

BLISS AND LINDGREN'S SPELLING REFORM

I am much interested in every endeavour to improve man's most important tool: Language. Hence I consider every pioneer in this field as a brother and fellowman. I exhort everyone who is interested in the same field to criticise to his heart's desire my semantography and I promise to print his criticism in full in my semantography series. In semantography series No. 193 "Semantography and the Professional Philosophers" you will find my leaflet which I sent to all the members of the Philosophical Association of America, to study it, because it seems to be the realisation of Leibnitz' speculation (as Professor Reiser told the American Association for the Advancement of Science), and to criticise it, and even condemn it, and I shall print their criticism and send them as many copies as they want, because this is their own monograph and they can add it to their publications. But - though I sent my papers to all members - over 1250 of them, NOT ONE PHILOSOPHER took the trouble to examine it.

Other men have worked on a universal symbolism and I have given everyone of them an issue in my semantography series. I did all this to prove to myself that I am broadminded enough to recognise every other endeavour in the same field. One day when a Universal Symbolism will at last be contemplated by the professional educators, all the issues of my semantography series will be available to them and they can then select the best of everyone of us pioneers for a modern symbol writing.

And in my many papers, and especially in my last book "The Invention and Discovery" I have stressed the importance of a spelling reform. Twenty years ago a man from Vienna Dr. Walter Gassner of Sydney worked out a new spelling system which he called "Rational Spelling". His work was featured in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald, and I got in touch with him. Eventually, I duplicated and bound for him his book and sent promotion papers (together with promotion papers of my semantography) to about 500 American university and public libraries. Then a revue about his book appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. I have not found the time to make a special issue of Gassner's work. Maybe I shall do so if only I could find the time.

But Gassner made one great mistake and he would not listen to me. He did not draw up a plan for the gradual introduction of his rational spelling. He wanted it to be introduced all at once. This was wishful dreaming and an impossibility, because English, when fully written in Gassner's spelling, was unrecognisable, and hence its acceptance would not come about. Now another man, Harry Lindgren of Canberra has done just this, as he drew up a plan for gradual spelling reform SR No. 1, No. 2 etc. in phases. He is a friend of Dr. Everingham, and through him I heard of Lindgren's work. Now on April 17, 1970 an article appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald with a big picture of Lindgren with the caption: "Fighting conservatism" and with the strange title
WANTS TO BERY DED SPELLING

Herebelow is the text written by Herald Reporter David Dale.

HARRY LINDGREN, of Canberra, is going to reform the spelling of English language, but he's not in any hurry.

In fact, he intends to devote the next 10 years to introducing just one small improvement - in the spelling of the "e" sound (as in "bet").

He finds it absurd that we represent this sound in about 10 ways, and is conducting a one-man campaign for change.

Consider "head", "said", "leisure", "guess", "says", "any", "leopard", "friend", "cleanliness" and "bury".

Harry Lindgren wants you to spell them "hed", "sed", "lesure", "gess", "eny" and so on. As he ses, the words may look funny at first sight, but think how much easier it is to teach a child or a migrant one spelling for one sound insted of 10 spellings for one sound.

Mr. Lindgren calls his scheme SR1 (Spelling Reform Step One). He reports that he is already making some hedway. The editorials in the Journal of the Victorian Teachers' Union now use SR1, as do all articles in a Melbourne publication called "Modern Teaching".

But why are Mr. Lindgren's goals so limited? Why only one change in 10 years?

"Because I'm being realistic," he ses. "Other spelling reformschemes have tried to revolutionise our spelling all at once. They're fighting hundreds of

years of conservatism. "But if we introduce improvements gradually - improvements which everyone agrees are simple and necessary - then we have some chance of succeeding".

Mr. Lindgren, who is aged 59, is resigned to the fact that he may not live to see the introduction of SR3. But if he can at least get SR1 accepted, and make a start with SR2, he will be happy.

Surprisingly Mr. Lindgren is not a professional linguist. He is a mathematician. He migrated from England to Australia in 1935 and acquired a BSc at the University of Western Australia. Now he is an examiner in the Commonwealth Patent Office in Canberra.

He lives in an elegant brick cottage in the suburb of Narrabundah. His house is filled with books in English, French, Spanish, Norwegian, Italian and Russian, all languages he reads easily.

He likes Spanish best "because its spelling is so logical." Reading Russian infuriates him sometimes "because its rules are even more absurd than English".

