

THOSE KIND OF ADJECTIVES

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(Received April, 1973)

An apparent grammatical change operating in English is outlined here. Examine the following sentences :

- (1) (a) Those kinds of people annoy me.
(b) That kind of person annoys me.
(c) Those kind of people annoy me.
- (2) (a) I like these sorts of bananas.
(b) I like this sort of banana.
(c) I like these sort of bananas.

The (a) and (b) sentences are grammatically correct in most dialects of English, though they are sometimes looked upon as being somewhat formal. In each case the demonstrative modifies the immediately following qualifying noun (kind(s), sort(s)), but it also agrees in number with the qualified noun (person/people, banana(s)), as can be seen by the ungrammatical sentences (3) and (4).

- (3) (a) *Those kinds of person ...
(b) *That kind of people ...
- (4) (a) *... these sorts of banana.
(b) *... this sort of bananas.

The (c) sentences in (1) and (2) are also grammatically correct in many dialects and idiolects, especially in informal speech, and it is my impression that sentences like (c) are replacing sentences like (a) and (b) as standard English. There appears also to be a semantic difference between (c) and (a), though perhaps not between (c) and (b).

If the (c) sentences are grammatical, then it appears that the plural demonstrative (those, these) refers not to kind or sort but to the following noun (people, bananas) which is also plural. The expression kind of or sort of cannot then be viewed as a nominal

expression - as it can be in (a) and (b) - but is better considered as an adjectival expression. It seems feasible, then, that deriving from an original noun + preposition kind of or sort of we now have a compound adjective kind-of, sort-of.
