

Living in a system we can't understand

Concerned readers often ask these questions: "Why are we living in a system we can't understand? Can't something be done about it?" The answers are simple, but changing the system so it can be understood is complex.



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

Complaining about our system is not an easy task because it is convenient, has a history of prosperity, and overall, we live fairly well despite a few confusing shortcomings. The complex part is doing something about understanding some of the goofy things we take for granted. Questions need to be answered that appear to be unanswerable. The reason they can't be answered is that they don't make any sense.

We asked our crack research team, the Googlamaniacs, to look into the major concerns about living in this system we can't understand. Here are a few of the most frequently asked questions:

Why do we wear a pair of pants but only one shirt? Shouldn't we wear a pair of shirts too? That inspires the question, why is the word "pants" plural while "bra" is singular?

Have you ever wondered how important you have to be before you'll be assassinated instead of just murdered? Now that's an astute question that could entertain the village idiot for hours.

Why do we cure ham? Was it sick? And how about, why are you "in" a movie, but "on" television?

Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face, he gets mad at you, but when you take him for a ride in the car, he sticks his head out the window?

When you sing the "Alphabet Song," are you plagiarizing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," or is it the other way around? They both have the same melody.

Although these questions are valid, they are still silly, and don't really have much impact on our lives. However, they do make us aware that we probably live in a system that is difficult to understand.

Let's look a little further, and question a few issues that could definitely cause problems, especially to newcomers to our sometimes problematic system.

Although it is not official, English is the language of government and business in this country. I can't help but feel sorry for immigrants who are trying to do the right thing by learning to speak the language before they make the move to America. I especially feel sorry for them if their native tongue is as logical and unambiguous as, let's say, Mandarin, the language of government and commerce in China.

How do you explain to a Mandarin speaking Chinese person, who is conversant in one of the oldest and most organized languages in the world, the various pronunciations of a letter group like "o-u-g-h"?

"O-u-g-h" is pronounced "aw" as in "thought," "oo" as in "through," and "oh" as in "though." It is also pronounced with an "f" in "tough" or "trough." If there is an English rule that governs these different pronunciations, I have yet to find it.

If these poor souls are attempting to learn how to spell, may their gods be with them. How can they look up a word if they don't know how to spell it? I suppose you can say, "Spell it phonetically." That

is the standard answer given by teachers across the country. If that is the case, how are these new students of English supposed to spell "pterodactyl," "pneumonia," or "psychiatry" when the "p" is silent?

These are just a few communication problems that stem from our adopted language. If you look at this country through the eyes of most foreigners, however, we have an issue or two that seriously raises eyebrows. For instance, any person born on U.S. soil is considered a natural born citizen. This means they are eligible to be elected to the position of the most powerful person in the world, the president of the United States of America.

Being born here is the only qualification. In other words, you could have the intelligence of a moron, but with a little charisma and a good PR program, you could be in the running. I shudder to think about how many times that has happened. In most other countries, even in third world countries, the position of president, Prime Minister, or leader of sorts, has a few requirements. Degrees in law, political science, and government are fairly standard fare for anyone with the desire to pursue those jobs. But not in America. No sir. All you have to do is look good and be popular. It's downright scary.

Despite our faults, however, we've managed to survive, and maintain the highest standard of living on the planet. That alone is living proof that we live in a system we can't understand.



Honored by land trust

The Conanicut Island Land Trust recently honored George and Martha Neale (left) and Harry and Gail Chase (right) with framed photographs of their farms in recognition of their contributions to the North Road clearing project. Land trust president Quentin Anthony presented the photographs.

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