

Letters to the Editor

BONNEY VS. PEI

I HAVE READ with considerable interest the articles by Mario Pei and Margaret K. Bonney respectively [SR, July 21 and Sept. 15]. The issue is of such importance and the handling of her point of view by Miss Bonney of such a nature that I would like to say a word in support of Mr. Pei.

If English is to become the one international language, it is all the more important that it be precise and understandable wherever it is used. The injection of a multiplicity of variable usages, as apparently advocated by the "linguistic scientists" will tend in the opposite direction.

HERBERT ASHTON.

Washington, D. C.

MISS BONNEY is to be congratulated upon her unparalleled masterization of all those many authoritativized works on linguistivization with which she seems to have eruditionized herself with such ultimizationized perfectionization.

VICTOR HENRY.

Los Angeles, Calif.

MISS BONNEY'S ARGUMENTS seem to boil down to two main points: (1) the structural linguists cannot have had the time to do what their critics claim they have done; (2) they are misquoted, misjudged, and not as bad as their critics make them out to be.

No one in the schools paid much attention to the structural linguists and their work and theories until they were put in charge of the Government's army language program during the war. Since 1942 or thereabouts, they may not have had time to reach down into the kindergartens; but they have had time to indoctrinate a number of teachers in the universities, colleges, teachers' colleges, and even high schools, who in turn apply the structuralistic methodology in their classrooms, as witnessed by Miss Bonney's closing paragraphs.

For point No. 2, the pages of *Saturday Review* are obviously not the place to cite chapter and verse of structuralistic dogma, with precise footnotes and documentation. For this, the reader is referred to my "Voices of Man," which Harper & Row are publishing in October of 1962. Here will be found exact page references to the works of many structuralists.

MARIO PEI,

University of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

BONNEY VS. PEI. This case comes to us on a Writ of Error from the Third Edition of Webster's Unabridged International Dictionary.

The plaintiff, Mr. Pei, contends that the structural linguists are the root cause of the present *laissez-faire* attitude toward

English. Buried, unread, in the scholarly tomes was the theory that all native usage is perfect. Nurtured in the scholarly environment, this theory has now blossomed into the tendency of teachers, denigrate a standard of usage. The said linguists are bad; Mr. Pei, himself a leading linguist, fails to say that any linguists are good.

The defendant, Miss Bonney, denies that structural linguists are to blame. They could not have planted the seed since their writings were not widely read until recently and since the subject is only a newly arrived fad. The tendency to believe that in language usage what is good was in full bloom before the structural linguists applied the fertilizer. She is fond of linguists, especially the structural kind.

Then the issue must relate to linguists. Both Plaintiff and Defendant seem to be arguing, "Are the linguists to blame?" Is their concept of English correct? Mr. Pei, their foe, believes standard usage should be established as "prevailing usage among the more educated classes." Miss Bonney, on the side of the linguists, says she does not teach usage or rules. She teaches taste. One disputant encourages a tendency toward usage of the educated classes whereas the other teaches taste which, by raising the students' level, tends toward educated usage. *De minimus non curat lex*. Nor do I care for trifles—the trifling difference of opinion on English usage.

Thus, at least on two points Plaintiff and Defendant agree. Both agree that one should strive toward a desirable standard of usage. Both agree, *inter alia*, that good usage is not merely adhering to rules. The real issue, from Defendant Bonney's viewpoint, is how one is to teach language. Mr. Pei thinks the dictionary should classify usage to help those who want to follow standard usage. When he began to joust with the linguists, Miss Bonney began to fear his lance would impale some educational theorists.

They and Miss Bonney must defend a departure from the past. Years ago it was assumed that one could identify the indicia of good usage. These indicia were recorded as rules and, occasionally, memorized. The rules were learned, then applied. Following today's fad, the teacher lets the child flounder, ignorant of the rules, for a time. But she is always encouraging conduct which, in the final analysis, is compliance with the same set of rules. However, her pedagogical theory will not allow her to admit that she used the wicked old rules. If the dictionary indicates standard usage, someone may ask her to teach it. Then we are back to the rules.

Her philosophy is best revealed when she insists that we not ban the words which enable a child to express a concept. She is asking the right to guide, not coerce.

Has anyone noticed what is missing? From the title of Plaintiff Pei's brief one would expect the defendant to defend the dictionary. Instead, she defends linguists. This, too, may have its moral. She ac- 's the thesis that there are preferred t- s which are higher levels or better taste. She has a high I.Q. She can lecture on linguistics to Mr. Pei. Will her attitude serve the average teacher candidate? There are no standards. Only levels of usage exist. Taste, not rules, must prevail. But where does the average teacher get the taste? She might assume that, since all levels are good, none are to be preferred. Then she need not teach grammar or usage at all. This is the criticism with Webster III. It records but does not classify usage. It is ignoring levels or categories of usage and it gives no guide to taste. However, the dictionary is not at issue and the above remarks are *obiter dicta*. Case Dismissed.

ROSS ROGERS, C.J.

Larchmont, N.Y.

