THE ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY.

ESSAY COMPETITION.

CLASS A.

1941.

"WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE BASIC ENGLISH WIDELY ADOPTED?
IF SO, WHY?"

NAME: FRANK MITCHELL RAMSAY.

DATE OF BIRTH: [redacted]

SCHOOL: WAITAKI BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL,
OAMARU,
NEW ZEALAND.
Would you like to see Basic English language widely adopted? If so, why?

Preface

Throughout this essay I have attempted to show that a universal language is necessary to hold man together.

Material progress is born of selfish interests and our age is nothing if not the acme of material progress. For the present man's spiritual progress has been halted by his wish for personal pleasure. If our civilization wishes to avoid the fate of the Roman Empire, we must unite, link nation with nation, and with what better chain than a universal language?

I think that of the many tongues spoken on our earth, English, with suitable alterations is the ideal language for this purpose and the wide adoption of Basic English now will clear the path for the propagation of English itself in the years to come.
For two thousand million years our earth has been wending her lonely way around the blazing sun. She was born a fiery mass of vapour. As she followed her, condensed and cooled and wrinkled. Then she gave birth to the first human animal creature. This first living, reproducing, growing and fertilized what was to develop through millions of years into the type of life.

Fifty thousand years ago, after countless ages of slow, interceded evolution, primitive man first stalked through the jungle undergrowth to exercise his cunning and resourcefulness in his ceaseless search for food. But even then our hairy ancestor was king over the animals. He possessed faculties unique in the animal kingdom — free will to determine his own life, and ability to profit and learn from experience. The bees and the ants have intricate social systems — the same system as they have always had. Each ant or bee has a specific task which it must do or die. Man can mould his own destiny and will no doubt evolve through the ages to a glorious climax.

Only for the last three thousand years has man been civilized. He has built shelters from the weather, made clothes for his body, but above all he has developed
by virtue of his inherent qualities, systematic thought. In throwing off the cloak of traditionalism, he revealed a rational being, who, slowly mastered, among other things, his intricate vocal chords. In this way he evolved a medium for inter-communication, understanding, which today, still deftly in the course of communication, confuses the label of tongues of our modern world.

The work of International Conferences is severely hampered by the necessary use of many tongues. Each speaker requires relays of interpreters to convey his meaning to all present; the wheels of State are further slowed down.

Certain industries, with very valuable educative values, such as phonographic recording, talking pictures and radio broadcasting send extra millions on translations into the different languages of the globe.

Above all, scientific research is slowed down. Man is retarding himself of the very tools he needs to save this civilization from destruction.

Although this manifest stigma on our age may appeal to the aesthete and the pleasure-seeking traveller, it is obvious by no encouragement to the better cooperation and understanding of men by himself. The brains of all nations and the creative genius of every race, must be pooled and become fully accessible common property of our civilization hopes to better itself and to outshine previous
civilisations in the glory of its achievement. The rise to
letargy of the Roman Empire resulted in its collapse: it did not have
the power to ward off the relentless result of luxury—idleness and decay.
But we are menaced by something far
more limited than a slow peaceful death.
A century ago industrialism broke
loose from the net of social refinement
restricting it. Men murdered his fellow.
Poison gas, unleashed by the chemist, its
use perfected by the laboratory, swept out whole
opposing armies. For four long years the
battleground continued and then it subsided.
Europe was strown with decaying bodies.
The influenza virus took hold in this
admirable breeding ground and swept
like a dark cloud over the world. More
millions lost their lives as the result of
man's folly.
No sooner had we dared recover from
the first fateful eruption than it burst
again with a new violence the results of
which none can predict.
It is against these ghastly holocausts
that we must turn all our energy.
Who knows that, if not this, then perhaps
the next great Armageddon will see the
mutual destruction of liberalism and
civilisation?
With the aid of perverted science
our social structure is being rocked
and blasted on its foundations. Only
with the help of properly applied science
can we come near resembling hope.
Only by using the immense source of
power to its best advantage can man
make his living as his conscience dictates.
The cause of this danger to humanity is
the lack of any ties between nations. What
should be the ideals of mankind are not
the ideals of his respective races. The
cooperation of our philosophers and scientists
is prevented by there being no common
tongue to unite and accelerate their
individual efforts.

