The Two-Party System

The Democratic thunderbolts
Assail Republicans as dolts.
The GOP, in its conclaves,
Belabor Democrats as knaves.
It is my prayer, my hope, my song
That both parties are dead wrong.
But sometimes I wake up at night
Chilled by the thought both might be right.

Bradley L. Morison

Present Participles

In its section on spelling (page 24a, paragraph 1.7), Webster's Third indicates that the silent terminal E of some verbs remains in their present participles to distinguish them from the corresponding forms of other verbs. For example:

dye, dyeing in contrast to die, dying
sing, singeing sing, singing
spring, springeing spring, springing
stinge, stingeing sting, stinging
swinge, swingeing swing, swinging
toe, toeing to (and fro), toing (and froing)
visé, viséing vise, vising

All these present participial forms can be found in Webster's Third. Another specimen which can be added to the list, but which isn't explicitly sanctioned by Webster's Third, is résuméing (in contrast to resuming). Though résumé is shown as a verb in Webster's Third, only Webster's Second spells out the present participle. Are there any other verbs where a terminal E is retained by the present participle to distinguish it from the present participle of some other verb?

However, the retention of a terminal E to facilitate distinction be-
tween different verbs does not explain why there are some verbs with two spellings of their present participles -- one spelling with the E dropped before adding -ING, and the other retaining the E and having an -EING ending. For example, the following five specimens are all taken from Webster's Third. Any additions or comments?

| age, ageing & aging | queue, queuing & queueing |
| blue, bluing & blueing | true, trueing & truing |
| cue, cuing & cuing |

An additional specimen, taken from outside Webster's Third, is routeing and routing. The first spelling is shown only in the appendix of the 1968 printing of The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Does this represent some sort of an attempt to introduce the idea that the first spelling comes from route and the second from rout? Anyway, the spelling routeing has disappeared from the most recent edition of the SOED.

Irritating Questions

Ever since a fisherman friend of ours remarked to us how irritated he would become when asked "Have you caught anything?", we have kept a mental list of the most irritating questions it is possible to ask this or that sort of person, the necessary ingredients being tactlessness and ingenuousness. Readers who delight in irritating will doubtless be able to add to the score of examples here.

Successful actor: What are you doing now?
Progressive rock band: Do you know any old Beatles stuff?
Bank employee: Any free samples?
Critic: What did you really think of it?
Cartoonist: Who supplies your ideas?
Chiropodist: Shall I take off my shoes?
Girl named Juliet: Where's Romeo?
Girl named Jane: Where's Tarzan?
Twin: Are you identical?
Archaeologist: Have you found anything?
Gordon Bleu cook: Do you have any salt?
Painter: What's that supposed to be?
Poet (while reading): Is that the end?
Bibliophile: Have you read all those books?
Havana cigar smoker: Have you got another one of those?
Clothes-conscious man: Is that jacket part of a suit?
Mother with a pram: Is it a boy or a girl?
Successful author: Do you write under your own name?
Child: Haven't you grown?

A New Dictionary

The sixth edition of The Concise Oxford Dictionary (the COD) was published in Britain in July this year. The COD is a dictionary of some 74,000 vocabulary items listed under 40,000 main entries. In size, it

The COD is an important dictionary in Britain for it sells something like 300,000 copies a year; and it is widely used for puzzles and competitions, along with the slightly superior Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary. A fairly casual perusal of the new dictionary reveals many words which do not appear in other major dictionaries. For example, below are 20 words taken from the COD, none of which is in Webster's Third, its addenda, Webster's latest collegiate, and The Random House Dictionary. This isn't to say that these words cannot be found in other dictionaries — they can. It just indicates that various words which were not in the unabridged dictionaries of 10 or 15 years ago, and a collegiate dictionary of only three years ago, can be found in the most recent sub-collegiate dictionary, the COD.