But he places his faith in science more than literature.

"I don't have much patience with these literary blokes," he ses. "They're the ones who have perpetuated our absurd spelling system. I'd like to see the improvement of English spelling placed in the hands of mathematicians and physicists, who would tackle the problems logically and realistically".

Mr. Lindgren keeps no count of the amount of money he spends printing pamphlets on SR1 and sending them to influential people. He has sent copies to every newspaper editor in Australia and to all members of the Australian Society of Authors. He has asked the Printing and Kindred Industries Union and the Australian Journalists' Association to distribute copies to all their members.

He believes the reform of English spelling is vital at this time, when human knowledge is expanding fast. He ses teaching children the irregularities of spelling wastes time which could be spent on more important matters.

Apart from the waste of time, it is very boring and annoying for the children." He ses, "I am inclined to think much of the juvenile delinquency in the English-speaking world can be traced back to childhood difficulties with spelling."

Mr. Lindgren intends to retire from the Patents Office in two years to devote himself entirely to the SR1 campaign.

But what of SR2, and SR3 and onwards?

"I haven't decided what they will be yet. I have ideas, but I want to consult with experts in spelling before I decide. It has to be a generally accepted improvement. I welcome suggestions, and remember there is plenty of time."

Mr. Lindgren would like to hear from anyone who is interested in SR1, and will send copies of his pamphlet on request. His address is 40 McKinlay Street, Narrabundah.

A.C.T. 2604

As he asked for letters from interested people I wrote to him the following letter, being sure that it will not please him, because I chided him for not approaching and attacking the men who indeed can introduce his spelling reform: The Director Generals and Officials of Education.

Mr. Harry Lindgren,
40 McKinley Street,
Narrabundah.

Sydney 19 April, 71

Dear Mr. Lindgr

You surely have heard of me, and hence you know that I am also engaged in the improvement of men's most important tool: language. As I am much older than you (74) and the scope of my work much wider, I hoped that one day a letter from you will flutter on my desk. Now, the article in the Herald of 17 April 71 reminds me to write to you.

We have much in common, first and foremost (and may God bless him) our common friend Doug, (Dr. Douglas Nixon Everingham) the untiring champion of all lost causes in language improvement, the man who has given me courage more than I ever deserve. The man who has written many articles and letters about me and my work, which are all preserved in my semantography series, already in a number of university libraries, and in more to go soon.

Furthermore, we both are patentmen. You are a patent examiner, I was chief of a large patent department in Europe and have conducted for my firm hundreds of patent litigations in European countries with great success. Without modesty I claim to have more practical experience in the patent field than many an Australia patent attorney who can only collect fees for patents which are not worth the paper they are printed on. The trouble is the catastrehic delays in getting a patent (up to 4 years) in most countries, and the worst trouble, you need a fortune to use a patent as an attack and you need a larger fortune to defend it (you usually fail in this). I have attacked a whole industry in Australia which used my patent and used all sorts of well-known tricks, especially false witness for prior art, to fob me off. I took them to the High Court of Australia, but showed them first that I have seen through all their nefarious practices. They

settled immediately.

Lastly, we both work on language improvement. And I am writing to you not to start a correspondence (this is my first and last letter) but because I think your endeavours are worthy to be preserved in my semantography series which deals with all those lonely looneys who think they can improve language. So, I am going to attack you with all vigour in order to raise your ire and to answer me in a letter which too will go into the semantography series of which I have already over 350 issues. You must agree to waive your copyright for your answer, as otherwise I would only be able to give the reader the gist of your answer. So here, we go.

This second page is being written one month later, and I realise I shall never finish it (my desk is swamped with correspondence and creative writing) unless I resort to some telegraphic style in writing to you. So here is the gist of my experiences of 29 years during which time I have written over 10,000 letters to the men who direct education and who matter in language. And here is my "Give up hope" advice.

