

Calendar Facts

Happy New Year! Did you ever wonder how January 1 became the day when one year ends and another begins? Or why this handoff from one year to the next takes place a few weeks after the shortest day of the year? Why are there 12 months instead of, say, 25 or 50?

We have just entered the 432nd year of what is known as the Gregorian calendar, which was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in the 1600s but was only adopted in England in 1752. The new calendar replaced the Julian calendar, which on introduction in 46 B.C., corrected problems with the previous calendar system by creating an initial calendar year with 445 days. This later became known as the “year of confusion.” Before that, the Egyptian calendar-the original prototype of our current calendar system-was invented as a way to track the annual rising of the Nile River, which was critical to Egyptian agriculture.

The common thread of these calendars, as well as the Mayan, Chinese and Greek calendars, is that they are based on the fact that the moon goes through 12 cycles of full to new each year, which is where the idea of 12 months (“moons”) came from. Alas, the Gregorian calendar preserved some of the quirks of the Julian calendar: the months are of different lengths, holidays fall on different days of the week from year to year, and there is the messy necessity to including an extra day each leap year. The new calendar did manage to preserve the 7 day week, which facilitated the observation of the Sabbath every seventh day-virtually a requirement for any calendar that would be adopted in the West.

You might be surprised at the number of proposed “new and improved” calendars that have emerged over the years. The Raventos Symmetrical Perpetual Calendar and Colligan’s Pac calendar both feature 13 months of 28 days each, while the Symmetry 454 Calendar eliminates the possibility of having the 13th day of any month fall on a Friday. Eastman Kodak founder George Eastman proposed an International Fixed Calendar which manages to have the numerical days of each month fall on the same weekday; for example, the 15th day of each month would always be a Sunday. The idea was to facilitate business activities, such as scheduling regular meetings, and make it easier to accurately compare monthly and quarterly statistics.

Will we see a shift to one of these new and improved versions of our calendar system? Probably not. After all, the U.S. has failed to adopt the metric standard of measurements, despite it being the universal system for scientific inquiry around

the world. In the end, a messy system we're all familiar with tends to be preferable to a tidy one that forces us to change our habits.

Source:

https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/geopolitics-gregorian-calendar?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=article