

Spelling Reform Anthology edited by Newell W. Tune

§20. Why there has been failure to adopt a reform.

Exploring the possible reasons for failure to obtain more success in the serious consideration and adoption of some form of a simplified spelling of English.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §6.4 pp92,93 in the printed version]

[also Spelling Reform Anthology §20.1 pp265,266 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1970 p5,18 in the printed version]

1. The Real Problem of Spelling Reform, by Newell W. Tune

Probably every teacher knows that numerous attempts have been made to reform English spelling and make it more consistent and regular. Hence, it is not surprising that the latest attempt* should be viewed with scepticism and apathy by many. But just because all previous attempts failed is no reason why the latest attempt should also fail. "It is always darkest just before the dawn of a new day."

*Congressman Bob Mathias of Bakersfield introduced a Bill, at the request of Homer W. Wood, Publisher of the Porterville Evening Recorder, to establish a National Spelling Commission, with the power to select a system of simplified spelling and to publish a dictionary in the new spelling.

Most previous attempts at spelling reform (and bills in Congress to do this) failed because some particular system of reformed spelling was proposed to be adopted. After looking at the kind of reformed spelling that was proposed, Congressmen were usually reluctant to accept such radical proposals. Such skeletons should be kept in the closet where they will scare no-one. The present attempt wisely avoids this pitfall.

Most of these attempts were made nearly a century ago when the attitude of the public seemed to be "What was good enuf for my grandfather, is good enuf for me. However, that is certainly not the attitude of the public today. All around us we see the public has changed their point of view. They are ready and willing to accept any change that will be beneficial. Notice the complete change in our supermarkets since before the war. Self-service stores quickly supplanted the old type of inefficient stores. Frozen foods, prepackaged meats, cellophane wrappings and preformed plastic packages were readily accepted because of their obvious advantages. Television and drive-in theaters have changed out living habits. The new homes are vastly changed, both inside and out,

from prewar homes.

So let us go back to the question as to whether the public would accept a reformed spelling. In a questionnaire sent out to 800 educators, those answering (140) were in favor of some kind of reformed spelling by a ratio of 95% to 5% who were opposed to any reformation. Strangely enuf, all of those who opposed spelling reform were either teaching in the conservative New England states or were educated there. All of these opponents expressed some fears - fears of the amount or extent of the reform, of the difficulty to put the changes into use, of the amount of re-education needed to use the new spelling, and of the disruption of a secretary's spelling habits. None of them considered that simplified spelling was necessary because they themselves had little or no trouble in learning to spell (eventually). Nor did any of them think that it took them too long to learn our erratic spelling. (Time is of no importance in a child's life.)

It is also true that many educators did not return the questionnaires possibly because of apathy to the subject or because they felt it was an impossible task to convince congressmen of the need for and advantages of a simplified spelling. Before congressmen can be convinced of this need, the educators themselves must be convinced:

1. that a simplified spelling in general use would greatly simplify their task of teaching reading and spelling;
2. that it would greatly shorten the time needed to teach reading;
3. that it would greatly improve the quality of reading of our pupils;
4. that there *is* a need to improve this quality of reading and spelling of our pupils;
5. that there is some correlation between pupils misbehavior and difficulty in learning to read and spell; which frequently leads to frustration, dropouts from school, and delinquency;
6. That our present spelling is not sacred thing that is unchangeable.

The big question then, is how to get the public and the teachers to understand all these things.

And then, to do something about it.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §20.2 pp265,266 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1978 pp9,10 in the printed version]

2. 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.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §20.3pp 267-274 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1972 pp6-13 in the printed version]

3. Factors which have hitherto led to Failure of Attempts to Reform English Spelling, by William J. Reed*

*The author has had 47 years of experience of teaching, including 25 years as Headmaster of a primary school. He is now engaged in remedial teaching for Kent Education Committee.

* He is author of *Spelling Reform and Our Schools*, 1959 with 2nd edition in 1960.

In *Testimony of Scholarship* [\[1\]](#) I have examined the works of Skeat, Trench, Craigie, Bradley, H. W. Fowler, W. I. Lee, Mont Follick, H. L. Menken, and others. In those passages where any of them has criticized, or is reputed to have criticized spelling reform, his actual words have been quoted and then examined in detail. Trench's attacks on reform and those reformers whom he called 'the phoneticians' are assessed. Menken's remarks concerning reform and reformers are exposed for the worthless jibes that most of them were.

Trench was the first real scholar who attempted to argue against spelling reform. Writing early in 1854, in lectures which later were assembled into a book, "*English Past and Present*," he clearly indicated his dislike of phonetic spelling and of 'the phoneticians.' Such arguments as he was able to bring in support of his case were effectively answered many times and particularly by three very eminent philologists. These were Sir James Murray, Prof. Max Muller (successively, Professor of Modern European Languages at Oxford, Fellow of All Souls, First Professor of Comparative Philology and, in 1896, a Privy Councillor), and Prof. Walter Skeat. Trench seems never to have rejoined the battle and doubtless lived to regret his attacks on 'the phoneticians.'

Henry Bradley and Sir William Craigie saw quite clearly that our inconsistent spelling conventions are a formidable obstacles to those who are trying to learn our language - particularly children and people whose native language is not English. They did not however, work for reform as many other great scholars did, tho Bradley spent many years on the periphery of the reform movement. Craigie explained in great detail how the existing anomalies and inconsistencies happened: see especially his *English Spelling - its Rules and Reasons*, Harrop, 1928. He explains clearly how these faults arose. Nowhere in it does he say anything that could be regarded as an argument against spelling reform. But in S.P.E. Tract LXIII, *Problems of Spelling Reform*, Clarendon Press, 1944, pp. 29, he presented a long line of obstacles to spelling reform, some hypothetical, some real, some fancied and opinionated. The committee of the Society for Pure English at that time consisted of the following persons whose names are listed on the inside of the front cover: Mrs. (Lloyd) Bridges, Kenneth Clark, W.A. Craigie, Kenneth Sisam, L. Pearsall Smith.

