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[illegible] Der Bos wen ma I have a ras

By FLORENCE LEE RHEAM

That, ladies and gentlemen, is post-war global alphabet writing for, "Dear Boss: When may I have a raise?" I figure I need it after writing it—at least post-war. Of course, raises may not be the fashion then, there may be no bosses, and the world may never adopt global alphabet.

But if the senate of the United States gives it enough consideration, global alphabet, devised by Oklahoma's former Senator Robert L. Owen, may be on the road to universal usage.

Its adoption would mean that dictionaries would be rewritten. Typewriters and printing presses would be changed. And little children would be teaching the "old folks" how to spell. But, according to Mr. Owen, it would all be worth while.

Global alphabet, he says, takes less printing space, would save paper and can be learned in a few hours. Webster's 604,000 words in formal Roman characters would be outmoded. The "basic English" idea would be swallowed up in a form of communication which young and old of all the world's 300 races and dialects could grasp.

Dignified professors and comic strip Palookas alike would be passing notes reading, "Der Jon: Hop u ar wel. Y don u kum se us?"

For Mr. Owen's alphabet is strictly phonetic. It also is, he says, "mnemonic (memorizable), stenographic and universal."

ROBERT L. OWEN

It's also very simple, in the 88-year-old Senator's opinion. But whether or not Congress thinks so, is open to question. At Mr. Owen's request, it was presented for adoption in Senate documents 49 and 133 as an easy way to make the English language a world language.

But the Senate, after seeing that he documents were printed, put them off on the Committee on Foreign Relations which, in turn, asked the State Department for its opinion.

Although this idea has been taking form in the blind ex-senator's brain for several years, Pearl Harbor caused it to crystallize. And now, with plans for reconstruction and rehabilitation corps to go into re-won countries, he feels it is indispensable.

It would mean, he hopes, that the cause of the Allies would succeed more quickly. That each inhabitant of the world, by becoming literate in his own language, could then grasp new world principles. And that one language would eventually be used by the whole world.

"Then all our productive power would be multiplied," he says, "and human brotherhood and the good neighbor plan of the Western Hemisphere could be established as a world policy."

What Oklahoma's ex-senator has done (he served as one of the state's first senators and retired after distinguishing himself for 18 years, because he "had accomplished all the good he could") is to devise a form of phonetic shorthand signs consisting of 21 consonants and 19 vowel forms.

Anyone knowing Gregg shorthand will find the principles of the system easy to assimilate, since both are phonetic. He discards four of Webster's forms as "unnecessary."

His 21 consonants are known their sounds. "B" is not Be, but "Bu," with as little vowel sound following as possible. His other consonants, on the same principle, are "pu, du, tu, fu, gu, ku, hu, ju, lu, ru, mu, su, wu, yu, zu, following the standard alphabet. There are also forms for "ch" as in "chin," "th" as in "thin," and "ng" as in "sing," and "wh" as in "why." Forms similar to these last four also appear in Gregg shorthand system.

Now for the vowels. The vowels as we know them are "a," "e," "i," "o" and "u." But because they have so many variations in pronunciation, Mr. Owen has created a form for each vowel sound. Hence his 19 vowel forms consist of four "a's,"—as in "at," "ate," "far," and "all;" three "e's," as in "met," "me," and "her;" three "o's" as in "go," "for," and "got;" three "u's," as in "rut," "lute," and "due;" plus "ou" as in "out," "ow" as in "how," and "ea" as in "near."

Here, for instance, is how to write "Saint Patrick's birthday" in global alphabet:

[illegible] sant patriks berth da

While world-language professors praise the alphabet, the ex-senator, convinced of its simplicity, gave it to a fashionable Chevy Chase elementary school to experiment with. Reports are that the eight-and-10-year olds are now passing notes like mad in global alphabet.

Byron S. Shepard, assistant superintendent of the city school system, has turned the idea over as a possible experiment to Isabel Watkinson Smith, Central high school language teacher.

A basic phonetic alphabet with world-wide significance is no untried phenomenon. Moses himself, 2,700 years ago, used a simple method of phonetic writing consisting of 22 letters. And Russia, with an alphabet composed of 30 letters, has in 20 years conquered illiteracy despite the 200 dialects once in use.

Dr. Frank A. Laubach, whose book, "The Silent Billion Speaks," is helping to advance the cause of a global alphabet, found that native Moros learned to read and write in an hour through a phonetic system.

Soon, Mr. Owen says, a book will be published which will give English-speaking people a quick conversational knowledge of phonetic writing of Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Roumanian and German through 1,200 chosen words. It was prepared by Prof. Mario A. Pei, Ph. d., of Columbia university, in co-operation with 60 other linguistic experts.

Back in 1863, Lepsius, great German linguist, published a book, "Standard Alphabet," analyzing 600 languages and dialects and proposed a universal alphabet for all of them.

SEQUOYAH

Mr. Owen, whose mother, Narcissa Chisholm Owen, was part Cherokee, is not the first one of Cherokee blood to devise a phonetic alphabet. First was the great Sequoyah, who devised one of 85 characters.

More than 100 years ago, Sequoyah (whom Grant Foreman has called the "illiterate Indian genius," and "the only man in history to conceive an alphabet") was first impressed by the way the white man "talked on paper."

He set about building an alphabet, started with innumerable characters which stood for words. But he was cleverer than the Chinese, who still labor with 7,500 word-characters, and soon turned to characters which stood for sounds.

Indirectly, his alphabet came into being because of his trade—making silver jewelry. Impressed when white men had their names carved on the pieces he made, he wanted the same privilege for his tribe.

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Mr. Owen's portrait, and that of his mother and of Sequoyah, hang side by side in the halls of the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City. Her own and that of Sequoyah were painted by Mrs. Owen.

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