

From Our Past

On April 23, 1960, at a special session of the spring conference at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, a meeting was held to form a new comprehensive state organization of English teachers. James Squire of NCTE christened the new organization and delivered the luncheon address. Dr. [Harold B.] Allen, [University of Minnesota-Minneapolis,] chaired the nomination committee and introduced the speakers of that first MCTE meeting.

During the succeeding months, hours were spent in drafting a constitution. Concern was for reaching and representing English teachers at all levels of instruction and at all types of institutions. The new organization, the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English (MCTE), immediately applied for a Class-A affiliate membership with the NCTE. MCTE membership dues were one dollar; associate membership, fifty cents; charter membership was available until September, 1960.

Records reveal that of the nearly three hundred members at that time a vast majority were high school teachers. White Bear schools had 100 percent membership; Austin, South St. Paul, Stillwater, and Virginia schools also had large MCTE memberships.

The first officers were Gerald Thorson, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, president; Lorna Bates, Austin High School, vice president; Stanley B. Kegler, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, executive secretary; Elfrieda Hintze, Waite Park Elementary School, Minneapolis, treasurer; and Joseph Miller, Moorhead State College, ex-officio member.

The *Minnesota English Newsletter* edited by Roger Kemp and William Ojala, both of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, first appeared in the spring of 1960. In an issue that fall, President Gerald Thorson stated the purpose of the MCTE:

1. To be the voice of English teachers, not a pressure group but a group to bring pressure as needed to upgrade the profession.
2. To integrate work at every level: to focus attention on problems we all share in areas of instruction, curriculum, and certification; to become informed about developing problems; to share insights and knowledge with others.
3. To learn more about language and literature; to inspire one another to a deeper understanding of subject matter; to be linguists and literary scholars in some measure.

During his presidency Dr. Thorson urged a heightened articulation between high schools and colleges and offered some suggestions to carry this out:

1. Prepare to make available a bibliography of studies in English curriculum.
2. Establish a program to publicize the *Minnesota Guide* and curriculum studies of NCTE.
3. Publish statements on the preparation for English teachers available in Minnesota colleges and universities.

Recognizing the need for immediate action, MCTE set up six committees to expand the scope of activity: Articulation, Curriculum, Fifth-Year Program for Teacher Education, Resolutions, Standards and Certification, and Teacher Load. In addition, a liaison was established between the Minnesota Education Association and MCTE.

Through the first year the organization progressed because of the work of many professionals, especially the tireless work of the Executive Secretary, Stanley B. Kegler, [University of Minnesota-Minneapolis,] a prime mover of MCTE. Two of his significant projects were the appointment of MCTE representatives in schools throughout Minnesota to increase the awareness of MCTE's goals and its importance to Minnesota teachers and the study of teacher load.

[**Excerpt from:**] *A History of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English: The First Twenty-Five Years* by Edna C. Downing.