

THE LAST WORD

Recently, Philip Cohen suggested that *Word Ways* needs a column to clarify editorial policy and to provide background comment on articles published in the issue. I'm not sure that there is enough need for information of this sort to justify a page every month -- but let's give it a try.

The article "Nixon and the Bee" was inspired by a French-language example by Georges Perec in *OuLiPo: La Litterature Potentielle* (Gallimard, 1973) -- a three-act play entitled "The Horrors of War" in which the entire spoken dialogue consists of a recital of the French alphabet. Harry Mathews, the author of the article on *OuLiPo* in the May issue, sent along the following English-language example entitled "Crow to Scarecrow": Hay, be seedy! He-effigy, hate-shy jaky yellow man, oh peek, you are rusty, you've edible, you ex-wise he! Remarkable.

Although I have never seen any other phonetic lipograms, Professor Hockett assures me that "Poems in Praise of English Phonology" is not the first effort in this line -- after a prince kisses a princess in a Hindu epic, his lips are so stunned that the poem contains no bilabials for the next couple of pages!

Recently, a *Word Ways* author ordered 30 extra copies of the issue in which his article appeared. A one-issue order as large as this can pose problems, for most back orders are by the volume, and I try to keep the number of back copies of the four issues of a year in rough balance. It is easy to order an extra 100 copies in advance of printing, however; consequently, I propose the following solution to the problem. If I receive orders for 100 copies in advance, I will sell these copies at \$1 apiece (the marginal printing cost, plus postage); however, if fewer than 100 orders are received, the offer is cancelled. (Don't send money until I confirm the printing will take place.)

The first part of Dmitri Borgmann's "The Ultimate Adventure" might well have been titled "What Is A Word?" This comprehensive statement of a pioneering logologist's views deserves careful study. Although few readers may wish to be as generous as Dmitri in defining admissible words, it is easy to ignore those words one cannot stomach; each reader can decide for himself just how many legitimate transposals of AEGINRST exist. Lamentably, more restrictive definitions often exclude words that are at least as reasonable as the ones included (can one find uncashed, duty-bound or ex-wife in Webster's?) or lead to unverifiable tests of admissibility (has the word appeared anywhere in an English-language printed work, including newspapers and magazines as well as books? has it been used by more than one author, to eliminate coinages?).