

Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter, 1983

Dedicated to Finding & Eliminating the Causes of Failure to Learn to Read and to Spell

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1. Newell W. Tune. In Memoriam

Newell Tune passed away on July 21, 1983, following a long illness. His failing health greatly hampered his writing and editorial work during the past two years, but he still managed to publish SPB on a regular basis. What is most remarkable about this accomplishment is that Newell handled every detail of *SPB* alone, from managing the mailing list to setting the type for each issue. He devoted his life to spelling reform and to improving education in the English language, and will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues.

Harvie Barnard

Spelling Progress Bulletin to Change Hands

Despite the passing of Newell Tune, SPB will continue to be published. Newell's wife Irene, knowing she could not manage the publication alone, sought help from Dr. Emmett Betts. Dr. Betts, in turn, contacted Dr. Walter Barbe, the editor-in-chief of *Highlights for Children*, the most honored juvenile publication in the world. Dr. Barbe, who is one of America's foremost language arts educators, agreed to serve as editor of *Spelling Progress Bulletin* for one year, and has made arrangements for *SPB* to continue after that time. Through Dr. Barbe's efforts, *SPB* will acquire a new look, and beginning with the spring issue, will feature a dramatic new design that is consistent with the high quality of the manuscripts published in the journal. We hope that the new *Spelling Progress Quarterly* will be a journal of which Newell Tune would be proud, and that it will become an even more significant contribution to the literature in education.

2. The Principles of Reforming our Spelling, by Edmund V. Starrett, Ed.D.*

*Excerpted from the Ed.D. Thesis of Edmund V. Starrett, Wayne State Univ., Detroit, Mich. 1981.

*Dearborn, Mich.

Beginning with an Augustinian monk named Orm at the start of the 13th century and extending through the following seven centuries; eminent linguists, educators, writers, statesmen & organizations have developed plans, schemes, proposals and ideas on how to change the spelling of English to make it more phonemic.

Over the centuries, these spelling reform proposals have varied greatly in purpose, nature and extent of change. They have been referred to by a myriad of different names: simplified, augmented, phonetic, phonemic, rational, revised and amended spellings, to name but a few.

Despite the nature and extent of these proposals, they fall rather naturally into six distinct categories according to the types of change.

One type of proposal uses new letters or characters to augment or supplement the present alphabet. These new letters may be modifications of present letters or completely new symbols. John Hart, in 1569, and Alexander Gill, in 1619, were two of the earliest writers to recommend the use of additional letters. In the 19th century, Sir Isaac Pitman popularized Phonotypy, an augmented alphabet of 42 letters. Almost a century later, Sir James Pitman, grandson of Isaac, devised a new 45 symbol alphabet called the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) to assist beginning readers to learn to read.

A second type of spelling reform proposal includes those that advocate supplementing the present alphabet by the use of diacritical marks placed over, under, or next to a particular letter to indicate pronunciation. Early enthusiasts of this type of change are 16th century educators William Bullokar and Richard Mulcaster, and American patriot Benjamin Franklin.

A third, and most popular way to achieve spelling simplification involves the use of digraphs, or new letter combinations, to represent certain consonant, vowel and diphthong sounds. The first recorded spelling reformer, Orm, about the year 1200, doubled consonants following short vowels. Examples of more modern alphabets are *Nue Spelling* by the Simplified Spelling Society in England, *Anglic* by the Swedish linguist Robert Zachrisson, and *World English* by Godfrey Dewey.

A fourth category includes those proposals such as advocated by The American Philological Association at and after the turn of the century, and the Spelling Action Society a decade ago, which advocated and promoted systematic; limited and step-by-step reform beginning with a certain group of words and extending beyond that to other word groups as acceptance dictates.

A fifth, and least common, means of achieving spelling simplification is through the use of colors to signal certain sounds of the printed word. Color coding proposals, such as those popularized by Caleb Gattegno and Alex Bannatyne are not, strictly speaking, intended as examples of permanent reform of English orthography; rather they are proposed as a means of teaching beginning reading to children and adults.

The sixth, and most radical, type of spelling reform involves the total replacement of the present Roman alphabet with new letters or characters which may or may not have some visual relationship to the present alphabet. Such radical new alphabets are based on the idea that the present alphabet is

so irregular and inconsistent that a complete overhaul of the alphabet is necessary; and they are devised so as to save space, time of writing, and may be considered as forms of shorthand. The alphabet of the George Bernard Shaw contest and the Deseret Alphabet of Brigham Young are examples of this type of reform.

Seven hundred years of spelling reform proposals seem to indicate a consistent desire on the part of some scholars to try to do something to improve the state of the orthography of the English language. It shows a need for such improvements. It also points out the failure of this group to bring it about. Perhaps some other tactical means is needed to bring about such changes.

One of the most debilitating characteristics of most spelling reform efforts; however, is the inability, to agree among themselves as to the nature and extent of the reform. Some have, for example, limited themselves to methods of overcoming the special difficulties faced by children learning to read; others have been concerned with devising 'a phonetic alphabet, subsidiary to or augmented to the Roman one, in order to indicate the "correct" pronunciation of dictionaries, for use in grammars or learning textbooks. Still other reformers have devised and sought to promote radical systems of spelling and alphabet reform for the ultimate benefit of the whole English speaking world. Their solutions range from minor modifications which affect a few words to completely new alphabets which bear little or no visual relationship to the present Roman one. While most proposed that the reform be introduced as a single dose, others preferred a series of gradual installments.

Classification of Spelling Reform Proposals

Several authorities have made efforts to classify the different types of spelling reform proposals. Godfrey Dewey, for example, stated that English spelling could be simplified in three ways:

- 1) Standardizing the Roman alphabet by assigning to each single letter, and to each digraph selected to represent those sounds for which the available single letters do not suffice, a single sound.
- 2) Supplementing the Roman alphabet by assigning to each of the 23 useful letters a single invariable value and creating some 18 appropriately designed new letters.
- 3) Supplanting the Roman alphabet by creating and making available on typewriters and composing machines throughout the world at least 41 wholly new characters."

Tauber, in his Ph.D. Thesis, *Spelling Reform in the United States*, presents five classifications for spelling reform: Type I which has to do with systems of reform that rely on diacritical marks or modifiers to obtain a greater degree of regularity; Type II which has to do with those systems of spelling reform that seek minimal changes such as the elimination of silent letters or substitution of a letter or letters; Type III is an extension of Type II and uses digraphs to form new letter combinations; Type IV which has to do with adding new symbols to the alphabet, and Type V which has to do with systems of spelling reform which replace the letters of the present Roman alphabet with a whole new set of symbols.

This study will divide spelling reform proposals into the following categories for the purpose of a more logical presentation and comparison:

- 1) *Augmented alphabets*: Those alphabets proposed to add to the present Roman alphabet additional characters, or letters, resulting in an augmented or increased English alphabet. These new letters may be modifications of the present letters or completely new symbols or characters.
- 2) *Diacritic Marks*: Those systems of spelling reform wherein special marks are placed over, under, or next to a particular letter to indicate pronunciation generally with little change in the traditional

spelling of the word. Sometimes these systems have been proposed merely to assist children in the beginning stages of reading. At other times, the proposals were serious attempts at permanent spelling reform.

