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Table of Contents

1. Can a child be taught to spell? by C. E. Lutkin
2. [The Confusions of Traditional Orthography in Learning to Read – and How they Can be Removed](#), by Sir James Pitman, K.B.E.
3. [A Summary Analysis of Chp. 6 & 7 of the Bullock Report](#), by Douglas Pidgeon
4. [Viewpoints IV: on Spelling Reform](#), by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.
5. [Can Yioux Say Sault?](#), by Mickey Porter
6. [Spelling and Spelling Reform: Arguments Pro and Con](#), by Valerie Yule
7. [The Spelling Action Society](#).

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §10.2 p152 in the printed version]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin, Spring 1976 p1 in the printed version]

1. Can a Child be Taught to Spell? by C. E. Lutkin*

* The following Viewpoint was written on spelling by Mr. C. E. Lutkin, coordinator of library services for Prince Albert public school district No. 3. He said he may also write articles criticizing the teaching of grammar, social studies, report cards, gnomes in the department of education, etc. if he is not forced into exile before spring.

Can we really teach a child how to spell? If we can teach a pupil how to read, does it logically follow that we can teach him how to spell? Does the child's memorization of a list of words and written work related to them (prepared for us by some publishing company) have anything to do with learning or is it just a pedagogical opiate which makes us feel that we are really teaching?

Most of us know adults who have a Grade 10 education and are better spellers than some university graduates. President Kennedy's secretary had to carefully check all of his letters and memos to correct spelling mistakes. Level of education and intelligence seem to be only secondary factors in determining why an individual is a good speller.

Part of the problem stems from the language we speak. One study has shown that North American-English spelling consists of 41 sounds represented by 26 symbols. Yet over 500 different spellings of these 41 sounds exist. If anyone could reduce that information to a few simple rules, he could make a fortune.

There are a number of spelling generalizations mistakenly referred to as rules. One example: "When two vowels go walking, the first generally does the talking." Such a generalization is hardly worth

teaching when we discover that, after feeding thousands of words through a computer in the United States, this generalization proved to be correct only 45% of the time.

Inaccurate spelling can result from the application of generalizations. The child who spells *bizzy* (for *busy*) or *honer* (for *honor* or is it *honour*?) may be trying to apply one of the old generalizations.

The number of times that people refer to a dictionary as the ultimate authority is unwarranted. Contemporary dictionary publishers now view their function as *describing* what people actually do with the language rather than trying to tell users what they *ought* to do.

The editor of Webster's Third New International Dictionary stated: "[The Dictionary] does not attempt to dictate what usage should be... [It is] the record of this language as it is spoken and written."

Our language has options regarding the spelling of many words and even the dictionaries do not agree on the number and spelling of many of acceptable variant forms. Is it *pygmy* or *pigmy*; *brier* or *briar*; *theatre* or *theater*; *plow* or *plough*; *colloquiums* or *colloquia*; *focused* or *focussed*? One authority has stated: 'The spelling lesson is not an occasion for indulging one's linguistic prejudices.'

Traditionally, students in a spelling class would all turn to the same page in the text and take a pretest on Mondays. The pretest would indicate what words the students already know. They all did the same exercise questions and all took the same test on Friday.

So what was the point of the pretest? Those students who were naturally good spellers only had a few words to learn and were not challenged. The poor spellers had perhaps 12 or more words to learn. A person did not need to have a great deal of insight to predict with a reasonable degree of accuracy who would be getting the highest grades.

Having completed exercise after exercise in the spelling textbooks year after year, even the most enthusiastic students were becoming mentally truant during spelling lessons in Grades 6, 7 and 8.

Simple logic should dictate that the words a child should learn to spell should be drawn from the words he misspells in his written work. Students, burn your spelling textbooks!

Reprinted from, *Saskatchewan Bulletin*, Feb. 14, 1975.

"Rather than having hundreds of remedial teachers concentrating on children's individual weaknesses, we should be emphasizing classroom teaching that concentrates on using children's strengths --particularly the intelligence that so often somehow we often seem to stifle. This of course, includes the need for spelling reform, so that children can be like those in other countries, using their intelligence and reasoning to code and decode, instead of having to burden their memories and submit to adult inconsistency." Valerie Yule, Faculty, Monash Univ. Vic. Aust.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §13.7 pp189,190 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin, Spring 1976 p2,3 in the printed version*]

2. The Confusions of Traditional Orthography in Learning to Read – and How They Can be Removed, by Sir James Pitman, K.B.E. *

* London, England.

The Confusions

What are the confusions present in T.O. and what is their cumulative effect upon the learner?

A double accident of history has contributed to the great confusions of the English orthography. First was the attempt to represent English alphabetically with a 2,000 year-old alphabet – perhaps adequate for the Latin tongue, but lacking characters for at least 17 sounds of the English tongue – and second, the inevitable failure 600 years ago to spell systematically the 40 sounds of English with only 23 effective letters (*c*, *q* and *x* are redundant), and the failure to spell alphabetically even with those 23.

We who are literate have become so conditioned to the shortcomings of the means by which what is spoken and listened to in English is thus confusingly represented for reading and writing, that we nearly all have found it virtually impossible to analyse those causes of confusion and of difficulty which faced us when we were learning – and even to realise that there had been any difficulties at all.

The confusions in T.O. – as the initial learning medium – come in three categories: two in *decoding* (reading) and one in *encoding* (writing).

1. *Decoding* (Reading)

The multitude of variations in the shapes of virtually all the 26 letters require the child to learn well over 100 symbols, including multilateral forms such as *Tn, Th, th, G*, etc. For instance, there are three variations of *a* (*A, a, a*); three of *b* (*B, b, b*); only one of *c*; two of *d* (*D, d*); three of *e* (*E, e, e*); four of *f* (*F, f, f, f*); and corresponding variations in the digraphs such as *ch* and *th* (*CH, Ch, ch*), (*Th, Th, th, th, th*).

The effect of these variations of "characters" in relation to "letters" and of the further variations of digraphs (inevitable for those 17 sounds which lack letters in the Roman alphabet) has been to cause a labyrinthine confusion in decoding (reading).

The confusions in this first category were commented upon by the Bullock Committee who said: "Letter outline may convey very little to a child unless it has been invested with some kind of special significance . . . many teachers think this aspect of reading requires little attention. This sometimes leads to their assuming mistakenly that there is something wrong with the child if he happens to have difficulty in learning to recognize letters" (para. 6.7). They also point out. "Encounter with such variations is inevitable, because of the wide range of printed materials to which children are exposed . . . they increase the total quantity to be learned and add to the burdens of the slow-learning child an extra dimension of difficulty that he could well do without (para. 6.10).

2. *Decoding* (Reading)

The second category of confusion lies in the instability of value attached to every one of such 26 "letters" with their well over 100 variations in shape.

There is a total of 173 differing values in sound for only 26 letters – an average of 6.7 different

sound values for each of the 26 letters and their many variants. For instance, the a, A or *a* is not stable, as in the number-value of 1. Indeed, we need think only of words such as *at*, *fat* (*father*), *bat* (*bather*), *hat* (*what*), *shall* (*all*), *man*, (*many*), and *wagon* (*postage*).

Here again the confusions in this category were indicated by the Bullock Committee who pointed out the necessity of using digraphs and even larger groups of letters (e.g. the *ough* in *borough*) to represent the phonemes of English. "Of much greater importance in this matter of establishing relationships between letters and sounds is the fact that there is no simple correspondence between the 26 letters and the 44 phonemes," and they gave "some idea of the ways in which written English falls short of (the) alphabetic ideal" by demonstrating how the letter *o* takes on 8 different values in the words "one, home, comes, women, of, or, to, do" (para. 6.18).

These two categories, acting confusingly together, make decoding a most difficult exercise – and at the beginning of learning, when simplicity and success are so outstandingly important.

3. *Encoding* (Spelling in writing)

The third category of confusion lies in the variety of different spellings for each of the 40 sounds of English. For instance, there are wide variations in the spellings of the sound of *a* as in *baby*. There is a total of 42, using combinations of *a*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *h*, *i*, *o*, *r*, *t*, *u*, and *y* – eleven different letters and their 32 variant characters. Some of the most common and useful words of the language – *baby*, *save* (but *have*), *rain*, *straight*, *may*, *played*, *great*, *eight* (but *height*) and *they* – are most confusing in their spellings. The task of spelling is made unnecessarily very difficult indeed, and learners are therefore inhibited from even attempting to write words which they habitually speak because they do not know how to spell them.

The Bullock Committee instanced, as an example of this third category of confusion, the multiple spellings in common words of the sound *ie*, as in *die*: "a single phoneme (*ie*) is spelled in 12 different ways, and indeed other spellings could be added if less common words were included, e.g. 'indict'" (para. 6.18). They also pointed out later: "we have already noted the bewildering complexity of the English spelling system, and it is self-evident that a simplification of the relationship between sound and spellings must make it easier for a child to make progress in the early stages. If there are fewer items to be learned this alone must reduce the time required, and if there are fewer ambiguities there will be less confusion. All this is amply confirmed by research" (para. 7.27).

Removal of the Confusions

The removal of all three categories of confusion – by the use of i.t.a. as the *first* learning medium – has been shown to help all learners, of all ages, all over the English-speaking world. Some 80 high-ranking researches and now millions of children and not a few adults, testify to what the Bullock Committee quoted, with approval, from the Schools Council Report "*i.t.a.: An Independent Evaluation*",

"There is no evidence whatsoever for the belief that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read *in* traditional orthography. It would appear rather that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn in the initial teaching alphabet" (page 234-5 of the Schools Council Report and para. 7.27 of Bullock).

That "best way" covers two classes of learner. For those who would anyhow succeed in learning, it reduces most significantly the time needed to acquire the ability to read; while for many of those who would otherwise have failed, it brings success. It is not, of course, a panacea, any more than any of the other lowerings and removal of obstacles to success can possibly guarantee success. If poor eyesight, poor hearing or absences due to ill-health are obstacles to reading success, the provision of spectacles, hearing aids or classes in hospital could never guarantee success but they, like i.t.a., help by removing obvious handicaps. Only some children suffer from poor eyesight, but all suffer from the confusions of T.O. and no less need, and are entitled to, the benefits of a learning medium as simple as 1, 2, 3.

There is no reason why learning to read and write words in letters need be all that more difficult to learn than reading and writing words in figures. After all, the great majority of illiterates are able to read and write numbers when expressed in figures but not when expressed in letters. *Eighty-one* and *two hundred and eighty-four* are illegible to them whereas *81* and *84* are read, written and comprehended easily. We can hardly wonder at the contrast, seeing that *eight*, as the spelling for the sound of *8* is at least as confusing as *one* for the sound *wun*. And it is no less confusing that there should be a *wo* in two and an *ou* in *four*. The wonder is not that so many children fail to learn to read and write in letters but rather that so many succeed.

The Transition

The results of research and the testimony of tens of thousands of teachers confirm that the transition from the simpler medium of i.t.a. to T.O. is an easy and natural development for all who can read with understanding. This fact was endorsed by the Bullock Committee who said: "Certainly the co-existence of two writing systems during the introductory and transitional period does not seem to be a handicap. This observation coincides with the judgement of the Schools Council Report that the difference between the alphabet used in school and that used outside does not present a significant problem" (para. 7.27). They added: "Children learn quite quickly how to spell in i.t.a., and they then have access to almost (why only 'almost?') "every word in their spoken vocabulary. The value of this for language experience activities is obvious." Referring to the research with i.t.a., the Committee added. "the i.t.a. pupils remain superior in T.O. reading and spelling even after five years at school, i.e. well beyond the transition stage" (para. 7.29).

Why i.t.a. and T.O. are Easily Interchanged

24 of the characters of T.O. have been retained *unchanged* and with their most common values when appearing in T.O. The table below shows how closely all the additional characters for the essential 17 sounds, which lack characters, resemble characters and spellings which are used elsewhere in T.O. – as shown in the words illustrating them and in the T.O. spellings of other words too.

How can it be that new characters may be provided for those 17 sounds of English which lack a discrete character in T.O., and how closely do they resemble characters used elsewhere in T.O., to represent those sounds?

Table 1

Vowels	Consonants
1. <u>a</u> arm (18)	12. <u>th</u> <u>th</u> ur <u>th</u> (11)
2. <u>æ</u> æroplæn (42)	13. <u>th</u> north (7)
3. <u>au</u> autum (23)	14. <u>th</u> northern (3)
4. <u>æ</u> eel (40)	15. <u>th</u> ship (13)
5. <u>æ</u> tee (37)	16. <u>z</u> azuer (8)
6. <u>o</u> moan (41)	17. <u>ng</u> long, longest (7)
7. <u>o</u> god (11)	
8. <u>ie</u> die (34)	
9. <u>ou</u> out (13)	
10. <u>oi</u> oil (12)	
11. <u>ue</u> due (28)	

(The figures in brackets represent the number of different other spellings for that sound which are present in T.O.)