1. Give up hope that newspaper articles will get you anywhere. Instead, kick into the pants every hackwriter who approaches you for a story. They adhere to the dictum. "Odd news is good news," if they have no killing to report. Then the next best thing is to write an article about a crank - meaning you. Look at that bastard (from blabla). He puts you as a crank right into the title of his article: WANTS TO BERY DED SPELLING... Every newspaper reader knows what is coming: the story of a crank.
2. Give up hope that private individuals will help in bringing about your reform. Look at Doug. He wants to help you, and consequently he writes in letters to ministers some words of your reform as for instance "meny" for many. Then at the bottom of the letter he writes SRL. Nobody knows what SRL means, but everybody realises that the Right Honourable Member for Capricornia is a crank and a crackpot. Stop using kind people to help you. You are only ruining their reputation. They are then not being taken seriously, thanks to you. Damn it!
3. Give up hope that you will ever convince the men who direct education that they should reform spelling. They won't. You write that you are writing to fight "hundreds of years of conservatism". If you only had a smattering of semantography you would not use such a word conservatism, as this is an abstract notion. In semantography you must adhere to the natural word order: physical thing acts on another physical thing. You are the first physical thing, a man [^] but conservatism is no physical thing. You must state WHOM you are fighting, and WHOM means human beings, notably men. Then who of these men you are fighting is conservative? The men in the streets or the men in the chairs of universities? The chairmen or the charwomen? Why don't you attack them for their horrible "conservatism" in preventing every improvement? Why do you write that you have sent pamphlets to "influential people". Who are they? Your hackwriter states that they are newspaper editors, the society of authors, the officers of the printing union, the journalist association etc. Excuse the dreadful metaphor, but "you are barking up wrong trees." The real scoundrels who are conservative are in the chairs of universities and schools. They prevent improvements in language, and they have done so for hundreds of years.
4. Give up hope from men who can't do anything. Instead start attacking the men who can do everything you want them to do: the teachers and professors of that catastrophic jungle called the English language. What are you afraid of? I'll tell you. They are all public servants, and you too are a public servant. You are afraid of your livelihood, that's what you are afraid of. I could fill a dozen teaching jobs at universities in chemistry, physics, language, logic, etc. Instead I prefer to be my own master and independent of them.
5. I could go on, and on, and on. I could tell you that 10 years from RS1 to RS2 to RS3 is ridiculous. I could tell you that even if the dream of yours has come true and all English speaking countries have adopted completely your spelling reform, and all books and newspapers are using it - then within twenty years or earlier Babel in spelling and pronunciation will set in. You know very well that language and pronunciation change from day to day. Within the same family, the father, the mother, the toothless grandfather and the children speak in different pronunciations. Within 20 years Australia, Canada and America, and Great Britain, etc. would have developed different pronunciations to your spelling. Look at the ideal spelling country, Spain (according to G.B. Shaw). Their spelling is perfect and yet different provinces pronounce their words differently. NOW READ THE PAGES OF MY LAST BOOK, AND RETURN THEM TO ME WITH YOUR ANSWER. I am your friend.

C.K. Bliss

May 20, 1971

Dear Mr. Bliss,

1. Your jaundiced imagination weaves fantasies of non-existent persecution. Mr. Dale's article in the Sydney Morning Herald is written seriously and sincerely,

without a trace of mockery, and his using SRL shows a co-operative spirit. He has presented my views quite well: in compressing a $\frac{3}{4}$ hour conversation into a short article he made a few errors, but a journalist who didn't, would be superhuman.

The eye-catching title WANTS TO BERY DED SPELLING has my full approval.

Did it herald for readers the story of a crank? The results indicate the opposite. Previous press publicity had brought 89 enquiries about SRL (by 17 April): the number has since jumped to 221 (by 20 May), and is still steadily increasing. Nearly all the increase is due to this article.

2. I don't need to hope that private individuals will help to spread SRL: they are helping. It was the positive actions by Dr. Everingham, Messrs. Elliott, Grover, and Williams, and Dr. Nye, that provided the material for the letters and articles in the press that brought the 221 enquiries. And many of the covering letters written by the enquirers show that they too are eager to help.

These are the people who perceived, fairly quickly, that SRL is a good idea. (Their perception deserves praise, and I give it unstintingly.) They in turn will bring others round to the same opinion, gradually. They in turn will win over others who will believe an idea is good if told it is good. They in turn will win over others who will do what other people are doing. And so it will go on. Thanks to press publicity, it is no longer true to say that nobody knows what SRL means: at least 0.1% of Australians do. And the response to the publicity shows that not everybody thinks that SRL supporters are cranks, that they are ruining their reputations and not being taken seriously.

