

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 6, 1987/3 p2 in the printed version]

[Chris Upward: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Pamflet](#), [Leaflets](#), [Media](#), [Book and Papers](#).]

1. Editorial

Christopher Upward

THIS ISSUE

So much other important material has accumulated since the 1987 No. 2 issue, and so little time was available since the [Society's conference in July](#), that it was decided to postpone the publication of conference papers until 1988. However a [brief report on the conference](#) is given.

Since the spring a good deal has happened on the spelling front. Most sadly and most seriously, the Society has lost John Downing, our President for 15 years, whose work has given the cause of spelling reform a new kind of scientific credibility. We pay [our tribute to him](#).

Then, the educational scene in Britain has been in turmoil, with a series of radical policy proposals from the government, among them the concept of a 'model' of English, spoken and written, for teaching in schools. The Society has submitted some very tentative ideas to the committee entrusted with fleshing out the concept ([see our last editorial](#)), and they can be found in [Item 5](#). The hoped-for interview with the committee did not materialise, but the Society has been invited to submit further evidence, which should perhaps be more forthright than our original submission. On that point readers' views are sought.

On more specifically orthographical matters, our Secretary Laurie Fennelly presents in [Item 10](#) an analysis of comments received from members on the changes proposed to the Society's long-standing (and over the decades repeatedly amended) *New Spelling* system for the total phonemicisation of written English. [In Item 11](#) Edgar Gregersen makes out a rigorous case against the use of <oo> for any kind of /u/ sound in reformed spelling. And [in Item 12](#) the Editor contributes some findings on the kinds of error that written English is most liable to, and considers how far Cut Spelling might help avoid them. Error analysis as a method of diagnosing the ills of t.o. has of course significant lessons for any spelling reform proposal, as it tells us what the most troublesome features of t.o. are — in practice rather than in linguistic theory. Then [in Item 13](#) Valerie Yule's article on Pidgin builds on a theme broached by John Downing and touched on by Robert Craig and David Stark in previous Journals — and gives further support to Edgar Gregersen's plea for <u>, not <oo>: the growing importance of international standards of sound-symbol correspondence, as opposed to the parochial equivalences the English-speaking world is prone to take for granted.

MEDIA PUBLICITY AND NEW MEMBERS

One striking aspect of the conference was the widespread publicity it attracted, with substantial articles in such papers as *The Guardian* and *The Times*, three radio broadcasts, and further TV, radio and press reverberations in Britain, Canada, the USA and New Zealand. What aroused such media interest was above all Cut Spelling: as John Downing predicted, the simple idea of removing useless and confusing letters proved to have an immediate appeal, where the traditional reform-strategy of imposing phonemic consistency bewilders the average adult. And this appeal was not confined to journalists, with their necessarily short-term view of what will create a stir in tomorrow's headlines. The media publicity triggered off numerous enquiries, especially from people with a professional interest: people in publishing, computing, but above all in education, primary school

teachers, remedial teachers at secondary level, adult literacy tutors, and dyslexia specialists. And there were lay enquirers, delighted at the opportunity to unload the pent-up fury and frustration that t.o. has caused them over the years, among them non-native speakers who bring a more objective, though if anything even more critical, gaze to its unique absurdities. To those who have newly joined the Society we extend a hearty welcome; we hope that many of them will be keen to explore the potential of improving English spelling in their own professional spheres, and so link the Society with the outside world in which spelling reform will have to gain acceptance if it is to come about at all. The Society is steadily strengthening these outside links, both with other organisations having related interests, and through the exchange of publications ([see the end](#))

SOCIETY AND JOURNAL AS FORUM

As the conference showed, spelling reform is a multifaceted, multidisciplinary question, to which people bring insights from very different directions. Even outright opponents of reform often have worthwhile contributions to make. At the present stage of development the Society and its Journal are a forum where these insights can be aired, compared and debated. Some anxiety has been expressed that CS appears increasingly to dominate (witness the large postbag on the subject) and by no means all members of the Society or its committee are equally convinced of its potential. But CS is not an official policy of the Society, it is one candidate, and like all candidates it must face interrogation and criticism. So let a hundred flowers bloom, with the proviso that when contending views are competing for time and space, those that are thoroughly substantiated should take precedence.

REVIEWS WANTED

Would readers who would like to report on any of the following (any length between 200–2,000 words) please contact the editor.

1. Robin Millar & Cynthia Klein *Making Sense of Spelling*, ILEA, Ebury Teachers' Centre, Sutherland St., London SW1 4LH;
2. Catherine Moorhouse *Helping Adults to Spell*, ALBSU;
3. K Perera *Children's Writing and Reading*, Blackwell 1984;
4. H Spencer *The Visible Word*, Lund Humphries 1968. Suggestions for reports on other relevant literature are always welcome.

NEXT ISSUE

The next two issues will chiefly carry papers from the conference. But it is hoped also to publish an article on Romaji, the romanised script for Japanese, whose sound-symbol correspondences are now so familiar world-wide.

2. Correspondence

Spelling History

From **Donald Scragg**, Director of Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies and author of *A history of English spelling*:-

We need a good deal more scrutiny of the seventeenth century (printed and private matter) before we can safely say it was the printers' "arbitrary typographical decisions". Our spellings came about by the gradual refinement of variants, but what caused one variant to disappear and another to gain favour is not easy to say. I assume that individual printers could hardly be sufficiently influential (although individual books — Bible, dictionaries — might). We should look for some influence on the printers — their teachers — and on the teacher — their textbooks. But what influenced the compilers of textbooks, and what control over their printers did the writers of textbooks have? As yet only circular answers!

From **Susan Baddeley**, HESO research team, CRNS, Paris:-

If medieval scribes and Renaissance printers wanted to improve their remuneration (with long forms in spelling), how do you account for their extensive abbreviations? ... (*We shall be printing a conference paper on early abbreviations in 1988—Ed.*)

Strategy, Political and Orthographical

From **R C Hope**, London:-

The problem is publicity. No one is going to risk simplified spelling if it will make a bad impression; but suppose each week the papers printed a small list of words in the new spelling.

Thenceforth any applicant for a job any man in business, could use them confident that the employer or customer would be cognisant of them. Schools would be supplied at the outset with the list and could decide which to teach.

— Go easy on the double consonant. It affects the vowel, like *tinny: tiney, rapping: raping*.

— Get money off the CBI.

— I personally am sick of <u> after <q>.

— You'll have to ignore regional accents — although if *nought* became *naut* a Yorkshireman could still call it *nowt*. I guess Cockneys will be worst off, since to them the words *fault, fort, fought, thought* all sound exactly alike.

— The friend you need is the editor of the OED. If he would agree to insert as a foreword, some rules for alternative spelling, then you are on the move.

From **Peter Pryer**, Aldershot:-

The vowels in English can be divided into vowels in monosyllables and vowels in polysyllables.

The only way around the difficulty with polysyllables is having standardised endings and prefixes.

As regards monosyllables, they must take their vowels from the oldest known form of the word.

There is another difficulty: how do we define a word? How are we entitled to write a word like *also* as one word, but *railway station* as two?

From **Dr Conrad H Slater**, Otley, West Yorkshire:-

Up to the present time, I have always regarded reformers of language as cranks but after your interview on the radio it is quite clear that you do not fall into that category, and that you obviously have something to offer.

I particularly liked your point about the saving of time and space. You are not just content with making spelling easier for future generations, you also have the present users very much in mind, in that your proposed variations should be instantly recognizable to all.

I can only suggest you console your German friend by saying that it probably won't come in for some time, and it won't become obligatory when it does. Indeed he will perhaps then have the status equivalent to someone who knows Chaucer's English today.

Be careful that in their enthusiasm your friends do not go over the top; be content with a minor change or two per decade, rather than pressing for a full-scale revolution overnight in which everything becomes unrecognizable.

From **Naïma Khireddine**, Canterbury, Kent:-

The published linguistic descriptions of spelling assume that it is consistent, i.e. there are more regularities than are apparent on the surface and that any 'so-called' inconsistencies are motivated rather than arbitrary. Unfortunately they fail to demonstrate such consistency in a way to make it useful to learners and teachers like myself.

From **Judith Worley**, Havant, Hampshire:-

Part of my work is teaching the London English Language Course for 'A' Level. Spelling Reform is a topic that frequently comes up. My colleagues, myself and our students would therefore appreciate whatever information you can give us about your work.

From **Don Hadden**, London:-

I am a free lance journalist from Canada interested in preparing an article on Cut Spelling and your Society. Hopefully I can help by providing a little overseas publicity. Please excuse my spelling.

From **John C Elmsly**, University of Auckland, New Zealand:-

I have read the article published in Auckland regarding Cut Spelling. I am interested in fostering Cut Spelling since I have practised leaving out unnecessary letters for many years, dating from an interest in cryptography. Your statements about ambiguity seem relatively unimportant because context should show the right word. CS might well help some people to express themselves without the usual fear of spelling.

Cut Spelling — Reactions from Teachers/Students

From **Steve Brain**, University of London Goldsmiths' College:-

... A group of literacy students discussed Cut Spelling and experimented with the system. They were very enthusiastic and felt that the 3 basic rules would help them considerably if in normal usage. The usual questions about silent letters, doubled consonants etc have arisen. Working with Cut Spelling certainly raised linguistic/grammar issues with them! As one of them said: "This is where most of our problems are. If this was the way we had to spell we wouldn't be coming to this class."

From **Jean Hutchins**, British Dyslexia Association., Redhill, Surrey:-

I showed your leaflet on Cut Spelling to a dyslexic adult who has a reading age of some 10+ years. She was able to read all the CS paragraph except 3 words — ones that she would not have been able to read in t.o., *orthografy, radicl, compatbl*. I think she found it easier than a more able reader, because she has to work out many words and has not got the t.o. spellings fixed in her mind.

I liked such a lot of CS — the four words *wil, giv, u, mor* were enough to convert me. *Cud, wud, shud* go into the *put* group. Doubled letters, especially <U>, present great problems for dyslexics.

We work on *well*, then have *wheel, full* but *careful*, not to mention *fulfil*. However would *filled=fild* be readable? I have never succeeded in teaching pupils there/heir.

Do, dos, don, go, gos, gon:— super. *Do ho, hose, hom* convey *who, whose, whom*? I'm not sure.

I think <g>=<j> is too drastic a change for the first stage, *ej* is too different. Re — <tch>: I have had a pupil at the Dyslexia Clinic at Barts, whose teacher spent a whole term failing to teach him when to put that <t> in, e.g. *such, much, rich, which* but *catch, fetch*, etc.

I think every syllable should have a vowel: I think *examples, rathr, contry, transfr, undr* are hard to read. You lose a syllable in *automnus, orgnization, incidently, litrat, natrly, systmatizing*. You can't say *aproachs, foxs, boxs, fixs, mixs, churchs*.

From **Peter Stocks**, Halifax, West Yorkshire:-

Oh that I could start teaching CS in school year! I would love to simplify the difficulties I see my young charges (7–9 year olds) go through. Both able and not so able could have their communication enriched by your reforms. I found your letter immediately recognisable and readable, only making one or two double takes as I read...

I feel u ar undrestimating just how regulr CS wud make th spelng to children. I find that I can teach aproximatly 75% of words thru a logicl aproach. CS wud increase this tremendously and these logicl teaching methods wud only be enhanced. Morover nearly al th children I teach hav very litl dificulty with the majority of words; they seem instinctivly to be able to aprehend the 'regulr' words from a simpl fonic method. It is on th very words that CS simplifies and regularises that chldrn hav th greatest dificulty. If these wer chanjed I am sure ther burdn wud be virtualy taken away.

I feel that CS wud be mor than logicl enuf as a systm, provided dificultis cud be ironed out and a consensus acheved. Is this posibl with th English peple? And th compatibility with t.o. cud be yr winning hand! I think that th speed and conciseness of CS is a great plus point. One or two

dificultis: first, a word I cud not reconcile was *yr*. It remindd me of Welsh or an abreviation. Wy not *yor*?

(*Th form yr for your is a compromise between english pronunciation yor and americh pronunciation yur; and it is a wel-nown abreviation. Your looks like a rym with our wich is far worse.—Ed.*)

I was also disapointd with *many* because it is one of th words I hav colectd with wich childm hav particulr problms.

Also, wy do we hav *trys* but *cuntris*? Wy can't we hav *cuntrys*? This again wud help one of childrns dificultis.

(*Th idea is to spel th two difrnt vowl-sounds difrntly.—Ed.*)

It seems that publishrs ar taking in hand som speling reform: in pluralising *leaf-leafs*. These chanjes ar comnly typset in childrns books nowadays.

From **Veronica Tippetts**, Fellow of the Association of Remedial Teachers:-

I think Cut Spelling has a lot going for it as a form of speedwriting. It would assuredly sharpen perception/production skills among the literate who had need for speed writing at appropriate times.

From **Annemarie Farrugla**, Malta:-

I think CS would benefit greatly Maltese schoolchildren. In Malta we start learning English at 5. Before they come to school, most children have more exposure to Maltese than to English. Although their contact with English is not negligible, it is mostly with the spoken word. When they come to school most children are liable to become confused because in Maltese the written word is a truer representation of the spoken word than in English. Some schools use i.t.a. but this gives rise to more confusion because the children have to cope with two alphabets.

Apart from children, I think even adults would benefit. English is very much in use in our country-names of shops and signs, television newspapers, books. If spelling was simpler, life would be easier, especially for those who encounter difficulties to read English.

Another point is about pronunciation. In England you do not have any set standard, but RP is used for teaching foreigners. Pronunciation is in a sorry state in Malta. Although we can communicate together in English, sometimes we find it hard to understand English people who speak RP. And the way we 'batter' some words makes them unintelligible for English people. We tend to sound each word as it is written (although not necessarily in every case). Such difficulties could be overcome by sirnplicyng spelling.

Cut Spelling — Critical Discussion

From **R Gleaves**, London:-

I think that present spelling should be rationalised rapidly — even if one is accused of aping American... I will not attempt to write CS, as a spelling dictionary needs to be prepared. Some of the spellings are not so much 'cut' as 'massacred', for you omit letters that are (or should be) pronounced. Surely the essence of your case is that one spells as one speaks, not just as one seeks a 'speedword' as per Pitman etc? A few examples: *foundd* needs <e>; *confrence* — the missing <e> is pronounced, so why not write it? Ditto *sevrl*, *classs*.

(There is a lot of uncertainty about whether these letters are pronounced, and if so, how. One cannot tell from the pronunciation what the second vowel letter should be in separate, desperate, elaborate, whereas one cannot mispronounce it in the CS forms sepat desprat, elabrat.—Ed.)

You answer my objections, but I am thrown by the jumble of consonants.

From **Elizabeth Wardle**, Seaford, East Sussex:-

Θə frend hooe nchez how intrəstid ie am in speling rəform haz just shoen mee ən artikəl in Eduekaeshən Gardiən dəskriebing uər simplified speling, kuting owt unnesəsri letz. Liek ue, ie startid bie dooeing dhat, but kaem too dhə kənkloozhən dhət so meni owrz ar waestid on vaeriənts dhat boeth fōrinərz and naetiv speekərz shood bee aebəl too divæet thoez too mor uesfool and intrəsting thingz.

Uer iliminaeshən əv sum əbskuer vowəlz wood bee les fusi dhən mie intrədokshn əv dheə <Θə>, but wood it kuvər al kəntinjensiz?

From **Bill Herbert**, Australian Simplified Spelling Association, Kenmore, Queensland, Australia:-
The immediate reaction of our members to CS was adverse — so many changes to words. Then on a second look they found they could read it quite easily.

But without exception our members were staggered at the prospect of trying to write CS. Obviously you will need a small dictionary, with your 3 basic rules at the top of each page. We appreciate your reasons for having children able to read the t.o. that their parents use, but eventually <k, s> must supplant ambiguous <c>.

We suggest field work on the ordinary citizenry to get reactions to CS.

Our own reform list is now 24 <ough & augh> words (10 pronunciations) + 10 highly unphonetic words.

From **Robert Craig**, Avon:-

The kuestion is whether CS or Substitution should be the first stage. It is my opinion that CS is not a suitable first stage, altho cutting is a necessary stage. Claims for CS are:

1. it is simple, 2. it retains the 'gestalt' of words.

My feelings are 1. it is not simple, 2. it does not retain the gestalt as well as substitution does, 3. it gives fewer clues to pronunciation than t.o., whereas substitution gives more. CS scores over substitution in being visually less disturbing because it retains familiar letters (but it upsets the gestalt or shape of words and sentences). Also, the shortening of words would be a financial advantage.

Ekzample ov Sybstituxion

Dhi problem dhat wi hav is dhat no wyn haz jet hyrd direktli from God wot a nuro-tranzmitter iz supposed tu du. Ij tend tu bi veri general about it, and Ij say if a nyrv sell haz a kemikal dhat it sikretez tu tolk tu anydher nyrv sell, it's tranmitting informaxion.

From **Ayb Citron**, Better Education thru Simplified Spelling, Michigan:-

The report of the SSS Working Party is well done. But it seems to me the first vowels of *souvenir*, *superior* are different so should be speld differently. How would Cut Spelling treat *ewe*, *you*?
(CS rites them as ew, u.—Ed.)

Here are three sentences from the report in Speed Spelg: *How cd a reformd orthugrafe b intrudoost? T x o i.t.a.*

shoz tt scoolchildren c perfectle wel be tawt a far m radicl sistm than Cut Speling. Hvr, why! children hav tu ubandn i.t.a. afr a y or tuu, tha cd cntinue tu uez Cut Speling f t rest o ther lyvz bcz it z cmpatubl w r.o.

From **Tom McArthur**, Editor *English Today*:-

CS has certain virtues. It is the basis of a valuable note-taking system. If it were promoted as such, it might creep into wider use. One can engage in interesting language-awareness exercises with CS: wch letters are needed, and which not, to transmit a complete message?

As a rival to t.o. CS has enemies on both sides: among t.o. conservatives who will see it as brutalistic, and among Simplified Spelling enthusiasts for whom it would not fulfil the basic need for phonic/graphic parallelism, as it is not after all, a 'phonemic' script.

From **Edward Rondthaler**, co-editor of *Dictionary of AMERICAN Spelling*, Croton-on-Hudson, New York:-

I have no difficulty in reading CS. I believe however that the reason is that I am already literate. I know 400 ways to spell our 42 sounds, and when I read CS my mind quickly sorts through various possible pronunciations and picks out the right one. But the illiterate person doesn't have that advantage, and it's my understanding that the whole purpose of reform is to help those who are illiterate. I'm apprehensive that from the learner's point of view there may be too many cases where certain combinations of letters will call for one interpretation in one word and a different interpretation in another.

(All CS forms reduce the variants found in t.o., so they reduce the possible interpretations.—Ed.)

I doubt if one can be certain of the feasibility of CS until its principles have been applied to tens of thousands of words, then double-checked to be sure that

1. there are no serious overlaps and
2. the rules are within the grasp of those we are trying to reach, and
3. that the end result is compatible enough with t.o.