In order to show how Craigie's mind was working, we present a number of quotations from this pamphlet and my comments. The public should know that his income and reputation depended on his work as chief editor of a dictionary (N.E.D.); one of his chief aims was to discredit (and so to prevent) any reform of spelling which would make his huge dictionary out of date and perhaps put him out of a job. Some of his silly remarks cannot be explained in any other way. Craigie was a good dictionary maker, but on spelling reform he was out of his knowledgeable field, as you will soon see.

Quotation: On the first page which is numbered page 47, we read that advocates of new spelling have "failed to produce any effect on the general body of writers and readers. These, for the most

part, have remained completely ignorant of the proposals, or, if acquainted with them, have regarded them with indifference or decided dislike."

Comment: It is not an argument against spelling reform to say that those "who have remained completely ignorant of the proposals" were not in favour of them. How could they be in favour of something they did not know about? To say those "acquainted with them have regarded them (the reform proposals) with indifference or decided dislike" is doubtless true of some people but is certainly not true of many other people, including most of those who were well qualified to judge.

Q: Line 28 of the same page -"The failure of so many attempts" (to reform spelling), "which in itself is a clear indication that there is no general desire for change, is due to minimizing, or rather ignoring, the practical and other difficulties which have to be reckoned with and would have to be overcome before any important change could be effected. A clear statement of these will serve to show that the problems are neither few nor easy to solve."

C: There can, of course, be "no general desire for a change" until people will have received at school, university or elsewhere considerable education in the theory and practice of spelling and until they will have become acquainted with the arguments for and against reform. People cannot very well make a useful decision if their knowledge of spelling has never progressed beyond the infant school stage in which they were *conditioned to accept: once, who, said, two*, etc.

It is difficult to understand why Craigie should say that spelling reform failures have been "due to minimizing or ignoring the practical and other difficulties." Spelling reformers are acutely conscious of the difficulties, especially those which Craigie himself mentions including the fact that most people are "completely ignorant of the reform proposals or regard them with indifference or dislike" Of all people in the world, spelling reformers are the least likely either to minimize or ignore the practical or other difficulties. The greatest of all difficulties is the fact that people are conditioned from infancy to accept what is euphemistically known as 'traditional orthography' and to regard all departures from it as 'mistakes' and therefore objectionable. This prejudice can become almost invincible after about fifteen years at some schools and colleges.

Q: On page 48, Craigie asks by what steps reformed spelling could be introduced. He says that the changes "must be introduced at the some time and to the some extent in all the English speaking countries and wherever English is written or printed. Otherwise, the resulting confusion would be worse than the present irregularities. It is difficult to see by what machinery this universal consent could be secured, and by what authority the result could be imposed on the printer, the publisher, and the reading public in the event of these disapproving of the change."

C: Craigie here wisely warns us that confusion could be increased if some people were spelling in one way and other people were spelling in another way. Hundreds of millions of people use the English language and they all have to be considered. The dangers, however, are much less now than they would have been even 25 years ago, when this passage was written. Central governments are stronger, communications more rapid and, above all, publicity is more effective. Driving on the right, instead of as formerly on the left, was brought about in Denmark without any difficulty and without any subsequent confusion: now, there is general satisfaction with the reform. Radio, television, newspaper and other publicity are able to make people accept changes much more rapidly than formerly. In Britain, decimal money has been introduced and the old money has been superseded (15-2-1971) al- most without any difficulty at all. [2] Craigie says that it is difficult to see by what machinery this universal consent (to change) could be secured and by what authority it could be imposed. It was likewise difficult to see by what machinery and by what authority all banks, shops, offices, schools, and the general public would stop using the coins (£. s.

d.) that they have long been used to and would start using a new and different coinage. What can be done to driving habits in Denmark and to arithmetical habits in Britain can almost certainly be done to our spelling habits.

Q: On page 49, lines 11 seq. is found a very important passage: "Some 70 years ago" (that would be c. 1874) "a number of distinguished scholars and men of note expressed their unanimous opinion that a reform of spelling was both desirable and necessary. Their views were fully recorded and published, and form an imposing body of testimony; but everybody continued to spell as before."

C: How many people have ever seen this "imposing body of testimony"? Was it taught in schools or in colleges? How could people get to know about it? And if they did not know about it, how could they possibly be influenced by it? Was there any newspaper or other publicity campaign about it? Or were these facts hushed up? No wonder "everyone continued to spell as before." [\[3\]](#)

Q: Page 49, line 16 seq. "in 1908, the Simplified Spelling Society was founded and is still in existence." (i.e. in 1944) "Among its founders and members it has included not a few well-known scholars and men of letters."

C: Lists of the Society's officers and committee members, as printed on the inside covers of pamphlets, were, and still are, most impressive. The greatest scholars have been devoted spelling reformers: not one great scholar has even attempted to make a case against spelling reform, though Dean Trench did attack "the phonographers" rather bitterly during talks he gave to the students of Winchester Diocesan Training College. Trench was soon answered by the greatest philologists of the time, including Max Muller, Walter Skeat and Sir James Murray.

Q: Page 49 continued. After saying that the founders and members of the Society included "not a few well-known scholars and men of letters" the passage continues, "but if its influence has been felt outside its membership, it has not been sufficiently strong to produce any change in the habits of writers and printers in the matter of spelling. This lack of effect is significant: if so little has been accomplished in the course of a century, it is evident that a much more active, wide-spread and continuous agitation would be necessary to convince the English-speaking world of the necessity of reform and to reconcile it to the particular form to be given to this."

