

business teacher's truck because it has been intruding upon "my" parking spot since September.

The faculty as a whole gets weird (or weirder, in some cases). People begin to arrive at the break of dawn and brag that they beat Mr. Barlow to the Xerox machine. As in *Caine Mutiny*, strange coffee mugs appear. Some people's coffee mugs disappear. Whole departments go a little "bonkers." English teachers horde memos, gleefully noting the mistakes and fantasizing about future confrontations with principals. At least once a week, social studies teachers discuss making citizens' arrests—first on students, then on administrators, and finally on other teachers.

The litany of injustices becomes louder, and some of us even react. We lock our doors and refuse to let the office aides—with their interminable summonses—into our classrooms. A

science teacher disconnects his PA box. Homeroom teachers make lists of all the duties nonhomeroom teachers don't have. We threaten to boycott the lunch line if pizza boats are served one more time. We growl at the lunch-line ladies for giving bigger portions (even of pizza boats) to their favorites. Female teachers threaten to violate the privacy of the men's faculty lounge.

Luckily, some semi-decent spring days break this logjam of idiocy, and a degree of sanity returns. We laugh at ourselves and follow our own advice to "get our priorities straight"—usually.

The danger is that the longer we teach, the earlier in the year we lose our perspective. Some people return in September already into the "dust rag" mind-set. The staff in my building and in most high schools are, in Jane Fonda lingo, "prime-timers." We have

been doing this a long time, and the walls close in earlier each year.

The solution? I don't really know. Maybe we should negotiate for week-end retreats in the mountains or at the ocean or for inservice days in which the school psychologist and the social worker give us group therapy. Maybe we need to switch roles with our principals or have our memberships paid at fitness centers.

I can hear the grinding of taxpayers' teeth, but a little money spent on revitalization is probably better than paying for substitutes when the business teacher and I go to small claims court—and definitely better than allowing a student to graduate believing margins count more than ideas. □

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Trends

English

CHARLES SUHOR

"English Only" Movement Emerging as a Major Controversy

Should English be declared the official language of the United States, or of individual states, and the only language used in conducting public affairs—from street signs to printed ballots to court proceedings? The question is not hypothetical but a point of active debate in a number of states and the U.S. Congress.

Former Senator S. I. Hayakawa (1987) and others have called for a Constitutional amendment establishing English as the official language; and according to *Education Week*, 37 states were considering English Only laws in 1987. Twelve states now have such laws in place. By far the most

publicized case is California's Proposition 63, approved in 1986, but the issue has been debated from Rhode Island to Louisiana to Washington (Crawford 1987). According to the Education Commission of the States, a movement is under way in Florida and Texas to get the English Only issue on the ballot in November 1988.

The long-range implications for education are unclear, but bilingual education could be severely limited by English Only legislation. Crawford's report notes that in at least one state, Delaware, the language of a proposed amendment to the state constitution would prohibit bilingual education.

The first organization to mobilize public opinion on English as a national language was "U.S. English," a

group chaired by Hayakawa. Their brochure, "In Defense of Our Common Language" (n.d.) has been widely circulated, and they claim 300,000 members. "English is under attack," the brochure claims, partially because "novel educational philosophies have led to extensive government-funded bilingual education programs...." According to U.S. English, private funding should be encouraged for maintaining "diverse languages and cultural traditions," while government should foster "the similarities that unite us...." A group called "English First," described by Crawford as a competitor to U.S. English, is also pressing for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The English Only movement is

strongly opposed by many state and local representatives of linguistic minorities—predominantly Hispanics, but also native Americans, French-speaking Cajuns, and others. In addition, numerous education associations have protested English Only initiatives. The June 1987 *Newsletter* from TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) noted that TESOL, the Center for Applied Linguistics, Linguistic Society of America, Modern Language Association, National Association for Bilingual Education, and National Council of Teachers of English have passed resolutions against English Only.

The TESOL resolution affirms that "all individuals should have the opportunity to acquire proficiency in English while maintaining their own language and culture." The NCTE statement condemns "any attempt to render invisible the native languages of any Americans," since "such actions will not only stunt the vitality of the language, but also ensure its erosion and . . . create hostility toward English, making it more difficult to teach and learn" (Allen 1987).

The groups opposed to English Only have formed EPIC—the "English Plus" Information Clearinghouse—to advance the idea that "the national interest requires that all members of our society have access to effective programs to ensure English language proficiency *plus* proficiency in a second language or multiple languages." The group's statement of purpose charges that the English Only movement "has the potential for abridging the citizen's right to vote, eroding other civil rights, fostering governmental interference in private activity and free commerce. . . ." (EPIC 1987).

Interestingly, there are common elements in the positions held by antagonists in the English Only debate. At least on the surface, opposing groups agree that all nonnative speakers should be given the opportunity to learn English and that their native languages and cultures should not be stigmatized as inferior. Despite these commonalities, the often bitter disputes center on the political motives of those who argue either side of the question: the beneficial or detrimental effects of mandating English as the

language used in public communication; and the preferred social and educational means for effecting literacy in English for all Americans. □

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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

ACT Publications	88
ASCD's Outstanding Dissertation Awards	33
ASCD Photo Contest	66
Call for Manuscripts	84
C&M Education Consultants	83
Center for Civic Education	31
Computer Curriculum Corporation	C-2
Control Data	47
Developmental Studies Center	77
Excel, Inc.	90
Forrest T. Jones & Company, Inc.	61-62
INSIGHTS Visual Productions, Inc.	81
Memphis State University	25
National Association of Secondary School Principals	29
National Curriculum Study Institutes	1
Outcomes Associates	86
Parents as Teachers National Center	82
Performance Learning Systems, Inc.	96
Phi Delta Kappa	17
The Psychological Corporation	C-4
Teacher Effectiveness Associates	74
Teaching, Inc.	19
Technomic Publishing Company, Inc.	87
Two Rivers Psychiatric Hospital	87
Vintage Books	89
Wilcox & Follett Book Company	C-3

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