COMMENTS AND REACTIONS
Dora V. Smith, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota

We have enjoyed a stimulating and profitable conference, considering together the problems of English education. I know you wish me to express our thanks once more to those who have worked with vigor and with foresight to make our gathering here a memorable one.

We have agreed unanimously on the importance of an adequate background in academic subject matter for those who are to teach English in the junior and senior high schools of this country. Such a program, we believe, should include (1) knowledge of English, American, and world literature; (2) an introduction to the historical development of the English language and understanding of the present status of structural linguistics; and (3) at least one course in composition beyond freshman English, which should help prospective teachers to understand and to practice the principles of expository and personal writing which they will teach to high school pupils.1

Dr. Robert Pooley has revealed to us a dearth of research which should undergird our program of teacher preparation in English. He has also pointed out too general inadequacy among us in understanding the techniques of research necessary to intelligent reading of studies by others and to effective designing of our own. We who teach English have seldom enjoyed an innate capacity for mathematics. Fortunately, we have men and women on our staffs in education and in mathematics who can help us. Would it not be profitable for us to set up seminars for ourselves to which we might invite our colleagues who are proficient in research to explain to us the terms necessary for efficient reading of significant studies? Then out of such a conference might come a permanent liaison between these experts and our graduate students and us whereby we might depend upon their help in setting up research of our own. A major eastern university employs a full-time research director who does nothing else but serve this function for all concerned with carrying on research.

Of special interest to all of us is the summary and evaluation of research in composition about to be published by a Council committee, chaired by Richard Braddock of the Department of Rhetoric at the University of Iowa. It opens with a section setting forth the flaws common to studies excluded from the report, followed by a list of practices used in experiments which were considered acceptable.2 The committee hopes the report may be useful as a guide for those engaging hereafter in studies of the teaching of composition.

Back of research are always a questioning attitude toward glib generalizations on how best to teach various elements of the English program and a constant searching for problems which need to be studied next. The habit of

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questioning can be instilled in students very early in their preparation for teaching. For example, some years ago a book on the teaching of reading reproduced a letter from Sir Winston Churchill to the king of England concerning who should succeed him as prime minister if he should be killed on a projected visit to France. The letter contained thirteen adverbial clauses. "No one can read this letter intelligently," said the author, "unless he can pick out these adverbial clauses and explain their function in the sentence."

Nothing could be easier than to test the validity of that statement. A graduate student drew up both a reading test and a grammar test based on the letter. Eventually, the passage became one of many tested in her doctoral study involving tenth grade students from widely separated sections of the United States. The letter proved to be the easiest reading item in the entire study and the most difficult one in grammar. It was Dr. Ingrid Strom, our hard-working local chairman of this conference, who made the study.

Some months ago, I visited with a graduate student from a distant university, who told me she had completed her course work for the Ph.D. and planned to devote the spring term to her dissertation. "I think I will write on creativity," she said. If doctoral theses in the teaching of English are allowed to degenerate into glorified term papers, there will be no impetus for the research necessary to intelligent teaching of English methods.

Who Should Teach Methods?

There has been some discussion in various sections of the conference concerning which department of a college or university should offer the course in English methods. To me this question seems relatively immaterial though it may be of interest to note that a resolution passed jointly by the College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1962 recommended that "the course in methods of teaching English, credited as work in education and taught by a qualified teacher accepted by the departments of English and education, be an integral part of the professional sequence of the English major, and be included among the requirements for certification of English teachers."  

What matters most, it seems to me, is that we should keep the qualifications for the position high.

1. The person offering the course in English methods should be more thoroughly prepared in English than the English majors he is teaching. Although this seems a modest proposal, the requirement is not always adhered to in the colleges of this country.

2. He should have qualified both in English and in professional education for the certificate for which he is preparing his students.

3. He should have taught English in high school a goodly number of years so that he may understand thoroughly the problems of prospective teachers.

4. Since he is the college or university's contact man or woman with the public schools, he should have kept close to those who are teaching in the high

*Copies are available from the office of the National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois.
schools of his state and should have attended their state and local meetings regularly. In short, he should be intimately related to the teaching of English in the high schools which his students will serve.

At the University of Minnesota, we have found especially helpful for both college and high school instructors through the years an annual campus conference on the problems of teaching English in secondary schools. A committee, chosen by the instructor in English methods and called by the dean of education, prepares the program. This committee is composed of representative members of the academic departments of English in literature, composition, and linguistics and professors of speech, journalism, and dramatics, the head of the department of English in the University High School, and a professor of curriculum and one in reading. Off-campus representatives include the presidents of the Minneapolis and St. Paul English clubs in each of the academic areas mentioned above and the state presidents of similar organizations, state and Twin City supervisors in these areas, three representatives of small town English departments, and the university, state, and Twin City school library associations. These committee members talk over together the problems facing teachers of English at the moment, plan the conference, and suggest speakers. After that, the chairman, who is the instructor in English methods, with any needed assistance from campus members of the committee, invites the speakers and arranges for meetings and meals. The dean of education sends out the invitations to teachers of the state and pays the bills. Nothing else we have done throughout the years has given both campus and off-campus teachers so great a sense of mutual need and mutual helpfulness as this conference.

