Republicans refuse to speak of Democratic party

By Theodore M. Bernstein

That certain party. Since the mid-1950's some Republicans have refused to speak of the Democratic party and insisted on calling it the Democrat party The idea apparently was to avoid giving the impression that the Republicans conceded that their rival party was truly democratic. However, the trouble is, as Russell Baker has pointed out in one of his columns in The New York.

and Mary went too," and certainly one would not appear in a construction such as, "Me too." When too in the sense of also appears in the middle of a sentence, however, it is customarily set off by commas; for example: "More taxes will have to be paid and probably more forms will have to be filled out, too, under the new law."

Ready? A columnist in Variety criticized some ad writers quite properly for having turned out the line "Nestea is also in ready-to-drink cans." As he pointed out, the cans are not ready to drink. Ready-to-wear clothes are clothes that are ready to wear, but ready-to-drink cans are not cans that are ready to drink. Maybe the ad writers should have made it "ready-to-drink-outa" cans.

Problem of the times. A question in a physics test that was reprinted in a newspaper recently raised a question of usage that caused at least two readers to write critical letters. In essence the question began, "If that distance is made 3 times larger than it now is . . ." The readers argued that "three times larger than" means "four times as large as," which is not what the test meant to say. They contended that "three times larger than" one is four since three times one is three, and that amount added to one—i.e., producing a "larger than" total—would make four. They maintain that the wording should have been "three times as large as." Something that is three times as large as one is three. Certainly as far as common usage is concerned and perhaps also as far as technical mathemati-

cal usage is concerned the readers' contention is correct. It's a tricky question, but obviously there is a difference between the two wordings that should be kept in mind. Selfless A reader in Salt Lake City deplores what he calls the change in usage that has turned a pronoun that he likes—hisself— into himself. No such change ever took place. In old English him selfum was the dative singular of he self. There never was any possessive element in the term or any such pronoun as hisself.

Word oddities. A comma indicates a separation or a pause in writing. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the word derives from the Greek root koptein, to cut off. With that we will koptein this column.

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Times, that the phrase accomplishes nothing except to make the Republicans using it sound both illiterate and coy. Isn't it about time for the phrase to be dropped by the Republic party?

A comma that can go to. Whether to put a comma ahead of the word too when it ends a sentence is a problem that bothers George Economaki of Des Moines, Iowa, and he asks whether there is a rule that applies to that situation. We are aware of no rule that tells writers what to do in such a sentence. Most often, however, the comma is not used ahead of a final too. No comma would usually appear in a sentence such as, "Johnny went to the store

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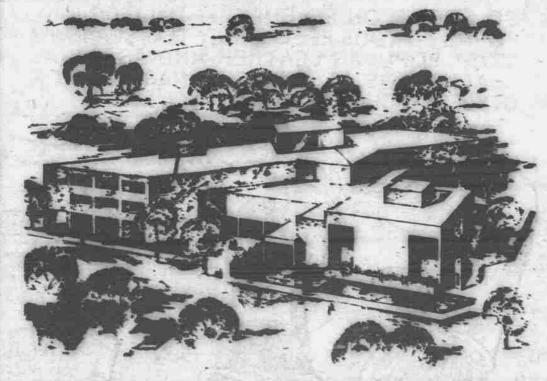


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