3) *Digraphic Alphabets*: Those alphabets proposed to replace the present spelling system by omitting silent letters and using digraphs to represent certain consonants, vowels or diphthongs.

4) *Word Simplification*: Those proposals for spelling reform that rely chiefly on the omission of certain silent letters and the respelling of words to bring about simplification of certain groups of words.

5) *Color Coding Systems*: Those systems of spelling that use different colors to signal certain sounds of the printed word. Color coding is generally proposed as a means of teaching beginning reading:

6) *Non-Roman Alphabets*: Those alphabets proposed to replace the present Roman alphabet by creating new letters or characters. The new characters may be entirely arbitrary with little, if any, relationship of one character to another. They may be inverted, mutilated, or Roman letters with appendages.

Limitations of this Study

It is impossible to present information on all or most of the proposals for spelling reform because their number is legion and because of the nature of promoting most of these proposals.

Spelling Reform Proposals using Augmented Alphabets

Most observers of English spelling point out the fact that the English alphabet contains only 26 letters, 3 of which are redundant (c, q, x) for the forty or so sounds of the language. As a consequence, one letter must stand for more than one sound. As if this situation were not bad enough, one finds that approximately 1/6 of all English words contain unnecessary silent letters and that over the years, alphabet or spelling change has not kept pace with sound change. English is thus left with a system of orthography in which no one can tell with certainty how a word is pronounced if he only sees it written but never hears it pronounced; and, inversely, cannot tell with certainty, how a word is spelled if he only hears it pronounced but never sees it written.

Throughout the history of the language, many individuals, scholars, and laymen have advocated the need for new letters to supplement the present system so that one symbol can stand for one sound only and each sound be represented by one symbol only.

Although there is some disagreement regarding the exact number of sounds for English, it is generally conceded that an alphabet of approximately 40 letters would be necessary to arrive at the desired effect of one sound for one symbol. In order to achieve this, approximately 17 new symbols would be necessary.

When it comes to the question of supplementing deficiencies of the present alphabet, this can be accomplished in several ways: according to P.A.D. McCarthy:

". . . by simply taking over existing letters from other alphabets (e.g. Greek, Cyrillic), with such typographical modifications as may be demanded by the need to harmonize with Roman fonts; by altering Roman letters sufficiently to constitute additional independent shapes; by designing new letters to go with the Roman (these might of course have resemblances to existing letters, and so come optionally under the preceding head); and by combinations of the foregoing."

The reputed advantages of augmented alphabets over other systems of spelling change are as follows:

- 1) An augmented alphabet would present a one to one relationship between sound and symbol without the addition of unnecessary diacritics or unnecessary letters, as in the case of phonemic alphabets based on digraphic spellings.
- 2) An augmented alphabet would retain most or all of the symbols presently used in the traditional alphabet, thus establishing a pattern of familiarity, and understanding for those who already know the present spelling.
- 3) An augmented alphabet would allow for more consistent spelling of sounds and thus be more helpful for those learning to read and write the language.
- 4) An augmented alphabet is based on the logical principle of retaining what is consistent and usable and adding to it rather than starting over with a totally unfamiliar non-Roman alphabet as other reformers have proposed.
- 5) Augmented alphabets, without sacrificing essential characteristics, generally use less characters in writing which afford greater saving of time and cost in the reproduction of material.

Problems in the use of Augmented Alphabets.

A one sound, one symbol phonetic notation by supplementing the present Roman alphabet with new symbols has several major drawbacks that hinder its acceptance as a viable alternative.

The first objection has to do with the uncertainty regarding the exact number of phonemes contained in English and the number of symbols needed to express these phonemes. [\[1\]](#)

In the alphabets presented in this thesis, there is little agreement as to the number of symbols needed. Benjamin Franklin eliminated six of the present symbols and added six new ones so his system contains the same number of symbols as the present alphabet. William Thornton used 30 symbols, the Initial Teaching Alphabet has 45 symbols, the International Phonetic Assoc. Alphabet contains over 48 symbols, and Edwin Leigh found that 70 symbols were needed to express his spelling system because he wanted to retain all present spellings, but superimposed on them was a phonetic system in bolder type.

Sir James Pitman expresses the opinion that between 35 and 41 different characters would be adequate to express all the basic consonant and vowel sounds without employing combinations of letters or digraphs. Obviously, an alphabet with as few as 35 symbols would be inadequate, and an alphabet of over 50 characters, while producing more accurate pronunciation, would run beyond the need for sounds that distinguish meaning. Altho many spelling reform proposals fit this 35 to 50 symbol requirement,, there is certainly a wide range of disagreement on just what symbols ought to be present in the new alphabet and what symbols should be excluded. Until there is some agreement, at least on the minimum number of symbols, proponents of augmented alphabets should not be surprised that their ideas are met with suspicion or outright rejection.

A second obstacle to the acceptance of augmented alphabets is the great difficulty of devising new letter shapes that harmonize with present shapes in upper and lower case, and in all fonts of type, as well as in handwriting. According to P.A.D. MacCarthy, "the new letters should remain sufficiently simple in their basic shape so as not to add much to the number of pen movements required to form them by hand." He also added that they should have good lateral extension.

A third objection to augmented alphabets lies in the acceptance of the number of new characters needed to make the alphabet completely phonetic. If only a few characters were needed, they would not cause too much relearning for the average reader, could be quickly assimilated into the present system and require minimal changes in our general overall system. Not two or three new symbols for English are needed, but more like 17 new ones are needed, or approximately 40% of the new alphabet. One has to want the change badly to accept these kinds of changes. As P.A.D. MacCarthy expressed it:

"To produce nearly a score (or more) of new shapes such as would commend themselves to expert and public alike, sufficiently powerful to secure wide approval and eventual official adoption – this has so far defeated all those calligraphers and type designers, whether amateur or professional, who have from time to time made an attempt."

(Ed. comment: Not true. It's merely his opinion)

Another difficulty with a new phonemic alphabet for English would be to find a phonemic pattern acceptable to the various dialectal groups comprising the English speaking world. The system should be acceptable to the total English speaking world, not just mid-Western Americans, Bostonians or Welchmen. Since pronunciations differ, not only between English speaking countries, but within the countries themselves, the task of picking the correct symbols to represent certain sounds becomes a difficult one. Some words such as *dance*, *because*, *father*, *been*, *going*, etc., could be represented by different spellings according to the various dialectal and/or ideolectical differences among groups or individuals. Monson presents additional examples of this difficulty:

"Not all dialects of English have the same number of phonemes: In the words *pants* and *dance*, some people have different vowels, some do not; and the phoneme occurring in the *dance* of the first group does not exist as a separate phoneme in the speech of the second group. In some regions, *starry*, *merry* and *Mary* have three distinct vowels; in others, two, and in still others, the words are homonyms. A similar problem would occur in transcribing *dog*, *fog*, and *frog*. Thus a standard phonemic orthography acceptable to all different dialects of English would be difficult to devise."