15 of the new characters resemble the digraphs used in lower case letters for these sounds. The two others (Nos. 1 and 16) are the characters actually used in T.O. when written in the cursive, rather than in the lower case letters.

These 17, with the 24 retentions of the existing characters – *a, b, c*, etc. (with *q* and *x* discarded as redundant) – make 41 characters, one more than is essential. The supererogatory character (*k*) has been retained in order to make the transition even easier – and on statistical grounds *ck* is a most frequent T.O. spelling for the sound of /k/ as, of course, is *k* as well as *c* and *cc*.

There are three other supererogatory characters which justify their choice on the grounds also of conserving the patterns of T.O. For instance, the addition of the character *wh* obviates the use of *hw* which, though alphabetically systematic for many, would cause difficulties in learning particularly to those who pronounce only the *w*. It also greatly facilitates the transition for all. The other two supererogatory characters are Σ and \mathcal{Z} . The sound /z/ is very frequent in English but the character *z* is seldom used to represent it, the character *s* being overwhelmingly used in T.O. The character \mathcal{Z} is introduced for an equally good reason. As in the case of *k* the use of \mathcal{Z} as well as *r* causes no difficulty to the learning reader or writer.

Thus system takes the place of lack of system, and invariability the place of variability. All the confusions are eliminated while the shapes and spellings substituted resemble sufficiently closely what is found elsewhere in T.O. to afford immediate legibility by those who have read only T.O.

A few last words – in i.t.a.

this is printed in the initial teaching alphabet, the purpose of which is not, as might be supposed, to reform our spelling, but to improve the learning of reading. It is intended that when the beginner is fluent in this medium he shall be confident of reading in the traditional alphabet.

If you have read as far as this, the next medium will have proved to you several points, the most important of which is that you, at any rate, have easily made the change.

No wonder the Bullock Committee commented:

"Though some of the characters in . . . i.t.a. are unfamiliar, one has little difficulty in reading it . . . After one or two more paragraphs of the same kind the reader would be handling the text with scarcely any hesitation. By the same token, it is argued that the child who develops fluency in i.t.a. can transfer readily enough to T.O." (para. 7.28).

We in education, as much as in other fields, cannot expect to make progress unless we are ready to think afresh. i.t.a. clearly provides the means of removing the many confusions which T.O. presents to the beginner. It is surely up to us all now to take advantage of what i.t.a. has to offer and thus make learning to read that much more easy and effortless in the future.

Many teachers have long realised that it has become most unfair to the helpless child to submit him to all these unnecessary difficulties inherent in T.O. Will not other infant teachers, no less devoted to the welfare of their children, give a new and fair deal to those helpless ones?

[Spelling Progress Bulletin, Spring 1976 pp4,5 in the printed version]

3. A Summary Analysis of Chp. 6 & 7 of the Bullock Report, by Douglas Pidgeon*

* i.t.a. Foundation, Reigate, Surrey, England.

Ed. note: The Bullock Committee of Inquiry into Reading and the use of English was set up by the British Secretary of State for Education and Science to advise on how to improve the learning of reading, writing and language. Early in 1973 the Bullock Committee granted an audience to representatives from the Simplified Spelling Society. They presented the case for total reform. On other occasions the Committee heard Dr. D. A. Pidgeon, and later Sir James Pitman, who represented i.t.a., or limited transitory reform.

Some readers may be confused by the difference of opinion expressed in the unfavorable statement by Wm. J. Reed on page 17, Fall, 1974 issue of S.P.B. and the encouraging analysis by D. A. Pidgeon in the following Summary. However, readers should keep in mind the fact that Reed, who "is doubtful if we made much impression on the committee's prejudices . . ." is referring to their negative opinion toward the case for national *reform of T.O.*, whereas Pidgeon is reporting on the committee's positive reaction in supporting the use of an initial, systematized T.O. during *only the early stages* of learning to read. (B. B.)

1. The Reading Process

The Report devotes a whole chapter to the process of learning to read. It sets out what a child has to learn when learning to read, and in particular analyses the difficulties he encounters through variations in letter shape. It is argued that an improvement in the teaching of reading will only come

Para.6.3 "from a comprehensive study of all the factors at work and the influence that can be
Page 78 exerted upon them . . . Thus a detailed understanding of the reading process is of critical importance in terms of its practical implications."

An attempt to summarise important aspects of the reading process follows; and it is pointed out that

Para.6.6 "The reader responds to print at a number of levels. At one level he recognises the shapes
Page 80 of separate letters, groups of letters, and whole words, and he associates appropriate sounds with those letters or collections of letters."

The Report points out that the child has to learn to respond both to letter *shape* and to *orientation*. Young children have a different "learning set" from adults when it comes to seeing letters, and orientation is regarded as critical.

Para.6.8 "For the first few years of his life a child learns to ignore orientation as a means of
Page 81 recognising objects. The doll or the toy train is still a doll or a train whether it is the right way up, upside down, facing left, facing right, or lying on its side. . . However, when they come to letters, they have a problem. They now have to learn that *b* is not *d*, *p*, or *q*; or that *f* is not *t*, and *n* is not *u*."

Although most children are flexible in their learning habits, adopting new "learning sets" does

present problems to some. However, the Report adds,

Para.6.10 "When children have learned to respond to a combination of shape and orientation they
Pgs81,82 still have to learn each of the 26 letters of the alphabet. To these have to be added the 17 shapes of those capital letters which are very different from the lower case forms."

In addition, it points out that there are typographical variations such as A, a, *a*, G, g, [*handwritten looped g*] etc. which

Para.6.10 ". . . increase the total quantity to be learned and add to the burdens of the slow learning
Page 82 child an extra dimension of difficulty that he could well do without. This difficulty is probably even more marked when the child comes to write, since he may be confused in deciding which of the various forms to set down."

The problem of variations in letter shape becomes even more acute with word perception as distinct from letter perception. For the child being taught to respond to whole words, variations in pattern present differences not perceived by the adult.

Para.6.11 "Moreover, the whole-word forms of certain different words e.g. 'hot' and 'hat,' are no
Page 83 more different than the variations of the *same* word, e.g. 'hat' and 'hat'.

2. The Confusions of Traditional Orthography

The Report turns next to problems concerning the orthography of English, to the relationship between letters and sounds. It points out that as there are only 26 letters but 44 phonemes, certain combinations of two or more letters have to be used to represent some sounds. It then adds:

Para.6.18 "Of much greater importance in this matter of establishing relationships between letters
Pages 85 and sounds is the fact that there is no simple correspondence between the 26 letters and
& 96 the 44 phonemes. If one were intent on constructing an alphabetic writing system from scratch the obvious course would be to aim at a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes, the grapheme being any letter or combination of letters which represented a single phoneme. Some idea of the ways in which written English falls short of this alphabetic ideal may be seen in the following examples:

i. one, home, comes, women, of, or, to, do

ii. aisle, height, eye, I, phial, ice, high, buy, island, guide, sty, rhyme.

In the first example a single letter is seen to take on eight different contexts. In the second, a single phoneme is spelled in 12 different ways, and indeed other spellings could be added if less common words were included, e.g. indict."

The Report then quotes a research study (Berdiansky, Cronnel & Koehler, 1969) which

Para.6.19 "examined the 6,092 two-syllable words among the 9,000 words in the comprehension
Page 86 vocabularies of a group of six to nine year old children. They recorded 211 different spellings for the phonemes in these words, and these required 166 rules to govern their use. Over 10 percent of the words still had to be left aside as 'exceptions.' Sixty of these rules applied to consonants which are usually thought to be 'regular.'

Further examples are given to convey

Para.6.20 "the kind of problem that confronts a child when he has to combine graphemes and
Page 86 phonemes in a phonic attack on an unfamiliar word."

The Report then says,

Para.6.20 "we must emphasise that this level of decoding *is* of particular importance in the early
Page 87 stages of learning to read, and the complexity of English spelling patterns does appear to retard progress?"

Later it adds,

Para.7.23 "children will tend to be confused by the complexity of the spelling patterns they
Page 108 encounter in the early stages. . . From their knowledge of certain patterns they can generalise effectively to cope with words of a similar pattern, but this does not help when they meet irregularities. For example, a child is likely to be misled into pronouncing *bear* as *beer* by analogy with *bear*, and *beard* as *bird* by analogy with *heard*."

3. Spelling Reform Rejected

The Report says:

Para.6.21 "Various solutions have been suggested to the problems presented by the irregular
Page 87 system of spelling English, the most radical of which is its actual reform. . . However, the majority of us remain unconvinced by the case for national reform of the system of writing and spelling in English."

4. Cueing techniques (colour and diacritics) not recommended.

The Report then turns to the use of "cueing techniques and spelling modifications as a means of making the early stages of learning to read more manageable." It considers the two cueing techniques – the use of colour and diacritical marking. On the former it comments,

Para.7.26 "The evidence for the value of colour systems is inconclusive. The more elaborate
Page 110 schemes may be said to exact too high a price in terms of the amount of attention they demand and the consequent distraction from meaning. Simple schemes which signal more general functions (e.g. silent letters, the grouping of letters), rather than specific sound values, may well have something to offer though this has yet to be convincingly demonstrated."

After discussing one or two schemes using diacritical marking – the application of marks of various kinds to signal letter function or value – the Report concludes,

Para.7.26 "In the circumstances we do not feel this is sufficient evidence to enable us to
Page 110 recommend diacritics."

5. Making the case for i.t.a.

Turning to i.t.a., the Report states first:

Para.7.27 "it is self evident that a simplification of the relationship between sound and spelling
Page 110 must
make it much easier for a child to make progress in the early stages (of learning to read)."

It further recognises that

Para.7.27 "if there are fewer items to be learned this alone must reduce the time required, and if
Page 110 there are fewer ambiguities there will be less confusion" and points out that "all this is amply confirmed by research."

The main conclusion of the Schools Council evaluation of i.t.a. is then quoted:

Para.7.27 "There is no evidence whatsoever for the belief that the best way to learn to read in
Page 110 traditional orthography is to learn to read in traditional orthography. It would appear that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in the initial teaching alphabet."

6. Transition is no problem

On the question of transition, the Report refers to Japanese children who first learn the "kana" characters, each of which represents a syllable, and then the "kangi" characters which are logographs and represent units of meaning. It points out that

Para.7.27 "certainly the co-existence of two writing systems during the introductory and
Page 111 transitional does not seem to be a handicap," and goes on to say that "this observation coincides with the judgement of the Schools Council report that the difference between the alphabet used in school and that used outside does not represent a significant problem."

A short passage in i.t.a. is quoted with the comment that

Para.7.28 "though some of the characters in . . . i.t.a. are unfamiliar, one has little difficulty in
Page 111 reading it . . . After one or two more paragraphs of the same kind the reader would be handling the text with scarcely any hesitation. By the same token, it is argued that the child who develops fluency in i.t.a. can transfer readily enough to T.O."

7. i.t.a. offers further benefits

The Report again refers to the Schools Council report:

Para.7.28 "The authors of the Schools Council report say that a head deciding to use i.t.a. as an
Page 111 initial medium can be confident that at the very least the children are unlikely to suffer, provided she has the support of the staff and can guarantee continuity of approach when the children go on to junior school. Indeed, they go on to affirm that there is a 'substantial body of evidence which indicates that most children will benefit in a variety of ways.'"

A reference is made to the comparisons of T.O. and i.t.a. taught children in the main British experiments with the comment:

Para.7.29 "the *writing* produced by the latter was of consistently higher quality."
Page 112

It goes on to refer to the follow-up of the children involved in those experiments where it was

Para.7.29 "found that the i.t.a. pupils remained superior in *T.O. reading and spelling* even after
Page 112 five years at school, i.e. well beyond the transition stage."

The Report in general advocates very strongly the adoption of a language experience approach to the teaching of reading, and for this it sees the value of i.t.a.

Para.7.29 "Children tend to learn quite quickly how to spell in i.t.a. and they then have ready
Page 111 access to almost every word in their spoken vocabulary. *The value of this (or language experience activities is obvious.*"

8. Conclusions

The Report points out that i.t.a. has opponents, including some who apparently believe that factors other than the new medium could be responsible for the gains shown by i.t.a. taught children. It continues however:

Para.7.29 "On the other hand, it also seems likely that many teachers who adopted i.t.a. have
Page 112 employed it in a rather narrowly conceived phonic approach. If this is so, the higher standards of reading and writing produced with i.t.a. may possibly have been *even better* had the medium been used differently."

It concludes its reference by saying,

Para.7.29 "Schools which choose to adopt it should be given every support. We also feel that
Page 112 teachers should examine the question of i.t.a. on its merits."

It is the traditional right of every teacher to have a voice in making educational decisions. On this question of the choice of medium for beginning reading instruction however, many, possibly feeling the lack of any official support, have remained undecided. Now at last a Government Report has exposed the confusions that T.O. produces in the learner and has emphasised the advantages that i.t.a. can bring. A clear lead has therefore been given to all who believe it is everyone's right to be able to read.

