

a host of other social needs, in addition to increasing foreign aid and cutting taxes. He ties this in with means of coping with other changes in America such as the increasing bigness of business, labor unions, government, cities and mass media. Chase makes the whole thing so obvious that you might wonder why

we haven't done something about it before.

Thirty years ago Chase wrote a book called A New Deal, discussing the national crisis of that time. This new book provides a similar service. In it he uses a general semantics approach to consider the vital questions of our day.

WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY UNABRIDGED. Philip B. Gove, Editor in Chief. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1961. 2720 pp.

Comments by Allen Walker Read, Professor of English, Columbia University*

The adjective Websterian is older than most people think. It was used as early as 1790 by the American historian Ebenezer Hazard; in a letter of August 23, 1790, he wrote: 'I am vexed at the printer's Websterian division of words. . . . This is perfectly puppyish.' [COLLECTIONS MASS. HIST. SOC., 5th ser., III (1877), 228.] Webster aroused antagonism throughout his life, but his AMERICAN DICTIONARY of 1828 was accepted as a monument of the scholarship of its time. Successive revisions by later scholars have kept it at the forefront.

In my opinion the THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL is still at the forefront of dictionary-making. On every page the rich documentation on which it is based is evident. It is a worthy exemplar of present-day scholarship.

The storm of criticism that it has aroused is a commentary on American social attitudes rather than on the dictionary itself. Part of the background is the desire to 'ascertain and fix' a language, a tendency that in a number of countries has resulted in the formation of linguistic academies. Among speakers of English an academy has been resisted, but 'the' dictionary has taken its place -- usually Johnson's in England and Webster's in America. The linguistic dictator of the nineteenth century, Richard Grant White, from whom many Americans took their opinions, expressed the popular view in 1869: 'Upon the proper spelling, pronunciation, etymology, and definition of words, a dictionary might be made to which high and almost absolute authority might justly be awarded.' [GALAXY, VII (May 1869), 656.] Although scholarly opinion strongly rejects this point of view, it is still current and helps to explain the attacks that have been made on the THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL.

Americans have made a cult of dictionaries even more than people in England or other countries. This is part of our colonial heritage. Since the models of the best English were thought to be in England and

not in America, a book substitute was accepted, and Walker's CRITICAL PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY of 1791 had wider acceptance in America than in England itself. Thus any modifying of the 'prescriptive' function of a dictionary goes counter to strongly entrenched American folkways.

The THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL shows itself to be thoroughly on the side of 'descriptivism' -- that a dictionary should be an accurate record of the language. Some puristic critics are not aware that this was also the point of view of the Second Edition of 1934. The managing editor, Dr. Thomas A. Knott, believed in the doctrine that people do not make mistakes; they merely follow variant traditions. As he wrote: "'Substandard' students are not 'making mistakes.'" They are simply talking and writing their own native language.' [AMERICAN SPEECH, IX (April 1934), 88.] It is important that we have an accurate record of the state of the language, and this is what the THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL is giving us.

Naturally enough, there are decisions in both detail and policy to which the specialist critic would take exception. I feel that the decision to avoid capital letters in the head words has been carried to an absurd extreme. In pronunciation, the recognition of the widespread use of so-called 'voiced t' is in accord with the latest scholarship, but phonemic theory should have led to the symbol of a modified t, not a d. The public is easily misled upon seeing po'tād-ō for potato, or 'bəd-ər for butter, or 'lad-ər for latter. The symbol → is provided for variants 'to the acceptability of which many take strong exception,' but it is applied very haphazardly. It is not used for the form that represents GUBB-m-unt (government), and yet is used for BAB-tust (Baptist), which sounds very natural to me. These are blemishes, but the work as a whole deserves unstinting praise.

*From 'A Symposium' review, QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF SPEECH, December, 1962, 438-39.