(Ed. comment: Not difficult to devise. It only requires that all 41 or 42 sounds be identified and symbolized. The difference comes with books printed in America (past) and in England (paast). But we already have printing differences, viz: *colour*, *centre*, *petrol*, *lift*, which in America are: *color*, *center*, *gasoline*, *elevator*; These differences are such a minor difficulty as to not be worth considering. Merely a 'red herring' intended to obscure the more important issues.)

But the most important obstacle in the need to change all typewriters, printers' fonts, remote teletype machines, and dictionaries; library indexing systems, and any system that uses the 26 letter Roman alphabet. Where are you going to insert these 17 new symbols into the Roman alphabet? Think of the disruption this will cause!

The final obstacle to acceptance of a new phonemic augmented alphabet lies in the degree of change and difficulties in getting people to switch to the new system. Aside from the fact that new printing fonts and new typewriters would be needed, with all the difficulty, confusion and expense this would involve, is the tremendous problem of educating the general public to the need for such changes. The educated and illiterates, the old and young, would need a large degree of re-education or instruction, and practice. Asking everyone to change deeply ingrained habits developed over many years is considered a difficult, if not impossible task by spelling reformers and spelling reform associations. Dewey concluded: "Because of the, enormous practical difficulties of making new characters everywhere available, such a notation is unlikely to achieve adoption for general use for several generations to come."

Problems in the use of Diacritical Markings

At first glance, supplementing the present alphabet by use of various kinds of diacritical marks would seem to be a good answer to the problems of an inconsistent orthography. Many of the advantages claimed for using diacritical marks, however, break down upon closer examination.

It is only a half truth, for example, to say that diacritical marks remove the necessity for new letters to obtain a more exact sound-symbol relationship. One might well ask: is a bar, a dash, or some other mark over the a, to indicate length, a new letter or isn't it? Is it already in the printer's fonts? Some would agree, with good reason, that it is more difficult to remember to put a bar over the vowel letters than it would be to learn a completely new symbol that sound. It is a gratuitous assumption to suppose that it would be easier to learn a new marking system than to learn totally new symbols.

It is true that diacritical marks can save printing space, but it is also true that most typewriters and printing shops are not equipped to add these marks in the normal process of reproduction. Going back to add the necessary diacritical marks can become a nuisance in both typing and handwriting. The relatively small saving in printed space is more than offset by the loss of time required to go back and add diacritical marks and the resultant loss of continuity in the writing and thought process.

It is often difficult to teach the child to dot his i's and cross his t's. Imagine how much more difficult it would be to teach the child to go back and add three or four or more additional marks. There is a good chance that the kind of diacritical marking system that is required to make our alphabet more phonemic would cause as many, if not more, spelling mistakes than currently exist with the present alphabet.

Provided they are not too complicated, diacritical markings can be very helpful to lead the beginning reader to a more exact pronunciation of an unfamiliar word or help him to sound out the word. To this extent, diacritical marks seem to have a useful place. But as a system of permanent spelling reform, it lacks validity and to that extent is hardly acceptable as a means of bringing about a more consistent spelling system.

Spelling Reform Proposals using Digraphs

An ideal spelling system would have one symbol for each phoneme, but English has only 26 letters and over 40 phonemes. Unless diacritical marks are used or new letters are added to the alphabet, it is impossible to get this optimal one-to-one relationship for English. The most common way to make up for this deficiency is to use digraphs – a combination of two letters to stand for one sound.

The technique employed by most spelling reformers who use digraphs to make up for the deficiencies of the alphabet is to establish a principle of consistency in their use of digraphs. This may be done in one of three ways. The most common method is to attempt to discover the common spelling digraphs used to represent a particular sound and then select one of these digraphs to represent consistently that sound. This method considers major spelling patterns and does not exclude alternative spellings of the same sound. The second method is less selective or systematic.

It consists of establishing digraphic spelling based in part on current spelling patterns and in part on other considerations. The third method is arbitrary and based primarily on the subjective desires or fantasies of its creators.

With almost all systems of digraphic spelling, the authors apply rules for eliminating silent letters. Again, the degree of change varies with each proposal depending on the needs and purposes of the

particular system.

The general advantages of digraphic spelling over other systems of spelling change may be summarized as follows:

- 1) No new letters or diacritical marks are necessary. This makes it possible to use present methods of printing, typing and reproduction of printed material without additional expense or inconvenience,
- 2) Much of the current spelling remains unchanged. This makes for greater ease of learning the new system for those who are already familiar with traditional spelling; and, makes the transition from the new to traditional for those who are not familiar with traditional spelling less confusing.
- 3) Most digraphs used in these proposals are currently in use or are familiar to the literate public. This means they do not clash with present familiar spellings and can be easily remembered and retained.
- 4) Digraphic spelling produces considerable continuity with the past and with other languages using the Roman alphabet.
- 5) Digraphic spelling initially produces less psychological and technological disturbance. For this reason alone it has a better chance of being accepted by the general public:

The Simplified Spelling Society and Nue Spelling

The British Simplified Spelling Society in 1940 developed a digraphic system called *Nue Spelling*, which was a modification of the system called *Anglic* developed by Zachrisson in 1929.

The principles upon which *Nue Spelling* was based may be summarized as follows:

- "(1) No new characters to be introduced.
- (2) No new accents or diacritics to be introduced, and detached marks as such to be used in any case as sparingly as possible.
- (3) Unused or relatively unfamiliar combinations of letters to be avoided as far as possible (though some exceptions to this are inevitable).
- (4) Current usage to remain unaltered whenever common sense and expediency suggest. This 'principle of least disturbance' means that as far as possible each sound should be written with its most habitual single letter (or pair of letters).
- (5) Each symbol (letter or digraph) to be self-contained; that is, its significance not to depend on any other letter in the sequence. This precludes, e.g., the doubling of consonant letters to indicate the (short) value of the preceding vowel.
- (6) The complete scheme to be thorough-going, simple, regular and free from exceptions and anomalies, economical, easy to learn and to use, and no concessions to be made to the habits of generations brought up on our present spelling, if future generations might thereby be inconvenienced."

Godfrey Dewey: World English Spelling

The Simpler Spelling Assoc. on the United States; which later became the Phonemic Spelling

Council, developed over a period of years a digraphic system of spelling called World English Spelling (WES). This system was made popular through the research, studies and writings of Godfrey Dewey, grandson of the famous educator, John Dewey. It was really a modification of the *Nue Spelling* of Ripman and Archer, adopted by the Simplified Spelling Society.

World English Spelling (WES) like the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) of Sir James Pitman was originally conceived as an initial teaching medium and not generally considered a system of permanent reform.

"To teach children to read effectively is increasingly being recognized as the paramount problem of American education. In this effort, it has long been realized that the complex irregularities of our traditional orthography (T.O.) are a chief obstacle. The simple and obvious way to remove this handicap would be to reform our English spelling, but that long-sought goal still lies one or two generations in the future. There is, however, an immediately available alternative which minimizes the impact of our spelling difficulties – a phonemic notation to be used for the first teaching of reading and writing, to be followed by a complete transition to reading and writing English in its traditional form. Such an initial teaching medium (i.t.m.) is not spelling reform but an educational tool, to be judged strictly on its merits in producing better results more quickly."

