

News2. [A5. 16pp in the printed version. *Underlined words and letters are in italics here.*]



The Simplified Spelling Society. Newsletter 1983

Patron: H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., K.T.

Hon. Secretary: Mr Stanley Gibbs, Middlesex.

Hon. Treasurer: Miss Mona Cross, Northampton.

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1. NEWS LETTER from Mona Cross, Hon. Treasurer

Dear Members and Interested People,

I'm always glad to receive your letters. Often one writer echoes the thoughts of the other, and many reflect the immediate concern of the Committee.

Here is an extract from Gilbert Rae's recent letter:- "What can the Society do to-day, except supply reading matter to members and those interested, and perhaps somehow encourage individuals who invent outstandingly practical schemes?"

This is what we can do — We can work together to interest the ordinary public. Even if we could once more reach the higher rungs of the parliamentary system, no minister can push through changes ordinary people have never heard about. I've talked to a few of them and found that they agreed that our spelling is odd, inconsistent, troublesome. Then they said, "It would cause a lot of

trouble to printers, dictionary-makers and to children who need to read our past literature." But dictionary-makers say that their job is to follow people's wishes, and they already give alternate spellings, and children might as readily read different script, as they could do the reverse after reading in i.t.a. (initial teaching alphabet). In our last News Letter there was a statement about Edward Rondthaler's computer dictionary based on "Soundspel" by which he shows "how easily modern computers could transliterate from present spelling to a reformed spelling during a transition period to eliminate publishing and printing problems."

As Lottie Hirsch of Indiana says, "Reform will happen in conjunction with a new technology."

Professor Abe Citron of Detroit has, in his Simplified Spelling Society, called BETSS, Officers and Board of Directors from Commerce, as well as from Banks, Television, Libraries, Universities, etc. Such people, and the leaders of the Societies for the Blind, and the Deaf and the Dyslexic etc., if they know of our ideas, could easily prove that simplified spelling will save time, and therefore money and effort. And those savings give a universal satisfaction, for money counts!

So, we need to harness the agreement about the obvious oddities of spelling which many ordinary people can recognise. How can we do that? I am thinking that some of Valerie Yule's Spelling Cartoons, if put in a popular paper like the Star, and in one of the more learned ones like the "Guardian", would be arresting propaganda. Maybe we couldn't afford to pay for that, but as the Editor (Valerie Yule) of our last News Letter asks, "What has happened to Dr. Follick's fortune, which was left, like George Bernard Shaw's — for the furthering of Spelling Reform?" Maybe we could use some of *that* money. Do you know what has happened to it? I suppose the legacies have merely been forgotten.

Alun Bye, a committee member, feels that a name for our society might give it a popular appeal. I like his idea. Do you?

Stanley Gibbs, our Secretary, is putting advertisements in certain newspapers and journals. Have you seen one? Why not follow up yourself, by writing to that same paper?

We haven't yet talked on radio or television, but Richard Lung writes to say that Reg Deans, the creator of a reformed spelling called "BRITIC", has done so — I wonder if one of you heard it? Radio 4 December 30th.

If we had a chance to speak on television or radio, how could we make "Reformed Spelling" entertaining enough to be listened to, or watched, by the non-academic, whose support is so imperative? If you have some ideas, we should be glad to have them.

Thank you all for your concern. We shall be pleased to see you at any of our meetings. Stanley Gibbs will give you details.

News of our hopes for the 1984 Conference will be sent in our next News Letter.

Yours sincerely,
MONA CROSS, Hon. Treasurer

P.S. I'm sending you all a Spring S.P.B. free of charge. But I have sent the Winter one to only 21 people because the rest of the copies were lost in the post. If I can obtain more I will send you one.