C: Craigie designates as "agitation" those attempts by great scholars and others to educate the general public in the matter of writing their native language. We must hope that no offense was intended. Let the word stay as it is. It should be recalled that an "active, wide-spread and continuous agitation" was necessary before slavery could be abolished, and before steps could be taken to prevent little boys from being burnt or suffocated in narrow chimneys and to prevent helpless little orphans from being transported to work long hours in unhealthy and dangerous factories. It may be that this sort of "agitation" is necessary before any important reform can be brought about. In that case, we must agree that "a much more active, wide-spread and continuous agitation" will be necessary, and should be undertaken, in order to bring about the reform of English spelling.

When Craigie says that English spelling should not be made phonetic "regardless of consequences," no scholar surely is likely to suggest changing anything "regardless of consequences."

Q. The passage continues ... "English does not stand alone in this respect; there would be equal difficulty in applying a phonetic spelling to French, or Gaelic, or Greek: in such a form, they

certainly would not be easier to read than they are now."

C: It would have been more accurate if Craigie had said, "With phonetic spelling, they would not be easier to read (*by those who have been long familiar with the unphonetic spelling*) than they are now." They would, however, be easier for those, children or adults, who were *learning* these languages. When we are considering English spelling reform, this is a very important point.

Q: Page 51, line 12 seq. carries a well-known passage which is often quoted, "No ordinary person in reading to himself is consciously translating the written or printed symbols into their equivalent sounds: the letters which he sees convey to his mind the word and its meaning without any such analysis."

C: It is certainly unwise to be so dogmatic concerning the psychology and physiology of perception. What Sir William says about the process of interpreting letters shows his ignorance of the perceptual reading process. Words in a sentence must be sounded (orally or silently) before the meaning is conveyed. However, an experienced driver can interpret road signs without any of the conscious thought and concentration which would be necessary in the case of a learner.

Q: Page 52, line 6, we read the following, "At the early age at which the teaching of reading normally begins, the child does not so readily associate letters and sounds as might be supposed." [\[4\]](#)

C: Slowness in associating letters and sounds may be due, in some part, to the early age at which reading instruction begins but it is due much more to the way most school books allow the same letter to indicate many different sounds in different words (the letter *a* can represent any one of nine sounds) and allow the same sound to be spelt in many different ways (*rush*, *special*, *station*, *mission*, etc.)

Q: The passage continues, "and beyond words of one syllable, (the child) is likely to have difficulty both in pronouncing the word (unless it is already very familiar with it) and in reproducing the spelling whether this is phonetic or not."

C: Pronouncing words and spelling words would both be made easier by a spelling which is phonetically consistent. With a reliable, consistent orthography, a child, or other learner, would be able very quickly to read any word he hears spoken. Most of the difficulties which children experience at school with reading and writing are quite unnecessary and could have been abolished long ago, if the Government had shown the same initiative in dealing with word symbols as it has recently shown in dealing with symbols of money, weights and measures.

Q: As Henry Bradley wrote in *Spoken and Written English*, page 8, line 34 seq., "The educated Englishman of the 16th century may have found that certain English words gained in expressive force by a spelling that brought them into visible association with their real or supposed originals in the learned languages with which they were so much at home. Although, however, we may admit that the pedantic spellings of the 16th century once served a useful purpose, it does not follow that we ought to perpetuate them now that the conditions which gave them their value no longer exist." On the next page, line 38, he says, "It is certainly absurd that we should go on writing 'victual' when we pronounce 'vitl'."

C: It is often said that there is an "etymological argument" against spelling reform. The evidence of all those who know most about etymology suggests that no such valid argument exists.

Q: On page 56, 4th paragraph, "The problem therefore is to find a form which would be recognized as an improvement without presenting too glaring a contrast to the standard which has remained practically unchanged for nearly three centuries, has many advantages to set against its defects, and has not been found really difficult to acquire and use correctly by those who have grown up with it."

C: This is fair enough, except, perhaps for the last clause. Most of us learned to read and write such a long time ago that we cannot recall how difficult these processes were to acquire. They almost certainly required much time and energy that could, perhaps, have been better spent on other things. Moreover, we must give some thought to all those millions who have not "grown up with it." They might be spared the necessity, and the incidental frustration of "growing up with it."

Q. The book ends with what seems to be an apology for our present spelling, "When all is said against it that can be said, it is well to bear in mind that it has now stood the test of three centuries and in spite of all its alleged defects has not prevented English from attaining the world wide position it now holds."

C: To say that it has now stood the test of three centuries means presumably that our spelling has lasted 300 years without radical change. This is true. Our system of coinage has lasted even longer, but, because it has been found to have unsatisfactory features, it was reformed in 1971. Many other systems, which have lasted for hundreds of years, have been found unsuited to modern needs and have been changed, and so improved. Spelling similarly needs to be improved. When Craigie writes of "all its alleged defects," he makes no attempt to refute the allegations or to deny that they really are defects.

He does not anywhere attempt to argue against spelling reform. He says that it would alter the familiar appearance of words, which statement is obviously true, and that it would encounter much opposition (his opinion).

Q: In the 3rd paragraph, page 75, Craigie gives two necessities for spelling reform. It will be necessary "to devise a new spelling which will be so clearly preferable to the old as to overcome all opposition to it, and not least such opposition as is based upon habit, prejudice or mere unwillingness to change." It would be necessary also "to put this forward in such a way that its general acceptance throughout the English speaking world would be practically assured from the outset."

