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[See Journal and Newsletter articles by Laurie Fennelly.]

New Spelling 90.

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Contents.

[Preface.](#)

1. [The need for reform,](#)
2. [The Problem.](#)
3. [The mat-mate System.](#)
4. [The reform of vowels.](#)
 - 4.1 [mat - mate.](#)
 - 4.2 [a e i o u.](#)
 - 4.3 [oo au ou oy er'.](#)
 - 4.4 [The Obscure vowel.](#)

5. [Reform of consonants.](#)

- 5.1 [Unchanged.](#)
- 5.2 [c k ck qu x.](#)
- 5.3 [s z sh ch.](#)
- 5.4 [f g j ng w wh y.](#)

6. [Two objections](#)

- 6.1 [Identical spellings.](#)
- 6.2 [Historical Spellings and Etymology.](#)

7. [The Implementation of reform.](#)

[Appendix - The Star.](#)

[New Spelling 90 in Brief.](#)

Preface.

The Simplified Spelling Society, founded in 1908, published the 6th edition of its book **New Spelling** in 1948. It was prepared by two of the leading figures in language studies at that time, Professors Daniel Jones and Harold Orton. It set out a complete scheme of spelling reform that was supported by a statistical analysis of current spellings. It remains the major work on the subject world-wide, and the Society hopes to reissue it in a new updated version.

In the meantime this booklet, designed for the general public rather than for language specialists, sets out some new proposals. These are firmly based on those in the original book, but some important changes have been made in the light of comment over the years.

Our Aim has been to set out a complete, coherent spelling system, that can provide a starting point for useful discussion. For this reason, and also for reasons of space, we have not attempted to discuss alternative forms, nor have we dealt with the anomalies that must occur in a language so diverse as English.

At this stage also we do not discuss the spelling of those foreign words that have come into the language recently. Some have been fully anglicized, some not. Consider **entente, garage, pizza, allegro**. When such words should be respelt is a matter for judgment in each individual case. We cannot delay reform while such relatively minor points are being settled.

It should be noted that we do not propose any changes in proper names, although of course people would be free to change the spelling of their own personal names.

1. The Need for Reform.

English is unique in being basically a mixture of two languages - German, as spoken by the Anglo-Saxons, and French, as spoken by the Normans, the mixing process starting in 1066. This may be a source of pride to the English, and it has certainly had beneficial effects on the vocabulary and the structure of the language, but has been a major cause of the extreme complexity, not to say confusion, of English spelling. Put simply, English spelling is so irregular and so unpredictable that native learners are obliged to learn almost every word individually - not always with conspicuous success. As a result, spelling can constitute an actual barrier to learning. Time has to be devoted to it that could be used for better things, and it makes it far harder for the normal pupil in school to get that sense of achievement without which there is little effective learning.

Take as an example the set of words - **bun, mother, one, wonder, thunder**. Clearly they should all be spelt with a **u** - **bun, muther, wun, wunder, thunder**. No doubt the readers of this pamphlet have mastered these words, but imagine the problems that face the teacher trying to explain to a five-year old just why **bun** and **mother** are spelt the way they are. In fact the teacher is reduced to telling the child that **mother** is spelt that way because it is.

Another set of words is even more extraordinary - **though, bough, bought, caught, through, thorough, cough, rough, eight, night, knight**. There is an explanation for these spellings, but to find it one must go back to the history of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic Languages. Why should such spellings be preserved for everyday use in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? Ironically, modern German itself has a very logical spelling system, and we can see what an advantage this gives to the Germans, if we compare the German and English words for the number 8. (They are identical in origin.) In German **ch** is pronounced as in the Scottish **loch**, and so the word **acht** represents the current pronunciation. Whereas the English word **eight** has only one letter out of the five (the **t**) which has its normal value.

Apart from its effect on native speakers, the sheer inefficiency of the system is particularly unfortunate, because English has become the main international language. Its rich vocabulary and its relatively simple and flexible grammar make it well adapted for such a role; its only handicap is its spelling.

2. The Problem.

The English alphabet of 26 letters is divided into vowels (**a e i o u**) and consonants (all the rest of the letters). Note that **y** is sometimes a vowel as in **pity**, and sometimes a consonant as in **young**. Unfortunately there are far more sounds in English than can be covered by such letters, and particularly is this the case with vowels. As a result, the existing letters have, most of them, to do a duty for more than one sound, sometimes by themselves, sometimes in combination with other letters, **a** in the following series is a typical example - **fat, fate, call, father, gaiter, soap**.

Another complication is that there is no one standard English pronunciation. The vowels especially have different values all over Britain, let alone over the North American continent and Australia and New Zealand. Among the consonants, too, *r* has very important functions. In words like **cart, finger** it is not pronounced in the South of England, but it is pronounced elsewhere, although not in the same way, as is shown by the difference in Scottish and American *r*'s.

It is for this reason that we are not trying to devise a so-called phonetic alphabet. Such an alphabet already exists, and it is designed to denote accurately all the sounds that can be made in speech in all languages. Parts of it are used nowadays to show pronunciation in dictionaries, and a glance at the key provided in the dictionaries will show just how unsuitable such an alphabet would be for ordinary use. Nor would it even be desirable. To take an example, there are numerous variations in the way the vowel **a** is pronounced in the word **cat**, but so long as everybody who says **cat** thinks he is saying an **a**, the variations in the vowel sound produced are quite immaterial.

Inventing fresh letters has been suggested, notably by George Bernard Shaw, but it would create many practical difficulties, and so has been generally rejected.

We are left, therefore with the task of devising a scheme, using only the existing alphabet, that is consistent rather than phonetic. So that all speakers no matter what their private pronunciation may be, can work out the spelling of a word from its pronunciation. Fortunately this can be done, using, strange as it may seem, only 24 or 25 of the available letters.