M. CROSS.

2. Thoughts expressed by M. Cross,

following the reading of
"A short account of the Simplified Spelling Society"
by Maurice Harrison, M.A. M.Ed. B.Sc. ECON.
Published 1971 [See [Pamphlet 11.](#)]

It was in my anxiety to find an answer to the question "What step shall we take next?" that I re-read Maurice Harrison's account of Simplified Spelling. It ends with this statement: "The S.S.S. has in February 1971, sent to the present Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, a fresh letter urging once more, an enquiry into the "educational, financial and international advantages likely to result from modernizing our out-of-date spelling conventions."

I have not seen the answer to that letter; I just sense that nothing was done. Again, it seemed to me that the lack of knowledge and therefore of support, by the general public, was the basic cause of the indifference as to whether anything should be done or not.

Did you know that in 1953 the first Spelling Reform Bill would have been passed had there been just three more favourable votes?

I was almost disheartened to read that right back in 1877 the London School Board and other School Boards, made a determined effort to influence the government — to no avail, as now.

I was *not* surprised to read that from 1875 "failure to learn to read has been a constant theme of educationists" — Will they never learn?

Monetary gain is one of the great driving forces for change. Perhaps someone can make clear to everyone that that will be the result of simplification of spelling in the long run.

As to the prospect of aid to the children and the common man and the foreigner, which is offered so readily by a simplified spelling, that could be the quietly powerful urge of more of the idealistic people.

We must get ourselves known, and supported by the people, ready for the next push through to the Cabinet!

3. Obituary Vic Paulsen

As some of you may know, Vic Paulsen of San Francisco, died in October of last year. He was the creator of TORSKRIP. The children's books which he published are first class and his other books are a lively reflection of his character.

He was another of those earnest people who have devoted time and energy, and money to the creation of a simplified spelling scheme. I hope that the Society will honour them all by recalling their works whenever opportunity arises.

In losing Vic, we have lost another friend.

M. C. On behalf of the Secretary & Committee

4. FROM MY POSTBAG Stanley Gibbs Hon. Secretary

Ken Tillema, an ardent Spelling Reformer of Ontario: "English spelling retards learning and stifles common sense. Most reporters agree with me, including this reporter I'm talking to now."

Reporter: "Moest surtenlee!"

.... the best way to reform spelling is by starting with spelling itself, with the illogical letters and letter combinations, rather than starting with the sounds of the words.

C. Jolly, Chairman of the Simplified Spelling Society

The society therefore favours a gradual change over an extended period of time thru' a series of stages. Proposed statement of the Society's policies.

But educationally i.t.a. did "work" and continues to "work" wherever it is used.

Professor John Downing, President of the S.S.S.

Wuns u cum owt with a sistem evry linggwest and self-apointed linggwest starts nitpiking Thay say "This canot wurk becauz" and then thay go on and on.

Professor A Citron, Author of B E t S S (Better Education thru' Simplified Spelling), Michigan.

This society (The S.S.S.) campaigns for supposed reforms which would obliterate the traces of our Greco-Roman and Saxon linguistic history. Spelling cannot be fixed or deliberately simplified if we are to maintain a living culture.

Elisabeth Henry of Blackburn.

The Secretary asks for your OPINION

I am impressed by Professor Citron's "Big Four" scheme. I would welcom comments and suggestions, as I intend to try to persuade the Society to adopt it, and to link up with Professor Citron's B E t S S organization in the U.S.A.

Here is the scheme:

- 1) The short e sound to be written always as e. reddy, stedy.
- 2) All ph words to be written with f. filosofy, telefone.
- 3) All "non-magic" e's to be removed. gon, liv, hav, ar.
- 4) All ough and augh words to be re-spelled. cof, tho, caut, baut.

Contributions by Stanley Gibbs. Schoolboy Howlers

The stumak is the moste delated part of the elementary canal.

Blud flows thru the alimentary canal into the abdominal canopy.

A barometer is a place b/lt on the roof of a hous where men go to study the stars.

Gravity was discuvered by Isaac Newton. It is cheefly noticed in the autum when the apples ar fauling off the trees.