Dewey further explains and describes WES as follows:

"WES, in the modified form here presented, assigns the same values to the 24 Roman alphabet letters when written singly, but supplies the remaining phonemic symbols required by standardized combinations of the Roman letters (usually familiar digraphs) instead of new characters, and makes substantially the same concessions from strictly phonemic writing made in i.t.a., keeping strictly within the resources of the universally available Roman alphabet."

World English Spelling has often been called the typewriter version of i.t.a. because they both derive most of their phonemic structure and much of their symbolization from the same source. "It is not surprising that, they are virtually identical except for the elimination of new characters by use of digraphs instead of ligatures or new letter forms:" For example, the 24 Roman alphabet letters of i.t.a. are assigned exactly the same phonemic values as in World English spelling.

WES is similar to i.t.a. regarding the use of the dot to separate what could be confusing because they are not digraphs (e.g. short.hand, en.gage) in the earliest stages of learning: In later stages, the dot need not be used. Dewey also recommends the use of a ligature below a digraph (ou, ie, th, wh) during the first weeks of learning to show that the digraph is a unitary symbol.

According to E. A. Betts, WES has many advantages over other systems, especially i.t.a.:

- "1. It employs 24 of the 26 letters of the universally understood Roman alphabet.
2. A standard typewriter may be used.
3. Digraphs rather than ligatured characters are employed, but this is one hypothesis yet to be explored via experimental research.
4. The common spellings for speech sounds (phonemes) are based on the extensive research of Dr. Godfrey Dewey.
5. WES spellings have been simplified for the i.t.m. version; e.g. *th* is used for both the voiceless sound in *think* and the voiced sound in *there*.

6. A dictionary, World English Spelling Dictionary, lists the few guidelines, spelling rules, and the spelling of about 3,600 commonly used words, as is done for i.t.a.
7. The spellings are highly compatible with T.O., as is true of i.t.a.
8. The names of the letters usually recorded in standard dictionaries are retained and respelled in WES, i.t.m., e.g., the name of the letter is *bee* not *buh*. (This procedure minimizes the probabilities of a teacher telling the child that the first letter of *bat* is *buh* – a confusing absurdity of the first rank).
9. The need for the schwa (ə) sound in unstressed syllables is solved by retaining "any single vowel letter of T.O., or when that might be misleading, write /e/." WES Dictionary, pg. 24).
10. Syllable-by-syllable reading (i.e., the stressing of all syllables observed in some classrooms) is reduced by respelling certain unstressed syllables, as in *captain-capten*, *stable-staabl*, *situation-situeaeshon*, *probable-probabl*.
11. To avoid 'clumsy' spellings, a redundant spelling *ue* is used for the /yu/ glide, as in i.t.a. For example, the letter *y* as in *yet* and the *oo* as in *moon* are available; but *few is* simply spelled *fue* rather than *fyoo*.
12. Diacritical markings are obviated by employing digraphs, as *sh* in *sure-shoor*, *sugar-shuugar*, *ng* in *finger-fingger*, versus *singer-singer*.
13. Lower case letters are used, as in i.t.a., so that the child will not have to learn different letters (graphic shapes) for the F-f, G-g, and so on.
14. Spellings with zero or almost no signal (predictability) of sounds are significantly reduced as road-blocks to reading; e.g., *one-wun*, *once-wuns*, *you-yoo*, *eight-aet*.

Problems in the use of Digraphic Spelling Systems

There are several objections to the exclusive use of digraphs to reform our present spelling.

In their proposals, most authors start first with a system of spelling changes and then apply that system to meet all contingencies. They assume that the only solution is to create a completely new phonemic system of spelling with little consideration given alternative spellings or other principles that may constitute a good spelling system. But basing the complete system on the principles of phonemic spelling can lead to extensive changes in spelling and a transformation in the appearance of the written language as to make its acceptance much more difficult.

Another objection to the use of digraphs stems from the fact that in order to make digraphic spelling work, several more digraphs are needed than presently exist. This is especially true for vowel sounds. This fact alone almost equalizes the number of letters saved through the elimination of silent letters or double consonants. One of the most powerful arguments presented in favor of spelling reform, the savings of "various kinds – savings of children's learning time, of the writer's writing time, of typists' and printer's wages, of paper, ink, transport, storage, and so on" is for all practical purposes meaningless when applied to most digraphic spelling proposals.

Rearrangement of letters to produce more phonemic spelling often conjures up unpleasant associations. Digraphic spellings, for example, are often suggestive of near-illiteracy (e.g. *nollij*, *elefant*); of substantial speech as represented in comic anecdotes (e.g. *wat*, *luv*, *guv'nor*); of

commercial catchwords (e.g. *Phit-eezi* for a brand of footwear, *kumbak* for a tennis trainer having a ball attached to, a length of rubber chord, etc.). These connotations all work against the acceptance of the reformed spelling that is liable to evoke them.

(Ed. comment: His opinion, not facts)

Despite these objections; the enormous practical difficulties involved in adding diacritics or new characters to the present alphabet, or switching to a totally new alphabet and the almost impossible task of getting popular acceptance of such systems; makes digraphic spelling the one system most capable of development and acceptance.

Implications of this Study

An analysis of the proposals for spelling reform of the English language prove beyond a doubt that there is little if any consensus among spelling reformers themselves regarding the best way to accomplish this monumental if not impossible, task. The two common denominators drawing all spelling reformers together is their agreement on the *need* for reform (not always for the same reasons). Aside from this one unifying principle, their proposals, plans, schemes and ideas on the nature and extent of reform are often as varied and unique as the people who created and promoted them. One writer pointed out that the most debilitating factor, and the main reason why spelling reform has failed to catch on, has been the inability of spelling reformers themselves to agree with one another on the *nature* and *extent* of the change and how it should be accomplished. If spelling reformers themselves cannot agree on what to do, it should come as no surprise why their proposals have never gained wide support.

Another general criticism is that with the possible exception of the Spelling Action Society of Australia and its Spelling Reform Step One (SR-1), most have attempted to do too many things too quickly. Or as Mencken expressed it, "All American spelling reformers, beginning with Noah Webster, have made the capital mistake of trying to cover too much ground in one operation."

In light of the perceived difficulties and resistances, it should be clear that the spelling reform organizations in the United States, Great Britain and Australia should attempt to coordinate their efforts and set up a few guidelines for programs and procedures for systematic spelling reform. Friction, disagreement, lack of communication and ignorance of each other's efforts cannot help but retard the whole process and give validity, to the arguments of those opposing reform.

If spelling reform is ever to get beyond the proposal stage, the first thing that must be done is to lay the foundation for the reform by educating the public to the *need* for reform. History teaches that no reform will ever take place unless *the climate is ripe for reform*.

No reform can ever get started if it lacks public support, especially a reform of that which is so ingrained as the spelling habits developed over the years. Students and adults are conditioned from early years to the notion that there is only one way to spell a word – "the correct way" the way it appears in the dictionary and the spellers. Any deviation from this one accepted spelling is branded a "wrong", "ignorant" and "objectionable." The child who spells the word *love* as *luv* can never content himself that he is logical or phonetically correct in the face of the laughter from his classmates or the scorn on his teacher's face.