3. The "mat - mate" System

The problem of shortage of letters is worst with the vowels, and English has evolved a complicated - and inefficient - way of dealing with it. Take the letter **a**. In the word **mat** it has one sound. By adding an **e** (or another vowel) after the consonant that follows the **a**, it becomes another sound, as in **mate. mating**. This applies to all five vowels e.g. **din. dining - hop. hoping**.

So we have a remarkable system in which one vowel is modified by another one, separated from it. But this is not all. If we want to stop the process, we do so by doubling the intervening consonant, e.g. **din. dine. diner. dinner. - hop. hope. hoping. hopping**. And then to crown it, the system is not consistently applied. Look at the series **liver. diver - hover. rover**. (Interestingly, whoever invented **bovver boots** some years ago, instinctively reverted to the general rule.)

Most people apply the system without being consciously aware of it, but many mistakes are made, and in fact it is at the very heart of the spelling problems of the English Language.

4. The Reform of the Vowels.

Note: Before discussing changes there is one point to clarify. When we recite the alphabet, we recite the names of the letters, not the sounds that they represent in

words. As an example, **kay** is the name of the letter, not its sound. However, the vowels **a e i o u** do keep their name value in some words in current spelling, but it is only one value, and by no means the commonest.

4.1. mat-mate.

Our first task is to deal with the "**mat - mate**" problem. This we do by establishing a rule:-

In words like **mate**, move the final **e** to the other side of the consonant, and join it to the vowel so that **a e o u** become **ae ee oe ue**. (see below for **i**).

These combinations then become the new symbols for these sounds, and are used permanently, regardless of what else follows in the word. So we have the series **mat. maet. maeting - hop. hoep. hoeping**. And as a further result, we no longer need to use the double consonants in **matting** and **hopping**, because plain **a** or **o** can only have the sound they have in **mat** and **hop** respectively. So we arrive at the new pairs **maeting. mating - hoeping. hoping**. Set out thus, this may seem confusing, but used in a context, these words present no problem.

In the case of **i** we could have followed the same rule and made it **ie** but we have chosen a simpler alternative. Use **y** everywhere for the sound of **by. tie**, and use **i** everywhere for the sound of **bit**. As a result we have **byt** for **bite**, and **piti** for **pity**. This has considerable advantages over using **ie**. (Compare **flying** and **flieing**.)

These changes at a stroke, enable us to get rid of all the double consonants in the language, with the possible exception of those few cases where the double consonant actually represents two sounds as in **thinness** or **unnecessary**.

Having established the general principle, we can now, in the following sections, treat the various uses of the vowels systematically.

4.2. a e i o u.

a. **a** as in **mat** stays the same.

a as in **mate** becomes **ae**, which gives **maet**. All other spellings for this sound will be replaced by **ae**. e.g. **say: sae, maid: maed**. (Note that **said** becomes **sed**. See below) In front of an **r** the vowel is slightly different, but it is normally treated as being the same, so that for example **pair: fare** become **paer: faer**. Note the difference between **pair** and **payer** which become respectively **paer** and **paeer**. The reason for this is that it is important to preserve the ending **-er**, when it has a specific meaning, in this case that of the "agent".

a as in **path** remains unchanged. New Spelling, on balance, recommended **aa** for this sound, to distinguish it from the **a** in **pat**, but we have abandoned this distinction, because so many people in Britain and America make no difference between the two sounds. Nor does the use of a single **a** for both sounds in current spelling seem to cause any problems for those that make the difference in speech. However there are a few pairs of words whose identical spelling might shock, and we

propose an **aa** as an alternative spelling in the following cases:- **have: hav - halve: haav - ant: ant - aunt: aant, - cam: kam -calm: kaam,psalm: saam, palm: paam.**

e. **e** as in **set** remains unchanged. All other current spellings for this sound become **e** as well. e.g. **friend:frend, said: sed, head: hed, heifer: hefer, bury: beri, any: eni, many: meni.**

e as in **scheme** becomes **ee**, which is already in many cases. Other spellings are **read: reed, police: polees, receive: receev, chief: cheef. read** and **reed** both become **reed**, but on this point see [Chapter Six](#). One syllable words in **e** become **ee**, except for **the be he she me we**, which are left as special cases or "word signs" because they occur so frequently. **re-** as a prefix remains with one **e** only, whether it is an active prefix, as in **re-state** or purely a Latin one as in **refuse**. The pronunciation of **re-** in this position usually varies, so it is convenient to make a simple rule.

i. **i** as in **pit** says the same.

y is currently used for this sound at the end of words, but this will be replaced by **i**. e.g. **piti, frili.**

Note. In the USA and elsewhere the sound of the final **y** is not the same as the first **i** sound, but this does not seem sufficient reason for retaining **y** at the end of words. The actual difference in sound is not great, it has no significance in meaning, and probably most Americans are not conscious of the difference. The **y** is never used to represent the sound elsewhere, and, a final point, in derivatives the **y** reverts to **i**. e.g. **pitiiless.**

i as in **bite** becomes **y** to give **byt**. **buy** also becomes **by**. (See [Chapter Six](#) on identical spellings). Note that **fire** becomes **fyr**, but **buyer** becomes **byer**, because in the latter case the **-er** has a significance for meaning. (See [Obscure Vowel](#))

o. **o** as in **cot** remains unchanged. It also replaces the **a** in 60 words like **was: woz, want: wont, swan:swon.**

o as in **rope** becomes **oe**, which gives **roep**. **oe** also replaces **ow** in words like **low: loe, sow: soe. sew** too becomes **soe**. Note that **poet** becomes **poet**. **so** would remain **so**, being treated as a word sign, because of its frequency. Purely Italian words like **allegro** would be left unchanged.

u. **u** as in **cut** remains unchanged. ([see oo for put](#))

It also replaces **o** in some 50 words like **mother**, and **oo** in **blood, flood.**

u as in **cute** becomes **ue**, which gives us **kuet**. It also replaces **ew** as in **few: fue, new: nue**. Note that **suit** becomes **suet** and **suet** becomes **sueet**.

