A Long Way Together

A Personal View of NCTE's First Sixty-Seven Years

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Preface

For four and a half decades the National Council of Teachers of English has been an important part of my life. Like most other members, I was at first only a reader of its journals and its books on the English curriculum and English instruction. Then I began to attend its annual meetings, which I found addictive, and, a few years after that, to write for its journals and to speak at its conventions. When Bob Pooley persuaded me to become executive secretary, I learned the inner workings of the organization and came to know personally its current and future leaders and those from its recent past. After that, I again became just an occasional contributor but a more-ardent-than-ever user of the Council's publications and other services and a more aware observer of the professional efforts that the Council was increasingly making through its government, inter-professional, and even international contacts.

If as a young teacher I had possessed more historical perspective, I might have been a more intelligent consumer of what I read in NCTE articles and books and what I heard at its conventions. I might in fact have been a better teacher, for I might then have more easily differentiated the genuinely new from the rehash, the tried from the trite, the educationally lasting from the faddish. And if I had possessed such perspective when I became a writer and speaker on professional subjects and an officer of the Council itself, I might have avoided some asinine statements and mistaken judgments.

This volume, I hope, will provide for others the perspective that my contemporaries and I could attain only bit by bit. I have unashamedly personalized it, for, as we teach our students, one must write about what one knows. Not everyone will agree with my conclusions and evaluations. Some people's feelings will be hurt—including those of some of my friends. Many persons will wonder why I have emphasized this rather than that, or why I have omitted an undoubtedly significant event or person. I myself can name hundreds of NCTE

movers and shakers—even educational statesmen and stateswomen —who deserve inclusion, but had they all been admitted, this history would be many times its present length.

In order to avoid what could have become a rivulet of text and a river of footnotes, I have eschewed formal citations in favor of placing within the narrative approximate indications of sources. Most of the history is based on these primary sources:

English Journal, 1912–1978, Volumes 1–67

College edition of the *English Journal*, 1926–1938, Volumes 15–27 (numbered concurrently with the regular edition)

Elementary English Review, Elementary English, Language Arts, 1924–1978, Volumes 1–55

College Composition and Communication, 1949–1978, Volumes 1–29

Research in the Teaching of English, 1967–1978, Volumes 1–12

English Education, 1969–1978, Volumes 1–10

Minutes of the NCTE Executive Committee, 1929–1960, and selected portions thereafter

Annual reports to the NCTE Board of Directors, 1953–1978

Selected minutes of the NCTE Board of Directors, 1953–1978

Selected minutes of the NCTE Annual Business Meeting, including resolutions, 1953–1978

Convention programs, 1911–1978, in early years summarized in the *English Journal*, later printed separately

Approximately 250 of the books, pamphlets, and newsletters (including *Council-Grams*) published by NCTE

Living past presidents' written recollections of highlights of their terms in office, gathered by the NCTE office in 1976–1977

Transcripts of lengthy taped interviews with more than a score of past Council officials (Alfred H. Grommon, interviewer) made in 1977–1978

Miscellaneous documents and correspondence duplicated for my use by the Council office

My personal recollections of a forty-four-year association with the Council

My use of secondary sources has been scant, although I have consulted a dozen or so relevant doctoral dissertations (out of several

dozen possibilities), as well as such obvious materials as histories of education and *The Encyclopedia of Education* (Macmillan, 1971). That encyclopedia's four-page article on NCTE, written by Dora V. Smith and James R. Squire, is an admirably succinct historical account; the encyclopedia also contains an additional eighty pages of articles, by various hands, on aspects of English teaching and the preparation of English teachers.

Most useful of the secondary sources has been James Hocker Mason's "The National Council of Teachers of English, 1911–1926," a doctoral dissertation completed at George Peabody College for Teachers in 1962, which chronicles the early years in great detail. Mason also kindly gave me a copy of an equally detailed supplement extending to 1936, which was not incorporated in the dissertation. His work was useful not only for its methodical coverage but also because of its references to interviews and correspondence with now dead Council officials.