3. SRL supporters aren't fighting anyone, let alone the men who direct education. They want their co-operation, and fighting them is not the way to get it. About a third of the 221 are teachers. When the number of teachers who support SRL grows and they make their views known to those who direct them, the latter will respond. No matter how progressive you are, being in a responsible position can sober you up wonderfully, and make you slow to move: this is only natural. But having the backing of those below you makes it easier.

4. Since SRL supporters have no intention of attacking teachers and professors, it is irrelevant to ask what I in particular am afraid of. Even if I did take it into my head to attack other public servants, there wouldn't be the least threat to my livelihood. It can be said that I attacked Dr. Cumpston (a prominent public servant) in a letter published by The Canberra Times on 5 March, for he stuck his neck out and I duly chopped it. I stay unscathed.

5. The facts are that English pronunciation is remarkably uniform, and that it changes only very slowly.

Look over any sample of written English and you can satisfy yourself, unless you are determined not to, that 90% or more of the words in it offer no difficulty to spelling reform. As for all but very few of the other 10% or less, one pronunciation is predominant or preferable on other grounds.

Lots of SRL spellings are found in English, written before its spelling was stabilized, that are still acceptable today. For instance I can give chapter and verse for the spelling deth used in 1530. On the strength of this I confidently predict that the pronunciations indicated by spellings such as deth, frend, sed, will also be used 450 years hence as they were 450 years ago.

Pronunciations do suffer secular change, due in large part to deceitful spellings. When we have spellings that can be trusted, changes will no longer be secular but millennial.

Why is SRL making headway when previous spelling-reform proposals have made none whatever?

It's no use proclaiming a desirable objective and giving no thought to the problem of attaining it. Yet many reformers upholding many causes do just that, and blame failure on the blindness of the powers that be instead of on their own. SRL on the other hand was arrived at only after exhaustive examination of the intrinsic, psychological, and procedural difficulties in the way of spelling reform.

If SRL succeeds, well and good. If it fails, then the practical thing to do will be to try and diagnose the causes of failure, remedy them, and try again.

Yours sincerely,

Harry Lindgren.

He did not mention with one word the pages from my book, but one day later I got them back in the envelope provided by myself - and without a word. Bingo!

As I had sent a copy of my letter to Lindgren to my friend Dr. Everingham, I got from him the following letter in which he took a stand for Lindgren and against some of my criticism.

Dear Charles,

21 May, 1971

It was good to blast Harry Lindgren but your criticisms are too sweeping.

1. The evaluation that the heading BERY DED SPELLING is to make L. a crank I doubt, since the heading uses SRL and it is accurate. To some, all reformers are cranks.

2. My using SRL makes me (you say) a crank, not taken seriously. But the Prime Minister agreed to investigate spelling reform and consult with other countries

in reply to my question on notice. My Liberal Party opponent at the last elections, Major Palmer, came to my office to agree with me and get L's book. He brought a motion favouring spelling reform before his Party's State Conference. The Victorian Teachers' Union uses SRL for its editorials. So does Modern Teaching, an educational research journal in Victoria.

3. Journalists you say are "the wrong trees to bark up!" Yet the Chicago Tribune has got the idea across that thru is another way to spell through or thro'. Other Americanisms were launched the sameway.

4. Academics you say are the real villains. Yet about a quarter of the replies to L's offer of pamphlets come from teachers. Their conservative masters are less interested, but those conservatives are also increasingly openly scorned by their students.

5. Attack is better than good humored promotion of strange new ideas. Yet your own slowly growing recognition is coming not from your attacks. If it did, it would be a violent contradiction of your finding of ethical co-operation in all creatures for a common good. But I enjoy your attacking letters, like the one on the Jewish writers. I take them only half seriously. There's good in the worst of us, even Nazis as you, found.

You have grounds to be a bitter rebel in your humane way and I do not want to change that: it gives you another point in common with me as I rebel at the selfish overpopulation, pollution, prostitution and exploitation of our environment. But I see more blindness, apathy, uninvolved indifference than ill-will behind it. I am an optimist - for SRL, Blissymbolics, and a future for man even if he has to go thru an "atomic" war first. I work to avoid it, just as you did to save a few in Buchenwald. I red about it in the Sydney Morning Herald.

Yours

Doug

I could not find the time to answer Dr. Everingham and to deal with Lindgren's spelling reform. However, on October 5, 71 the following full page article by Lindgren appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and I reprint it herewith.

S P E L L I N G R E F O R M : I S I T O V E R D U E ?