Note. The system just set out, leads to an increase in the number of words that have treble vowels, as in the current spelling **seeing**, or the New Spelling **loeer** and **saeing**. It would be possible to reduce the number of words that have treble vowels, by formulating a rule that the **e** of **ae ee oe ue** should be dropped in front of

another vowel. This would however create some anomalies, and on balance we prefer the logic of the system we have described.

4.3. oo au ou oy er.

oo. **oo** will continue to represent the two sounds found in **good** and **food**. **uu** was proposed as an additional symbol to represent one of them so that we would have either **good fuud** or **guud food**. However, Scottish speakers make no difference between the two sounds, and we therefore think it unnecessary to use two symbols, especially as there is no evidence that the present arrangement causes learning or spelling difficulties.

oo would also replace **u** in **put: poot** and **ou** as in **could: kood**. There would be difficulty with two pairs of words **pull, pool** and **full, fool**. We propose that **pull** and **full** be treated as special cases and spelt **pul** and **ful** respectively. This is especially important at the end of **ful**, because it is so often used at the end of words. e.g. **hopeful: hoepful**. **to** ought to become **too**, but it occurs so often, it is convenient to leave it unchanged as a word sign. Note that **two** and **too** both become **too**.

au. **au** as in **taut** remains unchanged. It also replaces **aw** as in **law:lau**. The **au** spelling is the commoner in current English, but **aw** is used in all single syllable words of the type of **law**, that is to say those that do not have a consonant at the end. In consequence the sound **aw** is identified with the sound in the public mind. Nonetheless we have decided on balance to adopt **au** but there would be no problem if it was desired to use **aw** instead.

Note this sound would NOT be used for the sound that occurs in words like **short** which have an **r**. In Southern English this **r** has disappeared from the pronunciation, changing the **o** sound into **au** in the process. But this has not happened elsewhere in Britain or in America, where **r** is still pronounced. It must therefore always be retained in spelling.

ou. **ou** as in **count** remains unchanged. It also replaces **ow** in **now: nou**. Exactly the same considerations apply as with **au** and **aw**, and **ow** could be used instead of **ou**. An additional reason for choosing **ou** is that **ow** has two values in current English. (cf. **how, low**) which could cause confusion during a transition period.

oy. **oy** as in **boy** is replaced by **oi** always e.g. **oil, oister**

er. **er** as in **merchant** remains unchanged. This spelling **er** is associated with this sound in the public mind, but there are two other spellings that occur when the sound is stressed, **ur** (**further**) and **ir** (**fir**). We recommend that both these spellings be replaced by **er**. However there are a few cases where confusion would be caused, and for these we would keep **ur**. Examples are words in **-cur** like **concur, recur**, and **fur** and **astir**. For **er** unstressed, see [the section on the obscure vowel](#).

4.4. The Obscure Vowel.

In English, when there is more than one syllable in a word, one syllable carries a main stress or emphasis, and sometimes, if the word is long enough, another carries a secondary stress. Examples are **háting** and **pérforátion**. But then the remaining

vowels, by a sort of law of laziness, lose their full value, and become reduced to the sound we find in the last syllables of **carrot**, **nation**, **total**, and the **a** we have in **a cat**. It is the sound you make when you open your mouth without making any effort. It should be emphasised that this is not a case of "bad English". It is an essential part of the English language, and we all of us use this sound all the time. It is by far the commonest sound in the language. But it causes great problems for spelling. Dictionaries have to use special symbols to represent it, and it is the cause of many spelling mistakes of the type **a** for **e** in the last syllable of **independent**.

Furthermore, the sound varies. Sometimes it is more like a very short **i** than a short **e**. cf. **profit**, **prophet**, **hatchet**. Then again, the sound can change, depending on how slowly or precisely one is speaking. In the word **success** the **u** might be the same as in **suck**, but usually it is this reduced sound.

This vowel is commonly called the "obscure vowel", and very often it is spelt with an **e**, but if we used **e** for it everywhere, it would cause enormous problems. We therefore make the following limited proposals.

Firstly we make three restrictions.

1. We only make changes where the vowel occurs in the **final** syllable of the basic word. (**silent** is the basic word for **silently** and **colour** for **colouring**.) We do not alter the obscure vowel when it occurs elsewhere in a word. We would not therefore concern ourselves with the **u** in **success** or the **o's** in **photography**. Similarly, the endings **-ary** and **-ory** remain unchanged. e.g. **sekretari**, **dormitori**. To try to change all the obscure vowels in the language is simply not practicable.

2. If the letter **i** occurs in this situation in a current spelling it is never changed. So **prophet** and **profit** become respectively **profet** and **profit**. The only exception is the ending **-ible**, for which see below. This simple rule obviates the necessity for establishing the precise sound value of each and every obscure vowel.

3. The letter **r** is maintained wherever it occurs in current spelling. It is never dropped, except of course that double **r** is always reduced to single **r**. (See below on the letter **r**.)

The changes we propose are therefore as follows:

1. **an en on ain** all become **en**. In addition **ant** becomes **ent** and **ance** becomes **ens**. e.g. **observance:observens**. One objection to this is that some words in **-an** have a derivative in which the obscure vowel recovers its full value. e.g. **organ:organic**. However there are not many of these, and the derivatives in question are usually quite learned words, and so we do not think there is any need to abandon our proposed rule.

-man. This ending is reduced to the obscure vowel in words like **Frenchman**, **boatman**, but we keep the spelling **man** in order to preserve the distinction between **-man** and **-men**. Similarly with the word **woman**.

2. **-le -el -al -ol**

(i) **-le able, couple, rattle, apple.**

We recommend that the final silent **e** be dropped, so that the above words would become **aebi, kupl, ratl, apl**. It will be seen that in this situation the **l** by itself has the value of "obscure vowel + **l**".