Also valuable, particularly for its placement of selected Council activities in a broad educational context, was Arthur N. Applebee's *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History* (NCTE, 1974). Applebee, now associate director of ERIC/RCS at Council headquarters, also was indispensable in locating and duplicating for my use numerous items in the Council archives and in calling to my attention materials that I might otherwise have overlooked.

The Council's librarian, Mary Jo Divilbiss, prepared a helpful list of the several hundred pamphlets and books published over the years by the Council and on file in the archives. Other members of the NCTE staff—most notably William Ellet, Lois Haig, Philip Heim, and Paul O'Dea—contributed to the book their editorial and technical expertise.

Finally, other members of the Commission on the History of the Council besides Applebee, Grommon, and Mason—Muriel Crosby, James R. Squire, Darwin Turner, and the late Robert C. Pooley—often suggested usable sources of information and in various other ways both enlightened and lightened my work, and NCTE Executive Director Robert Hogan placed many resources of the Council at my disposal.

J. N. H.
Waveland, Indiana
1979

1 Beginnings, 1911–1912

Look carefully at the photograph. You could date it fairly accurately even without the legend. Among the clues are the old-fashioned radiator, the style of the chair in the left foreground, the wall decoration, the rather tense faces of people unaccustomed to being photographed, the stiff collars of the men, and the imposing hats, long skirts, and primly folded hands of the women.

You would have more difficulty in determining the purpose of the gathering. You would hardly suppose that it is a meeting of protesters. Where are the placards, the banners, the raised fists, the rousing orator? But these people, it happens, *are* protesters—protesters against curricular rigidity imposed by colleges on American high schools. Not *only* protesters, though. They are also organizers—builders—and their constructive efforts will soon overshadow their protests. The life of almost every American who has gone to school in this country since 1911 has been touched, at least slightly, by what happened among the people pictured here.

Early accounts say that sixty-five persons attended this meeting on December 1 and 2, 1911, at Chicago's Great Northern Hotel. Possibly the number was as small as fifty or fifty-five. Thirty-five signed the roster of charter members of the National Council of Teachers of English, an organization born of protest but inspired by altruistic urges.

Of the charter members whose names survive, twenty-one were teachers or administrators in secondary schools, six were from normal schools or teachers colleges, and eight taught in other colleges or universities. Since the Council originated in protest by public secondary schools against curricular domination by colleges, the majority of those present were from the public high schools. But evidence that not all college teachers were considered villains lies in the election of a president, secretary, and treasurer from their ranks. President Fred Scott was recognized as a sturdy supporter of high school teachers and students, and several other of the college teachers

cago founders'
tt, 1912, 1913;
Hopkins, 1916.
F. Hosic, 1920;
ıas C. Blaisdell,

had taught in the lower schools. Through the years a similar interest has been shared by many College Section members.

Elementary teachers were not represented in the group, not because of oversight or indifference, but because the meeting had been called to deal with high school-college relations. An Elementary Section would be formed at the 1912 convention.

Almost a third of NCTE's charter members were women. But, sadly, none of the female charter members ever became president. However, Emma Breck, the lone Californian in the group, was the original first vice-president and served two later terms as second vice-president. Cornelia S. Hulst became a second vice-president in 1915. During most of the Council's early years, one officer, usually the second vice-president, was a woman. Not until 1928–1929 was a woman, Rewey Belle Inglis, elected president; she was followed by Ruth Mary Weeks and, after an interval of a year, by Stella S. Center. The Council was making up for lost time.

There were no representatives of minority groups. Later the Council would elect three black presidents in the span of a few years, but 1911 was long before the awakening. Almost all the names of the charter members are pure Anglo-Saxon: Hill, Wingate, Squires, Jenkins, Noble, Lynch, Clark, Clay, Livengood, Hopkins, and so on. There were no Italians, although the decade 1901–1910 brought two million Italian immigrants to our shores. There was one possibly Jewish name, Levy; one German name, Kling; one French, Maury. And no Irish, although one day the Council would have an Irish Catholic executive director named Hogan. Hosic, the name of the man with the flying coattails, is apparently central European. Hatfield (another English name) was not represented at the first convention, although from 1912 on, the name of W. Wilbur Hatfield would be one of the most prominent in the Council.