Alun Bye: see [Bulletin](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

5. Changing the Name of the Simplified Spelling Society

by Alun Bye

For some time I have considered that the title "Simplified Spelling Society" does not bear the impact or dynamism required of a radical organization whose aim of spelling reform has world-wide literary implications.

As has become clear over the years, by no means everyone feels sympathy with the idea of spelling simplification. To many people, proposed modifications to the orthography make the language look 'ugly'. Perhaps these visually sensitive opponents have experienced little spelling difficulty themselves, and have never felt the embarrassment, humiliation and frustration which our inconsistent encoding system inflicts upon those who suffer its anomalies. There may even be amongst these articulate, capable spellers some who believe, in some obtuse way, that struggling to overcome spelling difficulty is good for character development. There may well be little sympathy and even less support for the notion of simplification from this negatively influential quarter.

The inclusion of the word 'Society' in the title is of little informative or publicity value. Worse, it suggests an air of exclusivity, and fails to convey the quality and extent of our membership. As a somewhat inconsequential appendage it should therefore be replaced by something which more clearly reflects our image as an energetic, world-wide, reform movement.

The present title is also impossible to find in a telephone directory or other alphabetical index if one's uninitiated requirement is to discover whether some organization exists which is mainly concerned with spelling reform.

For this latter reason, if for no other, the first name in our title must be Spelling. I suggest its new title be SPELLING REFORM INTERNATIONAL. This is a crisp encapsulation of our concern, purpose and scope.

The third word of the suggested title indicates something of the vast world-wide network of interest and enthusiasm for the reform of English spelling. The inclusion of the word REFORM will have more positive appeal than the notion of simplification, and will connote a more immediate and morally convincing purpose.

The new title also has the benefits of sitting more easily on the lips, sounds more enterprising and appealing and, for those wishing to inject a punning sense of urgency, could be transcribed into the acronym SPRINT.

SPELLING REFORM INTERNATIONAL is, I believe, a more useful and suitable title, and one which more fully conveys the true purpose, function and definition of the present Simplified Spelling Society.

Alun Bye, Northampton,
30 January 1983.

6. Is 'rong' the right spelling?

TRENDS AND IDEAS

Toronto Star 1982 09 26

"Wen ar yu gonna du an indepth stori on our changing language?"

The invitation was irresistible, or rather, the invitayshun wuz earesistabul. It came from Ken Tillema, 39, of Chatham, who wants next Thursday, September 30, to be International Spelling Spotting Day. He has ritten to 20 cities in Canada and the U.S., asking their mayors to proclaim ISSD as a day on which citizens will realize that laf is better than laugh and only can be ritten as onely, (its original spelling, Tillema says). Illiteracy is on the rise and erratic, confusing English spelling is the culprit.



"In living English, spelling should follow pronunciation. For the past two centuries, spelling has been frozen, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is economic. Publishers of books, newspapers and magazines stabilized spelling because they believed their customers wanted words to be spelled the same way all the time."

English spelling reform has had a number of backers; Bernard Shaw, Mark Twain, Sir Cyril Burt, Sir David Eccles, Sir James Pitman are among them. What, precisely, does Tillema want to do to the language?

Basically, eliminate the silent letters in such words as hav(e), giv(e), b(u)ild, bre(a)d, bre(a)st, ar(e), de(a)d, de(a)f, he(a)d, he(a)lth, he(a)ven, he(a)vy, inste(a)d, le(a)d, barg(a)in, Brit(a)in, capt(a)in, mount(a)in and hundreds more. "Eliminating these unnecessary letters could save space and make it easier for children to learn (lern!) how to use phonics in 1earning to spell."

Tillema remembers his schooldays, in a tiny country school near Rondeau Park. "I couldn't spell 'could'" he says with some indignation, "because of that silent 'l'. The spelling text didn't make sense to me." That's what set him on his present path. What success has he had? A teacher in Owen Sound sent me some examples of her public school pupils' writing and said she was distressed by their spelling.

