FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

RELEASE: AUGUST 31, 1984

The Sad State of Spelling

"Mastery learning" is a term which has become dear to the the hearts of educators in the last couple of years. With this system, pupils must thoroughly "master" one task or subject before proceeding to another. However, the typed transcripts from the recent U.S. Department of Education Hearings on the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment dramatically reveal one essential skill which has not been mastered.

The growing inability of American children and adults to spell became painfully evident, not by the testimony of parents, teachers, or concerned citizens, but from the official typed transcript of these seven Hearings held in March. The large number of atrocious spelling errors found throughout the transcripts are cause for education alarm.

The U.S. Department of Education hired a different court reporter to record and transcribe the approximately seven hours of testimony in each of the seven cities. This resulted in 1,300 pages of typed testimony. Court reporters are the most highly paid stenographers because they are considered to be the most experienced and accurate.

The following sampling of some of the misspelled words in the official record of the Department of Education Hearings is a stunning commentary on the failure of the schools to teach pupils to spell. These spelling errors were made by the stenographers, not by the witnesses, since all the testimony was taken down orally. We did not include words that could be considered to be mere typing mistakes.

Able (Cain's brother), abstinance, addage, ammendment, angeles, arbiture, arithematic, attornies, authoritariun, autonamous, Bethleham, biase, birage, blatently.

Cognative, concensus, conondrome, contimum, contoled, contraversial, courrier, criterian, cirriculum, water over the damn, debator, defenseible, desparate, deterrant, devestate, devestation, dilemna, disasterous, dispell, dissention, divulsion, domaine.

Eletist, eliteism, Encyclopedia Brittanica, enteries, errode, espirit de corps, establishement, estensive, experimantal, experimentor, falacy, frautulent, genicide,

harrassment, hassale, Senator Orin Hatch, hollocaust, inaugerated, illigetimacy, influencial, ladys, lavishilly, liason, librarys, ligitimate, Longefellow.

Monstor, necessarey, nineth, nongermaine, observors, penetentiaries, perpertrators, perserverance, picinic, portested, psycologists, publically, puzzeled, questionaire.

Realations, refered, President Regan, regemented, regimin, relinquested, resistence, scandelous, seculur, silouettes, sponsered, squeel, steming, submisive, terrony (tyranny), theareted, thearetical, Unbudsmen, uncontrovertable, varios, veneral, violant, voccabulary.

Don't laugh -- this isn't funny. Anger is a more appropriate response. The Department of Education transcripts conclusively prove that, when the schools stopped teaching first-graders how to read by the phonics method and instead filled up school hours with the exercises in "attitudes" and "feelings," spelling was one of the Basics which fell between the cracks.

Students introduced to the disastrous Dick and Jane "look say" readers 20-30 years ago are now working adults who can't spell. Instead of learning to read by the phonetic method, students have learned a "whole word attack" approach.

If words are perceived as a hostile enemy when one hasn't first learned the letters and sounds, students must find other means to "attack" them. This is typically done by using the "sight-word" method ~~with~~ by which students learn and memorize whole words and sentences as groups of symbols, rather than as sounds. The pupils simply are not taught the individual letters or sounds. This is just the reverse of the natural order of learning.

The answer to this horrendous problem is <u>not</u> more money, as Walter Mondale suggests. Any politician or elected official who promises to improve education by spending more tax dollars is a fraud. Education problems are not financial.

Spelling will only be improved when those in charge of elementary education return true phonics to the first grade. Students have a <u>right</u> to learn how to read, write, and spell the English language, and parents, educators, and elected officials have the responsibility to see that they get their right to read.