By Harry Lindgren

Of the 250 million English-speaking people who are, or ought to be literate, every single one wasted hundreds of hours on learning spelling.

Tens of millions failed to master it, a disastrous effect on all their school-work.

Millions became "writing casualties" because of it. Today 50 million school-children are suffering this waste, failure, and emotional injury.

Some opponents of reform dispute the statement above, asking for "scientific" evidence. They may as well dispute that cork floats and iron sinks.

Are there people so ludicrously sceptical? Yes. In the 1965 Britannica "Book of the Year" it is sed of 100 years of simplified spelling that they have not "provided conclusive evidence that the inconsistencies of English spelling were a major cause of reading failure". The writer must think this needs to be proved!

Other opponents stress what we may term the "cultural" values of our spelling - historical associations, etymologies. These are mainly titillations for a few thousand literary scholars, who don't know what 50 million means. In view of the harm our spelling does, those who stress its alleged cultural values are culpably thoughtless, or callous.

Some wet blankets assert that we are simply stuck with our spelling. The difficulties of changing it are too immense.

Look how different a Texan's speech is from a Scotsman's they say. Even the nearby Englishman can be nonplussed on hearing "Hoots, havers, Sandy, you're no nae waur than the lave." How can one reconcile the differences in a uniform phonetic spelling? In brief, the Scotsman ses "Hoots mon", the Irishman "Begorrah". Hence spelling cannot be reformed.

Yet all one needs to do is base the spelling of each word on its pronunciation by the majority. The difficulty has been outrageously exaggerated. Look over any printed matter - this page for instance. You will find that 90% of all words cause no difficulty whatever, and most of the rest have one pronunciation that is commonest.

The wet blankets are persistent. Every day, they now say, books are being printed in English speaking countries by the hundred, newspapers and periodicals by the thousand. A hundred million people or more are reading, writing. Words are being written and red by the billion.

This colossal word-activity must go on: if it stops, so does civilisation as we know it. While it goes on, can we possibly replace one spelling system by another? Obviously not. It would be easier to replace an aeroplane engine in mid-flight.

Moreover, since English is in worldwide use, there must first be worldwide agreement on the reformed spelling to be introduced. What hope is there of this,

when it is doubtful that agreement can be reached even in a single country? And here again pops the "Hoots mon" argument.

The reply is simple. Man progresses not by capitulating to difficulties, but by conquering them. In the nineteenth century it was often asserted that heavier-than-air flight was impossible. But the Wright brothers just went ahead and eventually flew.

These problems of spelling reform, like those of flight, are some of those we must solve. They appear frighteningly difficult, but appearances can be deceptive, and are, as will be seen.

Wouldn't it be shameful to have taken fright at a shadow?

Little Change since Johnson

How did English spelling become distinctly worse than those of most other languages?

One reason was the introduction of French into England through the Norman Conquest. Not only did it bring confusion, due to the use of two spelling systems side by side, but also it brought about rapid changes in the spoken language, not recorded in the spelling (because a writer copying an old manuscript would also copy its spelling.)

Another reason was the use of printing, brought to England by William Caxton in 1476. Since a stable spelling facilitates typesetting, the tendency was to adhere to existing spellings, already obsolete and in confusion. To make bad worse, this again was a time of relatively rapid language changes - compare Chaucer's English and Shakespeare's.

Stabilisation of spelling proceeded slowly, the factor least considered being, it would seem pronunciation! (Learner's problems would count for little in days when the main teaching aid was the birch).

The superiority of Samuel Johnson's dictionary, published in 1755, over earlier ones, made it an authority and virtually completed the process. Our spelling has hardly changed since.

But dissatisfaction with English spelling is long standing. In 1551 a certain John Hart aired it in a book on the writing of our "English Tounge." The theme was taken up in later centuries, among others by Benjamin Franklin in the eighteenth and Noah Webster in the nineteenth. Webster's dictionary went so far as to introduce several simplified spellings. Some survive in the form of the present differences between American and English spellings.

Early in the present century a group of English scholars, the Simplified Spelling Society, began to devise what they called the New Spelling. About the same time an American group, the Simpler Spelling Association devised the closely similar World English Spelling.

Both groups realised that an outlandish proposal had little chance of acceptance. Hence they followed the so-called "principle of least disturbance", depart as little as possible from the present spelling appropriating to each sound, where possible, the symbol now most commonly used to represent it.