SPELLING REFORM

I WAS GREATLY interested in Upton Sinclair's letter to the President on spelling reform [SR, Aug. 18] which I read upon my return from vacation.

We have been rather quietly testing our multiple-use synthetic alphabet here in Chicago, in St. Louis, and in other schools as well as in overseas locations where English as a second language is being taught. This self-encoding letter-set permits conversion to binary codes easily and readily without expensive reading machines. The effect this will ultimately have on typesetting, telepak communication, and similar facilities is easy to contemplate. We are working with the Business Equipment Manufacturer's Association, the American Standards Association, AT&T, the International Standards Organization, as well as educators at Columbia, Harvard, and elsewhere. By expanding and standardizing on a broader symbol-sound convention, virtually all the major industrial languages can be put into the same convention with very few digraphs. For instance I can write (rewrite) Russian using only five digraphs with this forty-character set. To write English, there is a saving of from 17 to 25 per cent in the number of characters, depending on the nature of the text.

We have been at work on this for about six years, and our exempt foundation is now about three years old. As you can guess, this is quite a large undertaking, but with the mandate from unprejudiced machines, daily flights from one side of the earth to another, and telstar interlingual communication needs, there can be no let-up.

At the educational level, this is the easiest means you ever saw of taking dreariness out of our schools and upgrading our schools by a couple of years. It will be used in nursery schools, kindergartens, and first grades this winter a number of places.

JOHN R. MALONE,

Executive Director,

The Foundation for a Compatible and Consistent Alphabet.

Chicago, Ill.

AFTER READING the letters on spelling reform in the September 15 issue, I can't help wondering if anybody is going to say a word for our present and traditional spelling.

To one to whom the English language is an object of devotion as well as a means of livelihood, it seems that a protest is due. Can one really contemplate such atrocities as "thru" and "nite" without a shudder? Yet that is the sort of debasement to which we should be subject if the spelling reform enthusiasts had their way.

Our spelling is in a sense a pocket-account of the origin and history of our tongue. English is the richer and more flexible for not being phonetic. Anyone who cannot learn to spell properly cannot learn to read or write properly, either. If we must, in our craze for conformity, let us put texts of Basic English for foreigners or advertisements appealing to the semi-literate into the barbaric forms the "reformers" advocate; but let us not debase literary English to the standard of a road-sign!

MIRIAM ALLEN DE FORD.
San Francisco, Calif.

SEPTEMBER UNDERGRADUATE

SAMUEL GOULD, in "September Undergraduate: Hope vs. Exasperation" [SR, Sept. 15], says this: "I have described it (the world in which students are living) to make it clearer to those of my generation and the one before mine who are inclined to measure all thoughts and actions in terms as they themselves knew, a world in so many ways dissimilar from that today."

He has indeed made clearer those dissimilarities and their causes. To him for writing the article and to you for publishing it, my gratitude. I am sure it will help many readers. Mr. Gould has turned exasperation at the enigmatic up-coming generation into a hope which we can possibly pass on to them.

MARTHA KEEGAN.
Cincinnati, O.

I HAVE JUST FINISHED reading the article, "September Undergraduate: Hope vs. Exasperation" by Samuel B. Gould. I was so pleased by it that I had to tell someone! I graduated from Pomona College this June and am going on to Oxford in the fall. I couldn't help but be struck with the intellectual and emotional impact of what Dr. Gould had to say. His realistic view of the world and the problems and pressures which bear against people of my generation—and his hope—made this an article to cut out and reread.

I hope that it gets the wide audience among undergraduates which it deserves.

GRANT P. THOMPSON.
Arcadia, Calif.

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS and thanks for your publication of Mr. Samuel Gould's splendid article. It was most gratifying to

find such pungent, well-structured, accurate, and most of all sincerely believed statements by a former university president concerning what a beginning college student faces, and the enormous responsibility which is that very intrinsic part of the higher learning. I earnestly hope that this

article will have been read by many entering students, and that it will become a real part of their academic baggage throughout the collegiate experience and ever after. Mr. Gould speaks so directly, succinctly, and truthfully that I could not have been more stirred by his words. Those of us in academic life are extremely grateful, I am sure, for this magnificent message.

CHARLES G. THORNE, JR.,
Graduate Student,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, Pa.

WHODUNIT DEPARTMENT

ON PAGE 52 of your September 15 issue you reproduced a fine photograph. The artist is named "Carnegie Institute of Technology." This I don't believe. Who made the picture?

PHIL PALMER.
Mill Valley, Cal.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The picture of students walking in the rain was taken by Herbert K. Barnett of Carnegie Tech.*

LOGAN WILSON, President of the American Council on Education, gives me credit [SR, Aug. 18] for having described the American university as "an agglomeration of entities connected only by a common plumbing system."

I believe this phrase actually was originated by my friend Bob Hutchins, except

he referred to a "central heating system."

Perhaps Dr. Wilson's misattribution of the statement to me stems from my description of a university faculty as a group of "independent entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking!"

