know the good effect this will have on the development of their child. But unfortunately many North American parents seem unaware of the necessity of helping a child develop the oral vocabulary so essential for success' in the third step of "growing up," namely learning to read. As for teaching the child even a smattering of reading, parents have been discouraged from trying to do so. It was known for a long time the policy of the schools was to discourage any teaching of elementary reading whether at home or in the kindergarten. This seems about as shortsighted as it would be to wait for teachers to start your child to walk and talk.

In 1947 while home from our second furlough from Madagascar, I wrote to the Dept. of Education in Oslo to ask what percentage of their grade one pupils failed to learn to read in their first year. The answer was that Norwegian children mostly learn to read in one year and the few who did not succeed had some health or other weakness. At that time they had no statistics on the percentage of failures.

More than 20 years later Malcolm Douglass, Prof. of Education, Claremont Graduate School, Pomona College, Calif., visited Norway. His article, "Beginning Reading in Norway" in *The Reading Teacher* is of interest to teachers. Douglass found that Norwegian teachers did not consider that they had a "reading problem"; in listing instructional problems, they placed the teaching of reading last. He adds, "Who in North America would have the temerity to suggest that reading problems constitute the least of the school's worries?"

Reading failure is virtually unknown in Norway, as Norwegian is spelled phonemically, or very nearly so, and as the ancient "letters-first and syllables-first" methods have been discarded in favor of the Global Method of reading instruction. In the Global Method, each letter is taught, not in isolation but as a part of a meaningful word. This way seem a small matter but prevents the pupil from thinking reading to be the sounding of meaningless letters or symbols and teaches him always to look for meaning.

Dr. Douglass found that in the first year of school, Norwegian children are taught in this way and shown how to unlock new words. The total amount of instructional time devoted to reading and writing in the first year is five hours per week, and far less time is allotted in the following years, that is, formal reading instruction ceases for all children except for the few who have some specific reading problems, and, by the end of Grade 6, the percentage of those having reading problems is down to 1 or 2%. (Compare this with our more than 20%.)

My wife and I have visited relatives in east and west Norway four times over the years from 1924 to 1968. We have observed parents helping children read signs and other materials. They seemed to find this as natural as it had been to help them begin to walk and talk. As a result, Norwegian children start school well prepared to learn to read, if they do not already do so to a fair degree.

Once they read their mother tongue well, these children are ready to read the other Norse dialects and the other Scandinavian languages easily and even manage to read the convoluted English because of the similarity of some words. It is my opinion that Norwegian and other phonetically written languages could teach us a great deal if we have an open mind to learn. For the sake of the English-speaking children with over ten times the failure rate, don't you wish we would bring in better methods? – or a better medium with which to teach?

The crucial educational problem common to all English-speaking countries is English spelling. A reliable authority: Dr. Ben D. Wood writes in *Quinto Lingo*:

"There are over 500 different spellings for the 41 usually accepted sounds – an average of over 12 spellings per sound – and the different pronunciations of the spellings are no less confusing. This irregularity and confusion has been a major factor in reading failure and the consequent school dropouts in English-speaking countries, as well as the chief obstacle to even more rapid spread of English as the chief international auxiliary language."

The playwright George Bernard Shaw decisively sums up what is the matter with English spelling. In the *Preface to Pygmalion*, he wrote:

"The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it. They cannot spell it because they have nothing to spell with but an old foreign alphabet of which only the consonants – and not all of them – have any agreed speech value. Consequently no man can teach himself what it should sound like from reading it; and it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him. Most European languages are now accessible in black and white to foreigners. English and French are not thus accessible to Englishmen and Frenchmen. The Reformer we need most today is an energetic phonic enthusiast; that is why I have made such a one the hero of a popular play."