We need an international language
of simple structure with an appeal to as
many people as possible to give mankind
the unity and brotherhood of a homely
community.

Among the first to appreciate this
fact was Dr. Zamenhof. In 1887 he
introduced as an artificial universal
language. Unfortunately it has made little
progress. In 80 years it has only attract-
ed one million pupils. In other words
by the use of Esperanto only half a
million people can hold intelligent con-
versation with half a million foreigners.

Dr. Zamenhof's language has failed
lamentably to lead mankind linguistically.
However, it is but one of many such
schemes. Other pioneers in this venture
were Velazug and Ido; but they
were also artificial and were even less
successful than Esperanto. The 5000 four-
thousand books and hundred magazines
will go down to posterity as the only
relief of a brave attempt to solve man's
most pressing problem.

Another different though equally futile
effort was due to Sir Richard Paget.
His language was based on that
used by deaf-mutes. When he was
demonstrating his invention at a
meeting of the Royal Institution, he gave
the members a practical test. After 15
minutes' instruction they were able to
read a ninety word poem recited entirely
dy signs. But who wants to articulate
slowly with his hands to convey his
meaning when nature has given him a
voice and his heavier ears to make
communication easy?

All manufactured languages, whether
audible or visual, having no idiom, no
sentimental or traditional ties can only
become the medium for founding a
literature after hundreds of years of
constant use, experimentation, and adaption.

If a language is introduced with a long
the people it was intended for will recoil into
the safety of their native tongue and hide from
the intruder. But if the change is made,
imperceptibly at first and then gradually,
accelerated, all will be smooth, and the
people, instead of drawing back, will shrill
out to catch the innovation held tantalizingly
in front of their noses.

There were the chief faults in common with
Esperanto, Volapuk, and Uto. They were all
synthesized out of their inventors' ingenuity and were thrown at the people before they knew what was happening.

For our International Language we should concentrate on the slow systematic diffusion throughout the world of an existing tongue rather than the propagation of a synthetic language.

All languages would not be suitable for such a task. For example the orientals' speech is far too complicated and picturesque for condensation into anything simple.

The only languages which need be considered are French, Spanish, Italian, German and English. They are all commonly spoken by quite influential nations and all might be acceptable and suitable modifications as a secondary medium for conversation and writing.

But without very close examination of the finer details German, French, and Italian can be rejected on the grounds of geographical limits. Outside of their mother countries these languages are little used and are not of much importance. Although Spanish is spoken a great deal in Latin America it is of little importance politically, scientifically, or commercially.

Therefore by perfectly justifiable elimination we are left with English, which includes of course American. Perhaps its greatest claim to throne of universal is that already in its present form it is the national language of some six hundred million.
people comprising one third of the total population of the world.

Before the war started, English was taught in at least twelve European countries as a compulsory subject. For the greater part of this century it has been the lingua franca throughout the East.

British and American merchant ships, carrying on their enormous trade with every country in the world together with the influence of the former colonies and Dominions comprising the British Commonwealth of Nations have proved themselves an invaluable means for the dissemination of English throughout all the races of mankind.

The British are renowned for their honesty and fair-dealing, and no great is their influence in world trade that it is a definite advantage for any foreigner to be able to speak English.

As well as having these merits English, even in its standard form, is quite easy to learn. There are very few grammatical or gender complications to be ceded with. In fact the only stumbling block for a learner is the vast vocabulary, and as this is derived from every conceivable source there are certain inconsistencies which make spelling and pronunciation rather difficult.

In the early twenties of this century, C.R. Ogden – Editor of the International Library of Philosophy, Psychology,
and scientific method — and his collaborators began to develop a simple language which, without ceasing to be English, smoothed out its inconstancies and simplified its vocabulary. This he called Basic English.