CLARK KERR,
President,
University of California,
Berkeley, Calif.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mr. Hutchins, president of the Fund for the Republic and former chancellor of the University of Chicago, has confessed to Saturday Review that he was, indeed, the culprit and that he wishes he had said "common plumbing system" because he likes that better than "central heating system."*

ON MAGNITUDE AND COST

YOUR CHART on page 55 in the September 15, 1962, issue showing the bigness of education in the U.S. was very impressive. Why don't you print it in poster form so schools can post it on their bulletin boards? As a sequel, why don't you develop the costs of education in a similar manner? These two in poster form could well serve to inform and to stir interest on the part of both adults and children, educators and the public, pupils and all.

RICHARD K. FOX, SR.
St. Louis, Mo.

On the Art of Cheerleading

- Cheers should be positive, not aimed at antagonizing an opponent. Care should be taken in making certain that words used in a cheer are not suggestive and do not have a connotation which would inflame an audience.

- The gestures of the cheerleaders should be synchronized, pleasing to watch, and easy to follow.

- Firm, definite movements instead of little wiggles and shakes create the positive effect necessary to effective cheerleading.

- The choice of proper wording is important. Harsh or senseless phrases are to be avoided. "Smash em," "bash em," "knock em," "skin em alive," etc., have no place in cheers. These connotations tend to inflame the audience and set the climate of rowdiness. When belligerent cheers are used a similar belligerency is often reflected in the manner of play on the court or playing field.

- Cheerleaders should never use cheers that are the least bit suggestive, or have phrases that rhyme with swear words. Cheers of this nature discourage many rooters in the stands from cooperating and encourage others to carry on with crude and inappropriate responses.

- When "booing" occurs the cheerleaders should attempt to stop it with a waving-off motion of the hands. It is important that any booing is waved off immediately. If the booing becomes louder, the cheerleaders should help to divert the crowd's attention by starting a popular yell routine. If a band is present they can be directed to "strike up" a popular tune. Immediate action is the key to the control of booing.

- Properly trained cheerleaders can be as important to the spectator behavior as the coach is to his team.

- The head cheerleader must be aware of the proper timing and length of the cheers. At no time should the cheering interfere with either the beginning of the game or resumption of play after a time-out.

—From a guide for cheerleaders prepared by the Department of Health, Physical Education, Athletics and Safety of the Washington, D. C. Public Schools.

WHAT HAPPENS IN COLLEGE

By JAMES K. FEIBLEMAN, *Chairman, Department of Philosophy, Tulane University.*

EVERY fall on every college campus you can see them—the hordes of incoming freshmen. In the excitement, the welter of new experiences and sensations, they are not aware that they are beginning the four most traumatic years of their lives.

College life is a series of shocks, some pleasant, some not, some clearly defined, some vaguely sensed. But they are shocks none the less; nothing in the experience of a high school student has prepared him for life at college.

What are the students like? They come from all sorts of backgrounds: the very wealthy, who sport Cadillacs (if cars are allowed on the campus), fur coats, impressive allowances; the poor, with the tired determined look of odd-hour jobs and too little sleep. They are tall and short, handsome and ugly, bright and dull. They come (at any fair-sized university) from all parts of the country and even from all parts of the world. Some come from fine secondary schools, some from woefully inadequate ones.

Only one thing they are certain to have in common: they are roughly in the same age group. (The older freshmen, so common under the G.I. Bill, have virtually disappeared.) Thus a similar set of biological maturations are occurring in them. They are at once callous and sensitive, baffled and in-



—Roy Stevens.

“Nothing in the experience of a high school student has prepared him for life at college.”

tuitive, mystified and understanding, bored and interested. They are full of conflicts, fresh awakenings, contradictions and oppositions. They are basically terribly confused, because they are encountering powerful influences for the first time and are preparing to meet them first and interpret them later.

Why do they come to college? I am well acquainted with the usual reasons advanced by young people to account for their presence in college. Occasionally what they say is true, if sententious. Mostly it is not—perhaps because they themselves do not know what impels them. (To see the swarm of freshmen descend on campuses in the fall is an impressive experience; a bit, I imagine, like watching the migration of the salmon.) During years of teaching I think I have seen a well-defined set of motives reappear with each class. And these (one or a combination of them) are why young people come to college.

(1) They come because it is assumed that they will come, because almost everyone they know does. After all there are 4.5 million people in college right now and there are supposed to be another 3 million more by 1970. The

herd instinct is strong in young people, and the desire to be considered a regular fellow means that if the gang goes, so do you. I've known young men to turn down a really fine school for a fourth- or fifth-rate one—to be with their friends.

Very little depends on the situation of their parents. In many less privileged groups, having a child in college is a mark of success, a public sign that the children are having a better chance than their parents ever did. The current word for this, I believe, is “status symbol.”

Among other people, people of wealth, sending children to college is a foregone conclusion: educational advantages are also cultural advantages, and people of wealth, it is thought, should look and sound like people of wealth. Many young men give no thought to the selection of a college. They have been taught to assume that they will go to the college their father, their grandfather, and, in many cases, their great-grandfather attended. reasons are usually more familial and dynastical than practical.

(2) A second and related reason why students come is to make good contacts. (There is no one more cyni-