Among the charter members were seven future NCTE presidents:

Fred (not Frederick) Newton Scott. First and second president—the only person ever elected to two terms. Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Michigan, but deeply concerned with the lower schools. Coauthor (1903) of one of the earliest books on the teaching of English. Established precedent of long-continuing NCTE service following the presidency.

E. H. Kemper McComb. Fourth president (1915) and the first non-college person to hold that office. Head of the English Depart-

2 An Attempt at a New Order, 1913–1917

Modern teachers who hear or read fulminations about their failure to teach students to read and write, and who are adjured to return to the unspecified good old days when the "basics" were taught and supposedly everyone emerged from high school or college well read and amazingly articulate, may feel wickedly gleeful about criticisms made of English teaching, even by English teachers themselves, during the second decade of our century.

Change: Necessary but Difficult

A speaker at the 1916 annual NCTE meeting declared, "Despite our efforts the results of the teaching of English in our public schools are most unsatisfactory. To use a much overworked pedagogical expression, it does not 'function.' Over 80 per cent of our adult population read little else than the billboards and the newspapers, and this they do most unintelligently."

A University of Texas professor declared in the same year that elementary and secondary school teachers "coddled" children too much:

> It seems an odd fact that students who have spent eleven or twelve years in the so-called study of English composition should not be able to write fairly good sentences, should not be able to punctuate properly, and should misuse the English grammar in a truly pitiable fashion. Yet such is the condition of about 50 per cent of them at a low estimate, as most college teachers of English can testify.

A high school teacher adduced evidence that high school seniors of 1914, at least in one school, wrote no better than freshmen. Hosic criticized oral language: "In America, nearly all talk is bad—bad as respects voice and pronunciation."

Edwin Miller, three years before his presidency, gave examples of some deficiencies he had observed:

it the full meaning of the present life." A school should reproduce "within itself the typical conditions of social life. . . . The only way to prepare for social life is to engage in social life," for a child cannot learn to swim "by going through motions outside of the water."

As for language and literature, according to Dewey,

> we lose much of [their] value . . . because of our elimination of the social element. Language is almost always treated in books of pedagogy simply as the expression of thought. It is true that language is a logical instrument, but it is fundamentally and primarily a social instrument. Language is the device for communication; it is the tool through which one individual comes to share the ideas and feelings of others. When treated simply as a way of getting information, or as a means of showing off what one has learned, it loses its social motive and end.

The education of his day, Dewey wrote in 1915,

> is highly specialized, one-sided and narrow. It is an education dominated almost entirely by the medieval conception of learning. It is something which appeals for the most part simply to the intellectual aspect of our natures, our desire to learn, to accumulate information, and to get control of the symbols of learning; not to our impulses and tendencies to do, to create, to produce, whether in the form of utility or art.

Those who have stated that Dewey denied the importance of content have overlooked statements that he made as early as 1902 in *The Child and the Curriculum*. In that booklet he decried overemphasis on either subject matter or the child and insisted on the necessity of effecting an interaction of the two:

> Abandon the notion of subject-matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child's experience; cease thinking of the child's experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and we realize that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process.

The Changing Population

We need to recall one other feature of early twentieth-century life as background for the Reorganization Report. This was the changing character of American society. Population had passed 100 million by 1915, and Anglo-Saxons had become less numerous than before in proportion to Germans, Irish, and Southern, Central, and Eastern Europeans. Italy alone had sent us more than 4 million immigrants before 1920 (most of them after 1890); Russia another 3 million

(mostly Jews); the Scandinavian countries 2 million; all of Europe exclusive of Great Britain a total of 25 million. The number of Asian immigrants was far smaller but still significant, reaching 40,000 in a single year during this period. The immigrants made New York and some other cities linguistic Towers of Babel and made some rural areas largely monolingual—but the language was not English.