antivivisectionism / breathalyse / cack-handed / dy / evolue / felahel / gutser / Huzoor / kerfuffle / litter-lout / nuke / oh-oh / Pelmanize / ponggeng / samizdat / transvest / underachieve / verkrampte / weepie / yarmulka

opposition to vivisection
to carry out a measurement of the amount of alcohol in breath
clumsy
sediment rich in organic matter, deposited in unproductive lakes
an African with European education or modes of thought
a flat bread roll stuffed with seasoned vegetables
a heavy fall
a title used by Indians in respectful address
fuss, commotion
a person who carelessly discards refuse
a nuclear bomb
an interjection expressing disappointment
to learn by Pelmanism
popular dancing and singing in Malaysia
a system of clandestine publication of barred literature in the USSR
to clothe in other garments, especially those of the other sex
to do less than was expected
reactionary
a sentimental or mournful film
a skull-cap worn by Jewish men

The first edition of the COD appeared in 1911 (with subsequent editions in 1929, 1934, 1951 and 1964) while its mighty parent, The Oxford English Dictionary (the OED), was, somewhat confusingly, still not born. All dictionaries take longer than their compilers plan. The OED was meant to take 10 years; it appeared in 1928 after a heroic gestation of nearly half a century. A supplement appeared in 1933. In 1957, a New Zealander, Robert Burchfield, was appointed by the publishers to prepare a new supplement. He planned to publish in 1967, but in the upshot produced only the first third, A-G, in 1972, at which point his revised plan was that the plan has a second, H-N, and then perhaps a third. All is far from certain yet.

Plain Words

Several new Plain Words (by S. T. Fraser) are included in this edition of the dictionary.

"The attic is a part of a house above the ground floor. " The attic is a part of the house, but not part of the ground floor."

He suggests

"Neither a hero nor a villain, he was what they called half-breed."

Much clearer

Fraser quoted from Bartlett's "Famous Quotations" observing that it still seems a trifle odd to unravel any of them. He had said:

"To reduce these matters and to make them more manageable, we need a good dictionary."

Bartlett's "Unsolved Problem"

In May 1912, a considerable number of Less Familiar Words were rendered obsolete by the introduction of the new Oxford English Dictionary. Such a change is to be expected, and makes for a simpler English.
revised plan allowed for H-P in 1975 and Q-Z in 1977. Now, however, the plan has been changed again; there will be four volumes, and the second, H-N, appeared this autumn, though we haven't seen a copy of it yet.

Plain Words

Several readers are probably familiar with The Complete Plain Words (by Sir Ernest Gowers, revised by Sir Bruce Fraser), the intention of which is to help people to choose and arrange words in conveying their ideas to others. While it was originally intended to improve official written English, it has had an impact over the past 28 years (in its various editions) which has not been limited to officialdom or to Great Britain. The book is admirable, very readable and very cheap. Readers who don't know the book are recommended to track down a copy of it.

Fraser quotes the following as a piece of badly written English, confused and almost totally uncommunicative:

"The attitude of each, that he was not required to inform himself of, and his lack of interest in, the measures taken by the other under the provisions of plans then in effect, demonstrated on the part of each lack of appreciation of the responsibilities invested in them, and inherent in their positions."

He suggests that it could be translated as:

"Neither took any interest in the other's plans, or even found out what they were. This shows that they did not appreciate the responsibilities of their positions."

Much clearer, isn't it?

Fraser quotes a second example of badly written English, commenting that it seems untranslatable to him. Perhaps readers would care to unravel any meaning that there might be in it and then put it into clear, simple English.

"To reduce the risk of war and establish conditions of lasting peace requires the closer co-ordination in the employment of their joint resources to underpin these countries' economics in such a manner as to permit the full maintenance of their social and material standards as well as to adequate development of the necessary measures."

Bartlett's Unfamiliar Quotations

In May 1976, Faith Eckler entitled one of her kickshaws "Bartlett's Less-Familiar Quotations", wherein a number of famous quotations were rendered into the English language of today. Sitting on our bookshelves, not only is there a copy of Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, there is also a volume entitled Bartlett's Unfamiliar Quotations (by
Leonard Louis Levinson). This book is a compilation of unusual items, of pointed, quaint, tongue-in-cheek comments that reflect life and living today, of twisted sayings, polluted proverbs and offbeat wisecracks. Just as Faith treated readers to some less-familiar quotations, we shall treat them to some unfamiliar ones from this particular volume. Here is a score for your amusement. You might even try to impress people with them, passing them off as your own witty inventions!

