

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S ORDER.

In August, 1906, and after the adoption of the list of spellings recommended by the Board, by several educational boards in the larger cities of the country, and by a great many scholars and authors, President Roosevelt issued an order to the Public Printer at Washington to use the simplified form of spelling the 300 words in the Board's list in the printing of all executive documents. This order gave rise to much criticism on the part of those opposed to innovations in spelling. The President was charged with undue favoritism to what was erroneously called the "Carnegie idea," and to the efforts of The Simplified Spelling Board. To become a lexicographer and teacher, said his critics, was no part of executive duty, and to compel, by executive order, the adoption of reform spelling, even to such a limited extent as 300 words, in publications belonging to, and to be read by, the general public, was an arbitrary stretch of his power.

Extension of the President's Order.—Nothing disconcerted by criticism, rather because of it, and by further study of the merits of the simplified spelling system, the President, on August 28, 1906, extended his order regarding reformed spelling of the selected 300 words to all parts of the government, as represented through its executive heads. Thus the selected list became virtually the official dictionary of the executive staff, and the Public Printer set about the work of formulating rules for printing in accordance with the extended order.

The President Explains.—In a letter to the Public Printer, made public under date of September 2, 1906, President Roosevelt went at length into an explanation of his order and of the reasons which prompted it, by saying, in part, that most of the criticism of the proposed step toward simplified spelling had evidently been made in ignorance of what the step really is, no less than in entire ignorance of the very moderate and common-sense views as to the purposes to be achieved. He referred the Public Printer to the various circulars published by The Simplified Spelling Board, and recommended him to use them as answers to anyone asking for the reasons of his action.

No Attempt at Revolution.—The Presi-

dent continued his letter thus: "There is not the slightest intention to do anything revolutionary or to initiate any far-reaching policy. The purpose simply is for the government, instead of laying behind popular sentiment, to advance abreast of it, and, at the same time, abreast of the views of the ablest and most practical educators of our time, as well as of the most profound scholars of the stamp of Prof. Lounsbury and Prof. Skeat."

The Order Tentative.—In further explaining the nature of his order, the President said: "If the slight changes in the spelling of the 300 words proposed wholly or partially meet popular approval, then the changes will become permanent without any reference to what public officials or individual private citizens may feel; if they do not ultimately meet with popular approval they will drop, and that is all there is about it."

What the Changes Really Represent.—As to what the proposed changes really represent, the President continued: "They represent nothing in the world but a very slight extension of the unconscious movement which has made agricultural implement makers and farmers write 'plow,' instead of 'plough,' which has made most Americans write 'honor' without the somewhat absurd and superfluous 'n,' and which is even now making people write 'program,' instead of 'programme,' just as all people who speak English now write 'bat,' 'set,' 'dim,' 'sum' and 'fish,' instead of the Elizabethan 'batte,' 'sette,' 'dimme,' 'sunne' and 'fysshe,' which makes us write 'public,' 'almanac,' 'era,' 'fantasy' and 'wagon,' instead of the 'publick,' 'almanack,' 'æra,' 'phantasy' and 'waggon' of our great-fathers."

No Attack on the Language.—Again, the President said: "It is not an attack on the language of Shakespeare and Milton, because it is, in some instances, a going-back to the forms they used, and in others merely the extension of changes which, as regards other words, have taken place since their time. It is not an attempt to do anything far-reaching or sudden, or violent, or, indeed, anything very great at all." In concluding, the President said: "My plan is merely an attempt to cast what slight weight can properly be cast on the side of the popular forces which are en-