At a very impressionable age children are conditioned to accept inconsistency of spelling as an educational challenge and to take pride in their ability to spell words that contain silent letters or are especially inconsistent. Winning a spelling bee is something to tell the grandchildren about and a crowning recognition of superior ability.

As a result of teaching where drill and repetition, so necessary for reading and writing; are at the core of the curriculum, people are unable later on in life to think rationally about spelling without prejudice. "That's the way I learned it; and that's the way everyone should learn it;" they contend.

Even those who have experienced failure or difficulties in learning to read or write may agree that spelling reform is desirable but would reject it on the grounds that a new system would involve their learning all over again. Once having partially mastered the old system, especially with difficulty, one has no desire to, learn a new system, especially one that may be untried, untested, or poorly promulgated.

Spelling reform proposals have a long, hard battle ahead to prove their worth in the light of such immense, ingrained resistance or apathy. Certainly any proposal that is not well-conceived, well-planned and promulgated will stand no chance at all of reaching any kind of acceptance. Poorly planned, illogical, grotesque, amateurish proposals based on nothing more than the whims and fantasies of their inventors, will only set the whole cause back and make acceptance of more logical proposals that much harder to accept.

Overcoming the natural resistance to change that comes from long habit, constant repetition, education, and the understandable resistance that stems from many of the proposals themselves, will take time and effort. One cannot realistically expect change of attitude to come overnight. To ignore this fact is to assure failure. Acceptance, then, is the key word in spelling reform, for without it even the most logical and erudite system ever proposed for English will be relegated to the trash heap.

In order to overcome public indifference or resistance and to gain acceptance, it will be important to proceed gradually and logically over a period of years. Whatever changes the public is asked to make should at first be rather simple or innocuous. Once the public understands that spelling changes can be made that improve the language, cause relatively little inconvenience, and are less a problem in learning than the old system, then more complicated changes can be made. It goes without saying, that radical and unfamiliar spelling systems which would cause dramatic and traumatic changes in the way we spelling and read would have little if any chance of acceptance.

The first and most important or critical consideration is to find a place to begin that does not cause confusion in its initial introduction; does not require much new learning or special equipment, and will not contrast too greatly with existing literature. Fortunately for English, there are many good minimal changes that many people would readily accept and to which antagonists could hardly take exception.

A good place to start might be with a program of systematic gradual change involving the elimination of unnecessary silent letters. N. Tune has a list of 888 such words. Harry Lindgren's SR-1 and SR-2 to SR-5 are also not too radical that the public should object if fed to them gradually.

Regardless whether we start with these suggested minimal spelling changes or a host of others that may be proposed, it is important that the first changes do not radically disrupt current spelling patterns: Especially the first change or the beginning series of early changes should contain the following characteristics:

- 1) They should be easy to learn and require little, if any, relearning.
- 2) No new letters or unfamiliar digraphs be added to the words.
- 3) The spelling change should be similar to the most common spelling pattern for that sound.

If it seems probable that the general public cannot or will not accept gradual, systematic, minimal spelling changes, they certainly will not accept the more radical changes that may occur later on. Without public acceptance, any spelling reform is unlikely or impossible.

Recommendations of this Study

1. Research into Effects of orthography on Reading

Despite of antagonists of spelling reform, the whole question of to what extent the irregular spelling of English interferes with reading and spelling ability, of school children has still not been thoroly investigated by educators, especially in the United States. In searching for answers regarding the increasingly high rate of reading failure in the United States, many reading research projects annually investigate methods, techniques, materials for teaching, and the motives, incentives and background of the teacher and learner. Rarely do educators give any thought to investigating to what extent children are handicapped by all the anomalies of English. As Sir James Pitman asked, "Can it be perhaps that researchers into reading have overlooked, or at any rate neglected, the largest factor of all?"

Educators then should not categorically rule out the irregular spellings as a source of confusion. Through research they should attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent, if any, does English orthography interfere with beginning reading?
- 2) To what extent does English orthography handicap spelling and/or writing ability?
- 3) What experimental programs can be set up in schools to test and evaluate the effects of different types of spelling reform proposals on different types of students?
- 4) If spelling reform is advisable (would make a difference educationally), how can the general public be educated to this need and how can teachers be trained?
- 5) What in-service programs can be developed to better educate teachers regarding dealing with learning problems that stem from an irregular and inconsistent orthography?
- 6) How can educators eliminate for beginning readers the unavoidable spelling irregularities inherent in what is read?

The Bullock Committee, composed of over eight researcher efforts from different disciplines, concluded in 1976 that "these is no evidence whatsoever for the belief that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to read in traditional orthography. It would appear that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is the initial teaching alphabet."

Results from extensive use of i.t.a. in Great Britain indicate that most children using i.t.a. "benefit in a variety of different ways" and that "their writing ability was of consistently higher quality."

In light of these results, it is regretable – some might even say shameful – that educators continue to ignore the evidence and cling to mote traditional methods and materials, many of which have led to increasing failures on the part of a substantial number of students.

2. Establishment of a National Commission to Investigate Language Arts Programs.

With the recent establishment of the Department of Education, it seems a good time to establish a National Language Commission to investigate different types of language programs and to make recommendations and suggestions in the area of language improvement and development. Since language touches all aspects of life, the commission should have broad representation from a

variety of sources. It should include at least linguists, educators, businessmen, writers, publishers; and other interested individuals from other walks of life.

If and when spelling reform programs, or other programs in language arts; claim to be helpful for a certain group in the population (low achievers, foreigners wishing to learn English, pre-schoolers, etc.), a National Language Commission would be there to evaluate the claims, publish the results, and be instrumental in propagating the program if warranted. In the absence of any recommending and evaluating source with any authority, the whole area of language arts suffers to some degree.

3. More Relevant and Practical Information on How to Teach Spelling

An increasingly embarrassing phenomenon of the present educational system, which one educator called "programmed illiteracy," is the increasingly high number of high school graduates who find it difficult to write a simple sentence without making spelling mistakes, adults who are ashamed to write a friendly letter for fear of making mistakes and secretaries who type 90 words a minute but spell on a low fourth grade level.

In light of this serious educational problem, it seems important for local school districts and colleges of education to evaluate the effectiveness of current methods and materials used to teach spelling. After honest evaluation, if the methods prove successful, then they should be included in more practical and expanded courses in teacher education. The relative lack of any in-service training in teaching spelling in many colleges of education and the total lack of library and reference material books on the subject, is indicative of educators' indifference and/or ignorance on the subject.

Future Related Studies

Several related areas of studies suggested by this study are the following:

- 1) A survey of a cross-section of the country could be made in order to determine the types and nature of spelling changes that would be acceptable to the widest number of people. This survey could well serve as the initial starting point for future efforts at spelling simplification.
- 2) Investigations could be undertaken to determine the general qualities that make English acceptable as an international language and what difficulties or irregularities hinder English as an international language.
- 3) Intensive and systematic investigation into many different word lists in order to determine major spelling patterns (and phonological rules supporting these-spelling patterns) could prove useful for future spelling reformers to delineate what aspects of orthography need changing and what aspects do not.
- 4) Experimentation with different types of phonemic alphabets (or different types of spelling proposals for different types of students and different situations) might shed additional light on how different individuals learn to read.
- 5) The experiences, methods and materials used to reach reading in such countries as Italy, Russia, and Germany, which have a more phonemic language, merit investigation.
- 6) Attempts to coordinate the national spelling reform organizations in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia should result in more accurate and authoritative information on the subject than presently exists.