The best reason for not being President is that you have to shave twice a day (Adlai Stevenson)
The White House: the finest prison in the world (Harry S Truman)
Familiarity breeds contempt -- and children (Mark Twain)
If words were invented to conceal thought, newspapers are a great improvement on a bad invention (Henry D. Thoreau)
If God had meant for people to go nude, they would have been born that way (ad in "The Village Voice")
Whenever you hear the word SAVE, it is usually the beginning of an advertisement designed to make you spend money (Renee Pierre-Gosset)
A kiss that speaks volumes is seldom a first edition (Clare Whiting)
Avoid cliches like the plague (Anon.)
The best, cheapest oral contraceptive: NO! (Anon.)
When in doubt, tell the truth (Mark Twain)
If soldiers were asked to do in battle what the average motorist does on weekends for fun, the officer in charge would be court-martialed for brutality (Malcolm Muggeridge)
To double your salary, Xerox your paycheck (Pat O’Haire)
Of all sexual aberrations, perhaps the most peculiar is chastity (Remy de Gourmont)
Eros: spelled backwards gives you an idea of how it affects beginners (Anon.)
My interest is in the future, because I am going to spend the rest of my life there (Charles Kettering)
A few weeks ago, Nixon said he was having fun as President, for "fun is the opportunity to do things you couldn’t do if you were not President" (Ted Lewis)
It’s hard to know exactly when one generation ends and the next one begins. But it’s somewhere around nine o’clock at night (Charles Fying)
If the art of conversation stood a little higher, we would have a lower birthrate (Stanislaw J. Lec)
Bureaucracy is based on a willingness either to pass the buck or spend it (Mrs. Henry J. Serwat)
Lack of money is the root of all evil (George Bernard Shaw)

There are many groups of related words which have similar or overlapping definitions but which are not always exact synonyms. For example, can you distinguish between a ballooner and a balloonist? No? Well, the first is a type of sail, and the second is a person who ascends in a balloon. Now try the following 12 groups of words, all of which are nouns. Can you distinguish between the words in each group?

Some of these groups are familiar, others are academic, and still others are colloquial.

applying alcohol
alcohol to motivational disguising
disguising excitation inhalation
inhalation parachuting paralyzing parachuting
paralyzing racecar racing railroad racing
railroad racing running running
tingling tingling tingling

To save space, each group is presented in a precise department.

Slogans Run

Previous

The word is

Britain has

slogans over

moved by (
or slogans

certain for

Next to

CHELS
SOUTH
STENH

The name of

American
city

The origin of

In the early

gave rise to

RULE - OK

further streamlined and
carried to

gave rise to

The OK slogan

The OK slang

tioned by the
Some of the words are exact synonyms -- which ones?

- academe, academic, academician, academist
- applicant, applicator, applier, appliquer
- alcoholic, alcoholist
- collaborateur, collaborationist, collaborator
- disguisal, disguise, disguise, disguise
- excitant, exciter, excitor
- inhalator, inhaler
- parliamentarian, parliamenteer, parliamentener, parliament man
- parachuter, parachutist
- racist, racialist
- Scot, Scotchman, Scotsman, Scottie, Scottishman
- thingum, thingumabob, thingumajig, thingummy

To save space, we leave the reader to check Webster's Third for the precise definitions of these 38 items.

Slogans Rule - OK

Previous issues of Word Ways have carried items about OK, a term which never fails to arouse interest (see, for example, Ralph Beaman's article in the May 1975 issue and Colloquy in the August 1975 issue). Hopefully, readers will be interested in this additional material on OK.

