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"WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE BASIC ENGLISH WIDELY ADOPTED ?
IF SO, WHY?"

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Would you like to see Basic English language widely adopted? If so, why?

Preface

Throughout this essay I have attempted to show that a universal language is necessary to weld man together.

Material progress is born of selfish interests and our age is nothing if not the acme of material progress. For the present man's spiritual progress has been halted by his wish for personal pleasure. If our civilization wishes to avoid the fate of the Roman Empire, we must unite, link nation with nation; and with what better chain than a universal language?

I think that of the many tongues spoken on our earth, English, with suitable alterations is the ideal language for this purpose and the wide adoption of Basic English now will clear the path for the propagation of English itself in the years to come.

For two thousand million years our earth has been wending her lonely way around the blazing sun. She was born a fiery mass of vapour. As soon followed soon she condensed and cooled and wrinkled. Then she gave birth to the first timorous creepy creature. This first tiny nodule grew and fertilized what was to develop through millions of years into the 'tree of life'.

Fifty thousand years ago, after countless ages of slow, irrevocable, evolution, primitive man first stalked through the jungle undergrowth to exercise his cunning and resourcefulness in his ceaseless search for food. But even then our hairy ancestor was king over the animals. He possessed faculties unique in the animal kingdom — free-will to determine his own life; and ability to profit and learn from experience. The bees and the ants have intricate social systems — the same system as they have always had. Each ant or bee has a specific task which it must do or die. Man can mould his own destiny and will no doubt evolve through the ages to a glorious climax.

Only for the last three thousand years has man been civilized. He has built shelters from the weather, made clothes for his body, but above all he has developed

by virtue of his inherent qualities, systematic thought. In throwing off the cloak of barbarism he revealed a rational being, who slowly mastered, among other things, his intricate vocal chords. In this way he evolved a medium for inter-communication inter-communication and understanding, which today, still definitely in the course of consummation, comprises the babel of tongues of our modern world.

The work of International Conferences is severely hampered by the necessary use of many tongues. Each speaker requires relays of interpreters to convey his meaning to all present—the wheels of State are further slowed down.

Certain industries, with very valuable educative values, such as phonographic recording, talking pictures and radio broadcasting spend extra millions on translations into the different languages of the globe.

Above all, scientific research is slowed down. Man is robbing himself of the very tools he needs to save this civilization from destruction.

Although this manifest stigma on our age may appeal to the aesthete and the pleasure-seeking traveller, it is obviously no encouragement to the better cooperation and understanding of man by himself. The brains of all nations and the creative genius of every race, must be pooled and become easily accessible common property if our civilization hopes to better itself and to outshine previous

civilisations in the glory of its achievement. The senile lethargy of the Roman Empire resulted in its collapse: it did not have the power to ward off the relentless result of luxury - idleness and decay.

But we are menaced by something far more brutal than a slow peaceful death.

Twenty five years ago barbarism broke loose from the net of social refinement restraining it. Man murdered his fellows. Poison gas, unleashed by the chemist, its use perverted by the layman, wiped out whole opposing armies. For four long years the eruption continued and then it subsided. Europe was strewn with decaying corpses. The influenza virus took hold in this admirable breeding ground and swept like a dark cloud over the world. More millions lost their lives as the result of man's folly.

No sooner had we ~~been~~ recovered from the first patched up eruption than it burst again with a new violence the results of which none can predict.

It is against these ghastly holocausts that we must turn all our energy. Who knows, that, if not this, then perhaps the next gory Armageddon will see the mutual destruction of barbarism and civilisation?

With the aid of perverted science our social structure is being rocked and blasted on its foundations. Only with the help of properly applied science

can we save our crumbling hopes. Only by using this immense source of power to its best advantage can man mould his destiny as his conscience dictates. The cause of this danger to humanity is the lack of any ties between nations. What should be the ideals of mankind are not the ideals of his respective races. The cooperation of our philosophers and scientists is prevented by there being no common tongue to unite and accelerate their individual efforts.

We need an international language of simple structure with an appeal to as many people as possible to give mankind the unity and brotherhood of a homely community.

Among the first to appreciate this fact was Dr. Zamenhoff. In 1887 he introduced as an artificial, universal language. Unfortunately it has made little progress. In 80 years it has only attracted one million pupils. In other words by the use of Esperanto only half a million people can hold intelligent conversation with half a million foreigners. Dr. Zamenhoff's language has failed lamentably to link mankind linguistically. However, it is but one of many such schemes. Brother pioneers in this venture were Volapuk and Ido; but they were also artificial and were even less successful than Esperanto. The ~~4000~~ four thousand books and hundred magazines

will go down to posterity as the only relic of a brave attempt to solve man's most pressing problem.

Another different though equally futile effort was due to Sir Richard Paget.

His 'language' was based on that used by deaf-mutes. When he was demonstrating his invention at a meeting of the Royal Institution, he gave the members a practical test. After 15 minutes' instruction they were able to read a ninety word poem recited entirely by signs. But who wants to articulate slowly with his hands to convey his meaning when nature has given him a voice and his heavier ears to make communication easy?

All manufactured languages, whether audible or visual, having no idiom, no sentimental or traditional ties can only become the medium for founding a literature after hundreds of years of constant use, experimentation, and adaption.

If a language is introduced with a bang the people it was intended for will recoil into the safety of their native tongue and hide from the intruder. But if the change is made, imperceptibly at first and then gradually accelerated all will be smooth, and the people, instead of drawing back, will stretch out to catch the innovation held tantalizingly in front of their noses.

There were the chief faults in common with Esperanto, Volapuk, and Ido. They were all

synthesized out of their inventor's ingenuity and were thrown at the people before they knew what was happening.