And as one famous American comedian so often has said, "Try it – you'll like it!"

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §3.1 pp43–7 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1976 pp6–10 in the printed version*]

4. Viewpoints IV: On Spelling Reform, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.*

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An officer of the National Education Association (U.S.A.) telephoned this writer regarding the desirability of sending a delegate to the First International Conference sponsored by the Simplified Spelling Society at the College of All Saints, London, in August, 1975. Inquiries regarding research on spelling reform, especially on an i.l.m. received by the International Reading Association are referred to this writer. Finally, the International Reading Association is sponsoring a two-hour debate on "Spelling and Phonics" at the annual convention in Anaheim, Calif., on Tuesday, May 11, 1976.

That there is a rapidly developing interest in spelling reform by the reading establishment cannot be gainsaid. The immediate need, then, is the support of this sincere concern for respectable information on both the status quo and planned *experimental research* to validate a broad spectrum of *opinions* on this crucial concept. But a profusion of confusion reigns supreme, based on spelling-lore. To spotlight basic issues, to underwrite interdisciplinary experimental research via suggested projects for "hungry" graduate students, to assess the pragmatic implications requires strong, enlightened leadership – unhampered by the sponsorship of any one extant i.l.m. or spelling reform proposal.

Opinions regarding the *need* for spelling reform are many and varied:

"The Roman alphabet is probably the best among historically developed devices for recording sounds. But it is far from perfect."

Mario Pei. *The Story of Language*, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1949, p. 92.

"Standard English obliges the foreigner to learn at least 10,000 words before he can feel at home with a newspaper. The irrational spelling of these words imposes a grievous burden even on those whose natural language is English; that the Eastern learner should be expected to master it is grotesque. As the great philologist, Grimm, observed: 'Were it not for a whimsical, antiquated orthography, the universality of English would be still more evident.'"

C. K. Ogden. *The System of Basic English*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934, p. 13.

"*Teaching the child to write is complicated by the nature of English spelling* -- Let us take the simpler of two situations. The first stage -- teaching the child to represent by letters on paper what he says -- is greatly complicated, in English, by the fact that there is no general one-to-one correspondence between the sounds which the child already carefully distinguishes and the conventional choice of letters with which they are represented. We do not, unfortunately, write as we speak. 'Spelling' takes up a considerable proportion of our time during far too many years of elementary school. Some of us never learn to spell. Some of us go so far as to make a virtue out of necessity."

Norman A. McQuown in Harold B. Allen (Editor). *Readings in Applied English Linguistics*, Appleton-Century Crofts, 1964, p. 353.

"The graphics of English are ever a problem, because I am sure that it is only in Cloud-Cuckoo Land that we could find another system of writing so irregularly and inadequately representing the stream of speech, and so whimsically segmenting it."

Donald J. Lloyd in Harold B. Allen (Editor). *Readings in Applied English Linguistics*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1958, p. 339.

"Not all languages are so irregular as to require pronunciation keys in dictionaries. For the pronunciation key is merely a device for giving regular and consistent directions to say the sounds of words."

Archibald A. Hill in Harold B. Allen (Editor). *op cit*, p. 378.

"As phonemic orthography is unified system, in which all elements are related, it is not only more easily learned but also more readily retained, so that the chances of relapse into illiteracy are minimal."

"If the spelling of a language is phonemic, the distinction between literacy and functional literacy no longer necessarily exists. The extreme difficulty of English spelling, and not the demands of technological society, explains the high standard adopted for functional literacy in the United States."

Joseph A. Perry, Jr., "Phonemics and Literacy" in *Literacy Discussion. Linguistics and Literacy*, Vol. III, UNESCO June 1972, p. 192.

"The trouble with modern English spelling is that it does not spell modern English. It does not even approximately spell modern English. What it does spell is the English of the Late Middle English period around 1470 A.D. Ironically enough, it represents the pronunciation of that period with such accuracy that a student of the English language can tell from the spelling of today exactly how words were uttered in the London area of England during the late fifteenth century."

Harold Whitehall. *Structural Essentials of English*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1956, p. 134.

"For four hundred years thoughtful students have been longing for a phonemic spelling of English, a system in which each sound has its own peculiar spelling, in which each letter represents just one sound. But during that period our spelling has been growing worse, if possible, in the accumulation of duplications, owing to the fact that, while the system of Middle English sound representation has been largely retained, from time to time other methods of spelling certain sounds have been tried out, which have given such additional spellings as *ie* in *chief*, and foreign words have been introduced with a great number of exotic spellings, such as *ue* in *dialogue*."

Arthur G. Kennedy. *Current English*, Ginn & Co., 1935, P. 589.

"In a previous connection, also, it was brought out that three fourths of the difficulties that we meet in spelling are due to the peculiar characteristics of the English language, the unphonetic spelling of words. This fact has suggested to some students of the problem the need for a radical spelling reform. But this is the hope of a dreamer rather than the expectation of the practical educator. English spelling reform has been going on for hundreds of years, and at several periods in the near past it has been somewhat accelerated by organized efforts in this direction; but the changes that have been effected have failed to free the English language from its traditional shackles. The chances are that this will not be accomplished for many years to come, and too much should not be expected from the movement in the way of immediate relief. Yet spelling reform is gradually coming about, and the teacher, as one of the largest beneficiaries, should do all in her power to further the movement."

Willard F. Tidyman. *The Teaching of Spelling*, World Book Co., 1924, pp. 131-132.

"The real nature of writing in its relation to language is so obvious on a moment's reflection, that it might seem strange that so much misunderstanding could arise about it. Probably the confusion is due to two things: the nature of our English spelling system, and the age at which we start to learn it. People whose languages have a simple, relatively accurate conventional spelling, like Italian, Hungarian, or Finnish, are not confused as to the relation of writing and speech, are often surprised at the misunderstanding that spellers of English show. But our traditional orthography for English is quite far removed from the reality of speech, and our letters certainly do not stand in a wholly one-to-one relationship with the phonemes of our speech. It takes considerable effort and many years (as we all know!) to completely master our English conventional spelling; and once we have learned it, it represents a considerable investment. Nobody likes to give up the fruits of any investment, and the more costly it is, the less we want to discard it; and so it is with the spelling of English. Once we have learned it, we have a strong emotional attachment to it, just because we have had considerable difficulty with it and have been forced to put in so much time and effort on learning it."

Robert A. Hall, Jr. "Our English Spelling System" in Leonard Dean and Kenneth Wilson (Editors). *Essays on Language and Usage*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1963, p. 238.

"The chief aim, of course, is literacy. Although our writing is alphabetic, it contains so many deviations from the alphabetic principle as to present a real problem, whose solution has been indefinitely postponed by our educators' ignorance of the relation of writing to speech. Nothing could be more discouraging than to read our 'educationalists' treatises on methods of teaching children to read." Leonard Bloomfield. *Language*, Henry Holt & Co., 1933, p. 500.

"The object of spelling is twofold: (1) to make language serve as a means of communication both in print and in writing, (2) to show or at least give an idea of how the words are to be pronounced."

"For these purposes an ideal spelling ought to be simple, easy, and phonetic, i.e., it ought to represent as accurately as possible by means of letters or symbols the sounds of the spoken language. The more phonetic a spelling is, the better it will serve its purpose. The present English spelling is antiquated, inconsistent, and illogical." (p. 17)

"It has been said that no Englishman or American can spell with certainty an English word he has not seen written, or feel certain about the pronunciation of an English word he has only seen written and never heard spoken" (18)

R. E. Zachrisson. *ANGLIC, An International Language, with a Survey of English Spelling Reform*, W. Heffner & Sons, (Cambridge, England), 1932, p. 17-18.

"The connexion between letters and their sounds, and the spelling with the pronunciation, is a confused heap of uncertainties, which sets at defiance all rules and order, and laughs at common sense. Each of our simple sounds is represented by more letters than one, and several of them are attached to each letter. Letters are sometimes used to represent no sound at all, while a compound sound is denoted by a single letter. We have several simple sounds, to represent which we have no single letters at all, but have to do it by a combination of other letters, whose proper sounds have little or no affinity with it whatever. This being the case with our letters, our words, of course, partake of the some confusion by not being spelled as they ought to be. A great many of them have more letters than are needful to represent their sounds, neither are they in many instances placed in the order they are sounded. And, as if to make the discordancy complete, some words are spelled according to their meaning and not their sounds, while others are sounded according to their sense and not according as they are spelled. All things put together form a mountain of difficulties for the learner, because he can seldom be certain how any word is sounded from the manner in which it is spelled, but has to apply to some other source for information."

James Bradshaw. *A Scheme for Making the English Language the International Language for the World*, E. T. Brain & Co, (London), 1847, pp. 34-36.

"English is far from the ideal writing system, as anyone with spelling difficulties is well aware. In fact, English does not contain a single instance of a two-way, one-to-one correspondence – letter to sound to letter. Small wonder. Our language has thirteen vowel phonemes and twenty-four consonant phonemes – thirty-seven in all. And to represent these thirty-seven, it has only twenty-six letters, of which three are superfluous."

Norman C. Stageberg. *An Introductory English Grammar*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, p. 35.

"Even our rigid but woefully illogical and inconsistent system of English orthography is largely the work of one man, Dr. Samuel Johnson; and recent efforts at a simplification of spelling have, in spite of much ridicule, made noteworthy progress."

E. H. Sturtevant. *Linguistic Change*, G. E. Stechert & Co, 1942, p. 176.

"The case for some simplification of English spelling is commonly put on educational grounds. The existing spelling with its confusions and inconsistencies imposes an obvious burden on pupils and teachers throughout the English-using world, and requires the expenditure of time and energy which could be better spent in meeting the increasing educational demands of a changing civilization. But the bad effects are not confined to childhood and youth; they are social as much as cultural."

H. J. L. Robbie (Convener). *Studies in Spelling*, Univ. of London Press, 1961, p. 184.

". . . what is the cure? It is to reform our spelling by making it more phonetic. Simple enough to say, but not so simple to get it done! Very few subjects arouse more fury than this question of spelling reform, especially among people who are ignorant of the historical background. But we must have reform unless we are prepared to accept the eventual alternative -- that in time all our written words will become logograms which have broken their phonetic connection with the spoken words. If that came about, it would be as hard to learn to spell in English as it is in Chinese. Undoubtedly we shall prefer to reform."

Alfred C. Moorhouse. *The Triumph of the Alphabet: A History of Writing*, Henry Schuman, 1953, p. 175.

"English orthography, as we all know, has long ceased to make proper use of the advantages of alphabetic writing. This is of course not due to any deep irrational strain in the English character. As in the case of most irrational institutions, there is an historical explanation. When, about 500 years ago, English spelling became conventionally fixed in more or less its present shape, the spoken language was yet to undergo extensive changes. As a result of these changes, the same letter would come to represent a number of different sounds (e.g., the letter 'a' in *same, fat, call, fast*), or indeed no sound at all (as the 'silent letters' in *know* or *wrestle*). But since at that time reading and writing was only the privilege of certain leisured classes, the inconsistency of English spelling was not felt to be any special disadvantage. On the contrary, its anecdotal archaic flavor was sufficiently appreciated to discourage ideas of reform. It was enjoyable to discover in one's script some fossils of an earlier age. Also, to be able to spell correctly came to be a welcome sign of 'class' and of more than average education. Inconsistency, however, if not removed, continues to breed further inconsistency. An esoteric concern with etymologies, rather than any regard for an efficient script, went on molding English spelling conventions for centuries. It was only after the arrival of general education that the drawbacks of the archaic script were felt to be serious. Not every reader and writer of English could now be expected to know French and Latin; and there would be few, even among the educated, to appreciate that exquisite game of computing English spelling from a historical knowledge of three languages."

Wm. Haas. *Alphabets for English*, University Press, Manchester, England, 1969, p. 5.

The proliferation of opinions regarding "phonemic" spelling reform has only fueled the *opinions* of scholars regarding evangelical reformers:

"A detailed and exhaustive study of the relationship of the English writing system to the English language would itself occupy a fair-sized book. No complete study of this sort has yet been made. When it is, it may lead us to far-reaching revisions of our ways of teaching reading and writing, and perhaps to rational and thoroughly considered reforms in the system itself. As it is, suggested reforms in spelling and other aspects of the writing system are usually based on impressionistic or superficial knowledge, and their advocates have often been non-linguists like the librarian Melvil Dewey and the dramatist George Bernard Shaw."

W. Nelson Francis. *The Structure of American English*, The Ronald Press, 1958, p. 450.

"The spelling of English is, as Henry Bradley has insisted, not merely a matter of indicating the proper pronunciation of words. Because written words stand for ideas, in silent reading most older readers are able to gain the ideas directly from the printed page without taking the intermediate step of pronouncing the words. For this reason any generally accepted spelling becomes important and cannot be lightly tampered with. Even such conventions of spelling as the generally approved word endings and the avoidance of certain uses of some letters become important when regarded as a part of the business of silent reading. It seems, then, that the reformer might do well to refrain from violating the more general conventions until he has remedied the more troublesome inconsistencies."