They also brought into the schools millions of children who knew almost no English and who shared little of the cultural heritage of the native born. Such students, as well as many native Americans, could not cope with difficult literature thrust upon them too soon. Robert Fay, in his dissertation on the reorganization movement, quotes as a case in point a poignant account of the struggles of a bright young Rumanian, Marcus Ravage:

> But the classics! We began, mind you, with Milton. The nights and the Sundays I spent on "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," looking up words and classical allusions, if I had devoted them as earnestly to shirt making, would have made me rich. And then I would go to class and the teacher would ask me whether I thought there were two separate persons in the poems, or just one person in two different moods. Bless my soul! I had not thought there were any persons in it at all. I had made up my mind that it was something about a three-headed dog that watched at the gate of Hades, whatever that was. So I would go back and read those puzzling lines again and again, in a sort of blind hope that sheer repetition would somehow make me understand them, until I got them by heart.

While the increasing population was reducing elbowroom and closing frontiers, mobility was increasing: fast trains usually ran on schedule, and automobiles, some alarmists feared, were threatening to supplant horsedrawn vehicles. This ease of movement made it possible for many families to seek work almost anywhere and to shift their homes accordingly.

The demand for education was growing even faster than the population. Rural schools, once open only three or four of the winter months, now remained open from September until April or May. High schools doubled in enrollment between 1910 and 1920 and would double once more in the following decade. College enrollments followed a similar pattern.

Out of such a background grew *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*, published in 1917 by the Bureau of Education, then a part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

3 Surgent Americanism, 1918–1930

"This war," said President Allan Abbott at the Council's convention in 1917, "turns out to be in large measure a schoolmasters' war. It is a war of ideas, a war of visions." Germany, he declared, had been "schoolmastered" into its present attitude of mind, while we Americans had been "groping our way toward the building up of quite other beliefs."

> Life may be given in many ways [he quoted],
> And loyalty to truth be sealed
> As bravely in the closet as the field.

English teachers, said Abbott, are "conservators of a great national tradition." The spirit of American literature, although it has been "a kindly and tender spirit . . . , a God-fearing spirit, welcoming to brotherhood all nations, taking to arms with reluctance," had nevertheless been, as Whittier illustrated, "a trumpet to battle in the cause of the slaves." Emerson had also portrayed the spirit in his essay on war, "the best of pacifist sermons," and Lowell had insisted, " . . . freedom ain't a gift / That tarries long in hands o' cowards."

Most presidential addresses in the Council's history have been just that: addresses. Addresses informative or scholarly, sometimes touched with humor, often hortatory, occasionally inspirational, often a reflection of the speaker's special interest and concern. Abbott's address, however, was probably the greatest *oration* the Council ever heard. Its style is now passé and was old-fashioned even in 1917, but some of its phrases would be reflected for the next several years (at least) in the professional dialogue of the most idealistic and patriotic of teachers of English: "custodians . . . of the ideals of our race"; "weapons of the spirit"; "union, not merely of our states, but of all men and classes within the states"; "the good of all rather than of some"; "the power to tell the truth"; "confront the disordered facts of life with a question, to demand of them a solution, based on truth"; "this rebuilding of the world." Abbott concluded with a Whitman benediction for America:

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Thee in thy future,
. . . thy soaring spirit,
Thee risen in potent cheerfulness and joy, . . .
Scattering for good the cloud that hung so long, that
weigh'd so long upon the mind of man.

Abbott's oration was, of course, in keeping with the resolve of a nation which had asserted that the right is more precious than peace and which had vowed to make the world safe for democracy.

The next day, in a small but symbolic gesture, the business meeting instructed the officers to invest $100 of the Council's tiny cash reserve ($374) in a Liberty Bond.

The Council and the War

War-related articles were frequent in the *English Journal* in 1918. C. C. Certain of Detroit, who later would found *Elementary English Review*, told how Detroit schoolchildren helped to sell millions of dollars worth of Liberty Bonds. Joliet, Illinois, students raised money for The Fatherless Children of France Committee. A public speaking class in a large-city high school induced other students to collect and send five thousand books to "our soldiers."

The *Journal* reported a convention speech by Stuart Pratt Sherman on "The College Teaching of English and the Inculcation of American and Allied Ideals," in which Sherman ranged through old and recent literature to illustrate the repetitive struggles for "the cause of the commonwealth of civilized man." Charles G. Osgood of Princeton, writing on "American Ideals through College English," struck a similar note: "The concern of the teacher is not with our national aspirations as they have been and are, except in so far as his understanding of them enables him to help determine what they shall be." "Both literature and composition," said a *Journal* editorial, "are taking on new significance with the growing seriousness of the national consciousness. More and more, books and periodicals are read for their content, for their human interest, for the light they throw on what men live for, and less for a specialized knowledge of historical facts or growth in the capacity to evaluate writing in terms of technique." "Everything is now related to the world-war," said the same editorial.