For our International Language we should concentrate on the slow systematic diffusion throughout the world of an existing tongue rather than the propagation of a synthetic language. &

All languages would not be suitable for such a task. For example the orientals' speech is far too complicated and picturesque for condensation into anything simpler.

The only languages which need be considered are French, Spanish, Italian, German and English. They are all commonly spoken by quite influential Nations and all might be ~~suitable~~^{acceptable}, with suitable modifications as a secondary medium for conversation and writing.

But without very close examination of the finer details German, French, and Italian can be rejected on the grounds of geographical limits. Outside of their mother countries these languages are little used and are not of much importance. Although Spanish is spoken a great deal in Latin America it is of little importance politically, scientifically, or commercially.

Therefore by perfectly justifiable elimination we are left with English, which includes of course American. Perhaps its greatest claim to ^{the} throne of universal ^{use} is that, already, in its present form, it is the national language of some six hundred million

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people comprising one third of the total population of the world.

Before this war started, English was taught in at least twelve European countries as a compulsory subject. For the greater part of this century it has been the 'lingua franca' throughout the East.

British and American merchant ships, carrying on their enormous trade with every country in the world together with the influence of the far-flung colonies and dominions comprising the British Commonwealth of Nations have proved themselves an invaluable means for the dissemination of English throughout all the races of mankind.

The British are renowned for their honesty and fair-dealing, and so great is their influence in world trade that it is a definite advantage for any foreigner to be able to speak English.

As well as having these merits English, even in its 'standard' form, is quite easy to learn. There are very few grammatical or gender complications to be coped with. In fact the only stumbling ~~stone~~^{block} for a learner is the vast vocabulary, and as this is derived from every conceivable ~~source~~ source there are certain inconsistencies which make spelling and pronunciation rather difficult.

In the early twenties of this century C.H. Ogden — Editor of the International Library of Philosophy, Psychology,

and Scientific method — and his collaborators began to develop a simple language which, without ceasing to be English, smoothed out its incongruities and simplified its vocabulary. This he called Basic English.

The fifty thousand words of Everyday English have been condensed to 850 — the number which can ^{easily} be printed on one side of a sheet of notepaper. These 850 words are the essential minimum for intelligent conversation and are divided into three classes — Names of things, Qualifiers and their opposites, and operators. But the panoptic quality of Basic seems its greatest practical attraction.

It has never been claimed that Basic English as an auxiliary language would have any cultural or literary qualities. It has been devised as a practical link between nation and nation, as a compromise between the inadequacy of 'pidgin' English and the rich verbal expression of Standard English.

Expression in Basic must be clear and precise. No one believed that it could reproduce the brilliance of Shaw or the finer subtleties of Swift, but probably a foreigner, given translations of these great writers, would appreciate them almost to the ~~full~~ full.

Recently an attempt has been ^{made} to write the Bible in Basic. Although it proved quite successful in the clarity and

bluntness of its translation, it failed, as fail it must, to preserve the music, balance, and simple dignity of this example of English in its finest form.

The simple, though profound, statement: 'Be still and know that I am God' cannot be expressed with such humble expectancy in Basic, because that little word 'still' has been replaced by 'quiet' in the Basic vocabulary.

Basic English was not made by its driving spirit C.K. Ogden to cope with masterpieces of literature and it should not be forced to do it by others.

Great thoughts can be expressed in simple words and exact thoughts can be expressed more accurately. In this latter quality lies the value of Basic, not as a literary language, but as an International Scientific and Commercial Language.

The original 850 are quite adequate for the casual traveller, but for the requirements of commerce and science additional lists of technical nouns are necessary. But as these require no grammatical alterations the matter of learning fifty more words would be no difficulty for the conventional scientist or business man.

When this war wears itself out, when Europe, battered and torn by British bombs, strangled by Hitler's armies, rises in bloody revolution, then will Britain and America have to heal the wounds

of the Old World. It will certainly be a gigantic task but with the illimitable resources of North America at their disposal perhaps, together, they will slowly right the wrongs of this hectic 20th century. With the British and American navies patrolling the seven seas let us sincerely hope that a new World Order will emerge and that never again will the brutal steel of dictatorship, or jealousy between nations, menace the peaceful life of a freedom-loving civilization.

With America and Britain partners in a new world order, then surely, will English gradually become the Universal Language. With its way paved by the wide adoption of Basic English, within a few generations, Standard English itself will replace its younger brother.

Speech is the means to an end. The means to form the brotherhood of man, to reunite the races of his species after centuries of progressive alienation, to give mankind confidence in the knowledge that his ideals are spiritual and not selfish or material.

The progress of man through the ages can very well be judged by the development of his speech.

The great civilization of the ancient Greeks produced finer orators and philosophers than the world has ever seen. They had a common language, common ideals and

they had a wonderful civilization.

But Greece fell to the heathen's sword and Roman culture took her place.

By compulsion Latin became the world language, but it never replaced the vernacular of the conquered countries. So, the Roman Empire, lulled by a sense of false security, toppled over, and the once subject nations picked themselves out of the ruins to start squabbling ~~on~~ and fighting.

Ever since that day man has been multiplying and dividing in an asexual fashion. Colonies have sprung up here and there separated by the sea. New languages arose. ~~to~~ Man's ideals became split and selfish.

And now for the first time in history science has given us the means of drawing together, of becoming one family. The oceans and the stratosphere have been conquered. Nations are once more being enticed to cooperate, but they are also being repelled by national pride and international jealousy.

Science can remove this final barrier to man's progress. The world of science is, at least, partially linked by the 'language' of Mathematics.

Surely mankind can be united by a language, by a communal means of expression which will help to forget his selfish wants and to remember that his very existence depends on his unity, now.

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