The walls and other flat surfaces in many public areas in Great Britain have been "decorated" with simple-minded aerosol-sprayed slogans over the past decade or so. Most are ephemeral, being removed by officialdom, only to be replaced by some new catchphrases or slogans. Many of the British slogans, though, have displayed a certain format, which will be discussed here.

Next to any British football ground can be found slogans such as:

CHELSEA RULES - OK
SOUTHAMPTON RULES - OK
STENHOUSEMUIR RULES - OK

The name of any football team can be inserted as the first word (an American equivalent would be DALLAS COWBOYS RULE - OK).

The origin of this OK format can be traced to Glasgow, Scotland. In the early 1960s there was a street gang called the Tongs, and they gave rise to what was probably the first of these slogans: TONGS RULE - OK. This was seen frequently around Glasgow in 1964. As further street gangs appeared in Scottish cities, similar slogans appeared with different gang names in them. The OK as a slogan suffix conveyed the notion of "is that understood -- and if not, what are you going to do about it?" So, the OK was very much aggressive in tone. The OK slogans only very rarely end with a question mark; an exclamation mark is commoner. A similar early OK slogan appeared in Northern Ireland, where IRA RULES - OK was often seen in areas controlled by the Irish Republican Army.
By extension, OK can be used as a suffix for just about any slogan, aggressive or otherwise. The following are just a few of those we've seen:

CONSERVATIVE RULE - OK (a straightforward reference to Britain's Conservative party)

CANADA DRY RULES - OK (the soft drinks from Canada Dry built an advertising campaign round this in May 1976)

QUEENSBERRY RULES - OK (seen on the wall of a bar, this is an amusing reference to the Marquis of Queensberry rules which constitute a fair code of practice in boxing)

7UP RULES - OK (the reply to Canada Dry from a rival firm)

THE QUEEN RULES - OK (a headline from a newspaper in April 1976 just in case any superpatriots were getting irked by the profusion of rules slogans)

GEORGE DAVIS IS INNOCENT - OK (Davis was a wrongly-imprisoned Londoner, recently released after a widespread public campaign to free him)

GEORGE DAVIS IS FREE - OK (seen after Davis' release from prison in July 1976)

OK CARS ARE CHEAPER - OK (a headline from a newspaper in February 1976, where the first OK stands for OljeKonsumterbas, an oil consumers cooperative open to all car and house owners in Sweden. Cars run on their oil are cheaper to run than cars run on other oils)

Of course, the punsters and the wordsmiths are taking over, and the OK slogan as a gang slogan and a football fan's slogan seems to be on the wane. Amusing examples such as the following can be seen:

HEISENBERG PROBABLY RULES - OK (this is a reference to Werner Heisenberg, a German physicist who stated the uncertainty principle of modern physics, which is much concerned with probabilities)

DYSLEXIA RULES - KO (T-shirts of this neat volte face slogan have been reported)

Would readers care to invent some slogans of their own?

Writing on the Wall

There must be a Raisin
For the Currant
Graffiti craze
Or are they just Walnuts?

A Webster's Second Quiz

Webster's Second Edition contains a very large number of obsolete words, most of which were dropped when the Third Edition was published. Even this little quiz of the words marked as obsolete, you distinguishing realive, rerebaptist, recamera, re-redub, re-re-enables re-reforce, re-reglemen re-reigner, re-rejerk, re-reknow, re-red, re-redesign, re-redraft, re-redoubt.

Miscellaneous

Using the Webster's Second Edition, through the noun SCOTSMEN'S percoid food (percoid meant up), what many words have been dropped from the plural of that word? (Ralph, the editor, is left? The term BITCHES. How many words end down to just a quite different son of a bit... SON OF A BIT... just treating the no dictionary
But any slogan, those we've renee to nada Dry Jar, this is:rry rules ilval firm lper in April iked by the strongly-im. deepread pub-
release from newspaper in eKonsumen- car and are cheaper to

Thinking over, and than seems to be
ence to Wer-
the uncertainty hearned with
face slogan

lashed. Even many nonobsolete words were dropped from the Third Edition, through being too rare, too esoteric or too something. In this little quiz are 20 pairs of words from the Second Edition -- none of the words appears in the Third Edition. One word of each pair is marked as obsolete in the Second Edition; the other word isn't. Can you distinguish between the obsolete words and the nonobsolete ones?