(This work is proceeding. Interim results: there are som overlaps, learners do not need the cutting rules, and CS is compatible with t.o. because almost all its letters are those of t.o.—Ed.)

I do not think AMERICAN meets these goals nearly as well as I wish it did.

From **David Stark**, Cumbernauld, Scotland:-

Cut Spelling omits so many vowels that it de-syllabises words, and in the mental processes of reading and writing this means destabilising words.

(This requires careful analysis of what is meant by a vowel and a syllable. Let us remember that chasm contains two vowels and two syllables.—Ed.)

From **Mark Abraham**, Manchester:-

Why not include the silent, final *non-magic* <e> as in words like *imagin(e)*, *engin(e)* as part of Cut Spelling?

(The CS forms are 'majn, enjn'.—Ed.)

From **Susan Baddeley**, Chartres:-

I have had to teach English and sympathise with pupils who protest that "en anglais on écrit *caoutchouc* et on prononce *plastique*", but I think CS isn't adequate to represent English pronunciation. You have to be familiar with the uncut system in order to be able to understand the cut one.

(These are common reactions. Readers are invited to send lists of 'inadequate' CS forms. But no one taught CS from scratch would need to know t.o. first.)

CS, Further Publications and Research

From **Mark O'Connor**, Townsville, Queensland, Australia:-

My book *Words on Paper* does not propose any particular new system for spelling reform. Its aim is rather to explain the issues surrounding it in the kind of lively style to reach a large readership that has never dreamed that language could be made so interesting and so comprehensible. I aim to undo the impression that Noam Chomsky's followers created; viz. that the reform case was out of date, and the issues so frightfully complicated that no ordinary person had the right to act (indeed, scarcely to express an opinion) on spelling.

Obviously the issues are complex and to clarify them without oversimplification is a job for a skilled professional writer with a lot of time allocated to this project.

My final chapter will consider the various reforms currently proposed. It will take the line that reforms need to be practical and readily grasped by persons already literate in t.o., and must also be compatible with computer technology.

There is good reason for reformers to be tolerant of and interested in each other's proposals. I don't find it possible at present to point towards any particular reform as clearly the best. But I shall devote considerable space both to Cut Spelling and to Rondthaler's computerized American dictionary project as being among the most promising.

From **Valerie Yule**, Monash University, Victoria, Australia:-

Perhaps my Harvard article would show that academic journals will now publish on spelling reform. There should also be an article in *Applied Cognitive Psychology* — this is the experimental study by Yule and Greentree comparing immediate adjustment to spelling change in Cut, Cut-Plus, morpho-phonemic and World-English-Spelling phonemic.

Spelling reforms are going on by Macquarie Australian Dictionary, and investigations for more changes.

I think Cut Spelling proposals shd stil be tentative pending reserch confirmation. Setting out CS for new readers, I sugest always put first th point that surplus letrs removed ar surplus to both meaning and pronunciation, and give t.o. paralels to al exampls — *far-ar*, *her-wer*.

Poor readrs hav trubl with consonant strings. I may do som detaild reserch on this question — or can anyone else?

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 6, 1987/3 p6 in the printed version]

[John Downing: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

3. Professor John Downing — a Tribute

This tribute has been compiled from papers, notes and reminiscences sent by Alun Bye, Chris Jolly, Ronald Threadgall, Valerie Yule and others.



John Downing, who succumbed to cancer after a hard struggle in the late spring, was one of the Society's great Presidents. He was in the line of founding president Walter Skeat, Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge (1908–11), Gilbert Murray, O.M., Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford (1911–46), Daniel Jones, Professor of Phonetics at University College London and author of classic works on the pronunciation of English (1946–1968), and Sir James Pitman, father of the i.t.a. (1968–72).

Each played a distinctive, valuable part in increasing our understanding of the need for and possibilities of English spelling reform, and John Downing carried out the crucial scientific research which not merely demonstrated how and why i.t.a. was educationally so superior to t.o., but also provided solid evidence to support the Society's message that the level of literacy would benefit from improvements in English spelling.

John Downing's career was based upon, and in a sense never forgot, his years as classroom teacher in elementary, secondary and special education schools between 1947–57: the mind of the learning child remained his fundamental concern. From 1960–69 he was Head of Reading Research at the University of London Institute of Education, and then Senior Lecturer in Psychology. In those years he led the investigation into the effectiveness of the Initial Teaching Alphabet as a teaching medium, culminating in his report *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet*, whose lessons remain central to the Simplified Spelling Society's case.

With his move to Canada in 1970, when he became Professor of Psychological Foundations in Education at Victoria University, British Columbia, John Downing's work expanded in two dimensions. One was the psychology of reading generally, with a succession of works such as *Reading and reasoning*, *Language Awareness and learning to Read*, *Reading Readiness*, and most recently the major survey *Psychology of Reading*. The other dimension was the international one, which is of great importance because it provides a basis of objective comparison with English. His main work here was *Comparative Reading*, a cross-national study of reading in 14 countries, but a further work, — *Cognitive Psychology and Reading in the USSR*, will appear posthumously. Altogether he published some 300 articles. His work and especially his research took him to many parts of the world, including Australia, Finland, France, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Papua New Guinea, the USA and the USSR. As a psychologist and a scientist he knew the importance of evidence and empirical investigation. He conducted no open missionary campaigns

for spelling reform, but it followed logically from what he taught. He made a permanent contribution to literacy and education and established a world-wide network that will serve others in the future.

Though his association with i.t.a. inevitably involved him in controversy, which he did not relish, he was also deeply respected and honoured in professional bodies. As well as being president of the Simplified Spelling Society for 15 years, he was the first president of the United Kingdom Reading Association, and was elected to the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association, three of whose subcommittees he chaired. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and of both the American and Canadian Psychological Associations. He was awarded the higher doctoral degree of D.Lit. by the University of London, and the International Citation of Merit by the International Reading Association.

Personal recollections from members of the Society are exceedingly warm. He was quick to give recognition and assistance to others, and had a multitude of friends. His perpetually cheery face radiated friendliness and good will, aided in no small way by his habit of wearing loud check jackets and a bootlace badge tie, characteristics which seemed not so much to contrast with as to complement his otherwise quiet manner. The honour we held him in was all the greater for having known and learned from one of the kindest and most scholarly academics in the field of literacy. He became a personal friend of almost everyone he met, remembering their first names, where they lived and worked, and it was never too much trouble to send some useful literature from the other side of the globe. Both UKRA and the Society are much the poorer for having lost the services and congenial support of an elegant, erudite, charming and gentlemanly friend and colleague with international stature. At his last meeting with the Society, in the autumn of 1986, he was able to reinforce our understanding of those aspects of reading psychology most relevant to the future advocacy of spelling reform, in particular highlighting the potential of Cut Spelling.

We offer our sympathy to Marianne, his widow from their close marriage (she attended some of the Society's meetings), and to their now adult children.

Though we have lost John Downing as a person, we have not lost his work, which it is our task to build on. When one day the spelling of English is modernised, his will be one of the names to which most credit is due.

4. The Fifth International Conference of the Simplified Spelling Society

The Simplified Spelling Society held its [Fifth International Conference](#) at Aston University's James Gracie Conference Centre in Birmingham 24–26 July 1987. Conference papers will appear in the *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* in 1988.

THE PLACE

The Society picked a rare fine weekend in a grey summer to hold its 1987 conference in the agreeable James Gracie Conference Centre, with its trim lawns, mature trees, and comfortable part-modern, part-victorian-mansion buildings. Excellent food and friendly, helpful staff complemented the surroundings and provided a pleasantly relaxed environment conducive to the fruitful exchange of ideas and experience.

THE PROGRAMME

The conference theme *Spelling for Efficiency* itself implies certain concept of the purpose of spelling: spelling for use. In other words, spelling less as an abstract system of sound-symbol correspondence, than as a system that people have to learn and then make use of for the highly practical purpose of communication, whether as receivers or as transmitters of messages. The need to consider the spelling of English, of all languages, in this perspective, arises from its international function: not merely is it used by hundreds of millions of native speakers with very different accents (which itself rules out any straightforward sound-symbol correspondence), but it is also learnt by even more non-native speakers for communication around the world, and their needs are scarcely less important. The benefits of a regular system have been shown from the experience with teaching orthographies like i.t.a. and *Writing to Read* and in other languages (Hungarian, for instance). But how to get from the present fragmented mosaic of English spelling to a lucidly and logically patterned system is the problem that has defeated spelling-reformers in the past. It is not only teachers and linguists who today have an interest in and a vital contribution to make to the question, but publishers, printers, lexicographers, psychologists and business people who have perhaps the most rigorous concept of efficiency of all. The conference theme was intended as a focus for these many facets of the question.

THE PARTICIPANTS

And if the facets of the question were varied, so were the participants, even though their numbers were small. They ranged from young researchers in computational linguistics and experimental psychology to established professionals with many decades' experience in typography, printing, publishing, lexicography, editing (among whom the dynamic veteran New York typographer Ed Rondthaler must be mentioned by name); they included speakers of many languages of eastern, western and northern Europe and beyond to the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent — not to mention speakers of English of the American, English, Indian and Scots varieties; there were teachers of English to native-speaking children, to teenage backward readers, to adult illiterates, to

foreign learners, and to other teachers; there were information scientists, translators, administrators and historians versed in the techniques of paleography. By no means all arrived convinced of the case for simplifying English spelling, but more left convinced than arrived.

THE PAPERS

The papers and other contributions reflected this deliberate diversity. Dr Tom McArthur launched the proceedings after dinner on the Friday evening by linking the minutiae of letters to the whole history of civilisation, showing how technological advances in their use had transformed mankind's view of itself. On the Saturday Drs Fletcher and Upton demonstrated the haphazard evolution of our present spellings as manifested in the writing of Oxford dons 350 years ago. Dr Adam Brown drew on experience and research of foreign learners to consider the effect different mother tongues had on the ability to master English spelling. David Stark considered the relation between phonemes in different accents and ways of overcoming the limited potential of the alphabet to represent their variations. Ronald Threadgall gave a rousing account of the rewards of teaching literacy by the Initial Teaching Alphabet. Patrick Hanks described a non-alphabetic hazard of English spelling, namely the aggravation caused in publishing by the uncertainty over the use of the hyphen in English. Professor Knowles' polyglot analysis of the different spelling habits of the related languages of eastern Europe highlighted the fundamental issue of whether spelling should respect basic roots of words or reflect their variations. John Kerr gave an insight into the laboratory of experimental psychology and its findings on reading speed. Chris Jolly presented the unexpectedly favourable responses he had obtained in a marketing survey of attitudes towards spelling reform. Chris Upward described some uncertainties of Cut Spelling, which participants then discussed in a workshop session. Professor Nyikos demonstrated a technique for raising public awareness of the inconsistency of English spelling by alliterative saturation bombardment. And finally Professor Gregersen warned against the pitfalls of an inadequately thought-out series of staged reforms, with examples taken particularly from the Norwegian experience.

THE PROSPECTS

The conference ended with a discussion of the Society's future strategy. Ongoing work on the revision of 'New Spelling' as a complete reform scheme and the development of Cut Spelling as a first stage was to continue toward publication, while contacts with other organisations, particularly in the literacy field, were to be furthered.

5. The Kingman Committee

BACKGROUND

In 1986 the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker, set up a Committee of Inquiry into English Language Teaching, chaired by Sir John Kingman, Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University, which is to report by the end of 1987. Its terms of reference are:

1. *To recommend a model of the English language, whether spoken or written, which would:*
 - (1) *serve as a basis of how teachers are trained to understand how the English language works;*
 - (2) *inform professional discussion of all aspects of English teaching.*
2. *To recommend the principles which should guide teachers on how far and in what ways the model should be made explicit to pupils, to make them conscious of how language is used in a range of contexts.*
3. *To recommend what, in general terms, pupils need to know about how the English language works and in consequence what they should have been taught, and be expected to understand, on this score, at age 7, 11 and 16.*

Despite scepticism among educationists about the terms of reference and the expertise of the committee, the Society nevertheless decided it should take this opportunity to state the case for spelling reform. It accordingly submitted the following document to the Committee, which in its reply said that it would only be able to take oral evidence from a small number of organisations and that the Society would not be among them. Further written evidence was however invited, and readers who wish to make suggestions for this purpose are asked to let the Editor know.

Submission to the COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
from the SIMPLIFIED SPELLING SOCIETY. May 1987

I. The submission

The Simplified Spelling Society wishes to make the following submission to the Committee of Inquiry into English Language Teaching. The submission has been compiled by the Editor of the Society's *Journal*, in consultation with its Chairman and other officers:

Editor Christopher Upward, Senior Lecturer, Department of Modern Languages, Aston University.
Chairman Christopher Jolly, marketing consultant.

2 The background of public and political opinion

We think it necessary to preface our submission by describing how the Society's views relate to generally held perceptions of English spelling.

2.1 Variety of perceptions of traditional orthography (t.o.)

Views of t.o. span a wide spectrum, from despair at inability to master it at one extreme, to veneration of its unique richness at the other. Between these extremes we encounter: irritation at how troublesome t.o. is to teach, to learn and to use; impatience that its violation should be so stigmatized; resignation to its waywardness as a fact of life; rejection of the notion that the letters represent the sounds of words; painstaking analysis of the educational difficulties t.o. causes; attempts to make best use of such patterns and regularities as t.o. possesses; unquestioning acceptance of t.o. as a tool of daily world-wide communication; pride in the status that fluent, accurate command of t.o. gives above those who lack that command; affection for the eccentricities to t.o.; appreciation of t.o. as a vehicle for the continuity of literary culture; scholarly delight in the wealth of historical associations conjured up by the etymology of t.o. In short, t.o. is all things to all people; but above all how it is perceived by the schoolchild is very different from how it is perceived by the well-educated adult manipulating it with supreme but unconscious skill;

and how it is perceived by the more scientifically and less classically educated younger generation is very different from how it is perceived by the older generation. How it is perceived by the Simplified Spelling Society has been implicit in the Society's name for the almost 80 years of its existence.

2.2 Recent authoritative statements

In addition to the cross-currents of public opinion just described, the Society notes recent statements from more authoritative quarters which might have been in a position to consider the merits of reforming t.o. Thus the Bullock report [1] said:

"Various solutions have been suggested to the problems presented by the irregular system of spelling in English, the most radical of which is its actual reform... The views of the Committee differ on the question... and this difference of opinion is probably a fair reflection of the range and intensity of the views held by teachers and the public at large. However, the majority of us remain unconvinced by the case for national reform... We consider the issues involved too complex and the implications too far-reaching to enable us to stretch our brief to the extent of giving the subject the detailed study it needs. In the circumstances we do not feel able to make a recommendation on it."

And in the debate on The English Language in the House of Lords on 4 March 1987, Baroness Hooper for the Government said: [2]

"Many noble Lords have argued — and I doubt if anyone would disagree with them — that improvement in the standards of communication in English would be a great benefit. The question is how that improvement can be attained. Some believe that what is required is reform of spelling ... so that English can be more easily learned, whether by children or foreigners. We have heard many suggestions as to the types of reform that might be adopted. Gaining agreement to reform and bringing it about — not just in this country but in the whole of the English-speaking world — would be a formidable task.

Changes in language and language-use of course take place all the time in a living language but they do so naturally and gradually. I am not convinced that attempts to regulate or direct that process would achieve the desired results. Indeed, I am inclined to think that English would not be as universally spoken as it is if it were not that it is already so much more simple and flexible than many other languages. Even if it were possible to wave a wand and reform or simplify English spelling or grammar across the world, would that be desirable? The richness and variety of the English language are matters of which we are rightly proud, and many people would be sorry to see them lost even in the interests of greater simplicity. The Government are therefore concentrating their efforts not on trying to change the English language but on trying to improve the way that it is taught..."

3. Purpose of the Simplified Spelling Society's submission

The Society believes that, for all the caution expressed by the Bullock report and by Baroness Hooper, it has a duty to place those views in a fuller perspective for the present Committee of Inquiry, and to advance some new ideas on the subject. The Society would like to encourage their further exploration, and hopes that they may provide a stimulus for the improved teaching of English, in keeping with the Committee's terms of reference.

4 Spelling Reform in perspective

We would first wish to qualify Baroness Hooper's remark that "changes in language and language-use take place all the time in a living language but they do so naturally and gradually. I am not convinced that attempts to regulate or direct that process would achieve the desired results." We would point out that these observations apply to grammar and pronunciation, but they do not apply to the writing system, which changes not "naturally", but by conscious decision. The decisions that gave rise to t.o. were made chiefly by printers in the seventeenth century, when universal literacy and economic efficiency were not the major criteria they are today. Many such decisions were

influenced by the typographical requirements of a technology in its infancy, and conflict with modern perceptions of consistency, pronunciation, etymology, and educational and technological need. The last major decisions of this kind occurred some two hundred years ago with the abandonment of <f> as an alternative form of <s>, and with Noah Webster's improvements in America, few of which have been systematically adopted in the United Kingdom (*program* is a rare, but partial example). Since then only isolated changes of detail have been made, often without regard for consistency: thus <ph> has become <f> in *fantasy*, *freefone*, but not in *phantom*, *telephone*; and the single <1> in *fulness* is creeping in by analogy with *fulsome*, despite its base form which remains full. The experience of English shows [3] that a rational, efficient writing system does not necessarily develop "naturally" if the crucial decisions are left to individuals; and the experience of most other languages shows [4] that more efficient writing systems can be introduced if carefully planned by bodies selected for their expertise and wisdom, and equipped with realistic and rational criteria. Since the early 1970's the United Kingdom has by dint of careful planning at official level (after a century of deliberation) modernized its currency and to some extent its system of weights and measures, to the great educational and economic benefit of our society. After over four centuries of deliberation on spelling, a similar attack needs to be made on the much more intricate, entrenched and far-flung problems of our writing system. The Society believes it can demonstrate that, given the will and given a realistic appreciation of what is feasible and what is not, such an attack could be made. The penalty for failing to grasp the nettle is that the spoken language will diverge ever further from its written form, and present problems of illiteracy and waste will grow steadily worse. Sooner or later, like all human systems, written English will have to be modernized, and the burden of its present obsolescence is already so great that a first step would be better taken now than in some future century.

5 Implications for the Committee of Inquiry

The Committee's terms of reference do not explicitly include examination of this question, whose ramifications go beyond education as such, as well as beyond the United Kingdom. Yet since those terms of reference cover the written as well as the spoken language, they cannot properly exclude spelling: no "model" of the written language can ignore the very system by which the language is written down. Defining the model however means applying rational standards, and any attempt to apply such standards to t.o. is immediately lost in a maze of inconsistencies — as five minutes' study of the cover of the Society's *Journal* (enclosed) will show. If teachers are to be "trained to understand how the English language works", then they must understand the intricacies of the maze of its spelling. Furthermore they must understand these intricacies not so much for their own edification, as for a very practical reason that is central to their work as teachers: in order to teach their pupils to negotiate the maze themselves. The maze, or at least its main features, must "be made explicit to pupils" if the pupils are to achieve functional literacy. But it is on this rock that the whole preceding line of argument founders, since from time immemorial English spelling has proved just too complex for very large numbers of pupils to master. In the 1960's the i.t.a. experiments [5] showed it conclusively, and even the Bullock report was prepared to admit (§6.20) that "the complexity of English spelling patterns does appear to retard progress". In short, unless some steps are taken to rationalize the writing system itself, training the teachers to understand what it is implied they have failed to understand hitherto will scarcely help them to make the essential techniques of literacy "explicit to pupils" more effectively than in the past.