Inevitably, some of the professional recommendations made by teachers were jingoistic or silly. A New York City teacher, after asserting that the English teacher's "greatest opportunity for service

financial support for the public schools." He thus shared what would still be a concern of many Americans some five or six decades later.

The Council announced as its convention theme in 1918 "The Adjustment of English Teaching to the Needs of Democracy." Because of the war and a severe influenza epidemic, however, the convention had to be postponed until February 1919, three months after the war had ended.

The Council and the Peace

As the war neared its end, Hosic began looking at the problems peace would bring. He himself spent the immediate postwar period in Europe as chairman of an instructional team that organized an extensive educational program in English for soldiers in the American Army of Occupation. "Unless all signs fail," he said, "English is to be the chief humanizing agency in the schools of the future, the chief means by which the best that has been said and thought in the world shall be assimilated by our generation." Even more broadly, he continued,

> the Great War has opened up new prospects and has brought us face to face with new problems. In particular we must do our part in establishing a new and more democratic social order. Privileges readily accorded in war time will not be readily relinquished in peace. More than ever intelligence and good-will must be manifested if we are to be at peace as a nation. But beyond this lies the problem of establishing just and healthy international relations. Never again will America dwell in isolation. We are one of the family of nations.

The two major topics that Hosic saw as "most in need of treatment in the immediate future" by teachers of English were Americanization and the teaching of American ideals. In connection with the former, Hosic knew that only scattered efforts had ever been made to teach English to foreign-born adults and that their children were seldom given special attention in the schools. Concerning the teaching of American ideals, Hosic declared, "Preaching will not do. The procedures must involve genuine constructive activity. As yet, however, there is no recognized and successful mode."

The Council in 1917 had passed an official resolution urging "upon educational authorities throughout the country the patriotic necessity of providing now and in the future for the rapid Americanization of all foreign elements by insisting upon instruction in the English language for all residents within the United States." Despite that

preferred to ignore generalized ideals and to think and argue about women's suffrage, prohibition, and the pros and cons of American membership in the League of Nations and the World Court or to marvel at the exploits of heroes like Babe Ruth and Charles Lindbergh. Immigrants often encountered hostility, born partly of the fear that they would keep true-blue Americans from getting work. Legislation greatly restricting immigration was passed in the mid-20s. Many businessmen—typified by Sinclair Lewis's one hundred percent American George Babbitt—saw a Red menace in almost every foreign-sounding name, in every questioner of established procedures or beliefs. The cause of idealism was not helped by extremists of both the left and the right. It was certainly not helped by Teapot Dome and related scandals which showed that corruption and graft could extend into the very cabinet of a U.S. president.

Encouraged by their professional leaders, however, and probably by their natural inclinations, many English teachers of the 1920s tried to define American ideals and to find ways to make of their students responsible citizens who would uphold and advance those ideals. A Minnesota teacher, Edith Penny (one of a remarkable little Minneapolis group that included future Council presidents Rewey Belle Inglis, Dora V. Smith, and Luella B. Cook), described a course called "The American Spirit," divided into segments on "What America Stands For," "The Spirit of the Pioneers," "America the Land of Opportunity," and "Where There Is No Vision, the People Perish." In 1920, an editorial by W. W. H[atfield] urged that the Pilgrim Tercentenary be celebrated by having the children take leading roles in initiating and directing, so as to illustrate "a democratic spirit by a democratic method." The High School Section during the 1920 convention devoted its entire discussion to "What Is Americanism?"