(ii) **-el. chapel** and **apple** are identical in pronunciation except for the initial **ch**.

Similarly with **label** and **able**. We therefore recommend that **-el** when it follows a consonant is reduced to **l**. e.g. **chapl, laebl**. After a vowel, **-el** is always unchanged. e.g. **fuel: fueel**.

(iii) **-al -ol**. These endings have the same sound as **-el**. e.g. **legal, symbol**. However many words with these endings have derivatives in which the vowel recovers its full value. e.g. **legality, symbolic**. There are many more of these words, and they are more important than is the case with **an** referred to above. Therefore on balance we have decided that **-al** and **-ol** should be left unchanged.

(iv) Words like **hostile** and **fertile** are pronounced with a clear difference of stress in England and America. It is therefore necessary to have alternative spellings - **hostyl, hostl, fertyl, fertl**. (We should not be frightened to make use of alternative spellings, when there is a need. They already exist, of course in current English).

3. **-able, -ible**, as word endings, both become **-abl**. e.g. **detestabl, responsabl**. This simple rule will save many spelling errors.

4. **-er -ar -or -our -ure** all become **-er**. **colour** thus becomes **kuler**. **nature** gives **naecher**, but **mature** of course would become **matuer**.

Note: **hire** and **higher** are identical in pronunciation in current speech. **hire** becomes **hyr**, as it would be pointless to inset an **e** before the **r** in words of this type. But what should we then do with **higher**? We settle for **hyer** because of our rule that the ending **-er**, meaning "more" must always be preserved. In this case grammatical consistency must take precedence over phonetic exactitude. This likewise applies to **-er** as the "agent". cf. **tire: tyr** and **tryer: tryer**.

5. **-ous** becomes **-us**. e.g. **marvelus**.

6. **-ward, toward, forward, upward, skyward.**

toward becomes **toword** (cf. **ward: word, word: werd**) In all the other words **a** represents the obscure vowel, so we recommend that it becomes **e**. e.g. **forwerd, skywerd**.

5. The Reform of the Consonants.

Consonants are in some ways more important for reading than vowels. There are more of them, and they catch the eye more than do the vowels, which is why changes in consonants can seem disconcerting. Yet changes are needed. There are consonants like the **g** in **campaign** and the **w** in **wriggle**, which no longer have any significance, and are just relics from a distant past. There are also unnecessary double letters like those in **accommodate**, which reflect a Latin origin, and there are

consonants which perform a role which they were not intended to have, like the **gh** in *night* and the *l* in *calm*.

Our aims are:

1. To get rid of all unnecessary consonants.
2. To reduce all double consonants to single consonants, unless they represent a significant lengthening of the consonant as in *unnecessary* but this is quite rare.
3. To systematise the use of the remaining consonants,

Voiced and Voiceless consonants. Before considering our proposed changes in detail, it is helpful to understand one of the ways in which consonants are classified. Take **b** and **p** for example. They are produced by the organs of the mouth in exactly the same way, except for one thing. When the sound of **b** is made, the vocal chords come into play, whereas they don't for **p**. Consequently, the **b** is more resonant than **p**, which is the sole difference between the two. Other consonants can be paired in the same way -**d:t**, **z:s**, **g:k**, **v:f**. In each pair, the first one, the more resonant consonant is called "voiced" and the second one "voiceless". The difference is crucial in some words, and of no importance in others. The sole difference between *phase* and *face*, when spoken is that the **s** of *phase* is voiced. But in *cats* and *dogs*, where the **s** in *cats* is voiceless and the **s** in *dogs* is voiced, the difference does not matter.

5.1. Unchanged.

b l m n p v are quite unchanged.

d t are only changed to the extent that the verbal ending **-ed** becomes **-t** in words like *kissed*: *kist*.

r is not changed, but it needs attention. We formulate a rule that **r** is retained wherever it occurs in current spelling, except of course that **rr** is reduced to single **r**. This rule is needed because in the standard Southern English, **r** is no longer pronounced at the end of words, and in front of consonants. e.g. *painter*, *court*, *part*. But it is still pronounced elsewhere in England, in Scotland and in America, even though it is pronounced in different ways. It is therefore essential to retain it in spelling. (It may be noted that those who do not pronounce the **r**, mostly think they do. The situation is complicated because **r**'s come and go in this form of pronunciation. (cf. *water* - *watering*.)

th. th we have decided to leave unchanged.

In the current spelling it represents two sounds, the voiced sound in *then* and the voiceless in *thin*. The voiced sound could be represented by **dh**, which would be useful to foreign learners, but not to native learners, who are mostly unaware of the difference. The voiced sound **dh** is actually by far the commoner of the two, so logically, if we are going to adopt only one symbol for the two sounds, we ought to adopt **dh**. We are keeping the **th** for no other reason than to reduce the number of changes we have to make.

5.2. c k ck qu x.

c. **c** is replaced by either **s** as in **advice: advys**, or by **k** as in **cat: kat**. It therefore becomes a redundant letter available for other use. (Suggestions are instead of **ch** or **sh**.) It would be possible to reverse things, and keep the **c** for **cat**, and dispense with the letter **k** instead. The choice would be between for example **kik** and **cic**, **bak** and **bac**, **keep** and **ceep**. Using **c** would involve fewer changes, especially in initial letters, but we have chosen **k** because it is the clearer symbol visually (**c** resembles **e** and **o**), and because it is internationally identified with the sound.

ck. **ck** is replaced by a simple **k**. e.g. **kick: kik**.

qu. **qu** becomes **kw** and **q** becomes a redundant letter. e.g. **quick: kwik**.

x. **x** is replaced by **ks**, and thus becomes a redundant letter, except for its use as a mathematical symbol, and in the word **x-ray**. In words like **example** the sounds are actually voiced, so that one ought to write **egzAMPL**, but we recommend using **ks** for these words as well. Most people are quite unaware that **x** can have these two values, and in any case the difference is never critical for meaning.

k. To sum up, **k** has kept its present sound value, but has become a much more important consonant, through acquiring additional uses.