Arthur G. Kennedy. *Current English*, Ginn & Co, 1935, pp. 602-603.

"In time English spelling will probably be reformed. The gap between speech and writing will eventually become too great for the educational system to cope with. But when it is reformed, it will have to be frozen again. We won't all be able to write as we speak. We shall all have to write the same way, however we speak."

Paul Roberts. *Understanding English*, Harper & Brothers, 1958, p. 97.

"The twentieth century reformers have in general presented an even more distorted picture of the orthography than their predecessors."

Richard L. Venezky. *The Structure of English Orthography*, Mouton, 1970, p.32.

"The crying need for a reform of English spelling and the enormous benefits for the English-speaking peoples as well as for mankind in general that a solution of the problem would entail, have caused large numbers of scholars and laymen to devote energetic efforts to the working out of proposals for a satisfactory new system of orthography. Such attempts were started as early as Shakespeare's time.

"Nothing came of those attempts, however, very largely because the proposals made were of too radical a nature, involving the introduction of many new characters or of numerous diacritic marks, but partly also because they were not always based on a sufficiently thorough and accurate analysis of the sound system of the language."

Axel Wijk. *Rules of Pronunciation for the English Language*, Oxford Univ. Press (London), 1966, p.145-146.

"There have been of course, from time to time, groups of people who were much concerned with the efforts to tidy up our system of spelling. They do not seem to perceive that the 'muddle' of our language goes for deeper than our conventional manner of writing it. Its curiosities of spelling can all be explained. Many of them, to be sure, have come through ignorance or confusion or careless corruption of speech. No small number are the result of tinkering by other people who wish to

revamp the system. If they could only come to it open-mindedly, these apostles of 'simplification' might do well to read Samuel Johnson's section on spelling in the preface to his Dictionary, published in 1755.

Louis Foley. "Shall the world learn new letters?", *The Journal of Education*, Dec. 1945, p.307.

This is the section referred to by Louis Foley:

"There have been many schemes offered for the emendation and settlement of our orthography, which, like that of other nations, being formed by chance, or according to the fancy of the earliest writers in rude ages, was at first very various and uncertain, and is yet sufficiently irregular. Of these reformers some have endeavoured to accomodate orthography better to the pronunciation, without considering that this is to measure by a shadow, to take that for a model or standard which is changing while we apply it. Others, less absurdly indeed, but with equal unlikelihood of success have endeavoured to proportion the number of letters to that of sounds, that every sound might have its own character, and every character a single sound. Such would be the orthography of a new language to be formed by a synod of grammarians upon principles of science. But who can hope to prevail on nations to change their practice, and make all their old books useless? or what advantage would a new orthography procure equivalent to the confusion and perplexity of such an alteration?" Samuel Johnson. *A Dictionary of the English Language*, (2v) Preface, 1755, pg.7.

"We have seen how long ago and how very early in the history of our language men curious as to spelling began to contrive modes of phonetic orthography, and how continuous such efforts have been to the present day. Now, however, there is a phonetic-spelling 'movement.' The slender succession of individual reformers through centuries is suddenly in one generation developed into a bond of agitators, somewhat numerous, and in some instances highly distinguished, who clamor for a change. . . There are spelling-reform associations, and verily they have 'transactions,' and, faith, they print 'em; not always, however, very intelligibly to the general eye and mind. There are writers who publish in magazines each his little project for changing at a word, and by low or by general consent – sort of intellectual mass-meeting – the outward and visible form of a language which is the product of many centuries of well-rooted growth."

Richard Grant White. *Every-Day English*, Houghton, Mifflin Co, 1880, pp.204-205.

"A revolution in English spelling is unnecessary, and is not called for by the mass of the intelligent English-speaking and English-reading people, and is practically impossible. Any attempt to introduce phonetic spelling into literature on an extended scale would only result in anarchy, confusion, and disaster, which would be temporary, indeed, but grave and deplorable."

Richard Grant White. *op cit*, p. 260.

"The intention of the written word, the end whereto it is a mean, is by aid of signs agreed on beforehand, to represent to the eye with as much accuracy as possible the spoken word. This intention, however, it never fulfills completely. There is always a chasm between these two and much continually going forward in a language to render this chasm ever wider and wider. Short as man's spoken word often falls of his unspoken, that is, his thoughts, his written word falls often as short of his spoken. Several causes contribute to this. In the first place, the marks of imperfection and infirmity cleave to writing, as to every other invention of man. It fares with most alphabets as with our own. They have superfluous letters – letters, that is, which they do not want, because others already represent their sound; thus 'q' in English is perfectly useless; 'c', 'k' and 's' have only two sounds among them. They have dubious letters, such, that is, assay nothing certain about the sounds they stand for, because more than one sound is represented by them, our own 'a' for example. They are deficient in letters, that is, the language has elementary sounds, such as our own 'th', which have no corresponding letters appropriated to them, and can only be represented by combinations of

letters. This then, being, as one called it long ago, 'an appendix to the curse of Babel,' is one reason of the imperfect reproduction of the spoken word by the written.

Under the operation of these causes a chasm between the written and spoken word will not only exist, but will have the tendency to grow ever of a wider reach. This tendency indeed will be partially traversed by approximations which from time to time will by silent consent be made of the written word to the spoken; absolutely superfluous letters will be got rid of; as the final 'k' in 'civic,' 'politic,' and such words. . . Still, notwithstanding these partial readjustments of the relations between the two, the anomalies will be infinite; there will be a multitude of written letters which have ceased to be sounded letters; words not a few will exist in one shape on our lips, and in quite another in our books. Sometimes, as in such proper names as 'Beauchamp,' 'Belvoir,' 'Cholmondeley,' 'Cockburn,' 'Harwich' 'Marjoribanks,' even the pretence of an agreement between the written word and the spoken will have been abandoned.

It is inevitable that the question should arise – Shall these anomalies be meddled with; shall the attempt be made to remove them, and to bring writing and speech into harmony and consent which never indeed in actual fact at any period of the language existed, but which yet may be regarded as the object of written speech, as the idea which, however imperfectly realized, has, in the reduction of spoken sounds to written, floated before the minds of men? If the attempt is to be made, it is clear that it can only be made in one way. There is not the alternative here, that either Mahomet shall go to the mountain, or the mountain to Mahomet. The spoken word is the mountain; it will not stir; it will resist all attempts to move it. Conscious of superior rights, that existed from the first, that it is, so to say, the elder brother, it will never consent to become different from what it has been, that so it may more closely conform and comply with the written word. . . but what if they could be induced to write 'woud' and 'shoud,' because they so pronounce; and to adopt the same course whenever a discrepancy exists between the word as spoken, and as written? Might not the gulf between the two be in this way made to disappear?

In what has been just said we have the explanation of that which in the history of almost all literatures has repeated itself more than once, namely, the endeavor to introduce phonetic spelling. It has certain plausibilities to rest on; it appeals to the unquestioned fact that the written word was intended to picture to the eye what the spoken word sounded in the ear. For all this I believe that it would be impossible to introduce it, and, even if possible, that it would be undesirable, and this for two reasons: the first being that the losses consequent upon its introduction would far exceed the gains, even supposing those gains as large as the advocates of the scheme promise; the second, that these promised gains would in themselves be only partially realized, if at all.

I believe it to be impossible. It is clear that such a scheme must begin with the reconstruction of the alphabet. The first thing that the phonographers had perceived is the necessity for the creation of a vast number of new signs, the poverty of all existing alphabets, at any rate of our own, not yielding a several sign for all of the several sounds of the language. Sciolists or scholars may sit down in their studies, and devise these new letters, and prove that we need them, and that the introduction of them would be a manifest gain, and this may be all very true; but if they imagine that they can persuade a people to adopt them, they know little of the extent to which its alphabet is entwined with the whole innermost life of a people. One may freely own that most present alphabets are redundant here, are deficient there; our English is as greatly at fault as any, perhaps is the most faulty of all, and with that we have chiefly to do. Unquestionably it has more letters than one to express one and the same sounds; while it has only one letter to express two or three sounds; it has sounds which are only capable of being expressed at all by awkward and roundabout expedients. Yet at the same time we must accept the fact, as we accept any other which is out of our power to

change – with regret indeed, but with a perfect acquiescence; . . . A people will no more quit their alphabet than they will quit their language; they will no more consent to modify the one at a command from without than the other. Centuries may bring about and sanction the introduction of a new one, or the dropping of an old. But to imagine that it is possible suddenly to introduce a group of ten new letters, as these reformers suggested – that they might as feasibly propose that the English language should form its comparatives and superlatives on some entirely new scheme, say in Greek fashion, or that we should agree to set up a dual; or that our substantives should return to their Anglo-Saxon declensions. Languages are not made, they grow; and alphabets are something more than mere mechanical devices, the conscious work of men's art. A very moderate acquaintance with the external laws which regulate human speech, and of the limits within which deliberate action upon it is possible, should bring home to us the hopelessness of the attempt to add to our alphabet ten entirely novel signs."

Archbishop Richard C. Trench. *English, past and present*, Humbolt Pub. Co, New York, 1855, pp.136-139.

". . . all the systems of phonetic writing and marking, often most carefully worked out from the philological and logical points of view, have been conspicuously lacking in revision from the psychological and pedagogical sides. Psychology and pedagogy have now advanced far enough to make such revision quite possible and practicable, and this is now one of the many important problems awaiting solution at the hands of our newly established psycho-educational departments." Edmund Burke Huey. *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, The MacMillan Co., 1928, p.358.

"Writing can also be considered as something that needs reforming. Idealists claim that if the rules of English spelling were to be simplified, children could learn to spell and read more easily. Some suppose, indeed, that if the rules of English grammar were to be simplified, or if an artificial language with simplified rules were to be created or propagated, then all men would share common experiences linguistically in the cause of some form of moral brotherhood. Thus far the work of the reformers has succeeded only in multiplying the number of proposals for reform. Yet one must admire all efforts to replace anecdotal laws with rational ones, including the efforts of the reformers."

Herbert Lander. *Language and Culture*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1966, p.9.

"There would be little reason to link spelling reform with the international language, were it not that a large proportion, perhaps a majority, of the proponents of phonetic spelling either assert or imply that English, once it were phonetically spelled, would display its other charms to such an advantage that the world could no longer resist it. This attitude is in part wishful thinking, and is definitely connected with the frame of mind described elsewhere. ('How wonderful it would be if we had a language for the entire world, and how much more wonderful if that language were our own!') " Mario Pei. *One Language for the World*, The Devin-Adair Co., 1961, p.113.

"Pronunciation, and the proper way of representing it in spelling, and the ways in which it has been represented at various periods – these are subjects which demand long and severe study before one has the right even to state facts."

Thomas R. Lounsbury. *English Spelling and Spelling Reform*, Harper & Brothers, 1908, p. 57.

"It is evident from the facts that the desire to make the spelling conform as far as possible to the pronunciation – the one object for which spelling was devised – is far from being confined to the men of the English-speaking race. Even when it cannot succeed in its main object, it aims to bring about uniformity by sweeping away the anomalous. The movement for spelling reform now going on with us is, therefore, no isolated undertaking. It is simply part of a world-wide movement in the

interests of law and order. On this subject the intellectual conscience of the users of speech among all thoroughly enlightened nations has now been distinctly awakened. The only peculiarity about English is that the need of such an awakening is for more pressing than in other tongues, and the difficulty of discovering the right track to follow is far greater."

Thomas R. Lounsbury. *op cit*, p. 48.

"The complexities of English spelling cannot be accounted for completely on the assumption that the system is phonemic with the irregularities of the sort listed under (2) and (3). It is necessary to assume that the system is partly phonemic and partly morphemic. To show this, consider the three written words 'so,' 'sew,' and 'sow.' The differences of spelling correlate with nothing at all in the phonemic system of the language, since the three words are pronounced identically. But the three words are different morphemes. The child learning to spell English can keep these spellings straight only by remembering which spelling correlates with which morpheme."

Charles F. Hockett. *A Course in Modern Linguistics*, The MacMillan Co, 1958, p.542.

". . . simple grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences are not only unproductive for the prediction of sound from spelling, but also are in conflict with the underlying system of the orthography. If the function of the teaching of reading is to establish productive habits which relate to the underlying patterns of the orthography rather than to impart instruction on statistical correlations, then both morphology and syntax must be considered in the development of reading materials."

Ruth H. Weir and Richard L. Venezky, "Spelling-to-Sound Patterns" in Kenneth S. Goodman (Editor). *The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process*, Wayne State Univ. Press, 1968, p.198.