Towards the end of his long life, Shaw, who died in 1950, counselled his friend, Sir James Pitman, who had been interested with him in spelling reform, not to attempt this seemingly impossible task but to seek out some other way of attacking English illiteracy. By the early 1960's, Sir James Pitman had completed his Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA), which allows English to be taught as a phonetically spelled language for the first few months of learning to read. The ITA has a symbol for each of the basic sounds of English so that spelling becomes rationalized with sound. Children taught in ITA get meaning out of their lessons. They temporarily avoid the spelling of conventional orthography, where failure often caused a student to be labelled a dolt and made him think he probably was one, even when tests showed him to be of high intelligence. Later on, when the pupil has become proficient in reading in ITA, he is gradually introduced to conventional orthography at a rate that he can assimilate.

The widespread adoption of ITA would lead to an improvement in the teaching of reading comparable to that which occurred in arithmetic when the Arabic ciphers replaced the Roman numerals. It should always be kept in mind that ITA is a medium for use in teaching, and not a method of teaching reading. Any method of teaching can be used with ITA.

Children who learned to read German using Gothic type, or Ukrainian using the Cyrillic alphabet, learned to read English remarkably fast when they came to English schools. So, too, children who have learned to read English by using ITA have little or no problem when they come to the transition to our inadequate alphabet and bizarre spelling – a spelling which Noah Webster of dictionary fame called "vicious."

My ITA primer, *gajwæ*, is based on long years of experience with several languages, especially that of Madagascar which is completely phonic in its orthography. My Malagasy primer would bring full reading of their own oral vocabulary to Malagasy pupils in a few weeks. Since English has twice as many phonemes or letter sounds as Malagasy, we would expect English pupils to take four times as long to be able to read what they understand orally – as the number of items double, the difficulty increases by the square.

Taught as directed in *gajwæ*, English-speaking pupils will escape the feeling of abstraction often associated with reading even in phonetically written material when reading has been understood by the pupil to be more the sounding out of letters, rather than getting meaning. In Gangway, the first word taught is t-e-n, but the teacher is warned against sounding it out as "tee-ee-en" and told to say "ten" and ask the pupil to show his ten fingers. Since this is the way each new keyword is taught throughout the primer, the pupil learns the way the letters sound in words and still avoids the troublesome problem of blending supposedly inherent in learning to read.

When meaning and a phonetic alphabet are combined in the method used to teach reading, children, and adults as well, will learn to read much as they learned to walk and talk. Children are normally helped when they show signs of trying to walk or talk. They are usually admired and appreciated for their efforts. When they try to read signs, etc., they should never be jeered at even if their reading is wrong any more than you laugh at the baby trying to walk who falls flat on his face. Older siblings and parents can, by a considerate attitude towards the child wanting to learn to read, make him *eager to learn*. When the first contact with class reading is through ITA, there are far fewer failures than there have been in the past because achievement is easier.

gajwæ is a new approach to reading by the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) and is designed to bring pupils into full ITA reading ability in a minimum of time. After two introductory lessons teaching the three letters of highest frequency, t,e,n, 40 lessons teach only one new letter each, always in meaningful words and never as isolated characters. The 'atomic' letters – first method and the equally mindless whole-word method are both avoided in favor of understanding and meaning.

The introduction of new letters one by one in the order of their relative frequency of occurrence and in words the pupil understands, ensures a more rapid and better mastery of reading than is usually the case.

gajwæ, second edition, 80 pages, 7"x9", is sold for \$1.75 postpaid. It may be used with any child who shows an interest in deciphering printing such as is found on breakfast cereal cartons and the like. I would greatly appreciate your letters reporting on the experience you and your child have with the primer, with age and time indicated.

P. S. Read stories to your child so he will know what learning to read will open up to him. Try Kipling's *Just So Stories* as one of the best books for this.

(Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1978 pp20,1 in the printed version)

10. Detouring the causes of reading failure

The *Edmonton journal* recently carried a Canadian Press wire story from Ottawa headed, *School failure, a major cause of delinquency* (June 7). Similar notes dealing with school results appear regularly, and perhaps we tend to glance over them rather disinterestedly. School failure, however, is too serious, both for the individual and for our society, to be taken lightly. A large proportion of our teenagers have learning disabilities and probably much of this is due to poor reading skills.

The same story mentions remedial education at a cost of 13,000 for one student for one year. Correctional education in training schools costs \$13,000. The cost climbs to \$36,000 in a corrective institution.

