

PREAMBLINGS

With both sorrow and pleasure we print in this issue the talk given by Paul Roberts before the 1967 Annual Conference of the MCTE held in Rochester last May. The sorrow is for the loss of an admired colleague, one who has added much to the intellectual satisfactions of the English teacher. The reasons for the pleasure must be obvious to all those who heard Paul Roberts speak, or who will read the transcription of his speech which follows on the next pages. It seems particularly fitting that Mr. Roberts' Conference speech was introduced by Professor Harold B. Allen, about whom Mrs. Roberts wrote recently: "My husband thought very much and talked often of him."

The editorial staff will become a literal "we" next academic year, when it is enriched by the addition of two associates: for the secondary schools, Seymour Yesner, Consultant in Secondary School English for the Minneapolis Public Schools; and for the elementary schools, Sister Andre, at present serving as Linguistics Consultant and Master Teacher for the Central Minnesota Education Research and Development Council.

We plan to add another continuing feature next year, under the guidance of Mrs. Lucille Duggan of Richfield High School. While the function of her column is serious and useful, the titles that came to our minds suited only our frivolous tastes. The title must wait, then, until summer renews in us the juices of dignified creativity. The contents, to which we invite you all to contribute, will be devoted to brief accounts of tested classroom innovative practices or recommendations for experimentation and research. We lead off here with an example: Instead of passing on the entire accumulation of each student's composition folder, year by year, why not ask each student to choose the best theme(s) at the end of every year to go on to the next year's teacher? This will have the advantages of reducing the impedimenta and engaging the student in a practical judgment, as well as demonstrating his increasing skill as a writer.

The McKnight Family Education Fund is sponsoring an English Program focussed on oral and written composition in the elementary schools, to culminate next year. Director is Professor Naomi Chase of the University of Minnesota, who will organize the program in concord

with newly developing principles and methods for such instruction. Professor Chase is co-director of the Annual Institute of Creative Writing for and by Children.

We are impressed afresh at how certain subjects seem to draw their metaphors from a pattern of sources. Humanities teachers, judging by the articles in this issue, are notably attracted to apocalyptic imagery. Teachers in general turn to an industrial vocabulary for the common name for their practical conferences, producing at "workshops" what high-level management might persist in considering unmarketable commodities. Student teachers become "interns" in "clinical" experiences. We find this last troubling in its undertones of disease, hospitalization, and scientism. Our own preference inclining towards mysteries, whether of art or religion, we would substitute initiate, novice, postulant, and the dark night of the soul as terms more suitable to describe the student teacher's experience. Such lexical preferences aside, we welcome the chance to publish the first results of the initial AST - UMREL sponsored five-state invitational conference to test the Stanford University "technical skills" and "performance criteria" -- and everyone had a tense time steering that last word in and out of the plural -- of the teacher, and to develop the criteria by which a student teacher's performance might be judged in the various jobs that are the particular responsibility for the English teacher. Developing such criteria to help critic teachers train new members for our profession must be of interest to us nationally; we hope to hear more of this at our Annual Conferences both in the state and from the NCTE.

Future issues of M E J will be focussed on reports and articles from the forthcoming Annual Conference of the MCTE to be held April 19-20 at the Radisson Hotel in Minneapolis; and a selection of student papers on post World War II fiction chosen from nominations of English majors at the state's colleges at their Thirteenth Annual Conference held this last February at St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges. The Forum will print some answers to the question of what the State Department of Education does for all its English teachers, and what it would like to do if only local administrators would cooperate. We've got a potential symposium in the making on underground newspapers and "tasteful censorship." And we invite your contributions to the Review of Books.