One of the Council's leaders, Charles S. Pendleton of the University of Wisconsin (later of Peabody College), identified American ideals as dynamics, individuality, cooperation, achievement, and service, but claimed that the typical school failed to exemplify these ideals, being too static, conventionalized, lacking in teamwork, given to "bits and driblets" rather than solid accomplishment, and negligent of direct social and civic service. In 1923, Walter Barnes of Fairmont, West Virginia, who would be the NCTE president a decade later, echoed Pendleton in a thin book called *The New Democracy in the Teaching of English*. Like Pendleton, he believed that the schools should practice democracy, not just preach it. A reviewer praised the book as follows:

> In many square miles of territory in this country the urchins are creeping like snails to school for reading and writing as they did when [Shakespeare's] Jacques observed them. I am not cynical in my philosophy, yet I am certain that the wagging of the world for four centuries has not led to democratized teaching of English. There is need for Mr. Barnes's book. May it reach both Main Street and Back Bay.

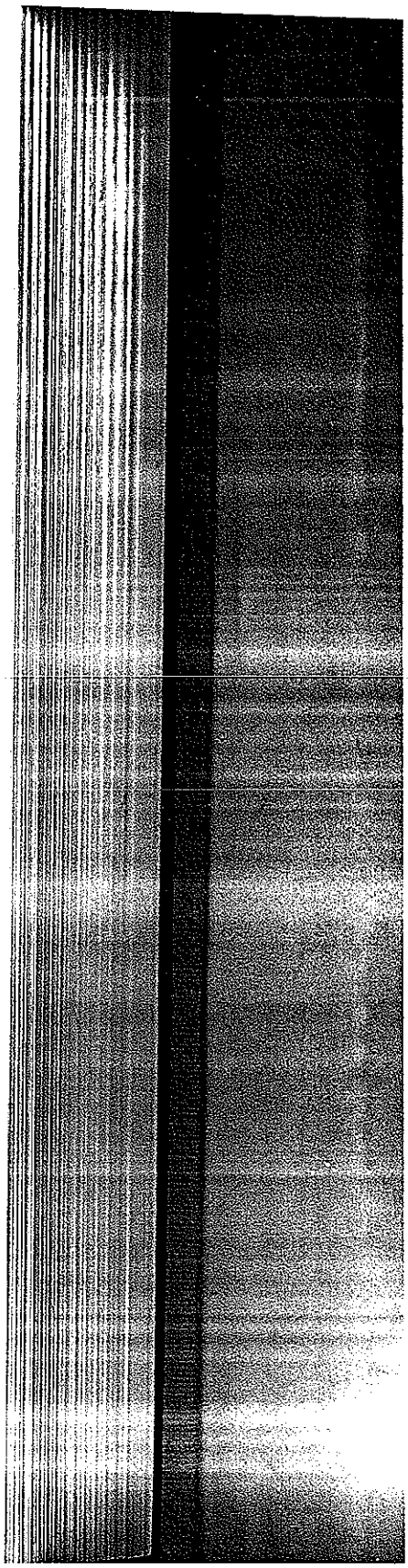
Perhaps no one better illustrated the hopes and idealism of many English teachers than did a relatively obscure and no-longer-young teacher, E. Estelle Downing of Michigan State Normal College. Downing's father had told stories of his being wounded and hospitalized in the Civil War, of his brother's being killed beside him. In her history books as a girl she had turned quickly past the pictures of death-strewn battlefields. "I knew in my heart," she said, "that war was very wasteful, very cruel, and very wicked; yet I heard only praise of its heroism and piously passive acceptance of its barbarity and folly." Carlyle, Ruskin, and Tolstoi had given her hopes of peace, but the Great War had shattered them. "I heard an old man, and a devout Christian, preach hatred for the enemy and offer prayers for their destruction; and I knew that war makes men and nations mad, that it is poison in the veins of the race."

So in 1925, she declared that she and her fellow teachers of English must aim higher than they had aimed before in their workaday tasks:

> How can we make English grammar function in better human relationships? How can we teach composition so that assertion will not pass for argument, prejudice for reason, or passion for knowledge? How can we teach literature so as to lessen combative group loyalties, inhibiting prejudices, and dangerous hatreds? How through the teaching of English can we prevent standardization of opinions and beliefs and the crystallization of a blind and deaf conservatism? How can we foster faith in the ultimate force of friendship, honesty, and justice between classes, races, and creeds?

Moved by Downing's eloquence, the Council that same year established an International Relations Committee with her as its chairman. She and her colleagues spoke to Council, affiliate, and outside groups; they wrote extensively; they cosponsored International Good Will Days.