'Tis said that fish will be the last to discover water. Likewise, most writers of textbooks on the teaching of reading appear to be the last ones to discover orthography and the myriad ways its roadblocks are very real to the beginner in reading. Most of these authors preach the mythology of phonics without the slightest consideration of the odds against the application of so-called phonic rules. Orthography is foreign to too many in the reading establishment, but reality is beginning to dawn on some.

Critical theoretical considerations, however, need to be resolved:

1. Spellings need to be phonemically based.
2. Spellings need to reveal both pronunciation and etymology (morphemics).
3. The writing system needs to be independent of language (speech).

These issues have been discussed in VIEWPOINTS III and have received honorable and dishonorable mention on the above questions. But future VIEWPOINTS will attempt to make explicit the positions which reflect different backgrounds in phonemics, morphology, orthography, and psycholinguistics. The major dilemma, of course, is the separation of fact from fiction and *opinions* from verifiable statements.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §3.2 p47 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1976 p10 in the printed version*]

5. Can Youx Say Sault? by Mickey Porter

The English language, as those of us who speak it know, is ridiculously easy, and mastering it is no trick at all.

Our spelling is standardized, our pronunciation is standardized, and anybody with enough linguistic savvy to know that he "threw" a ball is likewise aware that it "snew" last night.

Not long ago I was in Sault Sainte Marie, Mich., and became interested in the pronunciation of the first word – it's SOO, of course, – and furthermore, I wondered what a Sault might be.

Possibly I'm the last person to find this out, but at any rate, I did learn that the St. Mary River had unnavigable rapids; the Old French word for rapids was sault, pronounced soo; so the early French settlers named the town after the rapids of the river.

Now the general area is known as the Soo.

But the worst of it is that this intelligence prompted me to produce the following orthoepical, orthographical, paronomastical poem:

You'd have to say he was at fault
If some poor boob should call it Salt,
All unaware 'twas proper to
Pronounce it like the Indian, Sioux.
But how is anyone to know

The dopey French pronounce it so?
In English, if we'd spell the word
The way it is properly heard,
We'd know exactly what to do -

We'd spell it	S-o as in to
Or sue as in rue	Or Su as in gnu
Or sieu as in lieu	Or soup as in coup
Or soo as in woo	Or sew as in hew
Or seue as in queue	Or soe as in shoe
Or swo as in two	Or suoe as in moue
Or sough as in slough	Or soux as in roux
Or sous as in rendezvous	Or sout as in ragout
Or son as in you.	

See, it's trioux – English is the simplest language in the world.

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[*Spelling Reform Anthology §2.4 pp9–18 in the printed version*]
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1976 pp11–20 in the printed version*]

6. Spelling and Spelling Reform: Arguments Pro and Con, by Valerie Yule*(SR-1 used)

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Index

1. Introduction: Spelling Reform is Red, but not a Herring.
2. The claims of spelling reformers.
3. Arguments against spelling reform, and critique of these arguments.
4. Some opinions of reputable authorities and educational experts (representative of a much larger group.)
5. English spelling and 'specific learning difficulties' in reading and writing.
6. Why not spell any way you like?
7. The teaching of reading if there were a consistent English spelling.
8. The dangers of SR-1. The risks of letting Australians spell with short *e*-sound with the letter *e*.
9. SR-1 in the schools.
10. Comparative testing of spelling reform proposals.
11. The next step?
12. Recommendations for action on spelling reform.
13. For further information: Draft contents of a monograph in preparation on spelling and spelling reform.
14. Spelling Survey 'Beta.'
15. Bibliography, references: (still incomplete)

1. Introduction: Spelling Reform is Red – *but not a Herring.*

Modifying English spelling to remove its worst excesses and irrationalities is part of our fight against social injustice.

1. It was imposed in the first place in the 18th century in order to eliminate the visible signs of education to the elite. (Read Lord Chesterfield if you doubt this). The more difficult the spelling you espoused, the higher your snob rating. English spelling remains a visible sign of social oppression and social distinctions. It is indeed a dead hand of the past.
2. An important part of the fight for social justice is arousing peoples' consciousness of how they are oppressed. We do not have merely economic oppression but psychological oppression too, which we do not realise. We take for granted difficulties and suffering which are preventable, and put up with things that are completely irrational, not realising that they could be changed. In schools today many children are becoming quite vocal about how the adult world oppresses them – and English spelling is for them one of the most unjustifiable impositions of inconsistent, dishonest adults, who say, for example, our spelling is sensible – when the children can *see* that it is not.
3. English spelling does not handicap the privileged people in society, who have fewer problems with it because of their literate homes or verbal facility or good visual memories. Like athletes, they can jump the hurdles. But the cripples who cannot jump and have to clamber, if at all, are the multiply-handicapped and the disadvantaged and the foreigners. Where we spend months learning to read and write, they spend years on spelling. Many have not the capacity to cope with it as children without special coaching, or are only able to learn as adults – again with special

coaching – but they never become as proficient as others, and they have missed out on their years in school.

In the past a higher proportion learnt to read despite our spelling than do now because in the past:

- a. At least an hour a day and often more was spent just on spelling for 6 years. Today teachers want to 'educate' children, not teach spelling; the curriculum is full of other things. (Some schools still spend 1 hr. a day).
 - b. Children were punished for *not* learning, and so scared into learning. Do we want this still? What *positive* motive can we offer kids?
4. The more people can read, the more able they will be to know and fight for their rights and to act constructively to preserve and improve society. Therefore anything that helps people to learn to read and write better is a weapon in the fight for social justice, and should not be scorned.
5. Spelling reform has been a major plank in social reform in most countries which have changed their social systems in this century. (Whatever you may think of the social changes they made, the leaders of the successful changes regarded spelling reform as *part* of their fight, not a red herring).

cf. Russia, 1918, Turkey, 1929, Indonesia in their fight against the Dutch, Korea in its fight against Japan. Red China has been bringing in spelling reform even before they won the country; the pictograph system has been progressively simplified and reduced in number – and literacy rates have gone up, but it is still too difficult to achieve universal literacy, and so they are bringing in our alphabet with fonetic spelling – altho you would think their difficulties so much worse than ours:

- a. A completely different way of writing – not just minor modifications such as we seek. And their literary heritage, in that picture-writing, goes back thousands of years.
- b. Chinese has far more homophones than English, distinguished only by tone.
- c. Chinese has hundreds of languages, all linked by the picture-writing; now millions of Chinese must learn Mandarin to read it.

Yet they see universal literacy as so much a part of social justice, they go ahead. Already the fonetic writing appears frequently in dual combinations with the pictographs on walls, posters and periodicals (cf. how the Koreans switched to a new alphabet by the same dual transition period). A friend just come from Peking tells me that they confidently expect the transition to be made in five years. And we boggle at the few changes we need to make our own creaky system work – as if we were too mean to pay for a few spare parts when our car had broken down. We prefer to insist nothing is wrong – and keep on pushing it.

6. A red herring is what distracts attention from the main issue. Since the simple changes suggested require no money, time or effort except a willingness to try it out, it can hardly be said to be a distraction on these counts. (Unless everything a human being does that is not directly fighting for social justice in the economic sphere is a red herring. Do you go to the motion pictures? Do you spend time with your family?)
7. The degree to which it need not be a distraction is seen in the fact that people who imagine SR-1 would be disturbing can look at how little disturbance has been caused by other spelling and orthographic changes already generally accepted in the interests of efficient communication, e.g.:
- a. American spellings permitted as dual spellings in schools.
 - b. Omission of apostrophes in Scottish education and even in some Australian publications.

- c. Changes such as Ms. and the computer numbers on cheques, etc.
- d. A good deal of simplification of technical terms in cybernetics, etc.

Exercise for you: In the streets and when travelling, pass the time by reading notices, etc., and note:
 - how many silent letters are quite superfluous. (When in doubt, cut it out.)
 - how many simple changes would still leave words completely recognisable and yet so much easier to learn and spell.

If we only dealt with these, at least the burden would be lightened a little – and then we could decide whether we wanted to do anything about 'trickier' ones. Half a loaf is always better than no bread – and it might be enough – or it might encourage us further. Why not have the courage to find out? It is not as hazardous as smoking.

(Note re. our heritage:

1. Most books in the world today were printed or reprinted in the past 20 years. In fact only a small minority have read anything in the past ten years that was not printed within their lifetime.
2. A sensible spelling reform would not be so alien, so anyone who wanted to could read old spelling, as you read 1st Folio Shakespeare and English students read Chaucer.

"There is in fact no evidence at all for the main claims of spelling reformers." (quoted by Barry Hill, *The Melbourne Age*, Jan. 1975.

2. The Main Claims of Spelling Reformers.

1. The major claim is that English spelling needs reform.
2. Other countries have successfully modernized their spellings, and set precedents for us.
3. The difficulty of present English spelling is greatest for those who are already most handicapped in society – the disadvantaged, migrants, and children who are handicapped intellectually, emotionally, physically or culturally.
4. Present readers would have less difficulty reading a consistent English spelling than those now functionally illiterate have trying to read present spelling.
5. The major barrier against spelling reform is our own prejudice against change in what has been drilled into us as 'right' without us ever having a chance to contest it. The effects of this type of prejudice appear throughout history against every reform that has tried to benefit the human race.
6. That people can adjust to changes in spelling – as they have adjusted to radical changes in fashions, decimal currency, metric measurement, forms of transport, heating, communication, etc., etc. The bases of our society itself are questioned. Why keep spelling as the last paper tiger?
7. English spelling has always been changing – altho too slowly. It is already being quietly modified without disaster by dual spellings in dictionaries, and c.f. the recent modifications in the Victorian Spelling Book, the Scottish Spelling Book, etc. – none of which have attracted any public furore at all.
8. Modifications to English spelling such as the open 'short-e' the spelling of SR-1, can easily be tried out; if they are unsatisfactory, they will fail and no harm would be done – as the attempted American reform 70 years ago failed because people feared being thought 'uneducated' if they spelt more sensibly. On the other hand, if 'the time is ripe,' the changes will stick.

9. There are so many barriers to universal literacy that we cannot leave this one alone as if it were the only problem learners face.

These claims can be investigated – much evidence exists already.

3. Particular Arguments Against Spelling Reform.

a) *Popular:*

1. Our spelling enshrines the history of our language.
2. Our English language is very rich; if you change the spelling, the richness of the language is lost.
3. Changing spelling would mean the loss of our literary heritage.
4. Present spelling is beautiful and changes offend the eye.
5. If we have a spelling reform, we should have a perfectly phonetic one, and since that is impossible, reform is impossible.
6. Everyone should be allowed to spell as they like.
7. Hard spelling is good discipline for children.
8. Reading is on the way out, so it is a waste of time bothering with spelling reform anyway.
9. English spelling has never changed, and so must never change.

b) *Scholarly:*

1. English spelling is really quite regular even though it does not look like it.
2. The connections of related words, and the connection of the spelling with the underlying deep structure of our language would be lost. This would affect
 - a) Children's extension of vocabulary.
 - b) Ease of adult reading, undistracted by phonetic representation of words.
3. Homophones (words which sound the same) would be spelt the same and this would cause more confusion than it does when we talk.
4. Ninety percent of our words would need changing. This argument is often advanced by those who also support statement b) 1.
5. Spoken English varies so much that common ground for reasonable spelling is impossible.
6. Better sound-symbol correspondence makes reading speeds slower. (Conversely, does worse correspondence make reading speeds faster?)
7. Anything that tends to make writing easier will make reading more difficult and vice-versa.
8. The present spelling is the best imaginable for children learning to read.

Spelling reformers claim that all these arguments are untenable, that the research claimed to support them can be shown to fail to do so, and that evidence can demonstrate the opposite case.

Critique of arguments against spelling reform

Summary. (For detail, see Monograph Report).

a) *Popular arguments*

1. English spelling is not reliable as a shrine for the history of our language, which is better seen in reference books. Who wants to use it as a shrine anyway? We don't expect cars to look like horseless carriages.