6. Some misconceptions about English spelling

Yet this simple truth, namely that the traditional writing system is as much an educational obstacle as the traditional currency and weights and measures formerly were, is not widely grasped. An underlying, but largely unconscious reason for this may well be despair that English spelling can be treated rationally. We would pick out two manifestations of this tendency. The first is the influence of the Chomskys, and most famously Noam Chomsky's description of English spelling as "optimal, [6] which despite effective refutations [7] is still widely accepted. The second is the

adoption of look-and-say methods of teaching beginners to read, which we see as an irrational and defeatist response to an irrational and intractable orthography: because t.o. is so resistant to phonic analysis, many educationists resort to even less precise techniques such as gestalt recognition as an alternative. If English spelling were consistently phonographic, the idea that such a method (which might seem appropriate for Chinese, though we doubt even that [8] could be superior to the phonic method would scarcely have gained credence, any more than mathematicians would advocate guesswork as a substitute for calculation.

7. More promising approaches to teaching English spelling

Until the mid-1980's, the most successful new development in teaching children to read and write in English appears to have been the Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.), designed by the Society's former President, the late Sir James Pitman [9] on the basis of the Society's earlier phonographic spelling system *New Spelling*. [10]. Although the Bullock report (§7.29) was judiciously non-committal on the subject, the study [5] conducted by the Society's present President, Professor John Downing, into the results of first teaching by the i.t.a. predictably showed that children learn a more consistent spelling system faster and more effectively than t.o. The world-wide use of the i.t.a. (in the U.S.A., Canada and Australia as well as in the United Kingdom) shows that spelling-reform need not be just "national", as the Bullock report put it, but can be (indeed, in the Society's view, should be) international. Underlying the greater educational effectiveness of the i.t.a. is the "cognitive confusion" engendered by t.o., an idea first put forward by Professor Magdelene Vernon; indeed research has suggested that t.o. is not merely in itself difficult for beginners to master, but prejudices children's long-term intellectual development more generally. [11] The great disadvantage of i.t.a., which perhaps more than any other factor prevented its universal and permanent acceptance, is that it augmented the conventional roman alphabet with a significant number of unfamiliar extra symbols. It is to overcome this disadvantage that John Henry Martin [12] and Edward Rondthaler [13] in the U.S.A. have now developed new systems of reformed spelling for initial teaching purposes: apart from Martin's macrons for the five 'long' vowels, they confine themselves to our conventional roman alphabet. The work is being sponsored by I.B.M., and Martin's scheme is already being used in schools by over 300,000 children. The Society would urge the Committee to examine these developments carefully, with a view to recommending such a scheme in the United Kingdom.

8. A non-disruptive spelling reform for schools

The above spelling systems radically transform t.o. for the limited purpose of teaching the first stages of literacy; they are not designed to reform written English as used in the adult world. The Society recognizes that it is unrealistic to advocate any reform that would entail an overnight upheaval of English spelling, since that would be a recipe for chaos. As Baroness Hooper said, change must be gradual. The Society's view of a realistic reform strategy is that small, relatively uncontroversial and inconspicuous changes should be first introduced to the youngest schoolchildren. It would be possible, for instance, for the Committee to recommend that in future pupils should learn such forms as (in descending order of frequency, down to 400 occurrences per million words): *hav, ar, wer, wil, mor, som, befor, wel, peple, stil, thru, com, corse, smal, evry, yung, something, askd, giv, hed, scool, eys*. Another possibility would be to teach American spellings, most of which are more economical and consistent than their British equivalents: thus *mold, molt, ax, adz, worshiped, woolen, wagon, labor, esthetic, maneuver, catalog, program, plow, draft, sulfur, milage, mustache, analyze, check (for cheque)*; but the adoption of American forms would have less impact on the teaching of beginners than would the simplification of the very common words. Such simplification, entailing little more than the omission of redundant letters, not merely increases the regularity of sound-symbol correspondence, and so makes learning easier, but by shortening words it also makes the physical task of writing less laborious and time-consuming; and, most importantly, children would still be able to read t.o. without extra tuition, since the t.o. forms would merely differ by an additional letter or two. These simplified spellings

(unlike the i.t.a. forms) would be the normal forms to be used by the next generation for the rest of their lives, and since they would also save adults time and publishers money, there would be a strong incentive to their rapid adoption outside the educational system, and indeed world-wide. Such changes are conceived as part of a broader reform-strategy known as Cut Spelling, which is outlined in the enclosed explanatory leaflet. But it should finally be pointed out that, unlike a reform that substituted letters in words, reform by the omission of redundant letters would scarcely detract from the richness of the language as feared by many opponents of reform, indeed in many words it would restore historical spellings which were distorted by the early printers.

9. What should teachers and pupils know about t.o.?

Whether or not the Committee feels able to recommend such improvements to the English writing system, its terms of reference require it to recommend what teachers and pupils should know about that writing system. In our view, what they should know ought to increase understanding of the need and potential for the spelling-reform which eventually will have to be introduced (in other words, we think the Committee should actively foster a climate of opinion favourable to future reform). We would suggest that the following items should be borne in mind:

- 1) We believe that it should be part of the intellectual and cultural equipment of all teachers of reading and writing to know something about how t.o. evolved (D G Scragg's brief *A history of English spelling* [3] provides an excellent and vivid outline, and at least the 80-odd pages dealing with post-Norman conquest developments should be prescribed reading). At present there is almost total public ignorance on the subject; indeed we would say that this ignorance has been largely responsible for the general unwillingness to contemplate systematic improvements to the writing system in the last two centuries. Most people have no more understanding of the writing system they use (however skilfully) than they understand the chemical composition of the air they breathe. But it is no more possible to combat orthographic pollution without understanding the orthography than to combat air-pollution without understanding the chemistry; orthographic pollution may be less lethal, but it represents a quite unnecessary burden to a literate society, and by quite simple steps (*pace* Bullock) it could easily be reduced.
- 2) Teachers involved in teaching beginners to read and rite should understand something of the morphological and phonemic structure of English, and the patterns for its written representation. They would not of course directly pass on such theoretical or analytical insights to their youngest pupils, but the ability of teachers to point out recurrent patterns would help all learners grapple with inconsistencies.
- 3) This basic knowledge would help primary school teachers to put across the grammatical concepts it was thought their pupils should learn, and give pupils a basis of 'language-awareness' which would be useful to them later in foreign-language study.
- 4) Possibly at primary, but particularly at secondary level, knowledge of common roots (especially Latin and Ancient Greek) would help expand pupils' vocabulary both in English and in other languages. Such knowledge would also help understanding of such spelling difficulties as why *innocent* has two <n>s, but *inoculate* does not, and *erratic* two <r>s but *erotic* only one. (However a much better solution to that difficulty would be to simplify all such troubled consonants in English, as Spanish generally does — *acomodación* — and other languages spasmodically do — *une adresse, eine Adresse*.)
- 5) It may also be pointed out that since the decline of traditional grammar-teaching in English there has been a lack of understanding between English and foreign-language teachers. Greater linguistic understanding on the part of English teachers would both help overcome that lack of understanding, and help English-language teachers to appreciate the learning problems of non-native speakers.

10. Conclusion: an opportunity for the Committee

A reform of English spelling in the interests of literacy and to make the written language a less

cumbersome, more efficient medium of communication would be of world-wide benefit. The English-speaking countries stand to gain particularly, not only from the consequent educational improvements at home, but from the increased ability of other countries to use the English language. (In economic terms one would even expect long-term benefits for British trade to arise from the improved ability of non-English-speakers to communicate in English.) The United Kingdom, as the home of the English language, enjoys a unique authority which it could use to initiate such a development. The Simplified Spelling Society believes it has a practical proposal to offer which could be implemented either on a very modest experimental scale initially, or far more sweepingly, to much greater effect. Baroness Hooper accepted that languages change gradually, and we propose that schools should gradually teach children not to write those letters in t.o. whose only present effect is to distort the alphabetic consistency of English Spelling and clutter it with unnecessary characters. The gradualness of such a reform would be such that only after a whole generation had passed would everyone use the new forms — an essential reassurance for those who fear the imposition of strange spellings. We would urge the Committee to take up this question, as similar bodies have done this century for Dutch, French, German, Greek, Spanish and other languages, and make a historic mark for the progress of English by recommending a rigorous examination of the practicality of the Society's suggestions.

11. Enclosures

We enclose the following documents as background information:

6 copies of a leaflet on Cut Spelling.

2 copies of a leaflet on the Society's forthcoming conference.

2 copies each of the Society's *Journal*, 1987 No. 1 and No. 2.

More copies of these documents can be supplied on request.

12. Request for a meeting with the Committee

The Society hopes that the Committee will wish to explore the ideas put forward in this submission by meeting representatives of the Society, both because these ideas have merely been outlined here and can be further elucidated in discussion, and because the Society would value the opportunity to learn directly of the Committee's response to the questions raised.

References

- [1] Department of Education and Science, *A LANGUAGE FOR LJFE, Report of the Committee of Inquiry approved by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock F.BA.*, London: H.M.S.O., 1975, §6.21.
- [2] Hansard, *HOUSE OF LORDS, Official Report*, Vol.485 No.50, 4.3.1987, London: H.M.S.O., pp.683–84.
- [3] D G Scragg, *A history of English spelling*, Manchester University Press, 1974.
- [4] C Upward, 'Cut Speling — a Linguistic Unversl?' in *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, ISSN 0950-9585, 1987 No.2, pp.17–25, §2.
- [5] John Downing, *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet*, London: Cassell, 1967.
- [6] Noam Chomsky & Maurice Halle, *The Sound Pattern of English*, New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- [7] John Downing & Che Kan Leong, *Psychology of Reading*, New York: Macmillan, 1982, p.67 ff.
- [8] Geoffrey Sampson, *Writing Systems*, London: Hutchinson, 1985.
- [9] Sir James Pitman & John St John, *Alphabets & Reading*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd., 1969.
- [10] Walter Ripman & William Archer, *New Spelling*, London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd., 1948, 6th edition revised by Daniel Jones & Harold Orton.
- [11] John Downing, 'The Transfer of Skill in Language Functions' in *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 1987 No.2, pp.5–12, §4.3.
- [12] John Henry Martin & Ardy Friedberg, *Writing to Read*, New York: Warner Books Inc., 1986, reviewed in *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 1987 No. 1, p.26.
- [13] Edward Rondthaler, *Dictionary of American Spelling*, New York: The American Language Academy, 1986, reviewed in *Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter*, ISSN 0268–5655, Summer 1986, p.15–16.

6. Roman Lipi Parishad

RLP, the movement for a romanized script for Indian languages in Bombay, issued this circular, dated 2 March 1987, along with an illustrative leaflet.

1. Board of Directors

Annual General Meeting was held on 28 February. Following new board is elected for 2 year term. Mr Madhukar Gogate (Executive Director), Mr Rajnikant Shroff (Treasurer), Mr Husain Dalal, Mr Minochar Contractor, Mr Kuthanur Ramnathan, Ms Nirmala Gogate. First 3 are engineers, 4th doctor, 5th teacher, 6th singer by profession.

2. Sammelan

Two Roman Lipi Sammelans (with English medium for dialogue among all language speakers) were held at Bombay in Dec 84, Dec 86. Next Sammelan will be held around Dec 88, preferably in another city. Suggestions are invited.

3. Handbill

A new method of popularization has been found. National Welfare Foundation had arranged a rally (convoy of 50 trucks) on 28 February. They gave a truck to RLP and financed printing of handbills (copy in adjacent column) for free distribution on way. The response was good. Some sponsors have expressed interest in making similar handbills (distribution at railway stations), or newspaper advertisements, with sentences related to their items of trade. A sponsor has agreed for publicity on TV. Let us see how things materialize. RLP would like to provide proper translations. Would any readers help RLP?. For what language?

4. Target Language

India has many languages, and the Board has decided to give concentrated attention to one target language (Marathi) to derive useful feedback. Why Marathi? This language has experience of using 2 scripts (Modi before printing press came in 1818, Devnaagri thereafter for printing). Modi was taught in schools as late as until year 1948. People are aware that a scriptural change is possible. Moreover, 50% of Marathi mediamen, opinion makers, writers, etc., live in Bombay-Pune belt, highly industrialized, hence receptive to changes. These persons can be easily contacted. It does not mean other languages will be ignored. Readers are requested to do useful work, such as writing in newspapers, some poems, jokes, etc., in local and Roman scripts. Instead of discussing theoretically what should be the proper symbols for particular sounds, please now give actual trials to the scheme adopted at Second Sammelan. No scheme is afterall perfect, and can satisfy everyone. Start gathering experience, for exchanging it at the third Sammelan.

5. Intensive Work

For next one year or so, RLP may not come out with English circulars. It will come out with leaflets, charts, training courses, meetings, etc., using Marathi medium, using both Devnaagri and Roman scripts. Propaganda will be at various levels, urban, rural, men, women, rich, poor, etc. Purists may object to scrapping of distinction between short-long vowels for Marathi. But let us see what the public, the illiterate millions, etc., want.

Roman Script For India's Unity

भारत की एकता के लिये रोमन लिपी

bhaarat ki ektaa ke liye roman lipi

English	Sun and moon rise in the east.
Hindi	surya aur chandramaa purva me uday hote haim.
Maraathi	surya va chandra purves ugavtaat.
Gujaraati	surya ane ctiandra purvamaa uge chhe.
Urdu	suraj aur chaand mushrak me taluh hote haim.
Panjaabi	suraj te chaudramaa purabme nikaide han.
Odiyaa	surja ebang chandra purba digaare udaya huanti.
Baanglaa	surjo evam chaand purbodike othe.
Asmiyaa	hujja aaru sawndraw pub dikhaat uday hawy.
Kannada	surya chandraru purvadikkinalli muduttare.
Telugu	surya chandrudu turpu bhaagamunaa udainchuduru.
Mayayaalam	suryanum chandranum kilakke udikyunnu.
Tamizh	suryenum chanranum kizhake udikiradu.

Notes

Vowels	a (u in up) aa (a in army) i (it) u (u in put) e (egg) o (open) ae (a in apple) aw (aw in law) These can be lengthened by adding symbol: and nasalised by adding symbol m:
Consonants	t, d, n, l are dental and t:, d:, a:, l: are retroflex, thus d (th in they) d (d in dog)
Omit	in routine writing for simplicity
Respell	English words cement, table, coffee as siment, tebal, kawfi within Indian languages

Notes

Vowels	a अ (u in up) aa आ (a in army) i इ (it) u उ (u in put) e ए (egg) o ओ (open) ae एँ (a in apple) aw अँ (aw in law) These can be lengthened by adding symbol : and nasalised by adding symbol m:
Consonants	t, d, n, l are dental and t:, d:, n:, l: are retroflex, thus द्ध (th in they) द्द (d in dog)
Omit :	in routine writing for simplicity.
Respell	English words cement, table, coffee as siment, tebal, kawfi within Indian languages.

Issued at Bombay on 28 February 1987
National Unity Rally / raashtriya ektaa yaatraa
Sponsored by National Welfare Foundation, Bombay.
ROMAN LIPI PARISHAD, Bombay.

7. UKRA Conference 1987

Alun Bye, Treasurer of the Simplified Spelling Society, Consultant Teacher for children with specific learning difficulties and UKRA branch chairman for Northamptonshire, attended the 1987 conference of the United Kingdom Reading Association, held at Cramond College, Edinburgh from 27–31 July 1987, and here reports on significant aspects of its programme.

One of life's aphorisms must be that conference accommodation is generally rather basic in order to keep costs down. As I grow into middle age, while still appreciating the academic content and the opportunity to meet teachers and lecturers from all over the world, I look forward less each year to the prospect of shared ablutions, uncomfortable beds, noisy corridors and mediocre food. At Cramond this year the President Christine Anderson was magnificent, the food was wonderful and in great abundance, but the beds were so hard and narrow it had more in common with a rigorous retreat at a medieval monastery than a 20th century hall of residence.

The academic and professional content seemed more of a mixed bag than usual, and one might be forgiven for getting a faint suspicion that opinions were occasionally polarising between the traditionalists and the trendies, or the direct instructionists and the storyists. Storyism, as it was called, has nothing to do with a Conservative approach to education, but is a way of teaching children to read using so-called 'real books'. A 'real book' is, to a storyist, any kind of book chosen by the children for its interest and enjoyment, so long as it does not constitute part of a conventional reading scheme, such as Ladybird, Janet and John, Reading 360, etc. So reading schemes, many of which contain some excellent stories, are out of fashion, and storybooks or 'real books' are in. Storyism is thus yet another unproven bandwagon upon which a significant proportion of teachers and Local Education Authorities have clambered, apparently oblivious to its circular destination. Any claim that the 'real books' approach is any more effective than conventional reading schemes is based on very flimsy evidence, and is stoutly contested by no less a scholar than Dr Roger Beard of Leeds University. It was reassuring to hear his calm, steady voice of reason clarifying and informing this often emotional debate.

Little serious attention was devoted to spelling this year, with just a few notable exceptions. Such a one was a well-attended demonstration by Dr David Moseley of Newcastle University, whose ACE (Aurally Coded English) *Spelling Dictionary* (which he presented in embryonic form at the 1985 SSS Conference in Southampton) was greeted with fascinated enthusiasm. At another session Anne Robinson spoke on children's invented spelling, explaining how children generate their own rule-bound spelling system with such universal consistency throughout the English-speaking world that their attempts can be categorized into certain developmental stages. The natural logic of children's invented spelling is a phenomenon which I think the SSS has paid too little heed to in the past. However, now with growing interest in the developmental stages of spelling acquisition, we really should try to inform ourselves fully of the process, and examine the ways in which we might improve our quest towards an acceptable system of spelling reform. It might help us to resolve something of the apparent stalemate between *Nue Speling* (no child would ever naturally spell *new*

that way — more likely *niw* or *nyuw*) and Cut Spelling (children who in their wordsworthian wisdom prefer *gow* and *gowing to go* and *going* may find some cuts too economical).

Fergus McBride offered a valiant lecture entitled *What! Phonics? What Phonics?* which brought to mind many a discussion at SSS conferences. It was a pity there were not more people to hear him, but unfortunately this probably reflects the current lack of popularity of this sort of reductionist approach to literacy, as opposed to, the shiny new storyism — not so new in the USA, apparently, where it was tried, tested and discarded in favour of a more structured system some 10 to 15 years ago.