Relation to Methods of Other Courses

We have covered fairly well in the last two days the relations between the methods course and the offerings of the English department. It may be useful at a future meeting to consider the relationship of the course in English methods to what has preceded it in the program in education. The courses mentioned in the various sectional meetings have been Foundations of Education, including educational philosophy and the functions of secondary education in this country, the Psychology of Learning and of Adolescence, and General Principles of Teaching.

Surveys of students' evaluations of courses in education always place Student Teaching first in value and English Methods and Literature for Adolescents second. Literature for Adolescents is the only course which I have ever seen superseding methods in the rating of individual teachers except the experience in teaching. The courses in foundations, in child development, and in learning always rank lower on the scale of values. I wonder if this results because their relationship to methods and teaching is not made sufficiently clear to prospective teachers during their course in English methods. For example, in philosophy and in purpose the secondary schools of the United States differ markedly from those of most European countries. I remember vividly accompanying a small cousin of six to his secondary school in London, where he was to spend all his school years until he passed a final school-leaving examination or the matriculation examination for college. It was a handsome red brick build-
ing, over the gate of which was inscribed the name, Wilson’s Grammar School for the Sons of Gentlemen. Around it was a high wall, also of red brick, on top of which were pieces of glass and nails so that the sons of gentlemen could not climb over to mingle with the rest of the population.

Some years after World War II, my sister and I were wandering in our old haunts in southeast London, when we came on a battered red brick building with a broken wall falling into the school yard. Over the gate, which was still upright, was a simple sign: Wilson’s School. This is what two world wars did to British education. Thomas Mann, in a Phi Beta Kappa address in Berkeley in 1941, attributed the holocaust in Germany to the fact that her “doers” and her “thinkers” had been educated separately. St. Augustine, the old capital of Spanish Florida, proudly displays to visitors the oldest school building built on this continent. Behind it is a “grove of educators,” one from each country of the Western hemisphere. Who is it that represents the United States? Interestingly enough, it is Horace Mann, who gave up his law practice in Boston to stomp the state of Massachusetts on behalf of a single school system for all the children of the nation. Baltimore already had its Benevolent Society for the Education of the Female Poor, and Philadelphia, its Society for the Establishment and Support of Charity Schools. Thanks to Horace Mann, we developed in this country a pattern of our own, adapted to the ideology and conditions of a new nation.

What does such a philosophy do to the range of individual differences in our classrooms and our method of dealing with them? Does the question have any connection with the methods course? Future teachers need to face this problem in specific relation to the teaching of English.

Jerome Bruner, in his thought-provoking book on The Process of Education, deals not only with “the structure of the subject” but with the processes of growth in children. “One must respect the ways of thought of the growing child,” he says, and likewise the ways of feeling and of imagining. One must clarify for him the personal significance of what he is learning. Only in this way will he be led to assume responsibility for the pursuit of new knowledge. We as teachers, he believes, must pursue excellence while honoring the diversity of talents. Such principles have been the subject of study for many years. The prospective teacher has heard much about them in the courses which precede English methods. It is the business of the methods course to relate them all to the improved teaching of English. Ways of organizing the program so as to bridge this gap between educational philosophy, principles of learning, and the growth of children and young people and what is taught in English methods are being experimented with throughout the country. A group like ours has much to offer to the movement and much to learn from it. The stimulation of such meetings as this should help us on our way.

In some of the sectional meetings of this conference we have heard reports of William H. Evans’s survey of programs of teacher education in English.

4 Thomas Mann, “Thought and Life,” The Key Reporter, 6 (Autumn 1941), 1 and 5.
His results show that in one-third of the 576 colleges or universities responding to his questionnaire, teachers of English graduate without a specific course in methods of teaching their major subject. I believe that a group such as ours should investigate this situation and speak out in relation to it.

All of the aspects of the preparation of teachers of English discussed at this conference are examined in Volume V of the Curriculum Series of the National Council of Teachers of English, which will be available before the San Francisco meeting of the Council next November. It will be called *The Education of Teachers of English for American Schools and Colleges.*

Alfred Grommon of Stanford University and his co-workers at each level of our educational system have produced a book of which we may well be proud. It deals with the philosophical and practical problems of our specific task of preparing English teachers for American schools, bringing constantly to bear upon it the evidence of research already available in our field. What better preparation could we have for the next conference of this group to which we all look forward in 1964?

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*Mimeographed report of the Committee on Secondary Methods Courses of the National Council of Teachers of English by William H. Evans, Associate Chairman—to be included in a forthcoming pamphlet of the Council called The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, in preparation).*  