- realive, reasonal
- relishsome, relishy
- rebaptist, rebubble
- remembrancership, remembrative
- reecera, reehisel
- renewment, renovel
- re- enablement, re- enrollment
- requiteful, requitement
- reforee, refrenzy
- reremain, rerental
- regle menta tion, regnicide
- rejerk, rejuvenesce
- reknow, reknowledge
- revelant, revelous

Miscellaneous Musings

Using the standard two-letter abbreviations for the 50 state names (which were listed in the May 1976 Word Ways), what is the longest nonrepeating chain of overlapping abbreviations? The best that we've been able to come up with is COHINMNCTNVAKSCA RIA LA Z. Can anyone improve on that?

Webster's Third offers the following as one of the definitions of the noun SCOTSMAN: "a brilliantly colored southern African marine percoid food fish". Apart from the fact that we didn't know what percoid meant until we looked it up (and still didn't after we'd looked it up), what makes SCOTSMAN interesting is that the plural is not SCOTSMEN or even SCOTSMANS, but SCOTSMAN. There can't be many words ending in -MAN which don't change to either -MANS or -MEN (Ralph Beaman noted in the February 1971 Word Ways that the plural of MAN, the name of an early tribe in South China and Vietnam, is MAN). If anyone knows of another-MAN plural, send it to the editor.

The American Thesaurus of Slang lists the word DEMUBLICAN as a term for a Democrat-Republican. Can you transdelete that word down to just one letter? That is, can you successively delete one letter and rearrange the remaining letters to make a word until only one letter is left?

The term "moom pictures" occurs in Webster's Third. Where?

Dictionaries give the plural of SON OF A BITCH as SONS OF BITCHES. However, we distinctly recall Jack Nicholson in the film "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" referring to SON OF A BITCH'S, a quite different plural form. The transition is achieved by turning SON OF A BITCH into the solidly spelled SONOFABITCH, and then just treating that as a noun which is pluralized by the addition of -ES. No dictionary lists SONOFABITCH, though. The nearest that we
could find to it is SON-OF-A-BITCH, listed in all three volumes of Mencken's The American Language.

Webster's Third lists the verb FLEA (to rid of fleas). The past participle is not explicitly shown, but is implied to be FLEAED. However, the verb DEFLEA (to rid of fleas) has the past participle explicitly shown, DEFLEAED. Question: why does FLEA add -ED and DEFLEA add just -D? Are there any other verb oddities like this one?

CHAIRPERSON is a word which has appeared in the past few years in an attempt to remove the distinction between CHAIRMAN, CHAIRWOMAN and CHAIRLADY. Only one dictionary known to us, A Dictionary of New English, lists the word. Other -PERSON words are appearing, too, as the attempts to deny a person's sex are spreading. There are only a few -PERSON words in the unabridged Webster's, but time will probably change that. (Or do we mean that Time magazine will probably change that?) The Second Edition lists NONPERSON and SUPERPERSON, but without definitions; and it lists SALESPERSON as "one whose occupation is selling merchandise" and TRADESPERSON as "tradesman". Hmm! The Third Edition only lists SALESPERSON, having dropped the other three from the main body of the dictionary. However, the Third's addenda lists NON-PERSON, "a person who is regarded as nonexistent!", and UNPERSON, "an individual who is removed from memory". Notice the hyphen in the reinstated NON-PERSON. We have seen both COMMITTEEPERSON and CONGRESSPERSON in print -- have readers seen others?

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (8th edition) contains just eight words which end in -OGY but not -LOGY. They are ANAGOGY, BOGY, DEMAGOGY, POGY, MYSTAGOGY, PEDAGOGY, POGY and STOGY. The same dictionary lists a further seven words ending in -LOGY but not -OLOGY. How many of those seven can you identify without checking a reverse dictionary? Five of the words are sufficiently common that you will recognize them when you see them. We're not so sure about the remaining two, though.