Other noteworthy presentations included that of Jessie Reid and Joan Low (*Link Up Reading Scheme*). Jessie received an Honorary Life Membership award for her long years of service to teaching literacy. The Sue Palmer and Peter Brinton duo were dynamic in their call for a return to the basics and to bring back grammar, making it meaningful and fun to learn. Ms Palmer is a supporter of the notion of spelling reform, but confided to me she was not enamoured of Cut Spelling. Katharine Perera was impeccable as ever in considering what we can learn from listening to children reading aloud, and Joy Leich (NELP) enthralled an appreciative audience with her descriptions of the reading and spelling difficulties of e.g. West Indian children whose dialect would tend to lead them to spell *cat* as *kyat*, and *stairs* as *styars* or *stiar*s.

The plenary session speakers were somewhat monochrome in their devotion to psycholinguistic theories, creative self-expression in children, storyism, and not a little airy-fairism. Professor Ian Michael (London University Institute of Education) told us that historically a rules-based approach to spelling was unsatisfactory. "A thoughtful minority of teachers did not approve..." he said. Nigel Hall wondered whether animals could read and write, and quoted Dylan Thomas to prove they could. Keith Gardner (Nottingham University) defined teaching paradoxically as "making children aware of what they already know", and Professor Margaret Clarke (Birmingham University) confirmed that children are creative, but asserted that one's spelling is only important if it is so bad one cannot read it oneself. Which only goes to prove, I suppose, the truth of the old adage: "If Profs. and Dons were pros and cons, we'd have no need of thinkers."

There was some mention of élitism in the air, variously as it related to children, teachers, and not least to certain members of the national council. Thankfully, élitism is not an issue within the SSS. Perhaps we are too small an Organisation for such fragmentary controversy to arise. For this blessing, and that of consistently good, well-informed speakers, and superior accommodation facilities, perhaps the SSS should be grateful for small conferences.

8. BETTER EDUCATION thru SIMPLIFIED SPELLING, Inc.

Ayb Citron, Executive Director of BEtSS, is an old friend of the Simplified Spelling Society. Now BEtSS President Charles F Kleber has sent us their annual report for 1985–86 and accompanying papers, from which we here give excerpts and summaries.

BEtSS was founded as a non-profit-making organization in the Detroit area in 1978, and has made significant progress. It is confident that substantial human and economic benefits will be realized once we evolve a step-by-step educationally sound and practical process of change to a spelling system wherein words are spelled more the way they are pronounced.

From 1985 BEtSS focused on opportunities for funding from business foundations, and made useful contacts for the future with the Ford Foundation and Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation in New York.

BEtSS' second major activity in 1985–86 has been the development of an updated marketing plan for spreading awareness of the need for spelling reform, under four headings, public relations, research, outreach and national sanctioning. The research will feature the 25-single-letter words of the Speed Spelling system.

The Directors, who include business, professional and media people as well as teachers and academics, contribute their own funds to BEtSS, which are tax-deductible, and the program budget has recently totaled between \$3,000–\$5,000 annually.

A *Detroit News* report lists a number of the specific reforms BEtSS is proposing (nearly all also included in the Cut Spelling proposal):

- drop final <e> where it doesn't matter (*giv*)
- drop silent in *crumb* etc (what about *climb, comb, tomb*?)
- spell all <-gue> endings as just <g> (*catalog, leag*)
- endings in <ey> drop <e> (*donky*)
- simplify double final consonants (*bel*)
- <ph> pronounced /f/ to be written <f>.

One proposal not included in Cut Spelling, though it also reduces the number of letters, is

- <ch> pronounced /k/ to be written /k/ (*stomakake*).

9. EUROPEAN CONTACTS

France

Susan Baddeley, a member of Research Group 113 (HESO: Histoire des Écritures et Systèmes d'Orthographe) at the Paris CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) has kindly agreed to act as intermediary between the Society and the HESO group and its offshoot AIROE (Association pour l'information et la recherche sur les orthographes et les systèmes d'écriture). Publication-exchange has begun and we have received the 1986 bulletin from HESO, with items on early alphabets, French spelling seen in historical, regional, graphemic and structural terms, and frequency lists.

Germany

Following contact with the IdS (Institut für deutsche Sprache) in Mannheim, the Society is now in touch with Prof. Dr. Gerhard Augst of the Universität Gesamthochschule Siegen, who has been a major contributor to the continuing spelling-reform debate in German-speaking Europe. We have received from him his most informative brief history of the German spelling-reform movement from the 19th century onwards, with its early successes (1901) and more recent setbacks. It was published in 1983 in the *Folia Linguistica Historica* IV/1, pp.81–99.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 6, 1987/3 p14–16 in the printed version]

[Laurie Fennelly: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Pamphlet 12](#), [Leaflet](#)]

10. Revised New Spelling and Spelling Reform: the position in 1987.

Laurence Fennelly

Laurence Fennelly is Secretary of the Society. He chaired the Society's Working Party on the revision of *New Spelling*.

There is only one hope for achieving the reform of English the spelling in the foreseeable future, and that is for spelling reformers throughout the English-speaking world to agree on one single scheme as the basis of their work.

Such a scheme already exists. The Simplified Spelling Society, founded 80 years ago, produced [New Spelling, whose 6th edition](#), written by Professors Daniel Jones and Harold Orton, appeared in 1948 and was accepted in both Britain and America as the basis for spelling reform. Its recommendations were supported by the most complete statistical analysis of current spellings yet to be produced. Unfortunately, after a motion in favour of spelling reform was narrowly defeated in the House of Commons, the Society allowed itself to be diverted into sponsoring the Initial Teaching Alphabet, which although based on New Spelling, was conceived of purely as a teaching aid (albeit a successful one) and so the notion of reform passed into background and New Spelling was nearly forgotten. In the meantime many individuals put forward their own schemes of reform, none of which was generally accepted.

Many of them were based on the concept of introducing small individual reforms, such as the changing of one letter, or the reforming of a short list of very common words. The Society itself even produced a Stage One of this type, which has proved entirely insignificant in its effects.

The Committee of the SSS, faced therefore with the total collapse of spelling reform, made the firm decision that, whatever the merits of partial reforms, a complete scheme must be formulated as the basis of our propaganda, whether it was to be aimed at individuals or public bodies. A Working Party was therefore set up to re-examine New Spelling with a view to revising it for republication. At the same time the Working Party was asked to do something new — prepare an outline programme for the introduction of spelling reform, by stages if necessary.

The first 'of these tasks has been completed to the extent that a revision has been approved by the Committee and circulated to members of the Society for their comments.

The revision was based on six decisions of principle.

1. Consistency in representing sounds, not phonetic precision, was to be the aim. Take for example the letter <r>. The Southern English think they are pronouncing the <r> in final <-er> when they do not. Let them continue in their illusions. The Scots do pronounce the <r> but in a different way from the Americans. Let them both continue in their ways: <-er> can accommodate them all, and can also replace <-our>, <-or> and <-ur> in every variety of pronunciation.

2. It follows from this insistence on consistency only that the Working Party did not have to make a choice of dialects. Its members happen to speak RP, but they looked for spellings that would be consistent in any dialect, and they are relying on comments from members to point out where they have erred. In this connection the opinions of the Society's American members are of paramount

importance, even though Webster is available in England.

3. It was decided that morphological consistency, more popularly known as consistency in 'grammar' was also very important and could in some cases outweigh phonetic consistency.

4. Any scheme must be formulated on the assumption of the total ignorance of the public, including most emphatically the educated public, on all matters linguistic. To propose schemes that for example invite people to distinguish long and short vowels or between voiced and unvoiced consonants would be completely futile.

5. In view of the resistance of human beings to change it was hoped to reduce the number of changes made by *New Spelling*, so that its visual impact would be less disturbing. In fact it turned out to be impossible to make any significant reduction in the number of changes needed.

6. A formal decision was made not to use new symbols. It was noted, though, that once the spelling system was regularised it would be easy to introduce new letters. The Working Party also rejected diacritics. It is occasionally asserted that diacritics have advantages over new letters, but it must be pointed out that a letter plus diacritic is in fact a new letter.

Turning now to Revised New Spelling itself, it is not proposed to repeat all the proposals that have appeared elsewhere, but to discuss only those major proposals which have attracted comments. Inflected <s> — the <s> that appears in plurals, possessive forms and the present tense of verbs — represents two sounds, /z/ which is far the commoner, and /s/. *New Spelling* recommended using both symbols, but the Working Party rejected this for two reasons. Grammatical consistency requires one symbol, and the difference between the voiced and unvoiced sounds is in any case often too fine to be easily distinguished. The Working Party opted for <z> because that would enable <s> to be used everywhere for final /s/ (non-inflected) and for final <-ce> and <-se>. Using <z> obviously conflicts with our desire to reduce the number of changes, and this point was picked up by most of our critics. They felt that <s> should be retained and some other way found for dealing with <-ce> and <-se>, e.g. using <se>, <ss> or <ts>. All except one approved of the idea of keeping one symbol for the grammatical usage.

On <i, y> we found the proposals in *New Spelling* strangely involved, with <y> used internally in semi-consonantal positions, and both <i, y> used for the short vowel. We proposed therefore <y> for the diphthong (long vowel) and <i> for the short vowel, wherever they occur, e.g. *fyt, piti*. The objections received can be listed:-

- a. Changing final <y> to <i> would be very disturbing visually.
- b. <ie> for the diphthong is one of a series, <ae, ee, ie, oe, ue>, which would be recognisable to the public. A reading expert pointed out that with <ie> it would be easy to make up some such rule as 'drop the final <e> or move it to the other side' when teaching the transition between current spelling and New Spelling.
- c. <y> is already a consonant.
- d. In American English the final <y> represents a sound that is clearly <ee> rather than <i>.

Other changes are less wide-ranging but evoked equal criticism.

The Working Party suggested <sh> for the sound in *usual*, but this was rejected by most, who preferred the <zh> of *New Spelling*. One suggestion was that <zu> could have this value by convention.

We were assured that <wh> is still a live form in Scotland and the USA for initial <wh>, but discussions in the American literature on the subject seem to suggest that the sound is on its way out, with teachers resisting, just as happened in England within living memory. Possibly both <w> and <wh> could be used as alternatives.

We discarded the second <g> in <finger>. There were two objections — the second <g> was helpful to foreign learners, and in America its use would discourage uneducated speakers from pronouncing the <g> in words like *singer*. In fact this pronunciation occurs in some English dialects, and all experience shows that spelling has no effect in correcting so-called bad pronunciation, which must by its nature be unconscious.

New Spelling proposed the two symbols <oo, uu> for *good food*, and they were then reversed in response to American pressure. We recommended <oo> only because no distinction is made between these sounds in many areas of Britain. We would suggest <ful> and <pul> as special cases. Some Americans were sceptical, but gave no solid reasons against our views.

There were fairly widespread objections to <au, ou>, chiefly because the current monosyllabic forms <aw, ow> are the ones which identify the sound for the public, even though the <u> forms are commoner. One suggestion was to retain both forms, at any rate initially. On the other hand one correspondent asserted that <w> is unpopular with printers.

Regarding <c, k>, the Working Party came down on the side of <k> for the hard <c> sound after studying all the arguments set out in *New Spelling*. (It is interesting that an earlier version of *New Spelling* used the <c>.) Our correspondents objected on the grounds that too many changes would be involved, that there were too many initial <c>s and that <k> looked ugly.

Problems were raised by <x>. Some would like to keep it where it already occurs but not to extend its use. Others would like to preserve the *New Spelling* voiced and unvoiced <gz, ks>. We suggested <ks> on its own because the difference in sound is not essential to meaning, and although people can hear /gz/ when it is pointed out, it is by no means always easy to distinguish. It might be as well to remind spelling reformers that most people are quite unaware of the fact that <x> represents /ks/.

Regarding <a, aa>, the *New Spelling* <aa> was abandoned because the difference is not made in most parts of Britain, even though it is very clear in RP. This produces forms that might shock — *unt, ant* both become *ant*. The letter combination <al> as in *almond* occurs quite frequently (compare also *Pam, palm*) and raises difficulties. It would be possible to reserve <aa> for just these cases, rather than to insert it everywhere to no very useful purpose.

The neutral <e> vowel occurs so often in English and in so variable a way that it would be quite impossible to replace it everywhere with one symbol. The authors of *New Spelling* recognized this, and according to Maurice Harrison, one of their associates, abandoned any prospect of change in this area. However in their book they did suggest some changes, but in a rather inconsistent way, and so the Working Party prepared a somewhat more complete scheme, which was thought practicable and which would remove the source of many of the spelling mistakes that are currently made. The proposals attracted very little comment, except from Chris Upward, who pointed out that if the letter <e> was used for the neutral vowel in syllables after the main stress in words, the reader would be unable to tell whether the <e> should be pronounced with its normal value or as the neutral vowel. Furthermore the opportunity would be lost to indicate the stress pattern which occurs in so many pairs of 2-syllable words, e.g. *debtor: deter, wrestle: resell*.

Comments were received on the proposals from Professor Abercrombie in Edinburgh, R Craig, G N Deodhekar, G S Bryden and S Gibbs from Britain. From the USA and Canada have come detailed criticisms from Harvey Barnard, Kenneth Ives, Ayb Citron, Arnold Rupert and Edward Rondthaler. Dr Rondthaler has published a book which contains much valuable statistical material, *Dictionary of American Spelling*. He basically accepts the original *New Spelling*, but he has sent a most detailed comparison of our work and his, which will call for an article on its own. There is one difficulty. No doubt in order to make a popular appeal he calls the revised spelling in his dictionary "American" and the unrevised "English". Such a nomenclature is internationally impossible, especially as for us, the contact with spelling reformers in Australia, New Zealand, and those countries like India which use English as a second language is of major importance.

It is a great pity incidentally that there is no one Organisation in the USA with which we can deal. Our former partners, the SSA, are no longer in existence, and so we rely on our American members individually. In these days of better communications could our Society become truly international in its scope, with sections in other countries?

Finally we must say that our respect for the authors of *New Spelling* has grown the more we worked on it. Nearly every query and point raised by our correspondents was thought of by them and our revision represents really only making a different choice between alternatives set by them.

This leads on to the problem of stages and the introduction of spelling reform. The authors of *New Spelling* did not say anything about this, but they were presumably in favour of a once-and-for-all introduction. Since then there has been much talk of stages and on this the Working Party was divided, and no agreed scheme was produced. The situation is now therefore as follows. .

1. The authors of *New Spelling* might be right. It might be impossible to work out a scheme of stages.
2. One member of the Working Party, Chris Upward believes the Society should concentrate on Cut Spelling as a First Stage reform. The only significant point of conflict between Cut Spelling and Revised New Spelling concerns the neutral vowel: where RNS would spell words like *debtor*: *deter* the same, CS would keep them distinct.
3. The Committee has not taken the decision to accept Cut Spelling so far, and has asked the Secretary and one other member to examine alternative stages. When this has been done the Society will have to make a major decision of policy on RNS with or without stages and Cut Spelling.

The great problem that bedevils any partial reform, including Cut Spelling, is that so many words require more than one change. To cross the <e> off *come* is not sufficient. The <o> and perhaps the <c> also need attention. The simple rule of dropping silent <gh> in *bough* runs up against the word night. Consequently preparing stages involves the most detailed examination of the English vocabulary to see if it is possible to isolate changes that can be made independently. One approach might be to see if some disputed changes can be relegated to a later stage, and another would be deliberately to accept two spellings for the same sound in some cases. On all these points we very much hope we will get plenty of suggestions from our members.

In the last decade we have not been able to take our rightful place in the public debates on illiteracy and educational standards, because we have not had a set of coherent proposals to put forward, and still less any up-to-date literature. The time is short and our task now is to produce a popular pamphlet on Revised New Spelling, including a section on how it is to be introduced, and secondly a new edition of the book *New Spelling*, modified perhaps, but preserving all its academic apparatus. Then we will be in a position to use modern methods of publicity to reach all those people who have never heard of us.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 6, 1987/3 p17–21 in the printed version]

[Edgar Gregersen: see [Journals](#), [News5](#)]

11. The Best Way to Write the Vowels of *Moon* and *June* in a Rational Spelling of English

Edgar A Gregersen

Edgar Gregersen is Professor of Anthropology at Queens College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He has a special knowledge of accents of English, Egyptian hieroglyphics, the alphabetization of West African languages, and the spelling of Norwegian.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 <oo> or <uu>?

The great majority of spelling-reformers at present believe that the vowels in *moon* and *June* should both be written with <oo> (thus: *moon*, *Joon* or *joon*). Until 1971, the Simplified Spelling Society had proposed the use of <uu> in its Classic Nue Speling (*muun*, *Juun*), but in that year it too changed to <oo>, using <uu> for the vowel in *book*, *foot*.

This is a plea to restore the earlier Nue Speling value. I make this plea because <uu> (or a variant involving <u> such as <uw> or <û>) is the optimal spelling, at least for the vowel in *moon*. The vowel in *June* has problems I shall discuss near the end of this paper in section 2.8.

1.2 Phonetic/phonemic variation

In the following discussion, several vowel sounds will be mentioned because how they are represented has some bearing on the issue. I shall represent them tentatively with fairly well-known symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (=IPA).

/uw/ (also written by some as /u:/) as in *moon*

/u/ (phonetically [ʊ]) as *input*, *book*

/ʌ/ as in *hut*, *cut*, *love*

/ɪ/ the unstressed vowel of *alone*, *China*

/juw/ as in *cube* /kjuwb/, *music* /mjuwzik/

/iw/ a variant of /juw/ found in several American English dialects as in *new* /niw/, most Americans say /nuw/; elsewhere in the English-speaking world the pronunciation is /njuw/, which is also found in the USA.

The vowels of *cooed* /uw/, *could* /u/, and *cut* /ʌ/ (or of *moon*, *book*, and *hut*) are differentiated in nearly all of the standard dialects of modern English. The major exception is traditional standard Scots English where *moon* and *book* are pronounced with the same sound, a centralized vowel (IPA [ɨ]). Many speakers in Scotland have, however, adopted the southern British RP distinction. In north country English, the vowels of *book* and *hut* are often the same, /u/, such usage is not regarded as standard.

1.3 Phonemic definition

All dictionaries that indicate 'correct' pronunciations indicate the vowels of these words as different. A rational spelling for English would also have to indicate these distinctions. In 1985, the Working Party of the Simplified Spelling Society recommended that both /uw/ and /u/ be written with <oo>. This means that *cooed* and *could* would be written identically, as would *pool* and *pull*, *fool* and *full*.

I urge that this recommendation be rejected.

I do so because I believe that the fundamental principle for a rational spelling is that it be essentially 'phonemic'. In practical terms, this means that words pronounced differently should not be written the same. For various reasons an orthography may have to write differently some words that are pronounced the same (at least by some people): it is important to keep the language community together and not break it up by showing dialect difference. So, for example, the words *father* and *farther*, different for most speakers of English, would have to be spelt differently even though they are identical in RP and in the pronunciation of all Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and even many Canadians and (eastern) Americans.

A decent spelling may have to show more differences than are phonemic for any one dialect. It can never show fewer.

So the /uw/ — /u/ — / / distinctions must be shown.