7) Investigation into the educational and social advantages that have resulted from spelling reform in such countries as Turkey, Russia, Brazil and Finland could prove enlightening:

8) One-sound, one-symbol alternative alphabets (which could be easily transliterated into traditional orthography) could be developed to better serve the needs of business and industry when using voice-triggered communication equipment such as advanced typewriters and computers.

9) Carefully controlled and objectively evaluated studies and experiments comparing simplified spelling and traditional orthography with such diverse groups as prove school youngsters, the mentally retarded, non-English speaking students, adults, etc., ought to produce objective data which will enable all to make better judgements about the subject.

10) An intensive investigation of the relationship between spelling and reading (encoding and decoding) should result in a better understanding of both subjects.

Conclusion:

Despite the ingenious spelling reform proposals of many learned scholars, linguists, educators and statesmen presented in this study, and the hundreds of other spelling enthusiasts omitted from this study, the problem of the irregularity, and inconsistency of English orthography, and what to do about it, is no closer to, solution than it was in the 16th century.

(Ed. comment: Not true).

It is hoped that this study will shed some light on the subject of spelling reform; perhaps it will be a source of inspiration for some new and realistic approach to the problem.

Contrasted to the wishful thinking of some modern linguists who state that English orthography couldn't be better for all users of English, comes the harsh reality that a high percentage of school children fail to read and write, and an alarming number of adults are not much better off.

Instead of investigating all the irrelevant and/or extraneous factors involved in reading and writing (class size, materials, teacher preparation, environment, etc.), perhaps some day investigators might begin to pay more attention to the orthography itself and eventually eliminate the avoidable difficulties inherent in how words are put together. When that day comes, it will be the beginning of the dream of many educators for hundreds of years. (So many references were available that we could not spare space)

[1] **Ed. comments:** This is true of all phonetic alphabets, not just augmented alphabets. Franklin came up with a lot fewer sounds because he could not hear the subtle differences in some pairs of sounds. Pitman has 3 duplicates in order to make easier the transition to T.O. The I.P.A. splits some sounds into too small a unit to be useful, such as the dark and light 'l', which have no difference in meaning. Edwin Leigh's system had hairline type for silent letters, with the sounds superimposed by bolder type. The greatest advantage of Leigh's system is that it preserved the conventional spellings, yet gave a pronunciation guide to all words. In this respect, it was superior to all other systems before or since, and had the easiest transition to conventional spelling of any system ever proposed. It's a pity it isn't still in use.

You say there isn't agreement on the number of speech sounds. But there *is* agreement among the best qualified phoneticians, such as Pitman, Dewey, MacCarthy, Ives, Rondthaler, Tune and others. You cannot expect agreement with uninformed alfabetees.

3. Understanding the Basic Psychology of Learning, by Harvie Barnard

Education is essentially learning) and learning is "programming the human organic computer," the brain. The human brain is ready for programming at birth, which is when education begins, and continues thruout life. Any educational program which fails to, recognize and to function in accordance with these fundamental assumptions is not only inadequate but is doomed to eventual failure, failure not only for the individual, but also for the society which fails to plan and act on the basis of these psychological truths.

In keeping with these precepts, it is apparent that: 1) education should begin very early, earlier than the present mode; 2) education must be continuously progressive, following the principles of computer programming; 3) educators should recognize different rates of learning, input acceptance, and accomodate to these differences.

These three fundamentals are of course, only a beginning, but if not recognized and observed, all the add-ins, refinements, extensions and rules which can be devised will add little or nothing to the educational process.

Preschool education, except for privately organized and funded nursery school, has been and still is an area of virtually total neglect, The essentials of early preparation for conventional public school education are not spelled out in sufficient detail to provide adequate, guidelines either for our present system or for the parent who is assumed to have, the concern, the knowledge or the experience to satisfy the demands of this awsome responsibility for preschool education.

Since the average parent is simply unprepared to do this basic job, whether because of lack of training, time, or inebriation, it is not being done for a substantial number of our children. Hence they are not "ready" for our production line program when school age has been reached. Just how this pre-school education may be best accomplished, whether by schools for parents or by a national program of nursery schools for all young children, or by a combination of both, remains to be developed

But if our present system is to be strengthened and made to work without a complete revision of what we already have, then the place to begin is with an early education plan to get the preparation program in order and working smoothly before injecting our young computers into a standardized process of conventional "input" which assumes readiness that under present conditions does not exist.

There are teaching skills which are learned mainly by experience, much of which is well beyond the collegiate training for education majors. Certainly it would be appropriate to recommend that all future teachers be required to study the principles of computer programming in terms of basic human psychology.

Beyond the principles of computer technology, three basis instructional principles should be recognized: 1) the child must have complete faith and confidence in the teacher; the implications of this statement are infinitely broad; 2) this faith must never be hurt by confusion, frustration, misinformation, or an un sympathetic aptitude.3) When programming is satisfactory in terms of subject matter content, progressive continuity of input, and at a level of difficulty consonant with the capacity, of the pupil – according to the principles 1, and 2, above – learning will be joyfully embraced, and our youthful computers will be prepared for the higher levels of communication and computational training which are to follow.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1983 p9 in the printed version]
[The appendices mentioned were not in the SPB issue.]*

4. Will the Step-by-Step Reform Plan Produce a Satisfactory Simplified Spelling System? by Newell W. Tune

In our Winter, 1981 issue, this author wrote about the step-by-strip plan, SR-1 to SR-8. This article is an expansion of that article, but a lot more thoro and complete. I hope it does justice to its new title.

About 9 years ago, in Australia, Harry Lindgren started his step-by-step plan of spelling reform. It was adopted by the Australian Teachers Union at their convention and the idea was off to a good start. However, in the ensuing 9 years little progress has been made – and little will be until the government takes some action.

Lindgren sed that a journey of 1000 miles begins with taking the first step. But Tune has added a corollary: you don't start a trip until you know where you are going. Harry Lindgren has consistently refused to discuss future steps, SR-2 and further, on the grounds that unless the public is willing to accept and utilize SR-1, there is no point in discussing the subsequent steps. This author disagrees and thinks that more public acceptance may be forthcoming if they knew the subsequent steps and how easily they can, be put into use without disrupting our adult's reading habits. For the number of words affected in each step, see the Appendix.

Lindgren claims that his SR-1 is the least controversial change and the least objectionable by the public. This statement is open to question, but it is already started and we are stuck with it as the first step. Prof. Thomas R. Hofmann has suggested (in our Fall 1983 issue) that there is a serious flaw in SR-1. When the silent *a* in 'ready' is omitted, it becomes 'redy', which can be sounded either a short or long vowel sound. He suggests SR-1a, which would double the consonant to show that the previous vowel is short, as is usually done in conventional spelling. Unfortunately, this is not always done. Some consonants are always doubled, others are sometimes doubled, and certain others are never doubled. And besides, all the consonants should be so treated, not just a few which are made confusable by SR-1. Since only one kind of a change should be made in a step, the idea of doubled consonants will be deferred until later. Other steps are less controversial and less objectionable.