5.3. s z sh ch.

s z. **z** is the voiced version of **s**. Compare **sit** and **horizon**. But **s** is regularly used in place of **z** in many words. e.g. **visit, nose, these**. In words like **advertise**, **z** is used in America for the ending, and can be used in Britain even now. Contrast these words, however, with **cease, grease, this**. Our first step therefore is to replace **s** by **z** wherever it is necessary. e.g. **nose: noez, visit: vizit**. Note that **his** becomes **hiz**, and **hiss** becomes **his**. Next **-ce** can be replaced by **-s** as in **rice: rys**. (But see below)

s has one use which is of absolutely capital importance, and which requires special consideration. It is used in what are called "inflected endings", that is it is added to the end of words to signify:

- i. plural of nouns. e.g. **cats**
- ii. possession. e.g. **cat's, cats'**.
- iii. the person of a verb e.g. **he likes: I like**.

We will confine our discussion to the plurals, but whatever applies to them applies to the other categories as well.

The sound represented by **s** at the end of a word is in reality more often than not a **z**. e.g. **dogz, binz**. So it was suggested in the original New Spelling that we should use both **s** and **z** strictly according to the pronunciation. Compare **hats** and **ladz**. We had rejected this for two reasons. Firstly, we doubt very much whether most people hear this difference, and to make it more difficult, the difference varies from word to word. Secondly, and this is the decisive factor, we think grammatical uniformity must take precedence over phonetic exactitude.

Accordingly, we decide to use the one letter, either **s** or **z**, for all inflected forms, but before making the choice, we must look at words that end in **-ce**, or less often in **-se**. Most present no problem, and for example, **nice** and **grease** become in New Spelling **nys** and **grees**. But an important group of these words can be paired off with nouns in the plural, or in one or two cases, verbs e.g. **fence: fens, dense: dens, peace: peas, cease: sees**. Clearly one cannot use **s** for all these words, but if one chose **z** for the inflected forms, then one could use **s** for the **-ce** and voiceless **-se**. The system would be clear, without anomalies. But against this, **z** is generally felt to be a more awkward letter than **s**, especially in handwriting. To change all the vast number of inflected endings from **s** to **z**, would, we fear, be so disconcerting to the public, that it would arouse too much resistance to any project for reform.

We therefore recommend **-s** for all inflected endings, as at present, and **ss** for words in **-ce** and **-se**. e.g. **fence: fens** become **fenss: fens**, **pronounce: pronouns** become **pronounss: pronouns** and **cease: sees** become **seess: sees**.

Another problem pair is that of **princes: princess**. We suggest that **-ess** be retained as a special feminine ending, in which case the two words will become **prinses: prinsess**

Note. one . once. one's become **wun . wuns . wun's**. If it was desired not to use apostrophes, then **one's** would have to become **wunz**.

sh. sh remains as in **ship** but it also replaces a whole set of combinations, where the letters **t. c. s** combine with following **e** or **i**. e.g. **nation: naeshen, special: speshal, ocean: oeshen, diversion: dyvershen, precious: preshus**. This sort of spelling is sometimes used to represent uneducated speech, but there is no other way of pronouncing these words. The basic linguistic fact is that English people, when confronted by the sound combination "**s** + consonantal **y**" preceding a vowel pronounce it as **sh**. (Compare the French and English pronunciation of the word **nation**.)

Words like **issue** come into this category, because the **u** is really **yoo**. There is hesitancy over whether one should say **sh** or **sy**, the latter being regarded as more correct. Actually, most people tend to say **sh**, certainly when they are not thinking about it. However, we recommend keeping the current spelling, because there is so much fluctuation in usage.

Parallel to this is the use of **ch** in words like **nature: naecher**, where this is the established pronunciation. We do not dare to suggest **choon** for **tune** or **jook** for **duke**.

zh. sh is a voiceless consonant, and its voiced equivalent is the sound we have in **vision** or the **je** sound in French. There is no symbol for it in current English, and so we recommend **zh** e.g. **vision: vizhen, measure: mezher, usual: uezhual**.

ch. ch remains as in **church**, but it also replaces **tch** as in **hatch: hach**.

5.4. f g j ng w wh y.

f. *f* remains as in *if*, but it also replaces *ph* as in *telephone: telefoen*. Note that *off* becomes *of* and *of* becomes *ov*.

g. *g* keeps only the sound it has in the word *got*.

j. *j* keeps the sound it has in *jet*, but also takes over the sound of *g* in *age: aej*, and of *dg* in *bridge: brij*.

ng. *ng* keeps the sound it has in *sing . singer*. Strictly speaking, *finger* should become *fingger*, but we see no advantage in this because the pronunciation of this sound varies according to the dialect, and the current spelling causes no learning problems anywhere. It must be admitted that the spelling *ngg* would be useful for foreign learners.

w. *w* remains as in *win*, but it also replaces *u* in *anguish*, and as stated above, the *u* in *qu*.

wh. In most of England, *wh* is pronounced simply as a *w*, but there are areas where it is differentiated, notably in Scotland and parts of America. Its use is probably declining, being preserved to some extent by the efforts of the schools. We recommend *w*, leaving *wh* as an available alternative for those who pronounce it that way.

y. Although we have used *y* as a vowel, we have retained it as an initial consonant in words like *yet, year, young, youth*. This dual use is not ideal, but *y's* usefulness as a vowel outweighs the disadvantages. Of the words beginning with *y, you*, and *youth* could be spelt *ue* and *ueth* respectively. However, we prefer *yoo* and *yooth* to maintain the connections with *your* and *young*.

The names for i and y.

Our use of *y* as the vowel in *bite: byt* creates a problem. We can hardly coin fresh names, so we suggest that *y* keeps its present name, and that *i* is called "short i".