1.4 Previous suggestions for writing /uw/

How they should be shown is another matter. The majority of English spelling reformers seem to accept that they be represented as <oo, uu, u> respectively: *kood: kuud: kud* for traditional *cooed: could: cud*. This is the present official position of the Simplified Spelling Society in their 1971 Revised Nue Speling. It is also the position incorporated into the orthographics championed by Dr Godfrey Dewey in *World English Orthography* and Edward Rondthaler's *Typographic Council for Spelling Reform in American Spelling*, and generally by BEtSS (Better Education thru Simplified Spelling) headed by Ayb Citron.

Edward Rondthaler and Edward J Lias, in their *Dictionary of American Spelling* (1986, New York: The American Language Academy) call the Classic Nue Speling use of <uu> for /uw/ and <oo> for /u/ "typographic insensitivity ... doomed from the start". They are particularly concerned about the ending <-ful> (as in *beautiful*: Classic Nue Speling writes it as <-fool>, which they consider "ridiculous" and add "Critics of reform merrily regarded this as utter foolishness, which indeed it is" (all quotes are from p. 304). Rondthaler and Lias themselves write this ending exceptionally as <-ful> (in their system this should otherwise rime with *hull*; the independent word *full* they write as *fuul*).

Of course, a few reformers have not gone along with the majority position. The Simplified Spelling Society ov Canada, headed by Ted W Culp, proposes that /uw/ be written <u> finally: *thru, tu, (=to, too, two), yu (=you)*. It is not clear how it would be written elsewhere. In *The Times ov Toronto*, a newly formed newspaper published by Culp in reformed spelling, we find spellings such as *grupe* (*group*), *whuze* (*whose*), *cluus* (*clues* but the singular is *clu*), *fuud* (*food*), and exceptionally *bambuu* (*bamboo*). Both /u/ and /?/ seem to be written as <u>: *cud* (*could*), *buk* (*book*), *luv* (*love*), *becum* (*become*). Presumably, therefore, *cuud: cud: cud* for *cooed: could: cud*.

F C Wingfield in his *Fonjmik crthqgrafi* reassigns values for certain letters. He writes <w> for /u/, which frees <u> for /uw/. For /?/ he uses either <a> or <v>; for the vowel of *bat* he uses <ae> (IPA &). Hence, *kud: kwd: kud*.

Newell Tune also proposed <w> for /u/. He felt a single letter was reasonable here because the vowel is phonemically short. However, he accepted the spellings *moon* and *hut*. Hence *kood: kwd: kud*.

A number of other suggestions have been made by people outside the spelling reform movement proper. The linguists Martin Joos and Charles Trager, who see no hope for reform but find the matter of the ideal spelling for English a kind of intellectual game, have both gone along with long-standing linguistic conventions and so agree that /u/, the vowel of *book*, would be written as <u>. However, their agreement ends there. Joos wants <û> for /uw/ and <ö> for /ʔ/. Hence, *kûd*: *kud*: *köd*. Trager writes <uw> for /uw/ and <a> for /ʔ/ (he uses <æ> for the vowel in *cat*).

So much for the background. What *are* the arguments for using <uu> for /uw/?

2 THE ARGUMENTS FOR <UU>

2.1 The internationalist argument

As often as possible, unless some other compelling reason exists, letters should be used with 'international' values. For example, it would be absurd to show the sound /s/ with the letter <q>, all other things being equal. Of course, a perfectly consistent spelling could be invented using <q> to mean /s/, and such a system might be admirable in all other ways. But there is no reason to go out of one's way to use obscure rational values. One of the problems with the otherwise excellent current Hungarian spelling is that <s> represents a <sh> sound, and /s/ is represented by <sz>.

In the great majority of languages using the Roman alphabet, an /uw/ or /u:/-like sound is written with <u> as in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Hungarian, Turkish, Danish, German, Swahili, Zulu, Yoruba, Hawaiian, Vietnamese, Navaho. In the spelling of Hausa used in Niger, long /u:/ is shown as <uu>. The letter <u> is comparably used in official romanizations of Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Hebrew. No language uses <oo> to indicate an /uw/-like sound, though French uses <ou>, and Dutch <oe>. In Swedish and Norwegian, unlike Danish, the letter <u> formerly indicated an /u:/-like sound, but this sound has moved forward in the mouth (to /ʉ/, and <o> has moved up approaching an /u:/ value.

The International Phonetic Alphabet or its variants the Africa Alphabet and World Orthography have sometimes been used in the creation of practical orthographies. In all of these systems, the vowel of *moon* would be written with <uu> or <uw>. Short /u/ as in *book* is written <u>.

To write *moon*, *buuk* agrees with no international principles. To write (as in Classic Nue Spelling) *muun*, *book* at least gets us one international value.

2.2 The classicist argument

In English words of Latin origin, the letter <u> often has the value /uw/ (or sometimes /juw, or /iw/). Such words include the following, with the original Latin form given in parenthesis: *ablution* (*ablūtīo*), *brute* (*brūtus*), *crucifix* (*crucīfixus*), *crude* (*crūdus*), *frugality* (*frūgālītās*), *judicial* (*jūdicīālis*), *lunar* (*lūnāris*), *plume* (*plūma*), *pluvial* (*pluviālis*), *prudence* (*prūdentia*), *prune* (*prūnum*), *rude* (*rudis*), *rudiment* (*rudīmentum*), *solution* (*solūtīō*).

These are only a few of hundreds of similar words. When the <u> in Latin was long (here shown with a macron, <ū>), the Romans themselves sometimes wrote <uu>

If such English words were written with <oo>, the relationship to the Latin forms would be further obscured. Altho I do not believe that a decent spelling should necessarily display etymology, I don't see why etymology should be totally ignored if it can easily be accommodated. Simply choosing <uu> as the spelling for /uwl in general would do the trick.

However, because of much dialect variation, it might be best to spell such words with <ue> — which would also accommodate the etymology. This dialect variation will be discussed later on in this paper in the section on *June*.

These first two arguments considered here — the 'internationalist' and the 'classicist' — are external ones, that is, arguments not prompted by reverence for English traditional orthography or the facts of English pronunciation.

2.3 Reducing dialect variation

Several internal arguments derived from the facts of English itself also occur. All the following fall into this class.

A fairly common sound sequence in English is a <y>-sound or yod (IPA /j/) followed by /uw/, as in *cue* /kjuw/ or *few* /fjuw/. In many systems of spelling reform, including Nue Speling, this sequence is written as <ue>; hence *kue*, *fue*. The weakly stressed or unstressed sequences /ju/ and /j?/ are normally also written as <ue> as in *monuement* 'monument', *kalkuelaet* 'calculate'. For the rest of this discussion it will be assumed that these values — including also /iw/ (which may be phonetically a fronted [ɪw]) in those dialects that differentiate *dew/duē* from *do* but have no real yod in the first two. I shall use <ue> as a cover symbol for all these variants: /juw/, /ju/, /j?/, /iw/.

Considerable dialect variation occurs with regard to the use of <ue> and /uw/. For example, in many dialects in the United States and Canada, <ue> cannot occur in a stressed syllable if it would be preceded by <t, d, n, or θ> (the sound represented by <th> in *thin*) and /uw/ is used instead, as in *tune*, *due*, *new*, *enthusiasm*. (But in weakly stressed syllables, at least after <n>, <ue>, does occur, e.g., in *annually*.) We can call such dialects, yod-dropping. Elsewhere in the English-speaking world the standard form is almost invariably <ue>. We can call such dialects, yod-pronouncing. In Merriam Webster dictionaries, the notation <(y)ü> has been adopted to show such dialect variation.

Even the yod-pronouncing dialects may in fact drop the yod after <s, z> and especially after <l> as in *suit*, *presume*, *lute*, *revolution*. The use of <ue> in such words represents the older upper-class pronunciation still much used on the stage in serious drama (e.g. Shakespeare). The facts are complicated and usage varies from word to word. In RP *sue* usually has <ue>; *Zeus* and *lurid* always have <ue> even tho other words may vary. In the United States, among yod-pronouncers, *lute* almost never has <ue> but *revolution* occasionally has, especially in the speech of actors and radio announcers on 'sophisticated' stations (e.g. WQXR or WNCN in New York City).

In the United States, yod-pronouncers sometimes use <ue> where the rest of the English language community does not, e.g. in *maneuver* (elsewhere also spelt differently: *manoeuvre*). Some yod-droppers even use <ue> where it is not traditional, e.g. after the /k/ sound in *coupon*. On the other hand, in some other words after a /k or g/ sound the traditional <ue> alternates with /uw/, as in *lacuna*, *cuprous*, *gubernatorial*, *lugubrious* (with this word even RP shows such variation); or when unstressed (<ue> = /jə/), as in *executive*, *lucubration*, *inaugurate*, *configuration*. The American pronunciation of *figure* with unstressed <ue> as opposed to the Commonwealth pronunciation with /ə/ is; another instance of such variation.

Clearly a great number of words with alternations involving <ue> and /uw/ exist. I have made an informal count of all words with <ue>-/uw/ alternates as given in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (8th edition, 1973) where the variation is usually indicated as <(y)ü> or <(y)u> — the

<ü> indicating /uw/, the <u> /u/. I don't guarantee that my count is absolutely accurate; my eyes started to glaze over after the first 30 pages and there were over 1300 to go. Also, what should count as a separate item was a vexing question, which I dealt with in probably inconsistent and certainly ad hoc fashions.

Altho this dictionary does not indicate <ue> pronunciations after <s, z> and <1> at all, even so the count I arrived at came to 829 items where <ue>-/uw/ alternates exist. This suggests that a total figure including <s, z> and <1> forms is well over 1,000. Other problems exist, which will be taken up later with reference to *June* in section 2.8 below.

The important point is, that a sizeable part of English vocabulary would have alternate spellings if both <ue> and /uw/ pronunciations are shown. The Commonwealth countries would probably all adopt the <ue> spellings — and let us assume that <ue> would be the actual form used. If <oo> is adopted for the /uw/ pronunciation, the relationship between the dialect variations would be obscured. Alphabetization would be thrown off. On the other hand, adopt <uu>, and the <ue - uu> alternates will be less noticeable and alphabetization would at least be confined under a single letter <u>.

As a matter of fact, my own view is that in order to preserve the unity of the English-speaking world, the yod-pronouncing forms should preferably be used in all these instances. Yod-dropping pronunciations would be predictable because, for example, the sequence <due> could mean only <duw> in such dialects. I shall not press the matter, however.

2.4 Morphophonemic alternations with 'short u' / ? /.

Systematic relationships occur between <ue> or /uw/ and the vowel in *but*, here shown with the compromise symbol /?/. In RP this short sound is phonetically [ʊ]; in* General American, it is much more central and could be written as either [ʊ] or [ə]; in some western American dialects, it is higher, IPA [ɪ]. The sound /?/ is usually written as <u> in most spelling reform systems (altho, as we've seen, <a> has also occasionally been proposed — or else an altogether new letter has been suggested). My own preference is a new letter, either <ə> or <?> or <u>, to be alphabetized with <u> — or barring these, <v> would be generally unambiguous if so used and which is found for all <u>s in certain formal styles on public buildings, e.g. PVBLIC BVILDING).

In this discussion, I shall assume that /?/ is written with <u> or with a letter that would be lumped together with <u> in alphabetization.

The relevant fact is that, in effect, <u> counts as the stressed shortened form of /uw/ or <ue>: *assume: assumption; induce: induction* (and similarly with all the *-duce/-duction* words); *duke: duchess, duchy*; and commonly in the USA at least, *quadruple* with /uw/. *quadrúplet* with <u> (in RP the stresses and vowels are different: *quádruple: quádruplet*). To write <oo> for such words would obscure this relationship; e.g. *dook: duches, (better duuk- duches, best duek: duches)*.

Edward Rondthaler suggests that in such words <ue> be written altho normally the variety of English he uses as the basis for his system is an extreme y-dropping American form. He finds himself with this fairly arbitrary solution because he uses <oo> for /uw/. If he adopted <uu> for /uw/ then no makeshift compromise would be necessary since the morphophonemic relationship would not be obscured.

2.5 Morphophonemic alternations depending on stress

Even among 'yod-droppers', the yod may be restored when stress shifts. The yod is dropped in a

stressed syllable but not in an unstressed, e.g. *voluminous* (with /uw/, less often <ue>): *volume* (always with <ue>); *diminution* (with /uw/ in USA, Canada; <ue> elsewhere): *diminutive* (with <ue> everywhere). Again, to write <oo> for /uw/ would obscure these systematic relationships: *voloominus*: *voluem* is clearly not so desirable as *voluuminus*: *voluem*, etc.

After <t> and <d> the situation becomes somewhat more complicated because before the unstressed <ue>, <t> becomes <ch> (IPA t?) and <d> becomes <j> (IPA d?) at least in American English; cf. *constitute* with a moderately stressed ending <-tuut> (USA) or <-tuet> vs. *constituent* with <-stich-> (USA); *assiduity* with <-duu-> (USA) or <-due-> vs. *assiduous* with <-sij-> (USA). In RP at present forms with <t> and <d> have apparently usually been restored from the spelling. The <t, d> forms — not the <ch, j> ones — should probably be adopted in a rational spelling since <ch, j> forms can be deduced from the <t, d> spellings but not the other way round.

2.6 Weak forms and word signs

In some instances for some very common words, it would be useful to have shortened spellings. For example, the words *do*, *to*, *who*, and *you* which when pronounced in isolation have /uw/, often are unstressed in connected speech and then have shortened or reduced vowels. Ideal representations for these words are *du*, *tu*, *hu*, *yu*. In Nue Speling they are rather inconsistently spelt as *duu*, *to*, *huu*, *U*, respectively.

The spelling *thru* for older *through* or *thro'* is universally known already. Although this word is normally always pronounced with a full /uw/, nevertheless it is convenient to use *thru* as a word sign. It would certainly be a pity if *thru* were given up for the less desirable *throo* or *thruu*.

Some reformers have wanted all instances of final /uw/ to be written as <u>, e.g. <shu, kru, kanu> for *shoe*, *crew*, *canoe*. I do not, because a special rule would have to be added to restore the full <uu> before plural endings and the like: *shuuz*, etc. Furthermore, if we keep <tuu> for <too> — which is never unstressed — we can keep it separate from <tu> for <to> which normally is stressed.

Writing <oo> for /uw/ does not readily permit such reductions. Note particularly that the spelling <du> for <do> lines up very well with Nue Speling *duz* for *does*.

2.7 The diphthong /uj/ (or /ui/) and /uw/ before other vowels

In *ruin*, *doing*, *bluish* speakers vary as to whether a sequence of /uw/ + /i/ in two syllables is used, or a monosyllabic pronunciation with a diphthong /uj/ (also written as /ui/). If <uu> were adopted as the main representation of /uw/, a reduced form <ui> could be used as a compromise spelling to accommodate both pronunciations. In fact, as in Classic Nue Speling, /uw/ before any vowel could generally be written as <u> as a convenient abbreviation. If <oo> were adopted for /uw/, such an abbreviation would not be possible.

2.8 The problem of *June*, *rude*, *chew*, etc.

Most spelling reformers have assumed that the vowels of *moon* and *June*, *rule*, *chew*, etc. are identical. This is probably so in a great many dialects. But in so many others, involving millions of speakers, this is not the case.

In large part, dictionary makers have been guilty of confounding the facts, in part because they don't want their pronunciation guide to seem to be too complicated (I suppose). For example, *Webster's New International Dictionary*, Second Edition (1934) — which was long held to be the definitive dictionary by many Americans, and was championed by the New York Times in a special

editorial launched against the Third Edition of 1961 — wrote <oo> to indicate both classes of word but noted in the introduction that there are really differences, even for the yod-dropping pronunciations of *tune*, *duty*, *new*:

It is to be observed, however, that the oo in these words [e.g. *tune*, *duty* (EAG)] is the advanced variety [u+] [= ʉ or iw (EAG)], and that *suit*, *duty*, thus pronounced are not accurately represented by the spellings "soot", and "dooty", and do not exactly rhyme with *shoot*, *booty*. (p. lii)

So far, this dictionary adds nothing new to our discussion but simply recapitulates one of the points I've been making: that the use of <ue> is more widespread than may be realized, since <ue> often shows up as /ɹu/ or /iɹu/. Furthermore, it warns us from taking too literally the phonetic representations adopted in most dictionaries (the Oxford English Dictionary is an important exception).

More significant for the present section are the sentences that follow in Webster's:

... many Americans use the modified [ju] [=/fiw/ (EAG)] sound of u after consonants where the y sound has disappeared or is rare, as after r, l (after a consonant in the same syllable), ch, j, and less often sli, zh. Thus many Americans preserve the historical distinction in sound between **rude** and **rood**, **rheum** - **room**, **threw** - **through**, **brewed** - **brood**, **chews** - **choose**, **chute** - **shoot**, **lute** - **loot**, **lute** - **loose**, and the vowels of **glue** - **gloom**, **blue** - **bloom**, etc. (*ibid.*)

In short, the problems encountered with *do*: *dew* etc. are even more extensive than most spelling reformers have considered. Martin Joos is an exception: not only did he distinguish between *do*: *dew* (as *dū*: *dīu* respectively) and show the yod-pronouncing distinctions consistently after, <n, t, 1>, (e.g. *niu* 'new', *tiun* 'tune') — he also noted the distinction at least after <r>. Thus we find *rude*: *rood*, *threw*: *through* distinguished as *riud*: *rūd* and *thriu*: *thrū*.

The Oxford English Dictionary often recognizes alternate pronunciations after these residual consonants with a compromise symbol <¹ū>: *chew* is shown as t ? ¹ū, *Jew* as d ? ¹ū, *glue* as g l ¹ū or g l ū, *blue* as b l ū or b l ¹ū. The OED is not consistent, however, and writes all the following with ū not ¹ū: *June*, *rheum* (= *room*), *chute* (=shoot), *threw* (= *through*), *rude* (= *rood*).

Daniel Jones in the third edition of his *The pronunciation of English* (1950, Cambridge: University Press) maintains that Welsh speakers of English use /ju:/ or /iu/ after /r, t? d?/ or consonant plus //l/. Thus, *blue* as /blju:/ or /bliu/.

My general rule of thumb has been that — in order to preserve the unity of the English language community — dialect differences should be resolved by showing maximal differences. I am tempted to invoke this rule here as well. But the fact that dictionary makers have virtually never shown the /uw/: <ue> distinction after <r, ch, i>, or consonant plus <1> creates something of a problem.

A comparable problem occurs for the so-called 'short <a>' in several dialects of English. Daniel Jones always noted for RP that some speakers had a phonemic contrast between a long and a short 'short <a>' which he wrote as [æ:] and [æ], respectively. Thus, in his *An outline of English phonetics* (1962, ninth edition, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons) he noted that *sad*, *bad* generally had [æ:] but *lad*, *pad* had [æ]. In his pronouncing dictionary, he recorded several minimal pairs, e.g.

bad /bæ:d/: *bade* /bæd/ (also pronounced as /beid/). He noted that for some speakers, *jam* actually represented two words, one pronounced /dʒæ:m/ meaning 'fruit conserve', the other /dʒæm/ meaning 'crush, wedging'. Later editions of this dictionary edited by A C Gimson after Jones's death, dropped this distinction.