C: The first of these two necessities presents little difficulty. The other one would require action by the central government, such as has been forthcoming in all those countries which have adopted reformed spelling during the present century. Granted these two conditions, it seems that Craigie would have no objection to spelling reform. At least, he has put forward no case against such reform. He would certainly be in favour of "the principle of least disturbance" as so many spelling reformers now are. It is necessary, or at least advisable, to make concessions to current usage. He proceeds:

Q: "There would be better chance of some success if the aim were less ambitious. Gradual changes in certain words, or types of words, such as have been made in the past, might well be introduced by writers and printers, which in time would become so familiar that the older forms would take their place with those already discarded, such as horrou, terrour, musick, physick, deposite, as well as fossile, chymical and chymist. Such changes, however, could only be of a limited character, and would still leave the essentials of English spelling intact."

C: This last is the penultimate sentence of the pamphlet. The only other sentence is the one which says that all the alleged defects of its spelling have not prevented the English language from being adopted in many parts of the world. [5]

Regarding a "less ambitious aim," it is important to note that a very large number of reformers favour a partial reform as opposed to a thorough-going reform. If the reform is to be implemented by government action, as in the case of the Turkish alphabet reforms, popular objection is not likely to constitute a formidable obstacle, especially as in this case Ataturk was not a constitutional ruler and Turkey was not governed as a democracy. But in Western democracies, such as our own, popular resentment is something which has to be avoided as far as possible.

When Craigie speaks of "leaving the essentials of English spelling intact" he presumably means that many words would still look very much the same as before - that we should have what is often called a "minimal change reform." It would, however, be possible to assume that the essentials of English spelling, as indeed of all spelling, are that the same letters should always stand for the same sounds. One reason why this is not true today is that changes in spelling have not been able to keep pace with the much more rapid changes in pronunciation. Mechanical printing and, above all, the large stocks of infant school readers and other school textbooks have tended to prevent what may be called spelling changes from catching up with changes in pronunciation. Another reason is because words are imported from foreign languages unchanged in spelling although such spelling systems are often in conflict with the phonetics of English spelling.

Changes "might well be introduced by writers and printers" and these would, in time, become so familiar that the older forms would be discarded as Craigie suggests. The flood of printed matter in the older forms is making it increasingly difficult for them to be discarded in favour of consistent and more scholarly forms. Craigie might have joined the reformers in trying to popularise new and better forms but he chose not to do so.

This study of Sir William Craigie's 1944 pamphlet shows that the author did not advance any important arguments against spelling reform. Passages in which he may seem to have been arguing against reform have been quoted verbatim and appropriate commentaries added.

Craigie may not have looked forward with much satisfaction to the use of spellings which would be markedly different from those he had long been dealing with for the *New English Dictionary*, but he saw the disadvantages of the current spelling conventions and the educational obstacles presented by them. He noted how some former spellings had been reformed. He noted that many other spellings are now unsatisfactory and that they could be reformed with advantage to all who have to learn and use the English language.

The most eminent scholars in Britain and America have generally been in favour of spelling reform. There seems to be only one noteworthy exception: Richard Grant White in *Everyday English*, 1880, pp 512, (a sequel to *Words & Their Uses*, 1871). Here is his summary of 21 objections to spelling reform, in Chp. XVI, with my comments.

(1) "Language is speech, of which writing is not the representation, but the suggestion." Suggestions would be much more useful if they were consistent. The all-important objection to our present spelling is that it is inconsistent.

(2) "Spelling has nothing to do with speech." This is untrue. "Spoken words are not formed by a combination of distinct sounds." This is also untrue.

- (3) "A certain non-conformity of speech and writing is inevitable." Of course, unless we use a system of phonetic transcription.
- (4) "Difficulty of learning to spell has been much exaggerated." Untrue.
- (5) "The economical disadvantages of the received English spelling have also been monstrously exaggerated." Untrue, but spelling reform is much more concerned with education than with economics.
- (6) "The economical disadvantages of a phonetic change in English spelling would be . . . calamitous." Untrue, except during a short transition period when printers, typists, etc. were adjusting their habitual actions and thinking.
- (7) "Phonetic spelling involves changes in written language from time to time." Agreed; but with phonetically consistent spelling, changes in pronunciation would be less likely and less rapid.
- (8) "The introduction of phonetic spelling would make the written English of the past a dead letter . . . except in transliteration." Many people would prefer to read this in transliteration, as many of them now read Chaucer, Caxton, and Shakespeare. Changes in spelling do not affect the significance of any work when it is considered as literature.
- (9) "Phonetic spelling involves an entire change in the structure of written English." There would be changes in spelling (improvements) but most people would not define these as involving a change in the *structure* of written English.
- (10) "The function of science as to language is not to improve it but to study it historically, comparatively, and analytically." Scientific study, in any field, is a waste of time unless it leads to improvement.
- (11) "Philologists are incompetent, and out of place as reformers of written language." Untrue. Philologists study language and spelling. They do not presume to know everything, but they are likely to know more about these matters than other people.
- (12) "The question as to spelling is chiefly one of practical convenience - today." Every spelling reformer would agree wholeheartedly with this statement.
- (13) "Printing did not introduce confusion to the written language." Agreed. "it was the means of an approximation to a systematic and uniform orthography." Agreed; but now we could make our orthography more *systematic* and more uniform.
- (14) "Modern English orthography is not the result of a blundering compromise between sound and written form." It certainly is a compromise. Most of us would prefer to call it an unsatisfactory compromise rather than a blundering one.
- (15) "Johnson's dictionary . . . merely recorded a spelling which had been established for fifty years. Approximately true.
- (16) "Etymology . . . is interesting, valuable and to a certain degree instructive." True.
- (17) "Phonetic spelling reform is no new movement." Agreed. "Notwithstanding the learning, the ingenuity, and the labour of its advocates, it has always failed." The really important question is,

"Why has it failed?" Answers have been suggested in certain articles, including mine.