Here is the opening sentence of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address in the New Spelling.

"Forskor and seven yeerz agoe our faadherz braut forth on this kontinent a nue naeshon, konseevd in liberti, and dedikaeted to dhe propozishon dhat aul men are kreeaeted eekwal."

Other reformed spellings were proposed. Most of them followed the principle of least disturbance, making them much of a muchness: those that did not were usually too eccentric for words. (Spelling reform, like other reforms, has more than its fair share of cranks.)

One well-known figure among reformers was Bernard Shaw. Even the Latin alphabet that we use aroused his displeasure, so he proposed 40-odd new symbols, one for each sound. He overlooked a calamitous drawback, if we did have such an alphabet learning English would be virtually impossible for more foreigners whose language uses the Latin alphabet, likewise learning those foreign languages for most English-speakers. Look at some Russian or Arabic and you'll see why. Fortunately his proposal made no progress whatever.

What progress was made for more moderate proposals such as the New Spelling? Again, none whatever. Failure was not due wholly to resistance to change, but also to giving too little thought to the actual changeover to a reformed spelling.

In recognition of the first difficulty the usual proposal was that the use of a reformed spelling should spread gradually. A steadily increasing number of publications in the reformed spelling would be printed. Ultimately, there would be none in the old spelling.

The flaw in this proposal is that it can never get started. In the transition period there must be public able to use either spelling and for economic reasons this public must be large. But reading requires the instant recognition of thousands of words an ability only slowly acquired over several years. Getting familiar with just one spelling system is enough for most of us: few would ever learn two. Publications in the reformed spelling would not be sold, so they would not be printed.

The other difficulty remains. Colonel McCormick of "The Chicago Tribune" and President Theodore Roosevelt thought of introducing a list of reformed spellings every month or so, ultimately working through the whole vocabulary.

This is another gradual process, with the difference that the reformed spellings are not isolated in publications no one reads, but embedded in one's daily reading matter. They cannot be ignored. Yet McCormick's attempt failed, except that his spelling of "thru" attained currency in America. Why did it fail?

It must be that few of us take kindly to learning a list of spellings, a hateful reminder of schoolday drudgery. Moreover we would have to be continually looking up the lists, to see whether some word was there.

The second difficulty still remains.

No wonder spelling reform made no progress whatever.

No more trouble than a misprint.

One ray of sunlight is a proposal called SRL. This is merely that we write "e" for the clear shoer vowel-sound as in "bet" and adhere otherwise to a conventional spelling.

Why does this seemingly insignificant proposal arouse opposition?

It differs from McCormick's and Roosevelt's proposal in that the reformed spellings are such as can be subsumed under a single simple rule, readily grasped and applied. A list of words is provided, but only to demonstrate the rule and give reassurance. We don't have to learn it and will hardly ever need to consult it.

Let us now look again at the "frightening" problem, the enormous and widespread use of English.

As you will have seen from this article in which SRL is used, it is quite compatible with conventional spelling. Those familiar with the latter have no difficulty due to it. Conversely for those in future years who have learned only SRL, it is no more trouble than an occasional misprint.

Thus there is no inherent reason why SRL cannot gradually spread in Australia and ultimately prevail. Other English speaking countries will meanwhile see the wisdom of following suit. This will be accelerated if, after the predominance of SRL in Australia we introduce SR2, another single simple rule that is readily grasped and applied. Later steps, SR3, and so on can be introduced yearly.

What about worldwide agreement? Seeking it now on a complete proposal would kill reform, so one makes do with SRL, quibbling about this step that is common to all but eccentric proposals, is merely obstructive.

Who is to decide on SR2, and the rest? One answer is a reform society with headquarters in Australia but worldwide membership. This is one way of obtaining international participation and agreement later on, keeping everyone happy.

Going more deeply now into future molehills of problems such as this is not practical. There is a present mountain of a problem, the problem of getting the first step going. This and this alone is the problem now being tackled.

A proposal that depends on mere merit makes slow progress at first, if any. For all that, SRL's progress has been more than expected.

SRL is used partly or throughout in "The Teachers Journal" (organ of the Victorian Teachers Union, editor K. Grover), "Coffee Talk" (formerly called "Modern Teaching", editor R. Williams), the West Australian "Humanist News" (editor W.A. Clarke), and "Blackboard" (training journalist of Hardboard's Australia Ltd., editor F.G. Powell).