6. Two Objections.

6.1. Identical spellings.

As we have seen, New Spelling spells words that have different meanings but the same sound, identically. e.g *dear.deer = deer, there.their = thaer, hear.here = heer, read.reed = reed*. The immediate reaction of most people would be to say that these words would be a cause of confusion and misunderstanding.

In fact, there are already about 750 such pairs or groups of words in English, examples being *stalk.stalk, craft.craft, rank.rank*. They cause no problems in speech or writing, most people not even being conscious of them. The reason is that the language is above all a "heard or spoken thing", and it is context that determines meaning, not written forms. Writing came very late in the development of mankind.

We peer at the peer on the pier is a perfectly understandable sentence when spoken, even if it is somewhat unusual. In no way do we need the *ie* of *pier* to help

us understand it when reading. If we say or hear **rank outsider** or **rank grass** or in **rank order**, we have no problem in distinguishing one meaning from the other.

If words are too near each other in usage to be instantly distinguished by context, the language over the years drops one of them. **mete** is now obsolete, or at any rate purely literary, because **meet** as a verb, and **meat** as a noun are the dominant meanings. Similarly **gambol** has given way to **gamble** in ordinary use. It will be noted that spelling differences are not enough to save a word.

The trio **sow.sow.sew** sums up the problem. Current English has the same spelling for two words with different sounds, and two spellings for two words with the same sound. In New Spelling the pig becomes **sou** and the two actions both become **soe**. (How many people have found it difficult to remember which is which of **sow** and **sew**?)

If, despite all this we still want to try to invent separate spellings for our new pairs of words, then logically we should do the same for the ones which already exist. Which would be impossible. What alternatives could there be for **craft** and **craft**? Separate spellings for the same sounds could only be allocated in a purely arbitrary way, and hence they would present serious learning problems. It would be impossible to maintain the consistency which we have regarded as the essence of this reform. To take an example, if we use **ea** to help differentiate between **pair.pear.pare**, it is illogical to use it to differentiate between **sheer** and **shear**.

6.2. Historical Spellings and Etymology.

The other common objection to spelling reform is based on the desire to preserve the history of words as enshrined in their spelling. A well known scientist some thirty years ago protested vehemently against losing the "footsteps of history". The trouble is that the footsteps of history came to a stop several years ago, and some of them even in 1066. The Latin word **color-**, gives the Norman French **colour** which in standard French went on to become **couleur**, but the English process stopped in 1066, instead of going on to be **kuler**

In reality, the defenders of historical spellings are only thinking of those words which are direct coinages from Latin and Greek, and are the less important part of the language. The basic language derives ultimately from old Germanic, which has never been a fashionable study. The second strand comes from Norman French, which over 800 years of continuous change developed from Latin. But even here the word for **chief** (Norman French **head**), from the Latin for **head - cap-**, would not be immediately obvious to the non specialist.. It is also a fallacy to think that a knowledge of etymology helps with the understanding of meaning. **exaggerate** has developed meanings well removed from its origins, and if you use words like **concatenation** presumably you know the meanings anyway.

The archaeology of a language, like all archaeology, can be a fascinating study, but language is a living thing, not an archaeological object.

7. The Implementation of Reform.

The implementation of spelling reform is a subject that reformers have tended to avoid, perhaps because it presents particular problems for English. There have been spelling reforms in the majority of European languages, but in none of them have the need changes been so wide-ranging as they would have to be in English. The experience, therefore, of these countries has only limited value for us. And of course, reforming English requires action on an international scale.

Reform can be envisaged as a once-and-for-all event, or as a reform by stages, spread over presumably many years. Let us consider the once-and-for-all reform.

Firstly we must make a difference between the ability to read New Spelling and the ability to write it. Everybody would have to learn to read it, but few at first would need to write it, at least professionally. It would be obviously unreasonable to expect older people to learn a totally new writing system, but to learn to read New Spelling would not be particularly difficult for interested adults, and short courses could easily be arranged.

In schools, the situation would be different. Clear government involvement would be essential. Young children would begin with New Spelling, with necessary reading material being provided, and then at a later stage, they would have to learn to read, but not write, current spelling. Surprisingly there is experience to show that this would not create serious problems for them. Beginning in the 1920s, New Spelling was very successfully used in some schools, and at present i.t.a. which is a derivative of New Spelling is still being used to teach reading. It has been consistently found that the children not only learn to read quicker with i.t.a., but that their learning of current spelling and their learning generally are both improved.

New Spelling would have to be officially accepted for public examinations, and this would need government intervention. Older pupils who had become fairly literate in current spelling, could reasonably be asked to learn to read New Spelling, but this would not be difficult, and then they would be left to use New Spelling or current spelling as they preferred.

But most important of all would be the reading material used by everybody - newspapers, magazines, and library books, all these have a short life, and so it would be easy to print them in a reformed spelling, but clearly this could not happen without public demand, or at least acquiescence, and there is a great work of propaganda to be done.

Alphabetical lists provide an especial problem. Many spelling changes affect initial letters, which means that these changes would have to be made simultaneously to avoid repeated alterations to telephone directories and the various alphabetical lists that govern our lives.

Appalled by these difficulties, many have suggested a reform by stages, and this needs careful consideration. The basic problem is that it is very difficult to divide up the spelling system into self contained units. Changes are interrelated and many words would be affected by more than one change.

Consider these words - **night** . **know** . **wreath** . **wrought**. Dropping the silent **k** and **w** at the beginning of words, and the **gh** in the middle of words would seem obvious reforms. But if **gh** is removed from **night** we have to decide what to do with the vowel - shall it be **nite** or **niet** or **nyt**? Is it sensible to choose **nite** if we are going to change it later on? **know** will become **now**, and immediately we have created another example of the **sow** (pig) and **sow** (seed) type. So we must change **now** to **noe**. **wreath** becomes **reath**, which is pronounceable, but is it sensible to leave the change from **ea** to **ee**, and have to disturb the word a second time? In the case of **wrought** we drop both the **gh** and the **w**, and so we are left with **rou**, which for obvious reasons will have to be changed to **raut**.