(18) "The sounds to be expressed by phonetic writing are quite indeterminable." Untrue.

(19) "Letters once silent have in numerous and various instances . . . been restored to sound. This might be done again, and should not be hindered." This would mean changing the pronunciation of many common, familiar words back to that of 500 years ago - an impossible feat.

(20) "The ablest, most learned, and most experienced of spelling reformers confesses . . . that the more he endeavours after a phonetic spelling, the greater the difficulties he finds in the way." One man's failure helps another man's success. All these difficulties are surmountable, and have been overcome by researchers since the time of this most learned, and most experienced reformer.

(21) "Any attempt to introduce phonetic spelling into literature *on an extended* scale would result only in anarchy, confusion, and disaster, which would be *temporary*, indeed, but grave and deplorable." Reference to "an extended scale" introduces the conception of "How much?" and by so doing, seems to concede the 'point that spelling should be somewhat more consistently phonetic than it now is. This is what spelling reformers have been saying.

In this summary, it is apparent that a prejudice against any change governs and beclouds all his thinking.

White does not give any valid arguments which might weaken the case for spelling reform, or explain the delay.

Since most eminent scholars have been in favour of a reform of our spelling, it is important to ask the question, "Why then has there been so little change since Noah Webster's time?"

Conditions seemed to be favourable to reform in America when President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 gave an order to the Government Printer that State documents should hereafter be printed with the 300 reformed spellings recommended by the Simplified Spelling Board, and being used by many universities and newspapers. But Congress balked at the President's assumption of their prerogative and censured him, forcing him to withdraw the order.

Conditions seemed favourable in Britain between about 1924 and 1935 when university professors and many subordinate staffs were almost unanimous about the need for spelling reform. During this period, several notable petitions were drawn up and presented to successive governments, - those for instance of 1924 and 1935. The reform movement, however, was not supported by the general public and so did not achieve any success.

All young children are psychologically conditioned to accept the spelling conventions of Queen Anne's time and the effects of this conditioning last a long time; they frequently last throughout a person's lifetime. Children brought up in this way are not likely to demand anything better when they grow up.

For the general public to adopt a reasonable attitude to spelling reform, it is necessary that spelling should be taught reasonably to people when they are young. What happens in the infant school and in the nursery is the crux of the whole matter. Bad spelling habits formed in early childhood are difficult to change later on.

Indoctrination and Public Apathy

Attempts to implement spelling reform have been made by a large number of individual scholars

and also, since about the middle of the last century, by several societies.

No reform, however, can get started in the face of public apathy, and it is probably public apathy which has defeated all attempts at spelling reform. This apathy about spelling is due principally to the fact that children normally pass thru the successive stages of schooling without ever being told some of the basic facts about spelling. These basic facts are particularly the fact that printing and writing are symbolic representations of the language we speak, and the fact that letter symbols, like all other symbols, lose much of their effectiveness if they are not used consistently. In the spelling which children have to use at present, letters are used most inconsistently and therefore are used less effectively than they should be.

At a very impressionable age, children are conditioned to accept such irrational spellings as: *once, who, two, few, shoe, blue, said, where* - but *here, now* - but *know* (as if the addition of a silent letter could change the pronunciation of a set of letters to the sound of a different word) and forced to adopt an acceptance attitude of spelling generally. [6] As a result of this misguided teaching, many people are unable later on to think rationally about spelling or to consider the matter of reform without prejudice. It is not surprising that many people reject invitations to consider the arguments in favour of reform. The really surprising thing is that there are any at all who are able to see the faults in our present spelling and are not blind to the benefits that could be expected to result from reform.

It would be wrong to blame teachers for this state of affairs. So far as the essentials are concerned - and spelling is the most important essential of all - teachers have to teach what the authorities expect them to teach. For a hundred years or more, some of the most enlightened teachers have been advocating the use of a decimal currency and further metrification. Nothing however could be done to implement these reforms until recently when a government initiative is bringing them into effect. Similarly, some of the most enlightened teachers (in the universities and the schools) have long been in favour of more rational spelling, but no reforms could be implemented without some initiative by the central authority. *No improvement in our spelling will ever be brought about while the government pretends to be satisfied with what is clearly an unsatisfactory state of affairs*, and refuses even to consider the overwhelming case in favour of reform.

We all grow up in an educational climate which tends to make us think that whatever is now generally accepted as customary must necessarily be right. Tradition and habit are such powerful influences that young children - and even older children - have little chance to raise any effective protest against the conventional spelling that most adults use and which they seem determined to make children use also. A child's protests can be effectively overruled. When one child wrote the letters: *s e d*, the teacher complained, "That does not spell 'said'," whereupon the child respectfully asked, "Well, sir, what does it spell?" But a lamb might just as well try to argue with a wolf.

Tradition is one of the means by which the human race preserves its equanimity- one might almost say, its sanity. It would be too much if every human problem had to be solved from first principles.

Traditional customs can, however, become oppressive and be the cause of much suffering, as was the case in some parts of India with suttee and thuggee. The force of custom is so strong that these oppressive and cruel practices could not be ended except on the initiative of a foreign power. In English speaking countries, the force of spelling custom is very strong indeed; it may be that our schools are unable, without some outside initiative, to escape from the adverse influences of the presently accepted old spelling, which dates from about 1690. In the previous sentence, 'outside initiative' does not mean something foreign, but something outside the normal school organization. Just as decimal currency and further metrification is being accepted in the schools on the initiative

of industry and commerce, so spelling reform may be accepted for similar reasons. The latter, no less than the former, would have to follow action by the central government.