There is a better cure for reading failure, the cost of which would be less than one percent of that of remedial education. Used at the start of reading instruction it will give better results than any remedial or correctional education available. It is the Initial Teaching Alphabet developed by Sir James Pitman, the grandson of Isaac Pitman, the inventor of shorthand, and which allows the student to detour the confusing English spelling for the first few months of learning to read.

The English language presents extraordinary difficulties for beginning readers due to its illogical spelling. Take the sentence: "Whose shoes do you choose?" There are five different ways used to spell the same vowel sound. No wonder students are confused.

In the *i.t.a.* there is a symbol assigned to each of the 40 or so sounds in English speech, and spelling becomes rationalized with the sounds of a word. The student gets meaning and satisfaction from the very start of reading.

But will he learn to read traditional orthography? Of course he will, just as did non-English-speaking children, German or Ukrainian or others, who were taught to read their parents' language before attending public or English schools.

Veteran teachers who remember having taught in many parts of Alberta, confirm me in the knowledge that what happened to me and to others in our school district was not out of the ordinary when we learned to read sooner than did the English-speaking children once we learned a modicum of English speech. And we even spelled better than they once we could read, as we noticed the letters more than they. The English-speaking student is naturally far ahead if he has the opportunity of starting to learn reading in *i.t.a.* And this is shown to be the case where *i.t.a.* is used properly.

The Sec. of the British S.S.S. said, The S. S. S. suffers internally from a long-standing conflict of interests. While our investments were bequeathed to us to press for spelling reform, some of our members and officers have a very substantial investment in teaching reading in conventional spelling. They fear they would lose heavily if the aims of the Simplified Spelling Society were ever achieved.

I cannot help but wonder if the conflict of interests or the fear of the loss of well-paid jobs plays the same role in relation to the current teaching of reading which results in so many failures? Some weeks back the *Edmonton Journal* carried a short news article with the title, *Taxpayers not prepared to pay the cost of literacy, professor says*. The crux of the matter was that some 150 school administrators were told that education budgets will have to be at least doubled to ensure student literacy.

To me this is arrant nonsense. We do not need more money but to use better sense in spending what we have. 'We must do so to overcome the "böyg" which prevents us from learning from the phonic language areas of the world how to better make reading meaningful for our children.

11. Letter from Eleanor R. Kirkland

Dear Leo Davis: Thank you for your letter regarding my article, "A Piagetian Interpretation of Beginning Reading Instruction" in *The Reading Teacher*. Feb. 1978.

I agree with you that there must be a better way to "encode" the English language. There have been many groups over a period of time who have encouraged simplifying the spelling of English. Some of the better known today are: the Simplified Spelling Society in England and the Phonemic Spelling Council in U.S.A. . . . Part of my study has dealt with spelling. . . Many people were concerned that using i.t.a. in the earlier years would have an impact on later spelling! [1] This was not true. The third grade students who had gone through i.t.a. were much better spellers on standardized tests at the end of the third grade than were those who started out and continued in t.o. for the three years. I have come to the conclusion that the best way to teach beginning reading and writing is through the language experience approach where children see in print what they or others say – that they are surrounded by the written language – and perhaps a combination of language experience and i.t.a. may be the answer. I am afraid that we have too many traditionalists who say, "the spelling has been good all these years -why change it now?" that we would have a difficult time convincing them to really do a lot as far as the revision of the encoding of English. I tried to have the Curriculum Commission keep the i.t.a. materials on the reading list as supplemental materials for the 1968 state adoption so that the districts using i.t.a. would have the material available to them-but to no avail. Consequently, many areas that were using i.t.a. (and where they found it very successful) were forced to drop it because of the additional cost.

As for the article in your letter – it sounds good to me. I guess it just takes a lot of people with conviction to keep at it – then we may get some of the changes necessary. As far as Piaget is concerned, if we insist on using the present basal readers, we should consider Piagetian research in light of beginning reading and not expect from children that for which they are not "ready."

Sincerely, Eleanor R. Kirkland Ph.D., Sacramento, C.A.

[1] (would encode it incorrectly according to standardized spelling.)