2. Our English language is rich and marvellous; do not confuse it with the spelling. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.
 - a) In many ways a sensible spelling would make it easier to read Shakespeare in the original than it is now. He spelt 'cough' as 'cof.'
 - b) Once you are an expert reader, you can soon read anything, even another language – and more people would be expert readers. Expert readers today can read Old English spelling.
 - c) In any case, most of what anyone has read has been printed or reprinted in the last 20 years.
4. Beauty in spelling, fashion, art, women, depends on what you are used to seeing.
5. A *practical* spelling reform is needed for *practical* reasons.
6. Freedom to communicate more effectively is more important than free spelling at the cost of communication.
7. Good discipline for children is learning to work hard on tasks seen as sensible.
8. If literacy is lost, we do indeed lose our English heritage, as well as a major dimension of human experiencing and communication across time.
9. English spelling has always been changing, altho the tempo varies.

b) Scholarly arguments

1. An analysis of the Stanford computer studies shows that the 'regularity' of English is quite useless for learning to read and spell; even a computer given 203 rules for spelling can predict only 26% of the words Form II students are expected to spell correctly.
2. An analysis of the spelling list for Grades III-VI shows that only 10% of the non-phonetic spellings there have any connection with 'underlying structure' which Chomsky claims that English orthography represents. A further analysis shows how inconsistent English spelling is in even the nature of the connections that do appear.
3. English spelling is already full of words with different meanings which sound and are spelt the same. (112 on this MS page.' A phonetic spelling would only add 24, i.e. over 77% of the homographs exist already.) We use context both when we talk and when we read, and so are not confused. (e.g. show, can, sound, will). But in partial compensation, many homographs would then be spelt differently, e.g. read, does, present, tears, on this page.
4. Most of the change necessary for sensible spelling is in cutting out surplus letters, (which would save 5-10% of paper, ink, effort and time) and very few words would look unrecognizably different (e.g. cof and cough).
5. Dictionaries now use 'standard English' as guides for pronunciation; however much our speech does vary, we *think* we are talking the same, and what we *think* is what would make consistent spelling internationally feasible.
6. Only readers expert in present irregular spelling would be slowed down by better sound-symbol correspondence. If you learnt to read a phonetic spelling, it would not affect you as you developed your automatic habits of meaning-abstraction.

7. It can be disproven that *anything* that makes writing easier will make reading more difficult and vice-versa – for example, the more unnecessary letters are omitted, the quicker the writing and easier the reading. The only exception is of course, that the more careless the writing, the more illegible and full of mistakes.
8. The claim that our present spelling is the best possible for children learning to read is not only obviously untrue by common sense and common observation, but has been disproved again and again, notably by the i.t.a. experiment. (See Warburton and Southgate's *i.t.a.: An Independent Evaluation* which reviewed *all* the evidence, rather than look only at one study that happens to support your own preconceived ideas.) i.t.a. was shown to have so many advantages in helping children to learn to read and write quickly and successfully, that it is a pity that it has the dual disadvantages of being unattractive to adult teachers (only 10% of English infant teachers have ever even tried it) and requiring transition to present spelling.
9. A gradual transition, with dual spellings (the present and 'tha better' alternative) both permissible in the dictionaries until one or the other was superseded in public usage, would inconvenience nobody – neither present spellers nor learner-readers. This has been the way the language and spelling has changed before, and as it can continue to change, – but please God, a little quicker and in more sensible directions.

4. Some Opinions of Reputable Authorities and Educational Experts.

1. H. W. Fowler (lexicographer of the Concise Oxford Dictionary), in Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 1950, pp. 553-5.

"The notorious difficulty of English spelling and the growing impatience caused by it make it almost imperative to declare one's general attitude towards reform . . . that the substitution for our present chaos of a phonetically consistent method that should not sacrifice the many merits of the old spelling would be of incalculable value . . ." Fowler mentions some of the problems and opts for gradual reform . . . that "its spelling not be revolutionised but amended in detail, here a little and there a little as absurdities became intolerable, until a result is obtained that shall neither overburden schoolboys nor stultify intelligence nor outrage the scholar. In this book some modest attempts are made at cleaning up the more obtrusive untidinesses; certain inconsistencies have been regarded as in the present diffusion of literacy no longer required of us . . ." and so Fowler himself has made some contributions to spelling reform without outraging anybody, "desirable minor reforms" as he calls them.

He then goes on to discuss examples of spelling "philologically inexplicable." "Hence a larger proportion of the tears shed over spelling. Little relief can be given; the words in which there is no guide as to whether there is one consonant or two are not a score or so of which a list could be made and learnt, but thousands; nothing short of a complete spelling book will serve the turn of a really weak speller. . . "

2. The Report of the Bullock Committee on the Teaching of Reading. (*A Language for Life*. H.M.S.O. 1975, pub. by the British Gov't) pp. ?

The Committee considered spelling reform to be outside its terms of reference, and so did not feel itself competent to declare itself on the subject, altho members were divided on whether they thought a wholesale reform was desirable. However, the report was univocal in criticising present spelling:

"If one were intent on constructing a writing system from scratch the obvious course would be to aim at a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes." (pp.85-6). The report goes on to demonstrate how much written English falls short of this ideal, citing evidence of

research and horrible examples (e.g. (1) *one, home, comes, women, of, or, to, go.* (2) *aisle, height, eye, I, phial, ice, high, island, buy, guide, sty, rhyme.*)

"The complexity of English spelling patterns does appear to retard progress" in learning to read. (p.87). "We have already noted the bewildering complexities of the English spelling system and it is self-evident that a simplification of the relationship between sound and spellings must make it easier for a child to make progress in the early stages. If there are fewer items to be learned, this must reduce the time required, and if there are fewer ambiguities, there will be less confusion. All this is amply confirmed by research. Following a careful review of the evidence, the authors of the Schools Council Report on i.t.a. came to this conclusion:

"There is no evidence whatsoever that the best way to learn to read traditional orthography is to learn to read *in* traditional orthography . . ." (p. 110)

The Committee cited evidence demonstrating the especial difficulties of learning to read in English, compared with that in other countries, e.g. the research of Berdianski, Cronnel and Koehler (1969) who

"examined the 6,092 two-syllable words in the comprehension vocabularies of a group of six to nine-year old children. They recorded 211 different spellings for the phonemes of these words, and these required 166 rules to govern their use. Over 10% of the words still had to be left aside as 'exceptions.' Sixty of these rules applied to consonants, which are usually thought to be 'regular' (p.86).

"We must emphasise that this level of decoding is of particular importance in the early stages of learning to read." (p. 87)

3. Dr. John Downing, author of *Comparative Reading*, (1973), who was the director of the i.t.a. project in Britain said: "it is important to understand that the i.t.a. experiment took place as a test of the effects of spelling reform. . . . The conclusions are quite clear that a reform in English spelling would cut failure in learning to read by about 50%."

On the question of SR-I, Downing states categorically, the difference between i.t.a. and what Harry Lindgren is proposing very much favors the latter." (personal communication, Feb. 1975).

4. Carol Chomsky, "Reading, Writing and Phonology," *Harvard Educational Review*, May, 1970. pp.287-308.

"It is highly likely that the child, however, in the beginning stages of reading, does assume that the orthography is in some sense 'regular' with respect to pronunciation. In order to progress to more complex stages of reading, the child must abandon this early hypothesis. . ." (p. 299). Chomsky goes on to demonstrate what considerations of 'learned words and complex derivational patterns' are involved and that 'it is by no means obvious that a child of six has mastered this phonological system in full' (p.301) and that is why 'literacy acquisition from this point of view may well extend over a much longer period of time than ordinarily assumed' (p.302). Chomsky concludes by looking at the 'other side of the coin' and 'to restore a sense of balance' admits the 'less consistent aspects' of English spelling, and quotes one of the hundreds of humorous verses that exist on *Hints on Pronunciation for Foreigners*.

5. The marketers of dictionaries might well be considered reputable authorities on the public's capacity to read and write present spelling, and there is perhaps no more trenchant comment on English spelling that could be made than the fact that Anglo-Saxon countries alone have a

steady, permanent market for *Handbooks for Terrible Spellers*. This type of book is produced at about the rate of four a year in English.

6. There is also some point perhaps in citing that master of myth and fantasy, Jakob Grimm, who saw our 'whimsical, antiquated orthography' as the only barrier to the universality of the marvellous English language.

5. Spelling and 'Specific Learning Disabilities' in Reading and Writing English Spelling – a problem we set the children.

Successful adults usually had no problem learning to read and spell, and cannot understand why other people find it hard. We are like athletes who cannot understand why cripples cannot jump a barbed wire fence. English spelling is very much like barbed wire.

A. Why English spelling is harder for children at risk to Specific Learning Difficulties than you remember it being for you.

1. In the first place, they already have language difficulties, and while academics like Gillooly claim that English spelling is 'a near optimal system of representing the English language' for those who are already expert in the English language and 'instinctively' understand its 'underlying structure' *the children we are concerned with are not expert.*
2. *Sequencing problems* are compounded when spelling is sometimes sequential, sometimes not.
3. *Visual memory difficulties*, when most of our spelling requires rote memory.
4. *Auditory discrimination problems*, when so much of our spelling does not match the sounds properly in any case, making for more confusion.
5. *Sound blending problems*. When so much of our spelling cannot be sounded out for blending, children with shaken confidence give up trying.
6. *Weak figure-ground discrimination*, analysis, synthesis, etc. An inconsistent spelling adds booby-traps for those who are still shaky.
7. *Variability and difficulties in control of emotions, senses, movements*. Such children lack inner security and are more easily 'thrown' when they cannot find reliable structure in what they must learn, and more easily develop learning blocks when they cannot predict which spelling is regular and which not.
8. *Tedium*. They have to spend so much more time learning spelling, with less success, than other children; it takes up more of their school-time at the expense of 'intelligent' learning, and school takes on the colour of distaste.
9. *Continual mistakes* which they cannot avoid by using intelligence. They feel failures and this often generalises to other areas of learning also.
10. *Decoding reading* is so hard for them that they get entangled in the mechanics of reading, and so are handicapped in learning to read for meaning.
11. *Poor generalising ability*, as a result of insufficient opportunities to generalise, so they don't make the 'intuitive generalisations' about reading and spelling that textbooks often blithely say that children make without being taught.

12. *Less flexible sets*, so it is hard to accept exceptions to general rules.

13. *'Difficult' children* are more likely to stick their heels in and say, 'I refuse to learn this. It is silly. I'm not silly.'

B. *Comment:*

When a child cannot read or spell, adults try to diagnose what is wrong *with him*. The children themselves, when they haven't submitted to the adult's diagnosis, say 'It's the spelling.'

The i.t.a. experiments have demonstrated that with a consistent spelling, the failure rate in learning to read can be reduced by something like 50%. This is not to be dismissed as peanuts.*

*(trivial)

Most other languages except Chinese have spellings sufficiently consistent for children to learn to read in 18 months – not 3 years as with us – and for adults learning the language, to pick it up in one or two lessons. Our own children and migrants must learn two conflicting languages, *the spoken and the written*.

6. Why not spell eny way You Like?

A. The reason for uniform spelling is to make communication easy.

- 1) The reader can redily identify the words you are using.
- 2) It is possible to read very fast with automatic word-recognition, but that is slowed down by unfamiliar spellings. With spelling reforms, the reader adjusts quickly with practice to such uniform changes as we have to American spellings, but if everyone spelt as they liked, this adjustment would be impossible.
- 3) The reader can look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary, and so can understand what he is reading and also extend his vocabulary. This is particularly important for migrants and children.
- 4) One suggestion is that everyone can spell as they like except printers, typists, etc. This would place an intolerable burden on *them* and on publishers, given the task of rewriting all MSS. They would be additionally handicapped since presumably they would not have learnt a uniform spelling at school eny more than anyone else.
- 5) Some bad spellers are good readers, but on the whole, those who cannot spell have difficulty in word recognition – in reading too. Bad spellers left to spell how they liked would be even worse.
- 6) Those alredy handicapped by finding literacy more difficult to achieve would find reading even harder, with so meny more variant spellings to decipher.
- 7) Even with our present spelling, children learn more uniform pronunciation of words, to improve communication. This is particularly important for migrants.
- 8) A uniform spelling that was consistent and economical would extend the possibilities of automatic word-recognition by scanning machines reading aloud to the blind.

B. The arguments for 'spelling eny way you like' would have little or no force if we had a simple, consistent spelling.

- 1) D. M. Bennett and others have shown that learning spelling lists in school does not help much (while M. Peters and others have shown that most people still have to apply their minds to learn spelling somehow). If English spelling were consistent, children would be able to reason out how words were spelt and not have to rely on rote-learning. Reaching the basic principles of spelling would be short, merciful and once-and-for-all.
- 2) 'Doing your own thing' Since spelling is only a tool to communicate, with consistent spelling children would be much freer much younger and earlier to 'do their own thing' in expressing themselves and communicating effectively, as well as reading what they wanted to. 'Spelling your own thing' has as little point compared with those self-actualising possibilities as insisting on your own idiosyncratic techniques in the technical aspects of grammar, ballet dancing, mountain-climbing, architecture, sports, auto-driving, or any human activity requiring skill or social co-operation.

7. The Teaching of Reading if there were Consistent English Spelling.

(Assuming a reform of present spelling, not a new or revised alphabet, nor major alterations that would make past and present spelling difficult to read.)