Meanwhile, the conditioning process continues and the effect of this is not short lived. On the contrary, the ill effects last for such a long time that when people do recover - those who are fortunate enough, or strong minded enough to do so - they are often fairly advanced in years. Most of the spelling reformers I have known have reached an age at which, normally, they would be living quietly in retirement. Several of them have said that they spent their childhood being taught Old Spelling, spent much of their adult life teaching it, and did not realise the disadvantages of it until they were approaching an age when time and energy were hardly enough to enable them to work effectively for reform.

It is interesting in this context to mention just two reformers of the fairly recent past. Sir George Hunter was an octogenarian when he made his greatest efforts for the Simplified Spelling Society. If he could have started earlier, he would almost certainly have achieved much more, even in the face of opposition such as he had to contend with. opposition from such influential persons as Charles Trevelyan, Eustace Percy and Lord Irwin, who were successively presidents of the Board of Education and who were obstinately opposed to any consideration of the facts about spelling reform. At his advanced age, he could hardly be expected to continue fighting indefinitely against such odds.

So the conditioning which most of us undergo in early childhood has an inhibiting influence during most of our lives - certainly during what should be the best years of our working lives.

Prof. Walter Skeat was 73 years of age when he founded the Simplified Spelling Society in Sept. 1908 though, nearly 30 years earlier, in 1879, he had been a vice-president of the Spelling Reform Association and had long been pointing out the unscholarly nature of many conventional spellings.

The Hon. Robert L. Owen, a former Senator from Oklahoma (1907-1925) was 85 years old when, as H. L. Mencken records, "he set up as a spelling reformer." [7] Owen was born in 1856 and died in 1947. If he had started his reform activities at 35 or 45 instead of at 85, he would have achieved more. At any rate, that would be a reasonable assumption.

People usually start to work for spelling reform late in life and this is one of the reasons why their efforts have not been successful in achieving any significant measure of reform. Their lateness in starting to work for reform can easily be explained. In any human society there are strong forces which support and try to maintain the status quo. Teachers and lecturers, for example, find themselves almost inextricably involved with conventional spelling so that any work for reform is just about impossible until they retire. Throughout their working lives, they have to read the spelling of Queen Anne's time, write it, teach it, and diligently 'correct' all departures from it. The main stream of pedagogical practice is strongly running with this spelling of c. 1700 and it is not easy to struggle against the stream.

In examining human behaviour, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of habit. The spelling habits which we are compelled to form in childhood are difficult to change. The conditioning process, which has been noted above, underlies and explains almost everything that has prevented changes in the spelling we learnt as children. Those who resist reform are not necessarily wicked or specially stupid. They are victims of the system. It is not helpful to talk of their conspiracy, or their machinations against children. The truth is that they still believe what they were taught in early childhood and that they cannot change the spelling habits they formed then. When compulsory schooling was introduced, in Britain about 100 years ago, the authorities' first

priority *should have been* to find and introduce a sensible (that is consistent) way of representing our native language in printed symbols. The education authorities did not have the foresight to do this. They should have spent some time and money on finding a satisfactory *medium* for writing, printing and reading the language. Instead, they have preferred to spend large sums on *methods* of trying to mitigate the harmful effects of using an unsatisfactory medium. The currently used medium is so unsatisfactory that it has, according to Dr. Godfrey Dewey's calculations, 561 different symbols by which our 41 speech sounds may be represented. This is a formidable obstacle to the fundamental educational processes. All the arguments about *methods* of teaching literacy (look and say, whole word sentence method, and similar other inane descriptions) are to a large extent useless and meaningless until something can be decided about improving the *medium*. The authorities however are very slow to give their minds to this most important of all educational problems. Meanwhile, the children and other learners suffer, and educational standards are lower than they should be, with little hope of improvement.

Lack of Publicity

Although spelling is the basis of all reading and writing, and therefore of all literacy, the matter is almost completely ignored by the great instruments of national publicity. Daily and Sunday newspapers never mention spelling unless it has some special topical interest, such as when '*Androcles*' was printed in "Bernard Shaw's new alphabet" and sent gratis to all libraries; or when Pitman's Augmented Teaching Alphabet began to make an impact on the teaching of conventional reading; or when certain well-informed members of the Simplified Spelling Society sent letters and articles to the educational press and were successful in getting them printed.

Generally speaking, however, the press is not interested. This is obviously because it thinks the public is not interested, but does not stop to enquire why the public is not interested in this very important matter.

Radio and Television do not mention spelling reform in the usual course of events. I have twice been invited to broadcast on sound radio and once, at peak viewing time, on television, but such trifles are not enough to cause more than a ripple on the vast sea of public indifference. The mass media can make people like or dislike things, believe or disbelieve opinions, but they have never done anything to encourage people to understand spelling, which is the basis of all writing and non-vocal communication.

School textbooks could do much to make children think seriously about spelling, but they do not even try. In this respect, things are worse now than they were 30 or 40 years ago. The same fault can be found with most books used at training colleges and in education departments of universities. Teaching staffs are in some measure to blame for this state of affairs, but certain printers and publishers are still more to blame for the lack of initiative. Printers and publishers were the people who fixed our spelling conventions during the latter part of the 17th century and some of their descendants seem to be determined to prevent any change in even the most outdated and inconvenient of these conventions. Spelling reform would bring them important advantages but the immediate disadvantages of change prevent them from seeing this. Most printers and publishers are indifferent to spelling reform and know little about it. Scholars may write books about spelling reform but these will have no influence at all unless publishers decide to print them. All credit is due to the few publishers in Britain and U.S.A. who are sympathetic to the movement, but generally speaking, educational publishers and other publishers tend to obstruct the course of possible reform.

