

English spelling "a disgusting mess"

TORONTO (CUP) — "Our spelling desperately needs to be simplified, reformed, and rationalized. It is inevitable that this reformation will occur. The sooner, the better."

Some of the above words might look funny, but the Simplified Spelling Society of Canada, which penned them, insists the more-phonetic spelling is simpler, more rational and will eventually be easier to understand.

The three-year-old group calls current English spelling "a disgusting mess" that has caused among other problems, an illiteracy rate of 20 per cent in Canada.

"English is by far the Western world's worst language," says the SSSC's president Ted Culp. We use "ph" when we mean "fe", "gve" when "g" would suffice and add letters that don't do anything, like the "b" in dumb."

The group wants people to simplify their spelling and has drawn up 13 rule changes as phase one of the project.

Despite the enormity of the task, Culp says it is inevitable that we will revise our spelling.

"The present system is so irrational, it will collapse like a house of cards."

Already, he notes, there have been some changes, primarily in American usage. The "our" ending is changing to "or", "re" as in centre of "er" and simplified words like "nite" and "thru" are popping up.

Culp admits there are difficulties in trying to overhaul a spelling system and says some have been overcome while others are unresolved.

People will still be able to read books written in the old way, he says, because the new system will be phased in. Eventually, the old books will wear out and ones with

revised spelling will be published.

As for learning a new system, Culp says it will be simple, especially for young people who aren't as tied to the old style.

"The more you use it the more comfortable you become with it," says the Toronto-area high school teacher. "It's becomes very difficult for me to spell in the normal way."

However, there are snags. Culp says about 16 new letters will be needed and admits there will be problems because different countries pronounce words different ways.

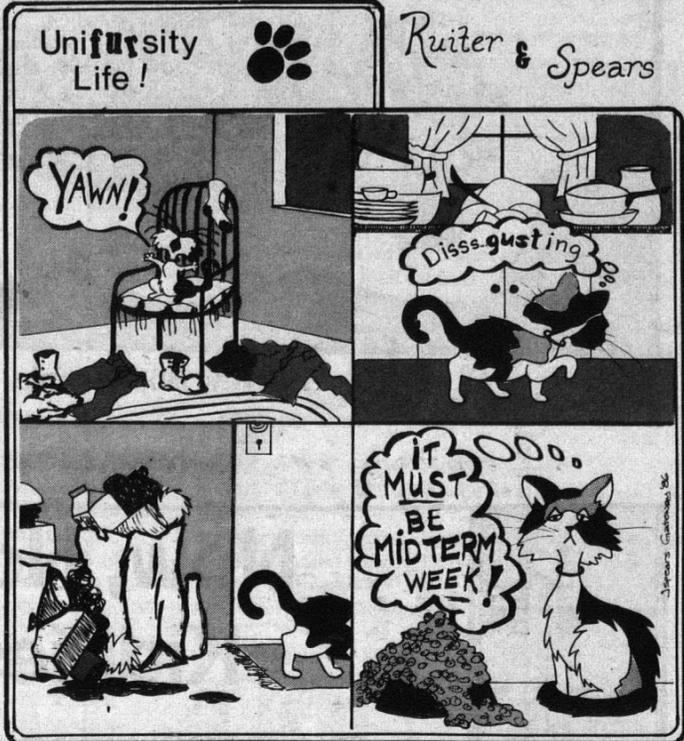
Culp won't say how many members the society has, only that they're "thinly spread" across Can-

ada. The group has plans for a dictionary and a newspaper to spread the gospel of simplified spelling.

In the past, there have been attempts in other countries to reform spelling, some more successful than others. Portuguese, Dutch, Turkish and Chinese have all undergone reforms.

A Simplified Spelling Society cropped up in Britain at the end of the last century, enlisting the support of notables like George Bernard Shaw and Lord Baden-Powell. However, the society's calls went unneeded.

Students frustrated with spelling can write to Culp at 240 Russell Hill Rd. in Toronto, M4V 2T2.



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