But in Europe at that time Hitler was writing *Mein Kampf* and Mussolini was ready to suspend parliamentary government in his country. In Asia Japan was accelerating its search for a larger place in the sun. In the United States disillusion was spreading, greed was not abating, and the nation was moving toward the breadlines of the



depression. The time was steadily becoming less propitious for idealists.

In his presidential address of 1926, Sterling A. Leonard lamented, "Now that we have saved the world for democracy, no one seems to be very much interested in democracy." Wilbur Hatfield, in a 1927 editorial, wrote of a "reaction from the World War altruism and enthusiasm for humanity." English teachers' idealism, altruism, and enthusiasm for humanity were certainly not dead, but they were beginning to be buffeted by forces hard to overcome even with eloquent pens and voices.

Some Failures and a Success

During the late teens, the Public Speaking Section at NCTE conventions was discontinued, but a Committee on American Speech became increasingly active. Its energetic leader for a number of years was Claudia Crumpton, who taught first in Alabama schools and then in Detroit. In 1917, the Committee helped to induce the Chicago Women's Club Committee on American Speech (CWCCAS) to investigate "the actual conditions in Chicago as regards training in speech and in use of the voice." Various professional and business people cooperated. "Unquestionably," a spokesperson for CWCCAS reported, "the speech work has been inadequate and poorly correlated." Over-large classes, children of foreign parentage, and limited resources all contributed to the problem. The *English Journal* in 1918 praised the "modesty, saneness, breadth of view, and intelligent energy of the Chicago Speech Survey," calling it "the first deliberate effort by a body of outside citizens to examine and estimate the work of the schools in training young people in the use of the mother-tongue."

Teachers' own speaking voices, CWCCAS reported, tended to be "hard and high, or rough and loud, and occasionally . . . artificially sweet," even though the Chicago Normal College had begun requiring a weekly lesson in voice and speech. As for the children, many of them did not enunciate as the Women's Club would have liked: they said "jist," "'er" for *her*, "b'ind" for *behind*, "uz" for *as*, and "in" for *-ing*. In the high schools a growing popularity of classes in oral expression was reported, but even in those classes the students tended to use horrible slang expressions like "Gee, that's swell," and after the classes ended,

the students often reverted to their earlier habits. For adults, "Many schools are to be found in the downtown district in Chicago where men and women who are in business are taking training to improve their English," and heads of departments in large stores often lectured salespeople on "the necessity of refined speech."

The Council and CWCCAS began getting requests for help from various other groups, especially the Parent-Teacher Associations and the Congress of Mothers. Some of these groups passed resolutions endorsing the work of CWCCAS. A list of recommendations was prepared. At least one of these reflected the lack of linguistic and psychological sophistication of the Committee on American Speech and CWCCAS and foretold the silly kinds of activity that later would undermine and destroy whatever good the movement might have accomplished. It was in the form of a Pledge for Children that began this way:

> I love the United States of America. I love my country's flag. I love my country's language. I promise:
>
> 1. That I will not dishonor my country's speech by leaving off the last syllable of words.
> 2. That I will say a good American "yes" and "no" in place of an Indian grunt "um-hum" and "nup-um" or a foreign "yah" or "yeh" and "nope."

"In connection with this pledge," the recommendations went on, "it has been suggested that a list be prepared of 365 words commonly mispronounced." "This stirring movement for Americanization," CWCCAS asserted, would help everyone, but especially would induce the foreign-born person to "love and revere" her or his new language.

Linguistic scholars tried to head off some of the excesses. As early as 1918, George Philip Krapp of Columbia University, in an *English Journal* article, declared that there is no such thing as "American speech": Americans, like the English, speak their language in many forms. Krapp argued against training that would make speaking mechanical, questioned the desirability of "correcting" dialects, and urged that teachers study speech to find out what really *is* before they attempted to make it "better." In 1922, Louise Pound, discussing pronunciation, warned that British dictionaries could mislead Americans and that American dictionaries were often ultraconservative and unrealistic. She feared that teachers were reluctant to accept divided educated usage in pronunciation and that they therefore wasted time in trying

Robert Frost spoke praise of American immigrants, saying that "these great figures will be our history for a thousand years" (1928). Lindsay, inimitably chanting some of his poems, shared the podium with Frost, and on the same program was a young scholar named Howard Mumford Jones (then of North Carolina, but later a celebrated professor of English at Harvard) talking about Southern writers.