Public libraries usually have few or no books on spelling reform. Few people have the knowledge and the will to write such books and get them published. Even when such books are published, it is

difficult to find reviewers who will review them and journalists who will discuss them. It often requires many thousands of pounds to launch a new book (or indeed, a new cigarette, a new pet food, a new drink, or a new washing powder) and spelling reformers do not usually have that sort of money. So it happens that even those who are willing and anxious to learn cannot find the books to satisfy their thirst for such knowledge. Ask librarians about spelling reform literature and they are unlikely to be able to help, however well disposed they may be to learning. Those who administer our libraries will not order books on spelling reform unless members of the public, in appreciable numbers, ask for these books. Members of the general public will not ask for such books until their interest is aroused by controversy over better methods of teaching spelling and reading at school. So the real villains of the piece are those who direct and decide what kinds of language teaching shall be given at schools and colleges, though it is possible to plead on their behalf that their policies are the outcome of deficiencies in their own education. Here is a sort of vicious circle.

Even encyclopaedia and other reference books afford little help. They are noticeably averse to mentioning reform. When an eminent scholar, who is or was a notable spelling reformer, is being dealt with, his efforts are glossed over or not mentioned at all. Of Prof. Walter Skeat, the Oxford Companion to English Literature (Clarendon, 1946) records this: "He did much to popularize philology and old authors and he also, in his later years, led the way in the systematic study of place names." There is no word about his prolonged work for spelling reform or of how he founded the Simplified Spelling Society.

Chambers' Biographical Dictionary (new edition, 1961) has 22 lines about Skeat but, again, there is not a word about spelling reform or the S.S.S. The Concise Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 1961) has ten lines about Skeat but, again, there is no mention of spelling reform or the Society. Encyclopedia Britannica (1962) has 16 lines on Skeat, but not a word about his work for sp. ref. In the 1969 edition, there is no entry for Skeat.

Everyman's Encyclopaedia (vol. XI, pp 681-2) has 19 lines on Skeat but nothing about his work for spelling reform. Everyman's Dictionary of Literary Biography (revised, 1962) has 15 lines but no mention either of sp. ref. The entry concludes: "He also made an authoritative Etymological Dictionary (1879-1882) and in 1873 he founded the English Dialect Society." All this is true, but there should have been some reference to his devoted work for sp. ref. The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature vol. 3, gives a half column to Skeat and concludes, "Skeat also published pamphlets on spelling reform, place names, etc." At least here is some reference to what we are looking for: there is at least a mention of spelling reform. Generally speaking, as these extracts show, the matter is ignored.

At the back of an old copy of Pears Cyclopaedia, there were calendars for the years 1943 to 1946, so the issue must have been that of 1944 or 1945. Under Spelling Reform, in the section entitled, "Matters of General Interest," the following passage is printed: "Spelling Reform is a subject which has many distinguished supporters - philologists and men of letters - and the Simplified Spelling Society, whose aim is to bring about a system of spelling which shall represent the actual pronunciation of each word, numbers over two thousand members, including Sir James Murray, Viscount Bryce, Sir William Ramsay and Andrew Carnegie: it is actively engaged in spreading the new spelling propaganda." (page 633). To show how, since then, the matter has been hidden from the public, we have to note that the 1968 Pears, and possibly some earlier issues, omits the foregoing passage altogether and makes no mention of spelling reform. This is further evidence indicating that today's reading public is not given a chance to consider the matter fairly. This is another example of the policy which was noted elsewhere while dealing with the Introduction to Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary where the criticism of accepted spelling conventions and the plea for spelling reform are omitted altogether from recent editions.

There is a similar example in the case of Melvil Dewey's "Decimal Classification and Relative Index." Melvil Dewey was one of the greatest of all spelling reformers as well as being a number of other things: his decimal classification is still used in thousands of libraries throughout the world. He wrote the introduction to this great work in his own system of reformed spelling. More important still, he gave five imperative reasons why we should work for reform.

"(1) We should end the 'disgrace of having the worst spelling in the world.'

(2) We should avoid wasting the time we now spend interrupting our train of thought and consulting dictionaries; we could also save one seventh of the total number of letters now used in printing, with consequent financial savings.

(3) We should avoid 'the criminal waste of school time - not only in spelling classes but also in all other studies throughout educational life.'

(4) It is wrong to addle children's brains. 'One could hardly devise a more deadening process to the normal brain than the teaching of such words as *bone, done, gone, or love, move, rove.*' There are thousands of other cases of equally unintelligent spellings.

(5) The present spelling is a formidable obstacle- probably the only real obstacle-to the acceptance of English as the world language or, at least, as the world's second language."

This powerful advocacy of spelling reform appeared on pp. 51 and 52. It was printed in the early editions and was still printed in the 13th edition dated 1932, but it was omitted from the 16th edition dated 1958 and from subsequent editions. The omission of Dewey's arguments for reform could only happen at the instigation of influential people who were opposed to reform. This again helps to explain why spelling reform has made so little real progress. The majority of people are not in favour of re- form chiefly because they are not allowed to see the facts on which they could form a sound judgement.

People cannot learn these facts - except in the face of every possible discouragement - at school or at college; they cannot learn them from the press, from the radio or television nor even from the public libraries. If some reformer does succeed in getting the facts published in a book, it is likely that these facts and relevant opinions will be omitted from later editions.

Spelling reform makes little real progress because of many publishers, because of many administrators, because of many teachers. These all act as they do because of the way they were taught spelling or, perhaps we should say, because of the way they were not taught spelling. It seems that this state of affairs can only be changed as the result of a government initiative, as Sir George Hunter and others realised in Britain, as Homer Wood and others have realised in America; and as has been realised by various reformers in other parts of the English speaking world.