The fifty thousand words of everyday English have been condensed to 850 — the number which can be printed on one side of a sheet of notepaper. There 850 words are the essential minimum for intelligent conversation and are divided into three classes — Names of things, Qualifiers and their opposites, and Operatives. But the panoptic quality of Basic seems its greatest practical attraction.

It has never been claimed that Basic English as an auxiliary language would have any cultural or literary qualities. It has been devised as a practical link between nation and nation, as a compromise between the inadequacy of pidgin English and the rich verbal lexicon of Standard English.

Expression in Basic must be clear and precise. No one believed that it could reproduce the brilliance of Shaw or the fine subtleties of Swift, but probably a foreigner given translations of their great writers would appreciate them almost to the full.

Recently an attempt has been to write the Bible in Basic. Although it proved quite successful in the clarity and
luntness of it's translation, it failed as
fact it must, to preserve the music, balance,
and simple dignity of this example of English
in it's finest form.

The simple, though profound, statement:
'Be still and know that I am God' cannot
be expressed with much humility in Basque, because that little word 'still'
has been replaced by 'quiet' in the Basque
classary.

Basque English was not made by its driving
spirit and Lydon to cope with masterpieces
of literature and it should not be forced
to do it by others.

Great thoughts can be expressed in
simple words and exact thoughts can be
expressed more accurately. In this latter
quality lies the value of Basque, not
as a literary language but as an
International Scientific and Commercial
language.

The original 850 are quite adequate for
the casual traveller, but for the requirements
of commerce and science, additional lists
of technical needs are necessary. But as
these require no grammatical alterations
the matter of learning fifty more words
would be no difficulty for the conscientious
ment or business man.

When this war wears itself out,
when Europe, battered and torn by
British bombs, strangled by Hitler's armies,
lies in bloody revolution, then will Britain
and America have to heal the wounds
of the Old World. It will certainly be a gigantic task but with the limitless resources of North America at their disposal perhaps together they will slowly right the wrongs of this hectic 20th century. With the 03 rival and American armies patrolling the seven seas let us sincerely hope that a new World Order will emerge and that never again will the brutal steel of dictatorship, or jealousy between nations, menace the peaceful life of a freedom-loving civilization.

With America and Britain partners in a new world order, the newly will English gradually become the Universal language. With its way paved by the wide adoption of Brazilian English, within a few generations Standard English itself will replace its younger brothers.

Speech is the means to an end. The means to form the brotherhood of man, to reunite the races of his species after centuries of progressive alienation. to give mankind confidence in the knowledge that his ideals are spiritual and not selfish or material.

The progress of man through the ages can only well be judged by the development of his speech.

The great civilization of the ancient Greeks produced finer orators and philosophers than the world has ever seen. They had a common language, common ideals and
they had a wonderful civilization.

But Greece fell to the heathens' sword
and Roman culture took its place.

By compulsion Latin became the world's
language, but it never replaced the vernacular
of the conquered countries. So, the Roman
empire, lulled by a sense of false security,
tumbled over, and the once subject nations
picked themselves out of the ruins to start
wandering war and fighting.

Ever since that day Men has been
multiplying and dividing in an endless
fashion. Colonies have sprung up here
and there separated by the sea. New
languages arose. Men's ideals became
split and selfish.

And now, for the first time in
history, science has given us the means
of drawing together, of becoming one
family. The Caucuses and the Stratotetah
have been conquered. Nations are once
more being trained to cooperate, but they
are also being repelled by national pride
and international jealousy.

Let us remove this final barrier
to man's progress. The world of science
is, at least, forcibly linked by the language
of Mathematics.

Surely mankind can be united by a
language, by a common goal of expression
which will help to forget his selfish roots
and to remember that this very existence
depends on his unity, now.
Bibliography

A Short History of the World
   - H.G. Wells
The Shape of things to Come
   - H.G. Wells
Basic English
   - C.R. Ogden
Brighter Basic
   - C.R. Ogden
Everyday Basic
   - I.W. Lockhart
Debabelization
   - C.R. Ogden