Meanwhile a spelling action society whose purpose is to further its use, is being formed. The main movers are Dr. D.N. Everingham, MHR for Capricornia, and Dr. L.J.J. Nye, of the Brisbane Clinic. Its existence should speed up future progress.

As long as the delusion persisted that we could replace our spelling in one fell swoop the principle of least disturbance was essential. It has a baleful effect on reformed spellings, for they can only be wretched compromises.

One instance is the "obscure vowel" (the last vowel in "final", "jewel", "civil", "symbol", "consul"). We cannot introduce a separate symbol for it, this being too great a departure from present usage. Nor can we use only one existing letter (eg, "u") for it, the consequences being impossibly grotesque. So we must do what we do now. We must use a variety of letters, and we must learn which one is used in each case.

This is only one of the inbuilt defects of the present spelling that must be retained. They make it unlikely that a reformed spelling would reduce the effort of learning to spell to less than three-quarters.

But step-by-step reform changes the picture completely!

Our spelling can evolve step by step into one that will reduce the effort of learning it not merely to three quarters, but to less than a tenth. Reading is a gateway to knowledge and culture: Now forced only by long assault, it will be opened wide.

In a way the principle of least disturbance provided anchorage, in that the symbol

for a sound ^{was} chosen from those already in use. No longer moored (or shackled), what should we do?

We retain the Latin alphabet because it is used for more languages than any other: It is the most international. In the same spirit we should choose those symbols for sounds that are the most international. In the alternative, the symbolism of the English language would be like that of no other. This recalls the Nazi emphasis on Gothic print (Fraktur) for the language of the Herrenvolk, because it was used for no other.

It would be Insular, then, or worse, to ignore international usage. In taking it into account we have side-benefits such as foreign languages being easier for us and English for foreigners.

Some of the benefits accruing from step-by-step reform can be foreseen. Others can not, but they will show up in time. The ground is prepared for them by the launching in this country of the first step, which enables Australians to take the lead in a reform instead of playing second fiddle.

Inquiries about SRL can be directed to Harry Lindgren, 40 McKinlay Street, Narrabundah, ACT 2604.

Mr. Lindgre, a BSc of the University of WA, is an examiner of the Commonwealth Patent Office, author of "Geometric Dissection (1964) and "Spelling Reform" (Alpha Books) 1969.

T H E S R L R U L E .

RULE. The clear short vowel-sound as in bet is written e.

(NOTE. The suffix-ary and derivatives are not affected.)

SHORT LIST

Present Spelling SRL

abreast	abrest
again	agen
against	agenst
ahead	ahed
already	alredy
any	eny
ate	et
bread	bred
breadth	bredth
breakfast	brekfast
breast	brest
breath	breth
bury	bery
cleanliness	clenliness
cleanse	clense
dead	ded
deaf	def
dealt	delt
death	deth
dread	dred
dreamt	dremt
endeavour	endeavour
feather	fether
friend	friend

Present Spelling SRL

guess	gess
guest	gest
haemorrhage	hemorrhage
haemorrhoids	hemorrhoids
head-head	hed-hed
health	helth
heather	hether
heaven	heven
heavy	hevy
heifer	hefer
instead	insted
jealousy	jelousy
jeopardy	jepardy
lead (metal)	led
leant	lent
leapt	lept
leather	lether
leaven	leven
leisure	lesure
leopard	lepard
many	meny
meadow	medow
meant	ment
measure	mesure

But not forehead, since the ea does not denote a clear vowel.
Not affected in American spelling.

Likewise in all derivatives.

Bliss final note: This is a good article, but such articles have been written throughout the last centuries. I too have proposed gradual introduction of spelling (see the first paragraphs of my introduction). But I have also said that any improvement in language can only be made by the men who can make it. They are the teachers and professors of language, and the director generals and officials in the departments of education. They can introduce SR 1 tomorrow - IF THEY WANT TO DO IT. But they DON'T WANT TO DO IT. There is not one word in Lindgren's article to make the reader aware that those leading educationists are the real culprits and the real criminals. I myself would not have used such harsh words 20 years ago. But I have written about ten thousand letters to the teachers and professors of language and to the educators of mankind. Only when I realised their total apathy to make any improvement in language, only then did I become a rebel and only then did I try to make the nations realise that those educators are the real criminals and that they should be taken to court and charged with criminal neglect of their duty to the children of mankind. The End.