1. Digraphs can be linked in primer reading (e.g. th as th) so that there is always one-sound, one-symbol correspondence at the beginning of learning to read.
When teaching with linked script, *letters and sounds can* easily be taught in consistent and sensible relationships. *a* always sez short-*a* except in digraphs, and as these can be taught initially as linked letters, there need be no early inconsistency to confuse the child.
2. The child *can write and read what he wants* to as soon as he is able to connect sound and symbol and is perceptually adept for the particular size of the print.
3. This means that his *vocabulary and his writing style* can advance at an early age because he can read material at his mental age level, not just at a reading-age level dependent on spelling skills.
4. *Teaching in other subjects* and areas can advance much faster because children can read facilely in it, and can work independently very early. It is much easier then for children to work at their own pace, and race ahead to hold their interest in a subject, insted of being held back by poor reading, and made to dislike subjects because they are associated with unpleasant struggling to read and decode.
5. *Library books* can be appropriate for the mental and emotional age of the child. He need read no tripe that he doesn't want to.
6. *Methods of teaching reading* can be improved in meny other ways now impossible, not just by the reduction of unnecessary difficulties and less wasted time, but by better analogy, phonic dissection and synthesis (e.g. develop early skill in fast reading, and in using context to aid fast reading and comprehension. For fluent reading, rhythm could, I think, be improved by giving children vowel patterns to read, which when red aloud, can be recognised as a familiar verse or nursery story – so that even at the stage of learning letter sounds, children are getting the idea of flow in reading, and developing good eye-movements for fast reading.)

The initial teaching alfabet experiments have demonstrated incontrovertibly the value of a consistent spelling for the unhindered development of children's spoken, written and reading language. We now need a permanent consistent English spelling that does not have the transition and unfamiliarity drawbacks of i.t.a., and which would make unnecessary any transition (with its time-consuming delay and impediment).

8. The Dangers of SR-1.

What are the risks of letting Australians spell the short-e sound with e?

1. The ACES Review editorial of Dec. 1974 suggests that the risks are as great as that of metrication which will only reach the terminal point of its operation 'when we are all speaking French and reading in the history books of the crushing defeat inflicted by Napoleon on Wellington at Waterloo.'

This type of 'thin-end-of-the-wedge' argument is used about any attempt to reform anything, and the ACES example shows to what ridiculous lengths the imagination can go.

The great advantage of SR-1 as a first step in spelling reform is that it is *not an irreversible step*. If it does not work, it will not be the thin edge of any wedge; it will simply fade out, as so many previous ill-timed attempts have faded out.

2. *Any change for better or worse involves some risk*. Let us then look clearly at what risks could result from allowing Australian adults and school children to write the short-e sound always with the spelling 'e'.

- a) At present 210 words in the basic spelling list for Grades III-IV are already spelt with 'e' for the short-e sound. Now 28 more words in which the sound 'e' is spelt variously 'ea', 'a', 'ie', 'ue', 'ai', and 'eig', could also be spelt as they sound, e.g.:

alredy	bred	brekfast	breth	ded	deth	fethers
hed	helthy	heven	hevy	insted	led	lether
ment	mesure	plesant	plesure	redy	welthy	wether
eny	meny	frend	gess	sed	bery	foren

- b) In any page of print using SR-1, the reader could expect to see 2-5 respelt words on the average – i.e. often not more than the usual number of writer's misspellings or printer's errors, which people no longer take as reasons for cancelling subscriptions or apoplexy.
- c) Would present readers be able to read anything written using SR-1? No worries – you have been doing it! Much has been made of the possible confusion between the different meanings of *bred*, *red*, and *led*, but as it is there are different meanings of *read* and *lead*. Context makes clear even such hypothetical examples as 'This is a little red book,' just as it clarifies the hypothetical example in present spelling of 'The truck had a tender behind.'
- d) Could children using SR-1 be able to read material using old spellings? Yes, no worries, because they would only need *recognition* memory which is easier than *recall* (it is easier *to read* than *to spell*). Teachers would only have to tell them there were dual spellings – as there are with *jail* and *gaol*, *judgment* and *judgement*, *connection* and *connexion*, *surprise* and *surprize*, etc. Context is a further guide. There is also the major point that it is always easier to build *from the simple to the more complex* in learning than *to start with the complex*, so SR-1 children could even have the advantage in learning to read present spellings.
- e) Could easier spelling sap children's moral fibre, making them intellectually flabby and work-shy?

The reverse is more likely, since nothing sabotages one's attitude to work more than realising it is futile and stupid. At present stupid spelling only encourages children to think that other adult

demands may be stupid also.

Sensible spelling would mean that one used one's reason to spell, instead of rote memory, thus encouraging children to use and trust their reason.

I believe and practice the Puritan Work Ethic, and believe that children should learn that Hard Work is stimulating and worth-while and necessary for self-actualisation and social welfare – but I want them to learn this through doing worth-while Hard Work, not mentally stagnating memorising other generations' mistakes. Simpler spelling would give more opportunity for the former in the school program.

- f) "To teach a few children that they can if they wish spell 'said' as 'sed' for example, is to implicitly authorise the development of a unique and individual lexicon for each person, which means ultimately of course the end of all communication and civilisation." ACES Review, op. cit. (Another superb hyperbolic exaggeration).

By analogy, Samuel Johnson was also presaging the end of civilisation when he permitted two spellings of many words in his dictionary – a practice which lexicographers continue – and when the Education Department permitted American as well as English spellings in Australia. To paint a zebra crossing on a road is not to authorise jaywalking.

- g) Would Australians be internationally ostracised? Would anyone lose a job for using SR-1, or fail to get one? In the 'good old days' of pedantry perhaps, but hardly likely today, when even academics in English departments cannot always spell impeccably. (I checked the word myself.)

It is my belief that the climate has changed so much, and British and American assumptions of their own innate superiority have been undermined so much, that an Australian example would be seen as an initiative, not cheek or presumption, and would soon be followed, since the need for change is becoming increasingly recognized, but no one dares to 'bell the cat.'

3. *Who will be the Guinea-pigs?*

Who can be the 'guinea-pigs' in any research or experiment in spelling reform, and what risks will they run?

A. For SR-1 'first-step' reform, spelling short-e sound with 'e'.

- a) *Literate adults* can use this spelling whenever possible. It would be worthwhile to have a register of volunteers willing to try the reform for one year, and survey them at the end as to:
- i. Any adverse effects on them professionally.
 - ii. The public reaction they experienced;
 - iii. Their own feelings about:
 - (a) continuing to use SR-1, and
 - (b) any further changes, and what these should be.
- b) *Volunteer periodicals* to include a column using this spelling in each issue, without making any public comment about it, noting any recognition by readers that this is anything except the usual misprints, and possibly after a time surveying readers about their reaction.
- c) *Schools*. In many schools there is a policy that students are not penalised for making spelling mistakes. It would seem reasonable that where staff-majority agrees, and parents and students are agreeable, that the students could be told explicitly that they will not be penalised for using either present or SR-1 spelling for the short-sound in words, for an experimental period

of one year. The results could be evaluated in terms of the effect on student's interest and attention to spelling (not only a Hawthorne effect), and whether this in turn affected motivation for literacy, and staff, parent and student attitudes after a year.

d) *Individual students* should be contacted for opinions as to the usefulness of SR-1.

B. *For Other Research.* Most of the research involved with the psychology of spelling is no different from the usual sort of educational research and can be conducted in the same way. However, when research involves the coding process or attitude change, adults may be concerned about confusing or otherwise affecting students. My own preliminary studies indicate that such research helps children to understand present spelling, rather than confusing them, but teachers and researchers may wish to monitor pilot studies very carefully. They may even wish to use only absolutely hopeless students, as a way of giving them a 'last chance' to learn how to read.

9. The Introduction of SR-1 in Schools.

A. To permit SR-1 to be used in schools as alternative spellings for words with the short-e sound would not be a major step at all, unlike other spelling reform proposals.

1. As opponents of the reform themselves ingenuously point out, (see e.g. *The Teachers' Journal*, 25.2.1975) the short vowel sound as in *bet* is already represented by the letter 'e' in 91% of words, – so this is only the logical extension to the other 9%.
2. Dual spellings for many words have been allowed by dictionaries right from the start, (including Samuel Johnson's)
3. The Victoria Education Department's most recent spelling books officially permits dual spellings for words spelt differently in America and Britain – and I think the trend is for students to follow the simpler of the two when there is a choice.
4. The reform also follows students' 'natural,' 'logical' spelling. Learners always spell the short-e sound with 'e' until they are taught all the horrible exceptions. In my own research, *Spell it how you would like to spell it*, the short-e sounds are almost 100% spelt by subjects with the letter 'e' only, (as in *tresure, sed, insted, certenly*) however varied some of the solutions of other sound-symbol relationships might be. The exceptions to this generalisation tend to be people who cannot imagine any change from what has been instilled into them.

B. *Testing what value SR-1 might have in schools.* This is not as difficult as you might imagine, and there are several avenues of approach, once one has the information on which schools or teachers are using or permitting the use of SR-1, and some information on the ways in which they do this.

1. General reading tests, using both SR-1 and traditional spellings, would be open to the criticism that the SR-1 teachers might all be the better teachers, haloed with Hawthorne effects, etc. – but that in itself might be significant. Children's own writing is another area.
2. Children and secondary students' own opinions are not unimportant.
3. Research at the infant level, observing whether children taught in SR-1 can use context to make the transition to traditional spelling in their reading, if they know that it is possible to encounter variant spellings.

10. Comparative Testing of Spelling Reform Proposals.

This is somewhat tricky in practice, altho the hundreds of proposals since the 15th century all tend

to fall into one of 3 groups: alfabet reform, additions to the present alfabet, and minimum-change reforms to tidy up the present system.

I have been carrying out some pilot experiments on acceptability and ease of learning of a variety of Spelling reform proposals, using as material a standard piece of prose (a fairy story containing as much really awful English spelling as possible) which has been translated into a variety of different reformed spellings by the authors of the proposals or recognised agents.

These spelling systems included: i.t.a., Wijk's Regularized English, Paulsen's Torskript, Kingsley Read's Sound-spell, Arnold Rupert's Ryt, Eustace's System II New Spelling, Wilkinson's World English (FWI), Reg. Dean's Britic.

The subjects have ranged from Grade 4 school children to adults, migrant and Australian.

Extraneous factors tend to be involved, e.g. Britic, which substitutes surplus letters of the alphabet for the instances where others have two tasks, or for major digraphs, is intellectually rather fascinating to play round with. Torskript is also an intriguing decoding exercise for those who can read already, and Soundspel is graphically pleasing to see.

However, altho the tests prove that given a key to a consistent spelling of eny sort, almost anyone who realises that the letters represent sounds can decode and read almost anything, there are considerable variations in which are the easiest to remember and apply oneself.

So far the incontestable finding is that most subjects

- a) would like spelling reform,
- b) would prefer a minimal change one, that benefitted *them* personally, by leaving them with what they had learnt already, but gave them security agenst making mistakes by tidying up the irregular spellings that are difficult to remember.

Further analysis is to be made.

11. The Next Step?

A great advantage of trying SR-1 as the first step in improving our spelling is that it gives ideal opportunity to:

1. develop attitudes to spelling reform that are not based on prejudice, but on some practical experience. The public as well as the experts will have had a chance to realise what it is all about – and they have a right to this chance since it affects them so directly.
2. find out what happens as a result of the first step – not only in peoples' attitudes and expectations about literacy, but what ramifications and implications, foreseen and unforeseen, may appear.
3. be able to consider the next step, if eny, on the basis of more information and experience, including the findings of the research that we hope will be carried out in the next year or two.

The range of possibilities include:

- a) dropping even SR-1,
- b) another single-sound spelling change, such as SR-2,
- c) an interlinked pattern of moderate spelling modification (on the Dutch lines – for example, a consistent representation of consonants or all short vowels.
- d) a major reform removing all irregularities in spelling in favour of a consistent system either phonemically or combination phonemic-linguistically based, or
- e) major reform going further into a modified, augmented or revised alphabet.

Possibility e) I consider to be out of the question at present in view of the necessity for an internationally recognised alphabet for as many languages as possible – although a few augmentations such as we have already in many languages would still be possible (c.f. Spanish, German, French, Swedish, etc.). Such changes would require common agreement among the major European and Anglo-Saxon countries and government authorisation. Even d) would require agreement among English-speaking countries.

If SR-1 becomes a fast-spreading success, there could well be demand from all sections of society for international agreement on a 'pattern' reform for SR-2, to be agreed on by those involved with the practical aspects of spelling (in the news media, education, publishing, technology, etc.) as well as by experts from research in psychology, linguistics, education, etc. and given government authorisation.

Possibility a) must also be recognised by those who support SR-1 and by those who oppose it.

Possibility b) could well follow the success of SR-1 in becoming acceptable for general use without any legislation being required – the change entering the spelling on the same trial-and-error basis as all spelling changes and all language changes have originally – with lexicographers merely recording and establishing the changes that occur.

Possibilities b) and c) now require thought, investigation, and pilot study. I think my own recommendation for SR-2 would be that all f-sounds be spelt with 'f' instead of 'ph', 'gh', 'ft', or 'lf' or 'v', and that this spelling be permissible one year after SR-1. (it would affect 16 words in the Grades III-VI Basic Spelling List).