It is clear that a complete plan to cover all eventualities has to be drawn up, even if only limited changes are contemplated. This is what New Spelling sets out to do.

All the choices we can make present difficulties. If we introduce a total reform, the revised spelling looks too different, too shocking almost. If we have two or three major reforms at lengthy intervals, then we have two or three major upheavals, and if we have fairly frequent small scale changes, we risk general confusion.

We must not let ourselves be daunted by this, but it is clear that the implementation alone of spelling reform requires the most detailed study, and this will be our task in a subsequent pamphlet.

Appendix.

1. The short story 'The Star' by H.G Wells, was issued in New Spelling with the author's permission in 1942. Here is a short extract, slightly altered to conform with the changes we have made in New Spelling.

<p>The Star. It woz on the ferst dae ov the nue yeer that the anounsment woz maed, aulmoest simultaeneusli from three obzervatoris, that the moeshen ov the planet Neptune, the outermost ov aul the planets that w(h)eel about the sun had bekum veri eratik. A retardaeshen in its velositi had been suspekted in Desember. Then a faent, remoet spek ov lyt woz diskuverd in the reejen ov the perterbd planet. At ferst this did not kauz eni veri graet eksytment. Syentifik peep, houeever, found the intelijens remarkabl enuf, eeven befor it bekaem noen that the nue bodi woz rapidli groeing larjer and bryter, and that its moeshen woz kwyt diferent from the orderli progres ov the planets ...</p>	<p>The Star. It woz on the first day ov the new year that the anounsment woz made, almost simultaneously from three obzervatoris, that the moshen of the planet Neptune, the outermost ov all the planets that w(h)eel about the sun had becum veri eratic. A retardashon in its velosity had been suspected in Desember. Then a faint, remote spec ov lite woz discoverd in the rejon ov the peturbd planet. At first this did not cauz eni very graet ecsitement. Sientifik peopl, however, found the intelijens remarcabl enuf, even befor it became *none that the new body woz rapidly growing larjer and briter, and that its moshen woz cwite diferent from the orderly progres ov the planets ...</p>	<p>The Star. It wos on the ferst dae of the nue yeer that the anouncement wos maed, aulmoest simultaeneusli from three observatoris, that the moetion of the planet Neptune, the outermost of aul the planets that wheel about the sun had becum veri eratic. A retardaetion in its velociti had been suspected in Desember. Then a faent, remoet speck of liet wos discoverd in the reegion of the perturbd planet. At ferst this did not cause eni veri graet ecsytment. Syentifik peep, however, found the inteligence remarkabl enuf, eeven befor it becaem noen that the nue bodi wos rapidli groeing larger and bryter, and that its moetion wos quyt diferent from the orderli progres of the planets ...</p>
<p>On the therd dae ov the nue yeer the nuesaepaper reeders ov too hemisfeers wer maed awaer for the ferst tym ov the real importens ov this unuzhueal aparishen in the hevens. "A Planetari Kolizhen" wun London paeper heded the nues, and proklaemd that this straenj planet wood probabli kolyd with Neptune. The leeder-ryters enlarjd upon the topik. So that in moest ov the</p>	<p>On the third day ov the new year the newwpaper readers ov two hemisferes wer made aware for the first time ov the real importans ov this unuzhual aparishon in the hevens. "A Planetari Kolizhen" wun London paper heded the news, and proclaemd that this stranje planet wood probably colide with Neptune. The leader-riters enlarjd upon the topik. So that in most ov the capitals ov the world, on January</p>	<p>On the therd dae of the nue yeer the nuesaepaper reeders ov too hemisfeers wer maed awaer for the ferst tym ov the real importance of this unuesueal aparition in the hevens. "A Planetari Colision" wun London paeper heded the nues, and proclaemd that this straenge planet wood probabli colyd with Neptune. The leederyters enlarged upon the topic. So that in moest of the capitals of the world, on Janueari 3rd, thaer wos an</p>