Logology in the Election

By the time this is published, the American election will have been decided. Nevertheless, we thought it appropriate to note a couple of logological curiosities called to our attention by the editor. FORD and DOLE, the Republican nominees for president and vice-president, can be incorporated in two different word squares consisting of exceedingly common words. (As Palmer Peterson demonstrated in the August 1972 Word Ways, constructing forms linking presidential and vice-presidential surnames ordinarily requires a plethora of arcane words.) On the Democratic side, the letters in CARTER and MONDALE contain the word DEMOCRAT -- remarkable, considering that only five letters are left over. To put this into historical perspective, consider the last 120 years of American politics, it would be interesting to see how the presidential and vice-presidential names to obtain.

Updates

Cynthia M. Morgan mentions that we would learn that the different names would increase earlier on any changes should change.

In the May 27 issue of the Rhopalium, the rhapsodic word suggestion so much THANE offered.

Jay Amongst the surname "Arlington, at the College.

David Shughart of spondylitics Americans and its meaning to be defined by G. G. E. who says on perversions "Spondy possibility is (1890): the wretched Dutch spaund," wretched"").

A Christmas What didja get for me? A piece of this. Why a piece of this? Oh! Anything Cottage cheese And? -- Two. I'm afraid to ask. Ah, yes. -- A Christmas Happy New Y
can politics, a time when Republicans have contended with Democrats for the presidential prize. In these 31 elections, no other presidential and vice-presidential candidates could ever combine their surnames to obtain the letters of their party!

Updates

Cynthia MacGregor of New York City notes a variety of trivial changes that would occur if the alphabet were rearranged: children would learn their LSRs, city streets in Washington, D.C. would have different names. She further observes that we could no longer talk of alphabetization, and offers the intriguing hypothesis that Word Ways would increase in circulation because it would almost certainly appear earlier on any periodical list. (If this is true, perhaps Word Ways should change its name to Acrostical Archives, or The Abecedarian.)

In the May Kickshaws, Faith Eckler offered the award Commander of the Rhopalic Divisions to the reader who came up with a 15-letter rhopalic word. Alas, such a word seems to be nonexistent; the best suggestion so far is the apparently-coined word P-EN-TAB-ROMETHANE offered by Maxey Brooke. (!It's not in our dictionaries!)

Jay Ames of Toronto confirms George Grieshaber's belief that the surname TOLLIFER is pronounced "Tolliver". CarolAnn Hilton of Arlington, Virginia notes that Taliaferro, the name of a dormitory at the College of William and Mary, also has this pronunciation.

David Shulman of New York City notes that the 1857 OED citation of spondulics is preceded by an 1856 citation in The Dictionary of Americanisms and the Dictionary of American English, clearly showing its meaning to refer to money. The shell theory, however, is supported by G. G. Evans in his Illustrated History of the U.S. Mint (1885), who says on page 52 that shell money was called by Portuguese traders "Spondylus Macutus" after the shell -- hence spondulix. A third possibility is explored by Barriere and Leland's Dictionary of Slang (1890): the word would appear to have some connection with the Dutch spaunde ("chips", slang for money) and the word oolik ("bad, wretched"), probably originating in New York in some confusion or perversion of these two words. Until earlier and more accurate citations are found, the etymology is very much up in the air.

A Christmas Greeting from Maxey Brooke

What didja get for Christmas? -- A piece of thin rope.
A piece of thin rope? -- Yep.
Why a piece of thin rope? -- It was a Christmas cord.
Oh! Anything else? -- A carton of cottage cheese.
Cottage cheese, eh? -- Yep, a Christmas curd.
And? -- Two fish.
I'm afraid to ask. -- A Christmas cod and a Christmas carp.
Ah, yes. -- And a small two-wheeled wagon.
A Christmas cart, no doubt. -- No doubt.
Happy New Year. -- Ditto.