Misrepresentation

It is regrettable that the facts about spelling reform are not usually given to students or made easily available to them. It is even more regrettable that in some books there have been misrepresentation of the facts. In Prof. Simeon Potter's *Our Language* (Pelican Original), p. 188, we read the following unfounded and misleading assertion, "In *English Spelling, Its Rules and Reasons*, (New York, 1927, pp 115), Sir William Craigie has prepared an erudite defence of our unphonetic orthography without special pleading."

Potter must have known that Craigie's 1927 book was not an erudite defence - or any other sort of defence - of our unphonetic spelling, so the words quoted above were probably written by some editor or bibliographer; but they appear in Prof. Potter's book and he ought to have checked them. Craigie's book, as the Introduction makes clear, was written to show "How the several elements have combined to produce the great variety so noticeable in the spelling of English." Craigie did not try to defend this spelling. He merely set out to show how it happened. Potter's statement about "an erudite defence" is just not true. This is a serious case of misrepresentation by one who ought to have known better. Spelling reformers have to contend with fairly widespread ignorance. It is unfortunate that they should have to contend also with untrue statements from people who are supposed to know about spelling and whom the general public trusts to tell the truth.

Chambers' Encyclopaedia (1966) prints an article, entitled "Spelling and Orthography," on page 82 of volume 13. The last paragraph includes this sentence, "The main claim of spelling reformers is that learning of English by children and foreigners would be made easier." Any reformer would add that this is one claim, but not probably the main one: there are numerous others. The article goes on, "But a violent reform of spelling, however desirable in theory, has evoked no great enthusiasm in practice."

Comment: an emotive word such as 'violent' should not have been used in this context; the phrase, "however desirable in theory" suggests that there is, in theory, a strong case for reform. Theory is based on facts. If spelling reform is desirable in theory, the evidence on which that theory is based certainly deserves to be carefully examined and thoroughly discussed. This the writer does not do, nor does he even suggest it. It is interesting to note that the writer of this article was an anatomist. It is difficult to see why an anatomist should be chosen to write something about spelling. At least, we can understand how he came to misrepresent so badly the case for spelling reform. We may hope that a future edition of this book will try to put the case more fairly.

The writer proceeds, "Moreover, spelling reform would sever a link between English readers of today and English literature of the 17th century and earlier."

Comment: we do not normally read literature of the 17th century and earlier in the spelling of any period earlier than about 1700. We normally read it after it has been transliterated into the spelling which became conventional *after* 1700. Spelling reform could not sever any link because there is no link to sever.

These are just two examples of misrepresentation. There are many others.

Vested Interests

The difficulty and wastefulness of Queen Anne's spelling - as still used in our schools today, should surely be factors favouring reform. With many people, unfortunately, they tend to make reform less desirable, and certainly less urgent. Those who have spent much time and energy learning to master the intricacies of this out-of-date spelling have acquired thereby a qualification which is worth prestige and money so long as these intricacies and absurdities remain current practice and so long as they have official approval. This affects writers, printers, teachers, shorthand typists, and many young people still in school and college. All these have a vested interest in keeping our spelling unchanged.

Teaching techniques which mitigate, to some extent, the ill effects of Queen Anne's spelling, can only justify their existence so long as we retain this inconsistently spelling, with all the said ill effects. just as purveyors of certain pills and prophylactics can prosper only so long as certain

forms of illness and disability remain widespread, so authors and publishers of certain books intended for backward readers can only prosper so long as Queen Anne's spelling ensures that there are large numbers of backward readers who may possibly profit from using these books and methods. So the evil tends to feed on itself. It obstructs the need for reform and obstructs the work of reformers.

The evils of Queen Anne's spelling are self-perpetuating and are likely to remain so until new teaching methods, dependent on the use of reliable spellings, are authorized by the Department of Education and Science. Meanwhile, we must urge the Department to encourage further experiments involving the use of better, more consistent, spelling.

Attitude of Government

Spelling reform has not been implemented, chiefly because we have not been able to persuade the government to show any real concern about the way irregular spelling affects the teaching of reading in the schools. During the 1960's, advocates of i.t.a. made notable progress, partly because they succeeded in enlisting the support of London University's Institute of Education, of the National Federation for Educational Research, of the Schools Council, and of other official and semi-official bodies. If spelling reformers will proceed on similar lines, the outlook for us should be no less bright.

At its Annual General Meeting of Dec. 1970, the Simplified Spelling Society unanimously passed a carefully worded resolution respectfully asking the Government to appoint a Departmental Committee to examine the accumulated evidence in favour of spelling reform. I personally delivered this resolution to the Curzon Street Offices of the Department of Education and Science. Correspondence followed and, as the Society's Honorary Secretary, I had an hour's interesting and encouraging talk with a high ranking official. So far, so good. Now that the Simplified Spelling Society of London and the Simpler Spelling Assoc. of New York are in full agreement concerning the details of New Spelling (thanks in no small measure to the long and untiring efforts of Godfrey Dewey and others in America, and Herbert Wilkinson particularly, in England) we should be able to look forward confidently to real progress in the near future.

[1] Title of a forthcoming book by this author.

[2] Ed. note: Also the Metric System of Weights and Measures is now in transition to use in Britain and has passed the U.S. Senate.

[3] Ed.: Everywhere in the world where spelling reform has been instituted, it has been done by government decree or legislation. Here, Congress did not act, so no one was obliged to change.

[4] Ed. note: Not true, as recent work in Britain by Downing has shown.

[5] Ed. note: How does he know that the irregular nature of English spelling has not been a deterrent of its use, and that long ago English would have become the Universal Language if it had not been for this handicap?

[6] Tennyson: Yours is not to question why, yours is to do or die.

[7] *American Language, Supplement Two, page 289.*

[Spelling Reform Anthology §20.4 p274 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1967 p16 in the printed version]

4. 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.

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.

James C. McGhee, San Francisco, Calif.

Anthology