<p>kapitals ov the werld, on Januerei 3rd, thaer woz an ekspektaeshen, houever vaeg, ov sum iminent fenomenon in the sky; and az the nyt foloed the sunset round the gloeb, thouzends ov men ternd thaer ys skywerd to see - the oeld familier stars just az thae had aulwaez been.</p>	<p>3rd, there woz an ecspectashon, houever vague, ov sum iminent fenomenon in the scy; and az the nite folowd the sunset round the gloeb, thouzends ov men turnd their eyes scyward to see - the old familier stars just az they had alwayz been.</p>	<p>expectaetion, houever vaeg, of sum iminent fenomenon in the sky; and as the niet foloed the sunset round the gloeb, thousands of men ternd thaer ys skyward to see - the oeld familier stars just as thae had aulwaez been.</p>
<p>Until it woz daun in London and the stars oeverhed had groen pael. The winter's daun it woz, a sikli, filtering akuemuelaeshen ov daelyt, and the lyt ov gas and kandls shon yeloe in the windoes to shoe w(h)aer peepl wer astur. But the yauning poleesman sau the thing, the bizi krouds in the markets stopt agaep, werkmn goeing to thaer werk betymz, milkmen, Disipaeshen goeing hoem jaeded and pael, hoemles wonderers, and in the kuntri laeberers trujing afeeld, poechers slinking hoem, and oever the duski kwikening kuntri it kood be seen - and out at see by seemen woching for the dae - a graet w(h)yt star, kum sudenli in the westwerd sky!</p>	<p>Until it woz dawn in London and the stars overhed had grown pale. The winter's dawn it woz, a sicly, filtering acumulashon ov daylite, and the lite ov gas and kandls shon yelow in the windows to show w(h)ere peepl wer astir. But the yawning polisman saw the thing, the bizi crowds in the marcets stopt agape, wercmn going to their werc betimez, milcmn, Disipashon going home jaeded and pale, homeles wonderers, and in the cuntry labourers trujing afield, poachers slincing home, and over the duscy cwicening cuntry it cood be seen - and out at see by seamen woching for the day - a graet w(h)yt star, cum sudenly in the westward sky!</p>	<p>Until it wos daun in London and the stars oeverhed had groen pael. The winter's daun it wos, a sickli, filtering acuemuelaetion of daeliet, and the liet of gas and candls shon yeloe in the windoes to shoe whaer peepl wer astur. But the yauning poleesman sau the thing, the bisi crouds in the markets stopt agaep, werkmn goeing to thaer werk betyms, milkmen, Disipaetion goeing hoem jaeded and pael, hoemless wonderers, and in the cuntri laebourers trudging afeeld, poechers slinking hoem, and oever the duski quikening cuntri it cood be seen - and out at see by seemen woching for the dae - a graet whyt star, cum sudenli in the westward sky!</p>
<p>Bryter it woz than eni star in our skys; bryter than the eevning star at its brytest. It stil gloed out w(h)yt and larj, noe meer twinkling spot ov lyt, but a smaull, round, kleeer shyning disk, an our after the dae had kum. And w(h)aer syens haz not reecht, men staerd and feerd, teling wun anuther ov the wors and</p>	<p>Briter it woz than eny star in our scies; briter than the evening star at its britest. It stil glowd out w(h)ite and larj, no mere twinkling spot ov lite, but a small, round, clear shining disk, an our after the day had cum. And w(h)er siens haz not reecht, men stared and feerd, teling wun anuther ov the wars and pestilenses that</p>	<p>Bryter it wos than eni star in our skys; bryter than the eevning star at its brytest. It stil gloed out whyt and large, noe meer twinkling spot of lyt, but a small, round, cleer shyning disk, an our after the dae had cum. And whaer syence has not reecht, men staerd and feerd, teling wun anuther ov the wors and pestilences</p>

<p>pestilenses that ar forshadoed by theez fyri syns in the hevens.</p>	<p>ar forshadowd by theze fyri sines in the hevens.</p>	<p>that ar forshadoed by thees fyri syns in the hevens.</p>
<p>And in a hundred obzervatoris thaer had been suprest eksytment, ryzing aulmoest to shouting pich, az the too remoet bodis had rusht together, and a huriing to and froe, to gather foetografik aparaetus and spektroskoep, and this aplyens and that, to rekord this novl astonishing syt, the destrukshen ov a werld.</p>	<p>And in a hundred obzervatoris there had been suprest ecsitement, ryzing almost to shouting pich, az the two remote bodis had rusht together, and a huriing to and fro, to gather fotografic aparatus and spectroscope, and this aplians and that, to record this novel astonishing site, the destrucshon ov a world.</p>	<p>And in a hundred observatoris thaer had been suprest exytment, ryzing aulmoest to shouting pitch, as the too remoet bodies had rusht together, and a huriing to and froe, to gather foetografic aparaetus and spektroskoep, and this aplyans and that, to record this novel astonishing syt, the destruction ov a werld.</p>
<p>1. Analysis of k, s, y, in the above passage.</p> <p>32 examples of k substituted for c, and 12 examples of k unchanged.</p> <p>23 inflected s endings are phonetically z, and 4 are s. (Not all of these would be easy for people to determine.) There are no examples of ss forms. (Chap. 5. Section 3 on s.)</p> <p>26 examples of the long vowel y, and 21 examples of final i replacing the current ending y.</p>	<p>2. Over the years many suggestions have been made for partial reform, ranging from changes to small groups of words to quite substantial changes. But none of them have touched the long vowels, nor faced up to the mat - mate problem. In this version of the passage from Wells' story, we try to show the effects of a partial reform on these lines.</p> <p>a. We have carried out the complete reform of the consonants, with the one exception that we have used c instead of k.</p> <p>b. We have regularised all spellings of the 'short' vowels, cat, set, kit, cot, cut, and removed unnecessary final e's.</p> <p>c. We have NOT altered the long vowels, except where it was essential. e.g. nite for night, and there we have used the conventions of current spelling.</p> <p>d. We have NOT altered any of the obscure vowels.</p> <p>* current 'none' becomes 'nun'.</p>	<p>3. In this passage we seek to demonstrate the overwhelming importance of the vowels in spelling reform. We have made all the vowel changes except for those involving the obscure vowel.</p> <p>Our changes to the consonants are confined to ph, gh, (both numerically unimportant, although gh effects vowels), and the reduction of double consonants to single ones.</p> <p>An analysis of the commonest 1000 words (nearly half of them monosyllables), shows that the vowels in the fate, wipe, rope, and meet, in that order, involve by far the greatest number of changes. Of the short vowels, u as in cup, involves the most changes.</p>

New Spelling 90 in Brief.

a	fat, father	b	bib	Word signs the, be, he, she, me, we re- (always when prefix) so to -ful (always when suffix)
ae	maed	c	replaced by k, kat, or s, faes	
e	set	ch	cherch	
ee	feet	d	dog	
i	fit, piti	f	fat, foto	
y	by, byt	g	got	
o	lot hoe,	h	hat	
oe	roep	j	job, aej, brij	
u	but, muther, flud	k	kat, kik	
oo	good, moon	l	lip	
au	lau, taut	m	man	
ou	out, hou	n	nod	
oi	oil, boy	ng	singer, finger	
er	merjer, tern,	p	pot	
or	(inkur) stori	qu	kwik	
obscure	vowel see text.	r	run	
		s	see	
		sh	shiver, naeshun, preshus	
		t	top	
		th	thin, then	
		v	vat	
		w	wil, kwaent	
		wh	wich or which	
		x	fiks, ekspekt, eksampl	
		y	yung, yoo	
		z	zip, vizit	
		zh	vizhen	