12. Recommendations for Action on Spelling Reform.

1. The active encouragement of public and student interest, so that everyone becomes well-informed on the wider aspects as well as the personal or specialist ones. It must be realised that Spelling is only a *coding* game, and a tool for learning as well as for communication, and therefore should be as efficient as possible.
2. The nomination of a reputable body, or concerned members within it, co-opting as necessary, to form the Victorian centre for collection and publication of information regarding spelling reform research and literature, with funding to be provided for this purpose.
3. The encouragement of responsible papers and discussion of all aspects of reform in professional journals and at conferences.
4. The nomination of a committee sponsored by relevant bodies to organise a conference on spelling and spelling reform in 1977.
5. The encouragement of responsible research on all aspects of spelling reform and the psychology of spelling, within the Education Department, by the Australian Council for Educational Research, and by research students in tertiary and post-graduate studies.

Such research to include:

- a) Reviews of previous and current research.
- b) Experimental investigation of claims of opponents of spelling reform, e.g.
Does phonetic spelling slow down reading once practice effects are established?
Do homographs in present spelling slow down readers in general practice?

How much of our worst spelling has any relation in fact to Carol Chomsky's notion of representation of underlying structure?

How 'regular' is English spelling for the learner at different stages of the learning-to-read process?

Group differences in practice effects in adapting to SR-1. The effect of exposure to SR-1 over a 2-year period.

Do children, while learning to read, effectively abstract meaning from words without phonic clues to the words? How does automatic speed-reading really develop in the fastest readers?

c) Experiments in the teaching of reading with 'double-decker' spelling, giving 'consistent' spelling cribs for reading at a child's mental age level, including evaluation of effects on his 'oracy' and vocabulary development.

d) Investigation of the sort of spelling easiest for learning to read.

e) Investigation of the sort of spelling that would be most efficient once the children could read in it. Comparative tests of different proposals.

f) Experimental investigation of how much a consistent spelling would really be affected by international differences in spoken English.

g) Attitude change: measuring changes after exposure to information or experience in using SR-1.

h) Marketing; Gimmicks, gams and gadgets to make spelling reform a fascinating subject.

6. That no penalties be imposed on anyone, adult or student, using the spelling 'e' for the short-sound for a trial period of two years.

13. For Further Information, Contents of a Monograph in Preparation.

Readers are referred to a draft Monograph on Spelling and Spelling Reform being prepared by V. Yule (draft copy held by Access Skills Project Team of the Curriculum Standing Committee - Technical Schools – of the Curriculum and Research Branch of the Education Department; by the Victorian Action Committee Against Illiteracy; and by the author), for further information and evidence. This report will cover the following areas:

1. *Does English Spelling Need Reform?* – a demonstration of how awful it really is and a discussion of the arguments put up by opponents who suggest that:
 - a) It is 'really quite regular,'
 - b) More regular spelling would make reading slower;
 - c) Present spelling represents the underlying structure of the language;
 - d) Making spelling easier would make reading harder and vice versa;
 - e) Present spelling is the easiest possible for children to learn;
 - f) Eny spelling reform would mean the loss of our heritage.

This includes discussion and critique of the works of Carol Chomsky, Paul Hanna and the Stanford computer studies, Lee, Jacobson, Wijk, Gillooly, Frank Smith, Sir James Pitman, John Downing and the i.t.a. experiments, the Simplified Spelling Society, Laubach, Skeat, Biack, Ripman and Archer, Mrs. Smelt, Goodman, Hodges, Hildreth, N. Chomsky and M. Halle, etc.

2. *Other Countries have Reformed their Spellings:* accounts of spelling reform in the Netherlands, Finland, Turkey, China, Korea, Portugal, Russia, etc; the reading process in countries with more consistent spellings such as Norway, and Persi-writing, Middle Eastern lands; Japan, where children's first learning to read is syllabic; Pitjiti-jara, which tribal aborigines in Central Australia learn to read in months; what happens in bilingual countries where children learn English and, say, Welsh, Erse, Bengali, etc.; our rival reactionary, France; cross-cultural studies on reading difficulties.

3. *Research Aspects of Spelling and Spelling Reform.*

- a) *Linguistics*: Structural linguistics, transformational grammar, psycholinguistics.
- b) *Etymology*: The effects of pseudo-learning for retro-grade spelling. How SR-1 revives the spellings of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton.
- c) *Phonology, Dialects, 'Standard English'* and related questions; Homophones. 'Why a perfectly phonetic spelling is an unnecessary (and impossible) ideal.
- d) *History and Sociology of Spelling*: How spelling has been a mark of social class for a mandarin elite, a sacred symbol, an initiation rite into the educated classes, a security shibboleth instead of being what it should be: a tool for the most effective communication and use of our real heritage, the English language.

The relation of attitudes to spelling to social change in general. The need for an effective spelling in the modern world. Future shock at change.

- e) *The Psychology of Learning Spelling and Reading*: Research needed on untested assumptions about the nature and development of automatic reading habits; optimal media for learning language skills; the available evidence on the effects of learning a consistent spelling on later T.O. spelling; the effects of dual spellings for words.

The study of irregularity of spelling in terms of the learner, rather than of the adult expert reader. Brief notes on some nine small scale studies in spelling and reading by V. Yule, 1972-75.

- f) *The Psychology of the Literate Reader and Spelling Reform*. The evidence on whether the 'public' would stand for spelling reform. The development of more phonetic spelling in technology and commerce. Attitude sampling; social characteristics of supporters and opposers of spelling improvement. Attitude change and its relevance to spelling reform. Adaptation of the literate readers to changes such as SR-1. Investigations of practice effects and familiarity.
- g) *History of Spelling Reform since 1500*. Why English spelling became worse in the 18th century; why reforms have failed to gain acceptance in the past; why does anyone still oppose reform; accounts of spelling reform proposals and their vicissitudes; what the initial-teaching-alphabet experience has shown; the opinions of 'reputable theorists and educational researchers' pro- and con reform, and the fact that experts on reading and spelling who *do not admit* that English spelling is pretty awful are rather rare and therefore conspicuous. Most say our T.O. is awful but take for granted nothing can be done about it. (e.g. the Bullock Committee).
- h) *Practical Questions on Reform*: Problems in reforming English spelling; possible solutions, and how to decide among the possible solutions. The introduction and implementation of reform, (research, authorisation, marketing, evaluation, time-tables). Practical proposals for action research at every level.
- i) *Who are the Experts?* What can they decide? How should they decide it?

- 1) *The first decision to be made is: Is spelling reform necessary and advantageous?* In this the public has as much democratic right as it has to change anything else it is fed up with. Those who suffer from present spelling – the learners, the teachers, those in any way handicapped – have more right to demand change than the few who have a vested interest in text-books, the history of words, or present readers have to resist modifications.

2) *What sort of Change?*

- a) *A new alphabet?* This would hinder international communication through the Roman alphabet so much that it should be shelved – unless at some stage computer technology requires a revision for all languages.
- b) *Changes in present spellings*: Some reduction of absurdities are so obvious that general consensus should easily be reached. Some are a little trickier, and this is where experts on philology, cybernetics, psycholinguistics, social psychology, phonology, etc. can come

together to decide. Going from simple to difficult, the questions of how best to represent the English language through spelling could perhaps be ranked like this:

For a phonetic representation of the language that did not require too fine auditory discriminations by the ordinary person:

- i. Easy-consistent representation of most consonants-. f for *ph, gh, lf, ft, v*, etc. omission of most silent, unnecessary letters, single letters for short vowel sounds. as in *bat, bed, bit, bob, but*.
- ii. *More difficult*, requiring general agreement on choice of spelling pattern:
 - (a) 'What spellings to use for the long-vowel sounds:
A E I O U as in *bay, bee, by, doe, due*
ar (aa), er, air, or (aw)
ow, oy, and particularly tricky, oo as in *book* or *boot*.
 - (b) How to represent the slurred sounds in unstressed syllables, which are only pronounced clearly in very formalised speech or in derived words (e.g. *metal, metallic*)
 - (c) What to do with, *k, q, x*.
 - (d) and a few tricky consonants, as in *tion, cion, sion, sure*, etc.
- iii. *The relation of spelling to the structure of the language*. It may be found desirable to have some spellings that *consistently* represent the structure of the language more than the sound, in order to have the easiest to learn and use, e.g. *s* for plurals rather than *s, z* or *s* plus spelling changes (as we now have with *lady/ladies*); *d* for past participles rather than *d, t*, or *ed*: some slurred vowels may be best represented by the sound in related words (e.g. *metal/metallic, demon/demonic*). But such linguistic rules could be understood by reason, and be reliable and consistent – as they are now.
 - (a) *Homophones*. English spelling is already full of homographs (and words with multiple meanings) which are not used in a confusable manner, e.g. *can/can, will/will, bit/bit, rest/rest*, etc; while a consistent spelling may possibly require exceptions for *two/too/to*, or *for/four/fore* and a few others, this can be investigated and decided accordingly. *Comment*: No problems are insoluble, including workable decisions on the 5% of words where dialect differences appear. (e.g. *sceptical, tomato, castle, clerk, pass*).

3) *The Deciders*: Everyone can make the simple, easy changes, but we should ask experts to decide on the harder ones, and all with international government support.

- i) The government should pass legislation establishing a commission with authority to investigate proposed reform schemes, to cooperate with other English-speaking countries on selecting a system of reformed spelling, and a means of introducing and utilizing it.
- j) *Conclusions*:

Appendices:

- I. Bibliographies.
- II. Opinions of reputable theorists and educational researchers, plus opinions of practical users of the written word.
- III. Analysis of spelling patterns in the Victorian Spelling Lists.
- IV. Detailed analysis of Chomsky's 'underlying form' argument – applied to the spelling primary children learn.
- V. English vowel spelling patterns – a manual for children.
- VI. Details of other research on spelling and spelling reform.

14. Spelling Survey 'Beta' Questions

	yes	not sure	no
Please tick appropriate space			
1. Is accurate spelling important?	___	___	___
2. Is your spelling accurate?	___	___	___
3. Is learning correct spellings difficult?	___	___	___
4. If words are understood, does it matter whether they are spelled correctly?	___	___	___
5. Can wrong spellings make words hard to read?	___	___	___
6. Are you disturbed by writing that contains many spelling mistakes?	___	___	___
7. Should there be a campaign to make spelling easier?	___	___	___
8. Would you help a campaign to make spelling easier?	___	___	___
9. Would you prefer our present spelling to remain unchanged?	___	___	___
10. Would it bother you if small and gradual changes were made in our spelling?	___	___	___
11. What pronunciation should be represented by the new spelling? Please tick appropriate space/s	___	___	___
Standard English	___	___	___
Standard American	___	___	___
Educated Australian	___	___	___
Different spellings according to the dialect spoken	___	___	___
Other: (please write)	___	___	___
12. Do you see any benefit in simplified spelling?	___	___	___
13. What advantages might be conferred by a simpler spelling?	___	___	___
a) Easier to write	___	___	___
b) Improved reading ability	___	___	___
c) Pronunciation more uniform	___	___	___
d) Easier to learn English as a foren language	___	___	___
e) Save time in teaching of reading and writing	___	___	___
f) No need to teach spelling	___	___	___
g) Encourage use of English internationally	___	___	___
h) When you read new words it will be easier to say them	___	___	___
i) When you hear new words it will be easier to write them	___	___	___
14. Should anyone decide how words should be pronounced?	___	___	___
15. Who should decide how words should be pronounced?			
Teachers ___ Politicians ___ Radio & TV announcers ___			
University professors ___ Public speakers ___ No one ___			
Dictionaries ___ Others: _____			

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire. Please return to:
 Barrie Smith, c/o Spelling Action Soc., Glenhuntly, Australia.

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7. The Spelling Action Society

So far as the Society's ultimate aim, the simplification of English spelling, is concerned with education, it is motivated on the one hand by the high illiteracy rates in all English-speaking countries, and on the other hand by the complexity of English spelling. The Society attributes the first of these, mainly, to the second, and considers that the back of the illiteracy problem would be broken if our spelling were simplified. This opinion is based on the principle that the simple is easier than the complex, with its corollary that simplifying a task makes it easier. This principle and corollary are apparently rejected by many educationalists who deny that simplifying spelling would make the acquirement of literacy easier, and some even maintain that it would make it harder.

There are several reasons why the Society's ultimate aim could not be achieved overnight, even if everyone were willing. On the contrary it can only be achieved by a large number of small changes, spread over many years; the first one, used herein and called SR.1, is that the clear short vowel-sound as in *bet* be written *e*. The Society's present aim is the introduction of SR.1 and no other spelling change, a proposal that has been well thought out. This fact is however ignored by the educationalists already referred to, part of whose methodology is apparently to pass judgement on the proposal without bothering to find out about it. Those who prefer to do this first can consult: Harry Lindgren, *Spelling Reform: A New Approach*.