One such step that has the unanimous agreement among the alfabetees in a survey made 3 years ago was decided should become SR-2. That is to use 'f' for 'ph' when it has the sound of *f*/*f*/, as has been the custom for centuries in Spanish and Italian. The number of words affected is probably about 100, as shown in Appendix 2.

The next step that a majority of alfabetees agreed upon was to be SR-3, dropping the unnecessary silent terminal *e* when that letter rongly indicates that the previous vowel is sounded long, as in *giv*, *hav* (but not in *behave*, and in *live* – with long *i*) etc. See Appendix 3.

Next for SR-4 we should consider making the double consonants consistent and regular, by always doubling a consonant when needed to indicate the previous vowel is sounded short. But Citron thinks we should change to follow the meny one-syllable words which do not have doubled consonants, like *bat*, *bet*, *bit*, *but*, etc. There are dozens of such words, but there are also some flaws and meny exceptions to this idea. We could make some rules that would fit the existing situation, such as: "One syllable words with a single vowel letter before a consonant shall have the short vowel sound; in one syllable words with a long vowel, the long vowel is indicated by a digraph before the consonant; in multisyllable words, the consonant is usually doubled." But there are

numerous exceptions to these rules, i.e. *bind, find, hind, mind, yet dint, lint, mint, and wind* can have either a long or short vowel. How about *blister, yet bliss, mister, yet miss*? There are 297 such homographic word pairs, which are all confusable. And there are many words which *do* double the consonants, such as: *ass, bass, class, crass, glass, lass, mass, pass, lass, bess, gess, less, mess, tess, bliss, hiss, miss, tiss, boss, cross, loss, moss, ross, toss, buss, cuss, fuss, muss, puss, tussle, etc.* And this is only for one double consonant, "ss". Think of the many more there will be with the other double consonants, viz, *bb, dd, ff, ll, mm, rr, tt*. It should be clear by now that there would be less disruption if the exception for one syllable words is eliminated, and *bedd, hedd, redd, etc.*, used consistently with the majority of our present spellings.

At this point, in the controversy, I realized that increasing the use of doubled consonants was a step backward from fonetic spelling which eventually would have to be repealed, and probably would not placate literate adults anyway. It would indeed be simpler if all double consonants were eliminated, by the following two rules:

1. a single vowel letter before a consonant shall have the short vowel sound;
2. a digraf before a consonant shall have a long vowel sound."

The only flaw in this idea is that there is no uniformity of use of any particular digraf to indicate the long vowel sound in each case. Frequency of use is no help because it is inconsistent. There are many digrafs used for each sound. Sometimes there are more than 20 different ways to indicate the long vowel sound (ref. Dewey). To take the most frequently used digraf may make agreement with T.O. in only 25% of the cases. Therefore frequency of use is an unworkable idea. But at this stage (SR-4), it is too soon to introduce a radical system like World English. Would it be workable to leave it merely as "any digraf" for the temporary time being? After SR-11 we could go to W.E. without much opposition.

For SR-5, the next least objectionable change would be to eliminate the unnecessary silent letters in some 888 words as listed in *SPB*, Spring, 1970. See Appendix 5 for the list of these words.

Now we are in a position to regularize and make fonetic several consonants that now have exceptions to the general rules. SR-6 could be, use 'c' fonetically for the 'k' sound, as in *sivic, siens*, etc. and all the others where 'c' before 'e' or 'i' has the sound of 's.' For the number of words affected, see Appendix 6.

While dealing with 'c', we should also make 'ch' fonetic, using it only for the sounds in church. 'School' would become 'scool,' etc. The number of words affected – probably only a few dozen.

For SR-7, the next step would be to make soft 'g' fonetic, replacing it with 'j' when it is sounded as 'j'. (The unnecessary 'u' in *guard* was already omitted under SR-5). The list of words affected will be found in Appendix 7.

For SR-8, the use of 'i' and 'y' should be regularized. Use 'i' only as short 'i' and 'y' only as a consonant, as in *piti, siti, priti, yes, yon, yoor*, etc. The number of words affected is hard to estimate but it will be many. See Appendix 8.

For SR-9, the step should be to make 's' regular. There is a chance that it will be objectionable to some literate adults, but it is necessary in order to make the simplified spelling more fonetic. 's' should be replaced by 'z' when sounded as /z/. The rule for this is: After voiced consonants use 's', after 'z' use 'ez', after 's' or 'z' use 'ez.' This rule should be easy to remember. The number of words affected (with plurals) will probably be several thousands, but it is a necessary step in the

foneticizing of English spelling. Even literate adults should welcome this change as it is a reliable rule.

The next step, SR-10 should be to use 'shun' for 'tion, sion, cion.' The number of words affected would be many, but one spelling would replace three now in use.

For SR-11 we could replace 'qu' with 'kw' which is a fonetic rendering of this sound. It is also in use by some industrialists for naming their product in a manner that it cannot be mispronounced, such as 'kween-size.' For the number of words affected, see Appendix 11,

At this point in the Step-by-Step plan it becomes less clear (and more controversial) as to what changes could (or should) be made, or whether the big jump to a completely fonetic spelling system should be undertaken. This is because there are still so many irregularities remaining about a dozen – such as *th, gh, ch* (when pronounced as *sh*), *oa, ou, eu, ei, ie, ar, er, ir, or, ur*, and there may be others. These are not only unreliable but do not fit in with any regular fonetic scheme or easily learned rules. A truly fonetic system would eliminate all the confusion associated with these confusable digraphs. But several thousands of such words remain to be regularized. Do we want to continue the step plan for another year (with one change a month) and see if it then will result in a satisfactory simplified spelling system? As with all piecemeal plans, we probably still have overlooked some remaining inconsistencies, such as: *all, awl, fault, few, true, main, mane, boat, bowl, bone, dew, do, duel*, etc. We have as yet not settled on a uniform set of digraphs to represent the long vowel sounds.

So the answer to our first question: "Would a Step-by Step plan produce a satisfactory simplified spelling system? must be answered in the negative unless you want to continue making piecemeal changes on thru SR-26 or SR-30. Even then we cannot be sure that the result then will be a completely fonetic system like World English unless we make the final step a change to World English.

Would the step from SR-11 to World English be too drastic for our literate adults? I don't think so. After they have seen the chaos left by SR-11, they should be gladder to welcome a one-sound-one-symbol system like World Eng.

A demonstration-comparison of Conventional Spelling, SR-11, and World English should show how much change has been achieved by SR-11 and how many words still remain as irregularities yet to be changed to more regular spellings. It also should show that SR-11 is easy for literate adults to read without much training. And, I think, will show the superiority of World English both as a learning medium (because it is completely fonetic) and as a permanent reform – because it is simple, reliable, and easy to learn, something you cannot say about the step-by-step plan. Is it as easy to learn 26 different rules and to apply them to every word or to learn two rules; with a reliable system that can be applied fonetically to all words?

World English Spelling can be easily remembered if one applies the following mnemonics,

1. for the short vowels, "That pen iz not much guud," and
2. for the long vowels, "Mae see thie toe tuesdae noon," and
3. for the difthongs, "haul our oil awae."