However, in the USA in many areas, such a distinction *is* kept — tho it may not be used in the same words that Jones listed. Very commonly *can* 'be able to' is /kæn/, whereas the noun *can* 'tin' or the verb *can* 'to put into a tin' is /kæ:n/. This is my own pronunciation. Some speakers similarly distinguish *have* /hæv/ from *halve* /hæ:v/. In other dialects, particularly in the New York City area, /æ:/ has changed its quality and is pronounced with a much higher vowel, that of *yeah*, and could be shown as /e:/. Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle in their influential book *The sound pattern of English* (1968, New York: Harper Row) describe the large vowel as 'appreciably tense' as opposed to the shorter one, which they describe as 'negligibly tense'. They add that

This distinction is fairly common, and almost completely predictable, in many American dialects, but the contexts in which it appears vary. (p. 68 fn.)

Apart from Jones and *Webster's Third New international dictionary of the English language unabridged* (1971; Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam), where /æ:/ or /e:/ is noted as a secondary pronunciation and written with /aaə/, dictionary makers have never shown a difference between these varieties of 'short <a>'. In *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1985), which is derived from the *Third unabridged*, the distinction is discussed in an introductory section on pronunciation but ignored elsewhere in the text. The editors justify their practise by maintaining that "this distinction is sufficiently infrequent that the traditional practise of using a single symbol is followed in this book" (p. 34).

The fact that several million educated speakers differentiate the two /æ/s and several million others differentiate /uw/ from <ue> after <r, ch, j> etc, makes me uneasy about ignoring these phonetic contrasts so cavalierly. I could very readily agree to showing all of these distinctions in the maximal form of English that I think an official written standard should be based on. Or else, they could at least be optional variants. Neither issue is crucial to the main point of my paper, however, and so I shall not belabor them further.

To review that point and the arguments for it: <uu> (or some variant involving <u> such as <uw> or <û>) is the optimal way of writing the vowel in *moon*. The digraph <uu> is certainly superior to <oo> (which should be abandoned with this value) because <uu>

- (1) agrees with international values of letters,
- (2) preserves the etymology of Latin loan words,
- (3) also preserves relationships between closely related forms in English itself both across dialects and with regard to morphological relationships within a single dialect, and
- (4) is compatible with convenient abbreviated forms with <u> before other vowels (as in *ruin*) or finally in words of high frequency often having weak forms (as in *thru*).

Spelling reformers at present are almost all pushing for <oo> for /uw/. But the only thing <oo> has going for it is its relative frequency in the traditional spelling. This frequency is hardly overwhelming, however, and is a specious argument, to be discarded.

In short: spell *moon* as *muun*!

12. Can Cut Spelling Cut Misspelling? Christopher Upward

Th Cut Spelling (CS) used in this article removes redundant letters from t.o. as follows: it cuts letters irrelevant to pronunciation (*det*), it uses syllabic <l, m, n, r> in most post-accentual syllables (*metl, atm, prism, detr*), it regularizes inflections as <d, s> (*hintd, bushes*), and it simplifies most double consonants (*eg, bigr, agravate*). Where pronunciation requires it, CS also replaces <gh, ph> by <f> (*tuf, filosofy*), <g> by <j> (*jinjr*), and <ig> by <y> (*syn, hy*). Readers are invited to comment on the spellings used.

1 SIGNIFICANCE OF ERROR-ANALYSIS

1.1 Practicalities of reform

The evolution of spelling-reform proposals, from the pure phonemicism of *New Spelling*, [1] through the symbol-sound but not sound-symbol regularity of *Wijks Regularized English* [2] and the micro-stages of Lindgren's *Spelling Reform — A New Approach* [3], to CS (omitting redundant letters), shows a growing awareness of the practical implications of reform. These practical implications have two aspects: firstly, we have to consider the practicalities of implementation, of teaching new spellings, of getting publishers to adopt them, of ensuring they are compatible with traditional orthography (t.o.), etc.; and secondly, our increased understanding of the psychology of literacy, the problems of illiteracy, the nature of dyslexia, etc., leads us to ask, what improvements to the way English is written could most benefit those who most suffer the burdens of t.o. at present? This article is concerned with the second of these aspects.

1.2 Diagnosing the ills of t.o.

It has been recognised for centuries that inconsistency of sound-symbol correspondence in written English lies at the root of its difficulties. What has until recently not been so carefully considered is which particular inconsistencies users find most troublesome. If we are now proposing reform by stages, we need to be clear about the answer to that question, so that we can decide which features of t.o. are most urgently in need of treatment in a Stage I reform. Rather than simply concluding that, for instance, long vowels should have priority because, in systemic terms, they are especially prone to inconsistency, we should examine the errors most frequently made by users. While lists of individual words (like *any, friend*) which cause beginners special difficulty have long been in existence [4], it is no less important to analyse the difficulties of more advanced users dealing with a full adult vocabulary, to see what *patterns* of difficulty can be identified. A convenient source of relevant data are corpora of spelling mistakes, of which three will be investigated in this article, to test the hypothesis that it is redundant letters which are most commonly misspelled and that CS therefore offers the greatest benefit to users as a Stage I reform.

1.3 Error corpora

Already an amount of misspelling-data is available. Adam Brown's paper at the Society's 1987 conference [5] examined the errors made by two categories of foreign learners, Ugandans and Singaporeans. And Roger Mitton of Birkbeck College, University of London, has assembled corpora of misspellings from a wide range of native-speaking and foreign sources. They are now held by the Oxford Text Archive [6], and include our Corpus 3 (see Section 4 below), as well as one drawn from the same source as our Corpus 2 (see Section 3 below).

1.4 Definition of misspelling

We may define misspellings as forms not found in dictionaries, but N's definition is not always adequate. Thus, if dictionaries give rare alternative or historic forms (*comick* for *comic*), does their use constitute a misspelling? And if a British writer uses an American form (*gray* for *grey*), is that an error. Then there is the question of word-boundaries — is *eye lashes* a 'correct' spelling since it contains the right letters? And does misuse of apostrophes constitute a misspelling? Sometimes the distinction between a grammatical and a

spelling mistake is blur: is *was* a misspelling of *were* in the phrase *we was ...* ? These uncertainties mean that the statistics given below are subject to a margin of error, though the broad trends revealed are not thereby invalidated.

2 CORPUS 1: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In their 1987 final Onrs degree examination 41 British university students had to translate and abstract texts from German into English, each student writing about 450 words. Some 50 misspellings were noted in the scripts: 15 simplified a doubled consonant, and 2 doubled a single consonant; 14 misspelt post-accentual and 2 pre-accentual schwa; 2 were morpho-phonemic inflections, 1 confused <-able/-ible>, 1 concerned a silent letter, 1 was an omitted apostrophe — and *phenomena* was written for *phenomenon* 6 times! 22 of the misspellings were shorter than t.o., and only 11 longer, a fact that if replicated suggests that shorter spellings come naturally and would be of assistance in avoiding error. In all, some 70% of the mistakes would probably not have occurred if the students had written by CS rules: there would have been far less uncertainty about consonant doubling, post-accentual schwa, silent letters and morpho-phonemes. The following table illustrates the patterns, listing errors in 4 groups:

1. errors that CS would not have helped prevent,
2. errors which CS rules could have prevented (marked x),
3. errors showing some CS features (marked ->), and
4. full CS forms (marked =).

	a) T.o.	b) Misspelling	c) CS form
1.	affect	effect	afect
	it's	its	it's
	phenomenon	phenomena(6)	fenomnn
	preceding	preceeding	preceding
	unperturbed	unperterbed	unpeturbd
2.	coalition	coallition x	coalition
	independent	independent x	independnt
	negligible	negligable x	neglijbl
	preamble	preambel x	preambl
	resurgence	resurgence x	resurjnce
	separate	seperate x	seprat
3.	accommodating	accomodating->	acomodating
	embellishments	ernbelishments->	embelishmnts
	historiographically	historiographicly->	historiograficly
	occurrences	ocourences->	ocourences
4.	connotations	conotations =	conotations
	forefront	forfront =	forfront
	implies	implys =	implys
	openness	openess(8) =	openess

3 CORPUS 2: DAISY ASHFORD

A rich source of misspellings (despite doubt about their total authenticity, the text having been transcribed for printing) by a highly literate young writer is Daisy Ashford's story *The Young Visitors* (sic) [7], which she wrote about 1890 at the age of 9. It is a hilarious mixture of naïveté and sophistication, cliché-ridden romanticism and realistic, even cynical social observation, to which abundant misspellings give added spice. Some persistent errors were non-alphabetic: unconventional word-boundaries (21 split words like *bull rushes*, *out stretched*, and *thankyou* always written as a single word) and the omission of apostrophes in *cant*, *dont*, *wont* and for possession. Altogether 444 alphabetic errors were noted over 69 brief pages. Many were repeated (*rather* 35 times!), and some words were misspelt in two or three ways (*jellous*,

jelous, jellus; pleashure, pleshure, plesure), but 218 misspelt word-types were noted. The errors fall into the following categories (numbers indicate frequency, asterisks show CS forms):

3.1 Pronunciation and accent

A few spellings conforming more predictably to standard pronunciation were substituted for t.o. forms, thus *bronkitis, convey* (2), *people* (9), *swallowed* (2), *surveyed* (2), but a larger number reflect the author's RP accent. Thus it is a non-rhotic speaker who inserts <r> in *gaiety* (10), *idear* (7), *ought*, *perlitely* (2), *rather* (35), *society* (4), *thought* (11), *thought* (2), *vase*, and omits it in *surprised* (6); and only a non-wayr (i.e. one who does not distinguish initial <w, wh>) would have written *wiskers, whicker*, and *horsly* for *hoarsely* implies no distinction between *hoarse, horse*.

3.2 Vowels

Among vowels, the many possible spellings of /i:/ caused most errors: *believe, coffee, cowleat* (3), *egerly* (2), *here* (2, for *hear*), *mystearious* (4), *people* (9), *quear* (5), *scenery, seized, siezing, searious* (2), *superier, viacle* (4). Except for schwa, no other vowel was misspelt more than 5 times, the worst being <ou> for <ow> in *broun, doun* (2), *douny, gown*.

3.3 Shwa

Shwa (especially post-accentual) is frequently misspelt. Actual CS forms with syllabographic <l, m, n, r, bl> are rarely used, but *diffrence, chocolates* show some affinity with CS, as does syllabic <l> in *musicle, portles, principle* (for *principal, tassles*). But *rithum, spasam* show a decided disinclination to use syllabic consonants even where t.o. does. In general shwa is spelt <u> far more than in t.o.: *blossum, consciunce, geniul* (2), *meershum, quietly* (2), *passiun, radiunce, reveruntly*, but elsewhere is mostly spelt <e>. Cases with the following <m> were *hansome* (2, for *hansom*); with <n> *bason, certin, cushion* (3), *Domnic, elegant, vacancy, vishen*; with <r> *ancester* (4), *decerated, grammer, murmer* (7), *pillers, razer, resterant, somber* (2, the US form), *superier* (6), *theater* (3, the US form). Few of these errors would have occurred in CS, which regularises with *blossm, meershm, revrntly, hansm, certn, cushn, Domnic, elegnt, ancestr, decrated, gramr, murmr, pilrs, restran(t?), sombr, superir, theatr*. Post-accentual shwa before other consonants was misspelt most often with <i>, sometimes with <a>: *laudible, salid, monagram, elligant, marriage, dowigers, languige; softist, tam a shanter, nativaty, cricket, privite* (6), *toilit* (2), *velvit* (9). Of these, CS would only have helped with *laudbl*. Pre-accentual shwa was misspelt far less frequently, but the following errors were noted: *mustache* (2, the US form-n), *perlitely* (2), *purplexed, purspired, surprised* (6).

3.4 Single consonants

Among consonants, most errors occurred predictably over the various spellings of /k/, the two values of <g>, and the palatalized consonants. For /k/, the older <-ick> ending prevailed over modern <-ic> (*domesticks, elastick*) and *aristockracy, exacktly, knickerboccers, majestikally* also occurred. The dual use of <g> for <g, dz/> and the dual spelling of /dz/ with <g, j> caused confusion in *vage, gorgous, vengeance, majic* (2), *sandwighs* (for *sandwiches*). By requiring /dz/ as <j>, CS resolves this problem, writing *vage, gorjus, venjnce, majic*. Palatalized <s, t> were often spelt <sh>, whether voiced or not, as in *parshial* (2), *pleashure* (2), *profession, professhon, tishu, vishen, presumshious, sumpshous* (3). The simpler CS forms *plesur, tissu, presumtuus, sumtuus* would have been more readily learnt than the t.o. forms, but would not otherwise have offered systematic assistance.

3.5 Consonant doubling

Many errors betray uncertainty about consonant doubling. Doubled consonants were simplified as in CS in *adicted, adress*, announced*, bagage, cariage* (3), *caroled, chiruped, disapared, embarrassment, flabergasted, hurah, inteligent, necesarry, pasengers, rumaged, shruged, sugested, wraped*; but single consonants were doubled after short vowels in *alpacka, ballance, bouquet, bussy, couple* (2), *elligant, ettiquett, finnished, gallopp* (2), *habbits, hastily* (4), *jellous* (3), *necesarry, pallace* (3), and the suffix <-ful> became <-full> in *beautiful* (2), *faithfull, painfull*. Such errors would be unlikely in CS.

3.6 Redundant letters

Other errors reflect a natural tendency to omit redundant silent letters (as in CS): *aile*, *bissness*, *brekfast**, *color** (2, US), *desperatly*, *ettiquett*, *favorite* (US), *hankerchiefs*, *hansome*, *honymoon** (2), *kidnys*(*?), *lether*, *lovly** (7), *merangs* (2), *mesure*, *mustache** (US), *nervus**, *pius** (2), *plesant* (3), *plesure* (3), *ruge* (5), *straitening*, *swet**, *vage**, *varius**. But a few words had an extra redundant <e>: *crystale*, *parasole*, *proposals*, *strolle*, *truely*, *weare*.

3.7 Morphemes

A tendency to inflect morphophonemically was noted, chiefly in the past tense of verbs as in CS: *arrayd*, *cheerd**, *disserppeard*, *continud**, *marrid* (6), *obeyd**, *reappeard* (2), *towzld*, *traveld*, *valud**; but also in *becomeing*, *desireus*, *familyls*, *partys*. But in *dose* (3, for *does*), *satisfide* the morpheme was not recognised or represented as such at all.

3.8 Miscellaneous

Homophones were occasionally confused: *fourth* (for *forth*), *main* (for *mane*), *right* (for *rite*), *role* (for *roll*), *there* (2 for *their*), and with *eat* (4 for *ate*), *hair* (for *heir*), *were* (for *wear*) there was confusion of sound as well. Only 22 of the 444 errors were not covered by the above categories, and mostly involved miscellaneous misrepresentation of vowels or random slips.

3.9 Cutting Spelling implications

Unlike Corpus 1, the Corpus 2 errors use marginally (7) more letters than t.o. But since 97 extra letters arose from just two types of error (70 extra <r>s as in *rather*, and 27 wrongly doubled consonants), we can still say that the errors show a widespread tendency to shorten words. But more importantly than the shortening, we see that many of the error-patterns themselves more or less directly match the patterns of regularisation introduced by the 3 cutting rules of CS: phonographically redundant letters, post-accentual schwa and doubled consonants.

4 CORPUS 3: TEENAJERS

More representative than the preceding corpora (which derive from highly literate individuals) is the following analysis, based on 163 questionnaires completed in 1981 by a cross-section of fourth-year pupils at a Nottingham comprehensive school (average age 15, 50% of each sex), as part of a survey of teenage attitudes [8]. The respondents ranged from very competent spellers to the virtually illiterate. The analysis aimed to establish types of error, but only approximate relative frequency, an exact count being impossible for such reasons as illegibility, unclassifiability, overlap, repetition and variation of errors, etc. The full listing is available from the Oxford Text Archive [6]. We here quote only illustrative or significant examples.

4.1 Primary categories

In total 1,377 errors were classified, but the number of misspelled words was fewer, a form like *manors* for *manners* being classified both as a vowel and as a consonant error. 707 errors involved vowels, 307 consonants, 233 word-boundaries (e.g. *kind ness*, *alot*), and 130 apostrophes.

4.2 Vowels

Of the 707 vowel-errors, 184 involved the letter <e> or its associated sounds, 167 involved schwa, 124 <i> or <y>, 78 <o>, 69 confused digraphs representing diphthongs (e.g. *jion* for *join*), 63 involved <u>, and 22 <a>.

4.2.1 <e> The preponderance of errors involving <e> is largely explained by the frequency of the notorious silent <e> in English; in fact 109 of the 184 <e> errors involved silent <e> in one way or another. In 44 cases a redundant final <e> was omitted, thus: *aprehensivly**, *befor**, *lovly**, *something**, *oposit**; a dozen of them used the morphophonemic past tense inflection: *gatherd*, *marrid*, *murderd*, *lockd**; such forms would not have constituted errors in CS, which makes a point of omitting such redundant letters. In another 44 words a

redundant silent <e> was added (*arguments, disrupte, senseably, learne, withe*); such errors would be far less likely in CS, where silent <e> is never redundant. But even when a silent <e> is not redundant, our ritters often failed to appreciate the fact, omitting it in 20 cases where it indicates a preceding long vowel (*besids, completly, guid, entirly, somtims*). Like Daisy Ashford, these ritters also often misspelled long <e> (/i:/), as in *areana, beeing, seariously, treet, leve*, se*, peple**, sometimes using forms that would probably have been avoided in CS (*acheive, bereivement, peices* CS *acheve, berevemnt, peces*). Short <e> was predictably misspelled in such trap-words as *agenst, anyone*, and the CS forms *frend, helthy* were used 5 and 3 times respectively. *Whether* came out twice as *weather*, twice as *wheather*; CS *wethr* for both *whether, weather* would obviously have helped prevent those errors.

4.2.2 Shwa

Of the 167 shwa-errors only 24 occurred pre-accentually (e.g. *intulectual, imagrination, affence*) where CS offers no help. Of the 143 postaccentual cases, CS could have helped in all but 27 (e.g. not with *ernbarris, fortunitley, reletivs, confedence*); actual CS forms (*lisen*, family**) were rare, but the regularity of CS would have greatly reduced the likelihood of error in *probabal, resmoserbl, senscebul* (CS *probbl, responsbl, sensbl*); *dismell, hassel, littel, modle, travill, vandle, vanderlism, vandolism, famaly, famley, famliy, persnaly* (CS *disml, hassl, litl, modl, travl, vandl, vandlism, family, persnly*); *hansem, hansun, enames enimes, enemies* (CS *hansm, enmis*); *certian, serton, couson, lisen, samariton, pleasant, pregnant, redundant, differant, present, perminently* (CS *certn, cusn, lisen, samaritrn, plesnt, pregnnt, redundnt, difrnt, presnt, permntly*); (*bachler, figer, neighbor, tempar, military, misarable* (CS *bachlr, figr, neibr, tempr, militry, misrbl*).