What next? "Spelling must change with pronunciation or the language will become unreadable. I look on the process as evolutionary, rather than revolutionary."

The campaign goes on.

7. ALFABET ANALYSIS

Richard Lung, Scarboro

Spelling reformers believe in liberating literacy from the authoritarian anarchy of English spelling convention. The English alfabet may not be intelligently learned because it is not intelligently organized, on an understanding of the relations between speech sounds. I follow Daniel Jones fonetik grouping of speech sounds. More or less, the vowels are the openly voiced sounds. The consonants are the more or less obstructed sounds, which may be either breathed or voiced. Starting with the consonants, in English, the *nasal* group are just the voiced consonants: m, n & ng. Some alfabet reforms turn ng into one letter, because it stands for one distinct sound. However, it was mainly a matter of pedants insisting on hunting, shooting and fishing instead of huntin, shootin and fishin. I should not complicate matters with a new letter for this unimportant sound, as in *lung*, which ng renders quite closely.

Our next group are the breathed and voiced pairs of stopped consonants: p & b, t & d, k & g. We note that c, q & x are not needed for the k sound. The voiced consonant, l, is called by Henry Sweet, a half-stopped and half-open consonant, which brings us to the *open* consonants, caused by sounds of air friction in the mouth: f & v, th (mainly voiced), s & z, sh (& no letter for the rare voiced version, as in *measure*), ch & j, r (voiced), h (breathed) .

Th is a hard sound for foreigners and perhaps should not be included in an international language alfabet. The use of both breathed and voiced versions is rare in a language. Moreover, breathed th is rare in English speech and indeed is easily overlooked. Reformers who assign it a special spelling ought not to be in a simplified but a complicated spelling society. The th sound is not the sound of its two letters spoken together. And neither Greek theta, θ, nor Saxon thorn, ð are widely known or widely available replacements. Reg Deans "Britic" and alfabet re-uses x as the Saxon thorn without its loop. Some reformers believe this would be too confusing. They ignore that English letters have often changed their sound-meaning before. The present use of x is largely confined to the prefix ex-. Also, three out of four words with th in them are the word "the", the most common English word. So this strange use of x would include the least strange word "the", and therefore the easiest possible such substitution to guess at, for people who don't listen to what they're told. After all, ye used to pronounce the, so it is no sacrilege for x to. In handwriting, x could be written x closely resembling the Saxon thorn, which would be cursive as well as nostalgic.

Like th, the sh letter combination does not mean what it says, unlike th. Elsie Oakensen lists 29 different spellings for this one sound. 4 contain the well-known sh digraf. 13 involve the less well recognized use of c. The ci spelling is usually followed by a vowel in English words. Its pronunciation has been simplified to the sh sound, as in the -cious, -cial, -ciate word endings, including such important words as: conscious, social, official, appreciate. But note also: conscience, ocean, brochure. C has changed its meaning before: it was once only pronounced as k. Rather than waste the spare letter c, it should be spared as the proper single letter option to the sh digraf.

The voiced version of sh, which is the sound in pleasure and treasure, has no letter of its own in English. And it is so rare that it would be out of all alfabetic proportion to give it one. Zs is a possible rendering of voiced sh (as sz is of sh) but the Welsh, for instance, tend not even to recognize voiced sh at all.

The next -h digraf ch is completely unfonetik. Nor is it always the spelling used for its sound, as in the words feature and fetch. Actually, the t is right, because ch = tsh. Like sh, ch has recognition value. But if and when c superseded sh, then ch would be replaced by tc. Reg Deans "Britic" alfabet already does this.

Moving away from the consonant groups, we have the so-called "*semi-vowels*" w & y. Mont Follick's Ootomatik Alfabet uses u & i where w & y are normally used. He then treats w literally like double-u as Welsh does. (Lloyd-George often said that if English were as well spelt as Welsh it would become the world language overnight). Historically, y became another way of spelling i. And if we are consistent with the use of w as double-u, then we should use y as double-i. Convention does some justice to this. Daniel Jones says the -y or -ey endings vary in pronunciation from a short-i to a long-i. For instance, glory is rhymed with free, in the Elgar march.