In 1927, Holland D. Roberts, who was for a time the assistant editor of the *Journal*, wondered editorially whether George Eliot, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray would not soon give place in the schools to Willa Cather, Edna Ferber, Sherwood Anderson, Joseph Hergesheimer, Zona Gale, and Sinclair Lewis. In 1930, Eda Lou Walton of New York University commented for the *Journal* on a new generation of urban poets:

> In New York are E. E. Cummings and his sophisticated sentimentalities, Hart Crane and his greater eternalities, Marianne Moore and her intellectual digressions, as well as the inevitable and renouncing Edna Millay, the shyer Lêonie Adams, and the more analytical Lynn Riggs and Horace Gregory. Nearby are such sophisticated lyricists as Wallace Stevens, Archibald MacLeish, and such specialists as William Carlos Williams and MacKnight Black.

In a 1928 *Journal* review of Vernon L. Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*, Paul Kaufman summarized how far America had moved in recognition of its own social, philosophical, and artistic worth:

> Even the most hurried skimmer of mere titles only must recognize with astonishment the flood of current volumes which offer new description and interpretation of the American scene—past, present, and future. Within two years, witness such extensive revaluations as suggested in *The Rise of American Civilization, The American Adventure, America's Coming of Age, America Finding Herself*, not to mention separate books on Thoreau, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Poe, George Washington, Anthony Comstock, and P. T. Barnum, and not even to attempt reference to the rising tide of novels which illumine some cross-section of our national development.

If the rush of publications left conscientious English teachers in doubt about what American writers to teach, publishers and textbook editors were eager to help. There was some fumbling at first in an attempt to find the high school year most suited for concentration on American literature, but soon by near consensus the junior year was chosen. And perhaps inevitably, certain authors and certain selections quickly became standard. There had to be brief tastes of John Smith

presidential address she did not refer directly to her sex, but she did include this paragraph:

> It was almost exactly three hundred years ago that Anne Bradstreet came to America—a pioneer woman to a pioneer land. She endured the hardships and privations of the rough frontier country. She found time in the demands of caring for eight children to write poetry, to cross the firmly grounded prejudice against "female wits."
>
> If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
> They'll say it's stolen, or else it was by chance.
>
> . . . Yet her voice was mighty in significance. Poetry from a land which through centuries of existence had known only great silence!

A second woman who became prominent in Council affairs in 1929 was Ruth Mary Weeks. The daughter of a Kansas City, Missouri, socialite, she had taught in a junior college and had then moved to Paseo High School, where she would teach and administer for many more years. She had written briefly for the *English Journal* and had had some poetry published elsewhere. Late in her life she recalled for James Mason that at the 1927 Board of Directors meeting, "I believe I was noticed mainly because the hotel was *freezing* and I wore a rather striking silk, fringed, green shawl. I was also young for the Council in those days. It was a small, tight group on the gray side." For years the shawls of Weeks and the wide-brimmed hats of a later president, Angela Broening, were familiar sights at Council conventions.

When, at the 1928 convention, possible sites for 1929 were being discussed, Weeks made an astonishing promise and was supported by Past President E. M. Hopkins of the University of Kansas. Weeks promised dubious Council directors and officers that if they held a convention farther west than St. Louis for the first time—specifically, in Kansas City—the attendance would be no fewer than six hundred! No Council convention had ever drawn more than four hundred persons. With considerable hesitation the Executive Committee decided to gamble that this energetic little woman—"this whirlwind," someone called her—could draw to Kansas City, if not six hundred, at least a respectable three or four hundred.

James Mason has looked into the details of that convention and has enriched his account with some quotations from Weeks herself. Let him continue the story:

> Miss Weeks had planned the details of the convention well; in this she had the help of a very loyal local committee chaired by C. T. Goodale. With the help of the local Chamber of Commerce and Herman