4.2.3 Other vowels

The common confusion of <-y, -ey> endings (*mony, angrey, badley*) would be avoided in CS, which spells them all <-y>. Also commonly confused were <i, y> especially in inflections (*enemys, orgi's, studiing, emtyed, erlyer, trys**); here CS offers only partial morpho-phonemic disambiguation (CS *deny, denys, denyd, pity, pitis, pitid*). Perhaps therefore CS should extend its limited regularisation of <y> for /ai/ (CS *myt, desyn, hy*), so that <i> is only used for the phonemes in *piti, studiing*. CS *bild, busness* would however have helped ritters avoid *biuld, buisness*. CS would have helped less commonly with <o> or <u> errors, though some CS forms did occur: *no** (11, for *know*), *corse*, cruse*, nutral**, and the following forms show a CS tendency at least: *sholders, contry, dose, norish, truble, beutiful* (CS *sholdrs, cuntry, dos, nurish, trubl, butiful*). Among the diphthong-digraphs, the 15 misspellings of *their/there* point strongly in the direction of the CS merger as *ther*, a form which occurred twice. CS would not have helped with the 22 misspellings involving <a>, except that CS *gards* would hardly have produced the misspelling *gaurds*.

4.3 Consonants

Silent consonants caused 37 errors. <gh> was predictably the biggest trap (17, such as *cought, eigther, figthing, laughth, fite, lafe, neighbour, tuff*); in CS these errors would hardly arise. Sibilants (24 errors with <c, s, or z>, as *concentrate, exept, resently, sertain, conciderate, percon, criticizm, wize*) and <h> (42 errors; omitted as in *disonist, macanic*, or inserted as in *hair, ham, hearn, whould, whorthwhile, whent*) were also troublesome; CS helps rarely with sibilants (*exept, persn*), but by getting rid of silent <h> and reducing initial <wh> to <w>, CS resolves much of the <h> problem. However, as in Corpus I & 2, consonant doubling caused most difficulty, with 80 wrong doublings (e.g. *habbit, accademically, begginging, ability, almost, fammily*), and 84 wrong simplifications (e.g. *rubish*, intelligent, comunity*, anoying*, hapiness*, worry**). By simplifying nearly all doubled consonants, CS makes virtually a clean sweep with <b, g, l, m, n, p, t> and would help with <c, f, r, s>. However our ritters sometimes wrongly simplified <cc> (= /ks/ as in *acidnt, sucess*, and they confused off/off 5 times (CS keeps <ff> in off). Lastly, palatalised <s, t> caused misspellings *like fassion, accationally, proffeson, recetion, manutrition, posistion, relations* — CS rarely helps here (except perhaps *fashn*).

4.4 Apostrofes

Othr comn errs involvd apostrofes and word boundris. CS can do nothing for th latr, but is trying out omission of apostrofe for posesion and in negativ contractions like *wouldn't* (th err *would'nt* ocurd 6 times in our corpus). If th apostrofe cesed to be used to indicate posesion, then th widespred confusion with between <-s>, <-s'>, plural <s> and presnt tense <s> wud be overcom: in our corpus 50 plurals and 14 presnt tense verb endings wer ritn <'s>, and th tru possessiv apostrofe was omitd 17 times. If <'s> wer only used for contractions of *is*, as in *he's*, *it's*, this dificlty wud larjly disapear.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Wat CS acheves

Our thre corpora hav here provided substantial evidnce that if english speling wer reformd on CS lines, a huge numbr of speling mistakes wud be avoidd. Al thre of th cuting rules target a specific major problm area in t.o. Pronunciation givs no clu as to th use of silent lettrs, nor to th choice of lettr for post-accentual shwa, nor for consnnt-dubling — and it is precisely in these areas that CS ofrs th gretst relief. Othr notorius speling — anomlis of t.o., such as th vowel lettrs used in comn words like *any*, *woman*, *son*, *busy* or to represent long vowels, pale into insignificnce by comparisn, at least when jujd by th criterion of err-freqency as found in th thre corpora examnd in this articl.

5.2 Furthr qestions

This latr point dos howevr raise an importnt qestion wich must be directd at CS, and wich is also reflectd in th most serius omission from this study: an analysis of errs made by primary-scool lernrs, for hom th comnst, most elementary words in th languaj ar th fust stumbling blok. Certnly CS helps with many such words (e.g. CS *frend*, *hed*), but ofrs it leves unchanjed. For th beginr, therfor, i.t.a. or AMERICAN may ofr an even mor efectiv systm. Here is an importnt matr to be pursud. Furthr reserch or reporting-bak myt also be intresting on th foloing points:

1. yung lernrs: th Oxford Text Archive has som corpora of misspellings made by primary-scool childrn, and som readrs may hav access to or be able to colect furthr material.
2. childrns inventd spelings: studis by Anne Robinson (Manchestr Polytecnic) cud be relevnt.
3. speling mistakes made in othr european languajs: dos John Downings *Comparative Reading* contain information on speling?
4. anglo-welsh experience: dos lerning th mor regulr welsh orthografy help childrn in bilingual schools mastr t.o.?

Ther is stil much work to be don.

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[Valerie Yule: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Quarterly](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Personal Views](#) 10 & 16, [Media](#), [Books](#).]

13. English Spelling and Pidgin: Examples of International English Spelling

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Summary

Features of the orthographies of two Australasian pidgin — English languages are described to demonstrate what may be desirable characteristics for optimum spelling for universal practical use, when tradition is not a constraining factor.

Introduction

Where Britain rules her spelling, it is hers. It is changing to meet modern needs, but it changes very slowly indeed. However, international English today is increasingly used by people who have had to learn it as a second language. Within twenty years there may even be more Indian users of English than there are literate native speakers in Britain, America and the white Commonwealth. ('Users' is the appropriate word, rather than speakers, since because of English spelling it is difficult for those who learn spoken English as a second language to read or write it, and for those who learn to read English, to speak it.) There may soon come the time when an overseas majority will believe that an 'international English' requires an international spelling. It is therefore worth observing how 'English' is spelt in the modern world when there are no bonds to enforce continuity with the past, and efficiency is the prime concern.

The extension of world English is not due to its spelling but to its historical advantages, its dominance as a medium for science and commerce, extensive heritage of print, and primacy in air and sea communication, as well as linguistic advantages of relatively simple grammar with few inflections, a rich and precise vocabulary, and its nature as a through its combined Teutonic borrowings and lendings with many other languages.

However English has lost ground post-war as a medium for education and internal communication in many third world multi-lingual countries where it could have been invaluable — nationalism and difficulty of linking spoken and written word have been too much. Pidgin varieties of English language are thriving, however, partly because of this. They are becoming 'respectable' and developing written forms.

The two examples to be discussed are Melanesian pidgin — **Tok Pisin**, the lingua franca of Papua Niugini and neighboring islands, which is spoken by over a million people to communicate in a country divided by 300 other languages, and which is overtaking English as a major language for government and the media — and **Australian Creole**, a mix of Ngukurr-Bamyili dialects spoken in the Roper River area of the Northern Territory. ('Pidgin' becomes a 'Creole' language when it becomes the native tongue of a complete district.)

Origins of Pidgin

The word 'pidgin' derived from 'business' in early Chinese-European trade, indeed the first dictionary of neo-Melanesian pidgin in 1945 was entitled *Dictionary of Bisnis English*. Pidgin forms

of English have developed as lingua franca from first contact with British traders in many parts of the world from the 17th century on, because of:-

1. The need for communication between peoples with many languages.
2. The difficulties of spoken and written English. Something much simpler was needed for immediate basic communication by itinerant Britishers. Vocabulary and grammar were adopted from the other languages too, to make reasonably effective communication with the simplest possible grammar and minimum vocabulary, so that pidgin could be picked up very easily. Some of these linguistic characteristics are described later, since they have intrinsic fascination, even though only indirectly relevant to orthography.
3. It is possible that in colonial days in some places it may have been thought desirable to keep natives in their place by communicating with them in a low-status dialect that could not help them gain social mobility (cf. Asian languages which until recently had several layers of forms of address and honorifics to distinguish Castes and social groups in communication.) Until recently too most pidgins were regarded as 'bastard jargons', with no claims to being proper languages at all; but today both nationalistic needs and linguistic scholarship have raised their status. It is even pointed out that English and other European languages may themselves be creolised versions from an original Indo-European source (Hall in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* 1973, p.1058). Swahili, Afrikaans and Bahasa Indonesia have all been labelled pidgin languages.

'Restricted pidgins' are only contact languages used for limited purposes by speakers of other mother tongues, and they are very simple and limited indeed. An 'extended pidgin' however has become permanently useful for communication and can develop into a creole when it becomes the native language of a community, its grammatical structure and vocabulary extend, and it becomes more or less stable over a wide area.

Spellings for pidgin

Smalley's five basic criteria for an adequate orthography (Smalley 1963), developed from missionary experience, were to combine to the maximum possible, and in order of importance, learner motivation, government acceptance, maximum representation of speech insofar that there remained maximum ease for the learner, maximum transfer for reading in other languages, and, less importantly, maximum ease of reproduction. Smalley pointed out that many theoretically perfect 'designed' writing systems have failed because they were too complicated for learners — and as we know, others not so theoretically perfect could be described as failures for the same reason.

Despite the myth current in English circles that spellings cannot be tampered with because they have a natural life of their own, both pidgins have been put on paper after much thought and discussion among 'experts' and nationals. Smalley's criteria have been taken seriously.

Neo-Melanesian pidgin, originally called 'Beche de Mer English', is only a hundred years old, but by 1971 there were nine different spelling systems for it. Even government departments used different systems from each other. There were two main schools of thought about rationalisation. The administrators were inclined to make spelling represent the nationals' pronunciation, since it was their language, while educators and others often wanted to make it like English, so that the transition to English would be easier — e.g. *ticher* rather than *titsa* for *teacher*. There was the usual sort of emotional controversy that spelling seems to arouse in the hearts of men. Finally the norm that emerged was that of the Medang area, the linguistic centre of Melanesian pidgin, rather than the areas closest to anglicisation. The government aim was to establish a standard written pidgin for general use, without any interference with the spoken dialects.

The official standardisation was promulgated in March 1956, with the premise that "the ideal orthography for a language is a completely phonemic one." However the phonemic orthography that had been developed by Dr Robert A Hall of Cornell University was modified by pragmatic, nonlinguistic factors — cultural pressure to avoid any letters or other usages not present in English, the preference for a "less than linguistically accurate, sub-phonemic" orthography (according to Mihalic, 1971) that would be most useful pragmatically at Medang rather than taking account of all the phonemes in a wide range of dialects (and with some influence from the spelling of Bahasa Indonesia not so far away), and thirdly cutting out English phonemes that were not adopted by nationals, in order to have as few phonemes as possible. The five single vowel letters are used to represent nine spoken phonemes, and there are only four 2-letter diphthongs. It was found easier to have fewer spelling patterns than phonemes, rather than the opposite, as in English, which has hundreds of spelling patterns for 42 phonemes.

In the past, when pidgins had no recognised orthographies of their own, when they appeared in print English writers would give them 'etymological spelling' — with the result that they looked like quaint, clumsy and rather stupid English dialect. (See the etymological spelling' of the Bendigut story below.) Their modern spellings reflect linguistic features that appear to be advantageous for easy learning, speaking and writing:-

4. Simplification and reduction of consonant clusters and digraphs, e.g. *ailan* for *island*. Vowels can even be inserted to prevent consonant sequences, e.g. *bokis* for *box*.

5. Comprehensive simple vowels that cover a variety of shades of phoneme, rather than distinguishing between them, e.g. *arurut* for *arrowroot*, when the <u> is both long and short, rather like our <a> in *banana*.

6. A preference for CVCV or CVC spelling structures, so that slurred vowels are represented rather than omitted — but unlike English with more consistent and predictable spelling, the most common forms being <i> or <e>. This is in line with the observation that child spellers often find *label* less confusing than *table*.

7. No problems with double letters.

8. Compound words, with consistent representation of morphemes, e.g. *klostu*, *wantaim*, *legoim* (put down), and the very useful and respectable *bagarapim* for all things that go wrong.

The spellings of both Tok Pisin and Australian Creole have the additional feature of current fluidity, because both languages are 'continuurn' — that is, extending over dialects that range from close to distant recognisability with English. The 'dialect problem' that is always raised when English spelling reform is mentioned is basically a matter of accents, vowel shifts and some extra vocabulary, but written pidgin must surmount more than that — another reason for its deliberate 'coverall' principles rather than absolutely accurate representation of any one version.

Since these pidgins are derived from English it might seem sensible for those languages to be spelt as closely to English as possible, so that anyone literate in English would have no trouble with pidgin, and pidgin speakers could learn English more easily. But Voorhoeve (1963) wrote about new orthographies — and I make no comment — "one cannot expect the users of a language only to be able to spell correctly with the use of a dictionary". And there are also psycho-social factors. Look at the difference between Roper River Creole as spelt in its phonemic form, and when spelt according to English etymology, in the Bendigut example given later. The one, you might say, is a fine, upstanding language in its own right — the other looks a childish,

handmedown broken English, likely to arouse condescension from English-speakers, without doing any service at all to the nationals.

About 85% of the root words of Tok Pisin come from English and the aboriginal pidgin is almost entirely derived from English, so a knowledge of how sounds have translated is often sufficient for English readers to be able to make some sense of both in print. This is because the spelling systems are consistent. Switch of 'spelling set' is often sufficient. But the initial appearance can look rather different from English, as in this paragraph about a protest over compensation pay from the newspaper *Wantok*, which is better understood if spoken aloud:

Ol pipel belong Siviri viles klostu long Kerema i bin wokim wanpela protes rnas long Tunde 3 Februari long autim tok kros bilong ol i go long provinsal gavman na nesenel gavman. Ol i belhat bikos gavman i wok isi tru long stretim kompensesen pe bilong graun we Kerema haiskul i sanap long en nau.

The native English reader only needs a few clues to immediately become aware of the great difference in difficulty between Tok Pisin and English spelling. In Niugini itself others confirm the observation of John Downing (1987) that nobody is taught to read Tok Pisin — it was even banned from accredited schools in 1960 — but its written form may be seen anywhere, and it's just taken for granted that if you can read in any other language, whether it's your mother tongue (which Niugini children can read fairly easily) or English (which is difficult indeed for them), then you can read in Tok Pisin too.

Roper River Creole

There have been pidgin dialects in Australia ever since the "barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect" that David Collins wrote home about in 1796 (commenting, as so often happens in British communication with 'foreigners', that "the natives have the advantage, comprehending with much greater aptness than we can pretend to, every thing they hear us say"). Hodgkinson wrote in 1845 of the spread of "aboriginal English" on the east coast that the "stockmen and sawyers supposed it to be the language of the natives, while they supposed it to be ours".

There were so many dozens of native languages that pidgin English also became the common language for inter-tribal communication. Today around ten major pidgins, creoles and forms of aboriginal English have been distinguished around Australia, but only one has a recognised orthography — the creole used in the Roper River area of the north by aborigines speaking to aborigines, who have around two dozen different language backgrounds.

Until 1972 aboriginal children were punished if they used Creole and not English in school, but following Australian government bilingual education policies it was then permitted as a medium in education, and the development of an orthography for it began in 1973, first by white, Australians and then increasingly with Creole speakers involved. In 1976 a Creole orthography was finally decided upon. The decisions are interesting.

The roman alphabet is used with near maximum representation of significant sounds, but allows under-differentiation in spelling — that is, complete representation is not regarded as necessary. (Sir James Pitman's concept of 'diaphones' that are broad-band representations that may overlap phonemes is seen here.) It was decided deliberately not to make Creole not look like English, but like a language of its own — and hence spellings designed to look like English were rejected.

There are 38 letters and digraphs, including 11 consonant digraphs and 7 vowels, two (rarely used) with diacritic <:>, and 4 diphthongs spelt with digraphs. That is, complexity of vowels, usually the

hardest part of spelling and aural distinction, is reduced to the minimum. (English recognises 19 vowels — a large number to distinguish, with an even larger number of spellings.)

It is worth noting that bilinguals tend to perceive Creole as having more significant sounds than those who speak Creole alone.

Morphemes are recognised in that words used in forming compound words must be spelt consistently, but there is still great latitude for writers to spell the way they speak, regardless of dialect. There is often a continuum from distant to near English, according to distance from English-speaking centres — e.g. *jilib, jilip, silip, slip* for English *sleep* and *jineg, jinek, sinek, sineik* and *sineik* for English *snake*.

My information dates back to 1977, and I am currently looking into the present situation. However, the early trials then were suggesting that aboriginal learners progressed well, while fluent English readers could read in Creole without assistance. Other English readers did need some formal help, however, particularly with the vowels, since the two vowel systems are distinct. This is expected to be a difficulty of transfer also when aboriginals are learning English language literacy — although the major problem will be the intrinsic difficulty in English spelling itself.

Sandefur (1979) gives an example in both Creole orthography and what an 'English spelling' would look like, in a story about childless Mr and Mrs Bandicoot going to ask the kangaroo for two children because he had plenty.

Creole spelling

Wel, langa naja kantri, ola Bendigut bin jidan.
Im en im waif bin nogud-binji dumaji tubala
nomo bin abum iginini.
Wandei tubala bin lisin gernan keingunu bin
abum loda biginini. Tubala bin labda golanga
keingurru blanga tubala biginini.

Tubala bin go en tubala bin karnat langa jad
keingurru kemp.

Wen jad keingurru bin luk tubala, imin askim
tabala en imin sei,
"Wanem bla yundubala bin kan iya?" jad
keingurru bin sei.

En jad Bendigut bin sei, "Wel, mindubala bin
kam bla askim yu bla tubalas biginini, dumaji
mindubala nomo gadem eni biginini."

Engl. etymological spelling

Well, long another country, all the bandicoot
been sit-down. Him and him wife been no-good-
binjey too much two-fellow no-more been have-
him piccaninny.
One-day two-fellow been listen gammon
kangaroo been have-him lot-of piccaninny.

Two-fellow been go and two-fellow been come-
out long that kangaroo camp

When that kangaroo been look two-fellow, him-
been ask-him two-fellow and him-been say,
"What-name belong you-and-two-fellow been
come here?" that kangaroo been say.

And that bandicoot been say, "-Well, me-and-
two-fellow been come belong ask-him you
belong two-fellow piccaninny, too-much me-and
two-fellow no-more got-him any piccanny."

The spelling of pidgin in fact, pronunciation shifts apart, could be regarded as a form of Cut Spelling. Pidgin may appear long-winded in comparison with English when it has only minimum vocabulary to work with (e.g. *ples bilong putim ol bok* for *book-case* in Tok Pisin), but as vocabulary increases, its economy increases also.

Future developments

Australian Creole orthography is still in a young, even fluid state. As literacy in Australian Creole develops, greater standardisation may be expected, and also probably a degree of 'spelling pronunciation', in which the dialects themselves become more uniform, converging to the major versions appearing in the printed word. It is possible, though not certain, that the Creole may become more like English, particularly as its vocabulary extends, and its spelling be rather like an English spelling reform, apart from the pronunciation shifts in consonants and vowels.

