

# You Can Learn Chinese Easily With the New Global Alphabet

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WASHINGTON, July 31.—The skimpy little 26-letter alphabet we use to write pieces like this is pretty old hat these days. I couldn't put in a phrase in Chinese or apt quotation from the Swahili with it if I wanted to.

Senate Document 49 seeks to correct a situation which is rapidly becoming insufferable to men of letters. It is the global alphabet, concocted by Robert L. Owen, former Senator from Oklahoma, and presented by Sen. Elmer Thomas (D., Okla.). Using Owen's alphabet with 41 symbols and 16 others which are for emergencies only you could sit down and bat out a story in Eskimo or Afghan if you wanted to and a Norwegian or a Croat or an American could read it with ease. Always providing he had boned up on Owen's little dinguses that take the place of letters.

Owen guarantees he could teach almost anybody Chinese in a month or two with the new alphabet which looks a little bit like shorthand but isn't. The whole thing is based on 18 consonant and 18 vowel sounds and five double consonants. Want to know what the five double-deckers are? "Ch," "Sh," "Th," "Wh" and "Ng."

In Senate Document 49 Owen points out that Sequoia, who couldn't speak anything but Cherokee, invented an alphabet of 85 symbols by which he taught his fellow tribesmen to write Cherokee in only two weeks. So that's how the Indians found out we had swiped their country on them?

Another fellow, a Dr. C. R. Lepsius, who dickered with alphabets at the University of Berlin in 1863



did a better job than Sequoia. He poked around in 200 languages and came up with an alphabet of 50 letters, which he said could express any sound in any tongue.

"Unfortunately," writes Owen in Senate Document 49, "international transportation and communication made concerted action (on the Lepsius alphabet) impracticable at that time . . ."

Seeing as how international transportation and communication among these same linguists—or their successors—isn't in much better shape now, it doesn't look as if Owen is going to get any farther with his new alphabet than old Lepsius did with his.

Owen allows that it wouldn't be very hard to change over all the typewriters and linotype machines in the world to his new alphabet—which, by the way, is made up of a lot of little things that look like pollywogs, curves, triangles and others that are for all the world like the things Nephew Willy draws on the wallpaper.