The above single-letter substitutions for digrafs are nearly the same as in Mr Deans Britic, which claims a saving of one-eighth on current English spelling.

The *short vowels* are in: pat pet pit pot put. The *long vowels* of a, e and o are generally spelt in Europe by adding an r: are & there (without the final e) & or, these spellings are consistent with the short vowel spellings. Northern speech is still true to this spelling convention. Southern speech is more accurately rendered by the aa, ee, & oo of the Ootomatik Alfabet. However, such a confusing reusage with the spelling conventions, in words like been and boon, is not justified by the minimal fonetik returns of distinguishing the pronunciations of arrow, error, oracle.

Perhaps the most useful suggestion I can make is how to signify the *unstressed vowel* without an old or new letter. Elizabeth Betts says the Hebrew word, the shwa means a point in the text to signify an unstressed vowel. Therefore, the apostrofe could signify omission of vowel stress, since an apostrofe is already known to signify an omission of some sort. Of course, it shows an absence of all pronunciation, as in the tv program "Diff'rent Strokes", Rock In' Roll. Theres a shop called Needle 'n Thread, in my home town of name historically spelt Scarb'ro. In the film "Calamity Jane", Doris Day is familiarly called C'lam not Clam. The difference supplies the answer to the question, why not leave the apostrofe out, too, for unstressed vowels. Its no good having to guess where the unstressed vowels go in words. And they amount to 9.5% of English speech.

As it is, the novice has to guess which of 5 different vowel letters or none is used for the short unstressed vowel, as in arable, open, prim'tive, occasion, circumstance. Daniel Jones showed that an unstressed short vowel in a word may become stressed when that word is in a different grammatical form. But there is no such spelling clue for the long unstressed vowel, being spelt with any of the five vowel letters plus an r: learn, were, sir, work, turn. These could be simply: l'rn, w'r, s'r, w'rk, t'rn.

Printers would rightly prefer the apostrofe to the hyfen for compactness. But the hyfen is on the typewriters lower deck, tho still not on a convenient key, and could be used till manufacturers agreed to put the apostrofe on the lower deck and a convenient key.

Summary of Alfabet Analysis

consonants		vowels			
breathed	voiced	short	long		
	m	pat	pet	are	there
	n	pot	pĭt	or	y (glory with free)
p	b (shwa)'		put	h'r	w (lwn'tik mwn)
t	d				
k	g	diphthongs, where English spelling is otherwise:			
	l	irregular	of limited	regular	
f	v	aisle	regularity	soil ui (= "we")	
	x or th	(or aye-aye)	vein (or fey)	(or toy)	
s	z			iu (= "you")	
sh or c		irregular	fairly		
ch or tc	j	aural	regular		
			mould	Britic uses <i>ow</i> or <i>q</i> for <u>ou</u> ;	
	h		(or mow)	-y & -w not preferred.	

The above alfabet analysis and argument is almost a hybrid of the Ootomatik Alfabet and Britic, that might be called the Ort'matik Britic Alf'bet.

References:

Daniel Jones, *The Pronunciation of English*. Cambridge 1956.

Henry Sweet, *History of Language*. Dent 1901.

Reg Deans, *Universal Language and Simplified Spelling*.

Copies may be obtained from Mr Deans, Leeds.

Mont Follick, *The case for Spelling Reform*. Pitman 1965

Newell Tunes Spelling Progress Bulletin.

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SSS pamphlet 5. Pitman 1942.

And correspondence with spelling reformers.

RICHARD LUNG

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

The Subscription for 1983 was due in January and is £5.00.

Back cover:

"Well, they sed enything could happen."



'TOMORO WE AR PRESENTING TH SIMPL TELEX SPELING SISTEM.'