Tok Pisin spelling is still not set rigid, and variations can be found even in the same issue of a publication, but its general principle of 'make it as easy as possible' is unlikely to be changed.

However, again, it would be very much in the interests of the progress of a country like Papua New Guinea if English were the lingua franca, because of its value for international communication, commerce, science, technology and education. Spoken English is still overall a more economical and precise language than pidgin — for example, a bilingual public notice in a newspaper took 48 words in English against 83 words in pidgin, i.e. nearly double, but the English spelling took up more space.

If in Papua New Guinea some periodicals, e.g. newspapers, also included columns in English language with 'Niugini' pidgin spelling, then it could become easier for nationals to read English and also increase spoken vocabulary without pronunciation worries. However there would also certainly be some confusion, and whether that would be constructive or not is uncertain.

For example, here is a public notice in pidgin spelling, and the English version of it, with common vocabulary also spelt in Tok Pisin (apart from some changes of vowels and consonants, e.g. the Tok Pisin grapheme <p> may sometimes be pronounced closer to /f/).

Tok Pisin:

Nau em i taim bilong Papua Niugini i ma gohet long wok egrikalsa ig o bungim yia 1987 na bai i go yet.

English Translation with Tok Pisin spelling:

Nau yu are moving with Papua Niugini in Agrikalsa intu yia 1987 and beyond.

In future it is possible that pidgin spelling may come closer to English spelling without adopting its inconsistencies, as with increasing commercial influences, secondary education and international communication more Niugini and Roper River nationals are exposed to English pronunciations and English spelling. This trend can already be seen in contrasts between city and rural residents.

English literacy is facilitated not only by familiarity with the sight of English print in everyday shopping and travelling, but also by the practice of the pidgin weekly paper *Wantok*, which carries large slabs of sport and advertising in English, mixed with the rest of the Tok Pisin reporting. This sort of model for familiarisation may be followed eventually for the introduction of English spelling reform in English-speaking countries — by exposure to a mixture in blocks in everyday media; however another model can be the Korean example of transition from Chinese characters to the Korean alphabet *hangul*, which commenced in the media by the introduction of Korean function words that were not represented by the Chinese ideographs, and gradually extended.

A note on pidgin language

Pidgins are moulded by necessity, not kept in a mould by tradition. Efficiency is essential for survival, even if consistency is not 100% through lack of standardisation. Their structure and changes therefore are good indicators of what may be 'optimum' for languages that are not defined by an elite, but required for universal use.

Because pidgins originated to communicate between peoples who did not share a common grammar, everyday words take the place of inflexions that might not be understood. The grammar of pidgin has the effect of labelling every piece of information very clearly so that listeners with minimum vocabulary will not be lost. Emphasis is often given by repetition, as in Malaysian and Indonesian, e.g. *liklik, toktok*. The possessive is usually a word derived from belong, and fellow is usually a bound morpheme, to indicate number and many other qualities, e.g. *dispela, wanpela, tupela, sikispela, nainpela, bikpela, trupela*. A term like *em* may indicate subject, and bound morpheme *im* indicate a transitive verb.

The English problem of sexist language is usually overcome by inclusiveness — for example, *brata* is brother, sister, cousin or friend of the same sex, *susa* is brother, sister, cousin or friend of the opposite sex, and *bratasusa* is brothers and sisters, *manmeri* is people, and *em* refers indifferently to *he, she, it, them*.

Some illustrative spellings from Tok Pisin

Janueri, Februeri, Mas, Epril, Me, Jun, Julai, Ogast, Septemba, Oktoba, Novemba, Desemba.

Some English words from a pidgin advertisement:

Debol Sais Foam Materes, Stov (to kuk), Prais Moni, Sterio, Set long ol Sospen (Sospan), Masin, Pilo, Kwalatai Vidio Rekoda, Spika.

Government is almost entirely derived from English and all the exotic words below have a touch of familiarity:

Dipartmen, Praimer, Indastri, Nasenel Brotkasting Komisin, Praim Minista, Australian Asosiet Pres Nius Sevis, Waia Seves, Eksekyutiv Opisa, Gavman Komyuniti Projek, Palamen, Provinsal Seketeri, Bisnis Kampani, Spesel Operata, Swisbot Operata, Greduesen Seremonis, Gurnius Elekerik, Lokel Maket, Milion, Misis, Mista, Moto Mit, Mamapapa Nogut, Notis, Niuspepa, Piksa, Promis, Politikal, Prinvisal, Pablik, Posta, Pipel, Saplai, Smel, Supamakot, Televisin, Turis, Tiket, Wok, Wik, Yusim, Yu, Dia Edita, winim vot bikos eleksen.

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 6, 1987/3 pp29–30 in the printed version]

[Kenneth Ives: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Book](#)]

14. Review by Kenneth H Ives

Carol M Eastman *Language Planning: an Introduction*, San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp, 1983, 276 pp., US\$9.95

Kenneth Ives is a retired sociologist and social worker. Since 1977 he has published 16 pamphlets and books for a specialized market (Quakers) using varying amounts and varieties of reformed spellings — finding that a 1% change is reasonably well accepted (3–7% trips people up too much in reading). He is author of [Written Dialects N Spelling Reforms: History N Alternatives \(1979\)](#) and of two articles on studies of acceptability of spelling reforms. Numbers in brackets in the review refer to the page in the book. [*Kenneth Ives died in 2002*]

Since spelling reformers are language planners, it is important for them to understand the problems which these planners face, and the clues to successful adoption which their experiences provide. Language planning is applied sociology of language. An earlier book *Advances in the Creation and Revision of Writing Systems* (J Fishman, ed., 1976, Mouton) has appeared. Points in the present work relevant to spelling reform are described below.

Language planning requires the cooperative efforts of political, educational, economic, linguistic authorities [ix]. Language plans are made with particular aims [4]. Hence the various aims of spelling simplification need to be specified. To achieve a policy goal one must intensify people's motivation for accepting the plan [11].

Language choice must be based on social, cultural and psychological factors [15]. The section 'How Writing Systems are Created' (16–26) is most relevant. Symbols must represent distinct sound and meaning units that native speakers recognize as being 'real' in their language. (Thus <ai, ay> are recognized for the sound in *aid*, but the <ae> of World English Spelling is not. See Dewey 1970, 1971)

Acceptability is the most crucial factor in the creation of a writing system, since the goal is that it be used [17]. Reasons for acceptance or rejection of programs of linguistic change are, in general, outside the linguistic system itself. Criteria for a writing system include: is it accurate, economical, and consistent [18]?

Language attitudes arise when one social group comes into contact with another having a different language, dialect or orthography [301]. People's attachments to language must be taken into account — do they want a revised language to be similar to, or distinct from, others they are in contact with? Is the language (or orthography) one the potential adopters will respect?

People are sentimentally attached to their mother tongue, as representing themselves [94]. This can aid spelling simplification thru popularization of Children's Invented Spellings (Read, 1975), which most native speakers of English have forgotten they first used.

English is already a 'world language' for specialized uses, as Caterpillar Fundamental English (a simplified version for machinery maintenance manuals for non-English speakers worldwide), the worldwide use of English for air traffic control, and the widespread use of English as a language of advanced instruction and wider communication in India and many other countries demonstrate.

Spelling reform needs to become a part of these developments.

Language changes that occur have social sanction. Hence language planners can predict changes in usage by studying the sociopolitical context [56]. What status do people give the change and its uses? Does the change seem *natural*, sensible and neutral? Does the shorter, more fonemic spellings which have many precedents in words already spelt that way will have an advantage. Similarly, respellings which avoid existing confusions and ambiguities also have an advantage.) Language planning (including spelling reform of English) has so far focused mostly on the product (specific reforms, linguistics) rather than on the process of change [61].

Language planning has three dimensions [70]: *codification* (including a system of spelling changes); *status planning* (how people view the revised language in relation to other languages), and the *economic* dimension — costs and benefits (who bears the costs, who reaps the benefits).

Codification needs to be sensitive to the culture in which the codified standard will operate [72]. (Working class efficiency and contempt for some of the 'hifalutin' distinctions that upper classes make in 'received spelling' and its 'conspicuous waste' [Veblen] could be a basis for their feeling superior, and a defense against the discrimination that has been demonstrated against those who do not spell 'correctly'.)

Codification needs to be:

1. stable, flexible, precise, rigorous;
2. attentive to the actual functions it has in the culture, and the attitudes various sets of community members have toward it.

In standardizing a language (a more fonemic spelling):

Step 1: develop a practical orthography;

Step 2: train people (in multinational corporations especially) to know and use it;

Step 3: develop cultural and historical (and commercial) materials and literature in it (edition of UNESCO courier.);

Step 4: spread its use in newspapers, magazines, and TV stations, especially in multilingual areas, and make materials (from Received Standard English) available in it.

Change occurs if a group feels the change is in keeping with its goals and its view of itself [79].

Men's language is often more forceful, straight to the point. (Marketing reformed spellings to working men could emphasize it is — more efficient, forceful, faster, pronounceable,...)

Written symbols should record distinctions which make *a difference in meaning to native speakers* [89]. Writing and speech are interdependent [90]. For literacy (in a revised spelling) there is need for:

1. an accepted writing system, and textbooks in it;
2. basic teaching and reading materials;
3. teachers trained in it.

A new version of a language (or its spelling) should be taught as "a second language". Analysis of contrasts provides teachers with ways to predict, diagnose and overcome likely learning problems students may have from the differences in the two languages (or orthographies) [93]. Change is most likely to occur between generations [114].

A chart of cost benefit analysis on p.38 shows these factors:

1. relative cost of teaching the languages (or orthographies) calculated in monetary terms;
2. cost to pupils being taut, estimated per hour of study (times number of hours for each). And nine other factors.

Language reinforcement activities can be used to change linguistic attitudes, feelings or beliefs.

1. *Codification* considers the loyalties, preferences, values and habits of the target population.
2. *Regularization* of dialect differences sensitive to social, geografic differences. Prepare 'official' dictionaries, etc.
3. *Simplification*, ease of printing, uncomplicated spelling.
4. *Purification* makes language change more acceptable. By pruning the language of extraneous cultural stigmata — loan words or mistaken derivations, letters no longer pronounced, etc.
5. *Elaboration*, extending the changes to all contexts where they can be used.
6. *Implementation* continues elaboration via reinforcement by governmental, educational, economic, social agencies.
7. *Evaluation* of reinforcement; extent of use of the changes. [146–7]

(Note: purification could be used extensively, and could counter the horror of the traditionalists!

Does this argue for steps based on types of errors — the clumsy vowel-consonant-vowel for a long vowel; Samuel Johnson's mistaken etymologies — he did not know French or German from which many words come directly; letters no longer pronounced [Cut Spelling] ...)

A common (international) language is a potential unifying force, because it strengthens sentimental/ ideological, instrumental/normative and symbolic/role-participatory attachments people have (in the world economic, political and cultural systems) [150].

A standard language has four functions, that foster three language attitudes — loyalty, pride and awareness [154].

Language 'cultivation' or 'treatment' is rigorous if it is:

1. *systematic* — it responds to plan rather than merely reacts to history.
2. *theoretically based* — on sociological and/or linguistic models.
3. *deep* — it responds to the linguistic situation responsible for the problem, rather than just to the surface manifestations of it.
4. *rational* — it has specific long-term goals and objectives, and also tries to solve the problem at hand. [155]

To think of 'making a plan' may be an illusion! Rather than seeking the best alternative, language planners should take a page from the book of city planners and find a satisfying alternative that will do. Businesses seek to stay in business first, and cope with long term plans secondarily. Planners who are faced with solving language problems should realize that their task is *wicked* rather than *tame* — for which no rule is available that will eliminate all problems. A planner cannot know when a plan is right. In language planning (LP) as in social planning (such as city, health or transportation planning) implementation is part of the policy-making process. Status planning rather than corpus planning needs emphasis. [162–163]

People want to belong to vital groups, and they strive for this goal in their intergroup behavior by using speech-strategies [171].

Ethnolinguistic vitality is structured by *status, demographic and institutional* support features. That is, a group and its language have ethnolinguistic vitality to the extent that they have prestige (status), numbers (demography) and are organized (institutionalized).

To use economic analysis in LP planners should:

1. estimate costs and benefits that can be attributed to specific goals and consequences of actual language planning;
2. determine the costs of the language planning process;
3. figure out alternatives to every decision made in the planning process;
4. make suggestions about what components of language planning are found to recur and be typical. [303, 1791]

Cost-benefit analysis in LP is a way to forecast the different results from alternative plans. To study time effectiveness of a proposed change, ideally all consequences the change would have on society should be defined.

The choice of language for work is influenced by:

1. the desire of employers to use their own first language;
2. the availability of workers who speak a given language;
3. the language of the technology used in the particular employment. (181]

Policy-makers are urged to:

- a. define the language function the policy hopes to maximize;
- b. calculate the pertinent costs and benefits of the policy;
- c. determine how much language use will yield the greatest benefit under the various alternatives. [1821]

Several conclusions quoted or stated appear to be mistaken. One is that government is necessary for change in language use [223]. Another is that "the need for a single world language does not arise until a world government is established" [431]. Both are at least partially refuted by Noah Webster's and Andrew Carnegie's efforts, some results of which are still in use. Also by the development and use of Caterpillar Fundamental English and similar special purpose simplifications, and by the use of *lite* by beer companies, and *foto* by some film service stores. And "for spelling reform to succeed it cannot be introduced gradually" [241] is doubtful, no evidence being supplied. While some conclusions such as these in the book are in error, and many admittedly need more data, the book opens up important areas for spelling reformers to study.

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15. Miscellaneous

Three Spelling Poems

Alice Thomas Ellis: *Lepard Speoll*

This poem has been used in lectures on English spelling to illustrate how arbitrary the phonographic variations in t.o. are. For the learner ignorant of the derivations of words the spellings used here appear no less convincing than the t.o. forms; but to the user familiar with t.o. their strangeness appears outrageous. Given the nature of t.o., both reactions are equally well- or ill-founded.

A leopard leopt out of a thicket	he ate a sheap
Wamb! and ate a lham	then the lepherd
Then with another leep	ate the sheopard

Previously published in *Times Literary Supplement* and here by permission of the author, who tells us that the Welsh spelling of her name is *Alis Tomas Elys*.

Christopher Upward: *Fuzzy-Opaque Orthographical Visions*

As well as presenting three different but all potentially misconceived attitudes towards t.o., the following limerick, with its title, was designed to include every letter of the alphabet and every RP phoneme, and may therefore serve as a compact test-bed for new orthographies.

There was a poor boy couldn't spell
Half the words in our language too well.
His teachers thought: "Brain-sick",
Mum 'n Dad hoped: "Dyslexic?"
Yet the child rashly jeered: "What the hell!"

Previously published in the Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter, Autumn 1985, p.19.

Peter Mortimer: *Charlie Fook*

This poem forcefully expresses the frustration of the learner and the educational damage done by a generally unpredictable orthography. Its rhymes further illustrate some of the obstacles to a straightforwardly phonographic reform of English spelling: the couplets in lines 1/2, 3/4, 9/10 only rhyme in some accents, so that no spelling reform can make spelling-rhymes of them for all speakers; couplets 5/6 and 7/8 involve foreign spellings, whose anglicisation would reduce the international validity of written English; and the rhymes in lines 4 and 10 cross word boundaries, and their correct spelling even in a regularised orthography would require at least a minimum grasp of the morphology and syntax of English.

1 Me name's Charlie Fook and me spelling's a laugh
I'd rather nick off and sit round in the caught
School gives me a pain; I'm no good at study
Can't tell Mr Simms; wouldn't understand wudy?
5 He pulls me up front, shouts, "now spell Cologne!"
He's got to be joking — what, me all ologne?
Or sometimes it's phlegm or caress or lasagna
Can't hardly blame me for skiving off cagna?
"Wake up at the back and spell chipolatas!"
10 That some kind of sausage? Got me beat for statas
See, I'm bleeding useless, I haven't a clue
Words don't make sense to me — what can I due?

© 1986 Peter Mortimer. Published for the first time in *New Angles II* edited by John Foster' (OUP, 1987). Reprinted by permission of the author.

The <-ise, ize> Dilemma

Editors in English face the question whether to spell words like *organise* with <-ise> or <-ize>. America, *The Times*, the Oxford University Press and Collins prefer <ize>, but Britain otherwise mainly writes <-ise>. The uncertainty arose from disagreement about derivation. If the suffix is seen as deriving directly from Greek <-izein> (-ιζειν), Greek zeta <ξ> transcribes into Roman <z>; but if the words concerned are seen as arriving via French, the French <s> (*organiser*) might be chosen. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary says: "The suffix, whatever the element to which it is attached, is in its origin Greek, and as the pronunciation is also with z there is no reason why the French spelling should ever be followed." This *Journal* has hitherto preferred <z>, but only for phonographic, not etymological, reasons: the ending <-ize> unambiguously represents the pronunciation and distinguishes it from the ending of *precise*. However for spelling reformers there is a counter-argument. Some words with this ending are never spelt with <-ize> because they derive from a Latin or Germanic root using <s>: *rise, advise, surprise, advertise, compromise* etc. Then there are Greek-derived words like *analyse, paralyse* which go back to the root *analysis* etc., which in Greek uses unvoiced sigma <cr>, not voiced zeta. Collins and Oxford prefer *analyse* but Webster has *analyze*. So which form should spelling reformers prefer, phonographic <-ize>, with a whole string of exceptions, or ambiguous <-ise>, with fewer and perhaps more manageable exceptions (unvoiced *treatise, precise* and a few words always spelt with <z>, *prize, size, capsized*)? Should reformers anticipate a time when all voiced sibilants would be spelt <z>, and accept the awkward exceptions for the present, or should we give priority to the problems of present users, for whom standard <-ise> would be easier to learn and use correctly?

Miscellany

Spelling Innovation in the Service of Advertising

Harp Lager: summer cooler than others.

Special Notice

Athletics at Alexander Stadium

English Schools National Championships 10–11 July, England v USA International 17 July
All 'i's will be on World Class Athletics at Alexander Stadium this Summer

Knowledge & experience "U" can trust

Tip-Ex for Rong Writers

Softwear anywear (shoes)

Publications available to members [at that time]

—Harry **Lindgren** *Spelling Reform, a New Approach*, Sydney: Alpha Books, 1969, 152 pp., postage 24p.

—eds. Edward **Rondthaler** & Edward J Lias *Dictionary of simplified American Spelling*, The American Language Academy, 1986, 312pp., postage £1.70.

—Arnold **Rupert** *School with less pain*, Lunenburg, Ontario, Canada, 18pp., postage 13p.

The Committee for Linguistics in Education jointly formed by the British Association for Applied Linguistics and the Linguistics Association of Great Britain has published a report by Professor Michael Stubbs of the London University Institute of Education, entitled: *The Synchronic Organization of English Spelling* based on a discussion held at the University of East Anglia in April 1986.

A collection of computer-readable files of English spelling errors, containing tens of thousands of errors by both native speakers and foreign learners, compiled by Roger Mitton (Birkbeck College, University of London), is available for a small charge on magnetic tape from the Oxford Text Archive.