The consonants are pronounced as in: bob, cock, dad, fluf, gag, ha, juj, kick, lul, mom, nun, pop, roer, sing, sis, tot, verv, wow, yes, zoozs, this, thhin, vizhon. When all these rules-examples are learned, all new words can be tackled confidently.

Demonstration-Comparison of Conventional spelling, SR-11, and World English

CS: School calls are necessary to get children through one grade after another. Tension mounts as the child enters the
SR: Scool caulz ar nessari to get children through one grade after another. Tenshun mounts az the childe enterz the
WE: Scool caulz ar nesseri to get children throo wun graed after another. Tenshun mounts az the chield enterz the

CS: school for the first time, hopefully at eight o'clock. Either that or at nine o'clock when the sun gets up too late. You
SR: scool for the furst time, hopefuli at eight o'clock. Either that or nine o'clock when the sun gets up too late. Yoo
WE: scool for the furst tiem hoepfuli at aet o'clock. Eether that or nien o'clock when the sun gets up too laet. Yoo

CS: will (I hope) notice that it is easy to read because there is really only a little change from conventional spelling. But
SR: wil (I hope) notis that it iz eezi too reed becauz ther iz reeli onli a litl chanj from convenshunel speling. But
WE: wil (I hoep) notis that it iz eezi too reed bicauz ther iz reeli onli a litl chaenj from convenshunel speling. But

CS: admittedly, these words were chosen that were not subject to many of the SR-11 changes, in order to show the reader
SR: admittedli, three wordz wer choezen that wer not subject to meny of the SR-11 chanjez, in order to show the reader
WE: admittedli, theez wurdz wet choezen that wer not subject too meni ov the SR-11 chaenjez, in order too shoe the reader

CS: what still remains to be done.
SR: what stil rimaenz ti bee dun.
WE: what stil rimaenz too bee dun.

(This example shows the only word in W.E. that is confusable with C.S. spelling: 'shoe.'

The Farmer's Dilemma

CS: The weather was great; the sun was breaking through the clouds, and a slight breeze wafted the smell of newly mown
SR: The wether waz great; the sun waz breaking through the cloudz, and a slight breez wafted the smel of newly mown
WE: The wether wuz graet, the sun wuz braeking throo the cloudz, and a sliet breez wafted the smel ov nooli moen

CS: hay and alfalfa to the nose of the farmer's wife who was starting to prepare the noonday luncheon. All was peace and
SR: hay and alfalfa to the noze of the farmer's wife who waz starting to prepare the noonday lunchon. All waz peas and
WE: hae and alfalfa too the noez ov the farmer's wief hoo wuz starting too prepaer the noonday lunchon. Aul wuz pees and

CS: quiet when suddenly a sonic boom startled the farmer and his wife. A military plane flew overhead and quickly dis
SR: quiet when sudenli a sonic boom startled the farmer and his wife. A militari plane flew overhed and quickli dis
WE: kwiet when sudenli a sonic boom startld the farmer and hiz wief. A militeri plaen floo overhed and kwickli dis

CS: appeared from sight. The farmer said, "Those damned planes scare our hens and then they don't lay eggs. I wish
SR: apeard from sight. The farmer sed, "Thoze damed planes scare our henz and then they don't lay egz. I wish
WE: apeerd frum siet. The farmer sed, "Thoez damed plaenz scaer our henz and then thae don't lae egz. I wish

CS: they'd take their manoeuvres elsewhere." But of course, they didn't hear and could not appreciate his wish. The mount-
SR: they'd take their manuverz elswer." But of tours, they didn't hear and coud not apresiate hiz wish. The mount-
WE: thae'd taek ther manooverz elswer." But ov cours; thae didn't heer and cuud not apresiaet hiz wish. The mount-

CS: ains and nearby hills are resplendent in their beuty, with the heather in bloom and the scent of sage in the breeze.
SR: inz and nearby hilz ar resplendent in ther beuti, with the hether in bloom and the sent of sage in the breez.
WE: inz and neerbie hilz ar resplendent in ther beueti, with the hether in bloom and the sent ov saeg in the breez.

5. Letter to the Editor

In the Fall issue of 1983, Edward Rondthaler wrote in *SPB* that spelling reformers must settle their differences. He explained clearly that we must present an agreed plan. He is quite right of course. However in doing so he brings spelling reform down to a simple matter of agreeing the answers to a well-known problem. In practice of course it is not just a matter of agreeing the answers – the fact is we do not even know the questions.

We should not be surprised that spelling reformers can have such different views of the subject and produce such different results. In a practical sense spelling reform is still in its infancy even though the subject has been in existence for several hundred years. Workers have an enormous undeveloped field to work in and we should not be surprised if they all go in different directions. As an example of the problem let us consider one of our basic building blocks – the different phonemes as defined by the International Phonetic Association. These phonemes each have their own graphemic symbols, either those in the Latin alphabet, or new graphemic symbols that have been developed. The surprising fact is that these new symbols still have no name – we remember them solely by their symbol. Yet for the common phonemes a symbol alone is really not enough. We need names for them which are agreed and commonly used. (The one exception is the schwa or neutral vowel, (ə), which has a clear name, widely used and a name which has helped in the recognition and understanding of an otherwise complex phoneme.) It has long been commented on, that the French only began to make the most of their weekends when the word "Le Weekend" entered their vocabulary, so establishing the concept. The same will be true for the building blocks of spelling reform. But not only names – phonemes need identifying with symbols which have upper case and cursive derivatives. How else can they be used effectively in writing? This is not to suggest that the symbols would be used in a reformed spelling, simply that we must enable the layman to obtain some understanding and recognition of each phoneme if we are to manipulate and reform our spelling.

Over the years spelling reformers have disagreed not only on the end result of their reforms, but just as importantly on *how* to achieve them. Some have advocated total change to a new system, others a gradual change over a series of stages. Nowadays most workers probably support the process of gradual change if for no other reason than the sheer extent of reform needed would make it unacceptable otherwise. But this comes back to the need for agreement. Gradual change has the very real risk that

(i) different reformers and different communities would steer their reforms down different routes, and

(ii) different communities would be at different stages of progress. Some will have implemented many reforms, others hardly any at all.

The diversity of spelling which this could introduce is, to me, the most worrying aspect of the whole process of spelling reform. I also see it as almost inevitable. It could make the difference between present day American and British spellings seem like chickenfeed, a mere irritation. Hence I endorse again Edward Rondthaler's call for agreement. We must discuss the issues widely and seek to develop common programmes for reform to minimise diversity and give direction to those who so earnestly seek to work with us.

C. J. H. Jolly, London,

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Mark your calendar
Wednesday, May 9th, 1984

Special Interest Group 18 of the International Reading Association will meet during the annual convention of the IRA in Atlanta, Georgia. This SIG focuses on Orthography and Word Perception, and is closely allied with *Spelling Progress Bulletin*. Plan to attend the meeting, as this is an opportunity to promote the cause of spelling reform at a national forum of educators. At the meeting of SIG 18, the premiere edition of the new *Spelling Progress Bulletin* will be introduced.

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