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5/2/77

Questions of gender

A recent edition of a popular dictionary contains the following entry:

"**Ms.** (m'iz) n. Used instead of Miss or Mrs. (as when the marital status of a woman is unknown or of no interest) [Ms. Mary Smith]"

As a logical extension of the spirit of the letter by Susan A. Gordon et al (February, page 13), and as a modest contribution to the enrichment of the English language, I would like to propose the adoption (and recommend the use) of the following noun:

"**Ps.** (p'iz) n. Used instead of Ms. or Mr. (as when the gender of a person is unknown or of no interest) [Ps. P. Potter]"

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3/3/77

If language reflects the attitudes of a society, then changes must first be made in attitudes in order to be reflected in the language, and not vice versa.

Carried to its logical limit, the move to remove all suffixes and prefixes indicative of gender will lead to such curiosities as "chairpeople" and "wopeople," as Alvin Radkowsky has suggested, perhaps a trifle facetiously. The movement to obtain equal opportunities and respect for women may wish to consider expending more of its energy in seeking out and encouraging capable women, than with its seeming preoccupation with changing words. No inequity is funny, but surely there should be some sense of proportion.

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3/3/77

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