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### The national association

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## THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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J. M. O'NEILL  
The University of Wisconsin

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THE National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking is at last a reality. It numbers in its membership, which is distributed over thirty-one states and Canada, most of the eligible teachers of reputation and position in America. It is fitting that we should in this our first formal appearance explain our presence, give the reason for our being, and declare our purposes and plans.

For a number of years departments of public speaking, under various titles, have been growing in size, usefulness, and academic dignity. Ever-increasing responsibility has been given to the members of these departments, and has been carried by them, apparently, with ever-increasing satisfaction to all interested in education. Today the various courses covered by the general heading "Public Speaking" are offered in a majority of the leading colleges and universities in America, in well-organized, independent departments. The number of such departments is rapidly growing. Many normal schools, the leading private schools, and most of the large high schools have a definite part of their curricula in the hands of special teachers of public speaking.

Paralleling this rapid material growth, there has been developing recently what might be called a spiritual growth—in the consideration of professional ethics, the heightening of professional ideals, the stiffening of professional standards, the growth of professional pride, and *esprit de corps*. As a class we have developed a very healthful attitude of self-questioning and mutual criticism. All has not been well in all places with affairs in this department—as in other departments. Many important questions have been settled differently in different institutions (those in authority often acting in ignorance of what others had done or were doing) or have been

ignored and left unsettled. Among such questions are those having to do with the proper qualification of teachers, special training for teachers in this field (as distinct from training for the public platform, or for teaching English, history, or economics), academic credit for work, subordination of student activities to academic courses, private lessons and special fees, and the relations with other academic departments.

Out of this general situation there has grown a strong feeling in late years that we should have a national professional organization and an official organ, in order that we might find out what is being done and what people think should be done. A centralized system for promoting investigation, disseminating knowledge, and crystallizing and expressing professional opinion seemed badly needed. This has been realized by individual teachers for some time, but a good opportunity for launching a national movement backed by a sufficient group to make success seem possible, first presented itself in November, 1913. At that time a large number of teachers of public speaking happened to attend the meetings of the National Council of the Teachers of English in Chicago. At a largely accidental, and wholly informal, gathering held at that time, the whole situation was discussed at length. It was decided to send out a questionnaire in order to find out how the teachers of the country felt in regard to departmental organization in their respective institutions, and in regard to a national association of teachers of public speaking. For this purpose a committee was organized under the chairmanship of Professor C. D. Hardy of Northwestern University.

Replies to the questionnaire sent out by the committee were received from 116 teachers, representing 93 institutions (51 independent departments, 38 English, 4 others). The vote on the proposal to organize a national association resulted as follows: No, 3; Yes, 113. An opportunity was given for the expression of a preference as to whether such a national association should be an independent organization or a section of the Council of English Teachers, National Speech Arts Association, or National Education Association. Those voting expressed preferences as follows: Independent, 41; Council of English Teachers, 41; National

Speech Arts Association, 10; National Education Association, 16; miscellaneous, 5.

As it was evident that the only question left in doubt by this vote was whether the national organization should be independent or a section of the English Council, a second vote on this point was requested from those voting any other way. The final result of the questionnaire is shown by this table:

	VOTE	DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION			
		Present Status		Preference	
		English	Separate	English	Separate
Independent.....	57	11	42	4	50
Council of English Teachers	56	29	25	19	34
Miscellaneous.....	3	3	0	0	1
	116	43	67	23	85

At the meeting of the Public-Speaking Section of the National Council of Teachers of English in Chicago on Friday afternoon, November 27, 1914, Professor Hardy reported the results of the questionnaire. It was moved and seconded that the teachers there present organize a National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking to meet independently of but simultaneously with the National Council of Teachers of English. A long debate ensued on this motion. It was argued in favor of it, (1) that the replies to the questionnaire showed that the overwhelming majority of teachers in the larger and better-known institutions favored independent organization, (2) that a large number of those voting for the Council of Teachers of English did so because they thought an independent organization meant a meeting at a different time and place. They wanted to attend the Council of Teachers of English meetings and did not want to make two trips. Men who had voted for the English Council for this reason were present advocating the adoption of this resolution. It was also shown (3) that as a section of the National Council of Teachers of English the teachers of Public Speaking had no independent authority in the election of their officers, appointment of committees, or in publication of articles in the organ of the Council, *The English Journal*.

It was argued (4) that an independent organization was needed to do for teachers of Public Speaking what similar organizations are doing for teachers in all other departments. Harmony and co-operation with the English Council was advocated by all those speaking for the motion.

Against the motion it was claimed (1) that such an organization could not enjoy harmonious relations with the English Council, that its organization would check co-operation, and that (2) the National Speech Arts Association met the need for a national organization. After considerable debate the motion was laid on the table by a vote of 18 to 16.

Of course this vote settled nothing—except that eighteen people present did not want the main question voted on. The wishes of the great body of teachers of public speaking in regard to a national organization, as shown in the replies to the questionnaire, were in no way carried out. For purposes of full and honest record three statements ought to be added here, viz., first, that *more than two* of the people voting to table this motion were public readers—not teachers—or teachers in other departments than public speaking; secondly, this vote was taken at a time when the attendance was small—a number of strong supporters of the motion being absent at the time, and, thirdly, that *at least two* (I think three) of the men who voted to table this motion were present at the conference the next morning and voted for all the motions passed in that meeting. All actions taken at the Saturday morning session were passed by unanimous vote.

On Saturday morning, November 28, 1914, a group of teachers of public speaking met and again discussed the wisdom of organizing a national association. It was felt by these men (whose names appear below as charter members) that an independent national organization could do many things that need to be done for the profession, and which could not be done by a section of the Council of Teachers of English which would have no independent authority—especially in encouraging research work, in promoting the establishment of more uniform standards, in carrying on committee investigations, and in publishing a professional quarterly. Since a majority of public-speaking teachers are already carrying on their

work independently of other departments, and expressed a desire for an independent national association, it was voted unanimously to organize "The National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking, for the purpose of promoting research work and more effective teaching."

The following teachers registered as charter members:

I. M. Cochrane.....	Carleton College
Loren Gates.....	Miami University
J. S. Gaylord.....	Winona Normal
H. B. Gislason.....	University of Minnesota
H. B. Gough.....	DePauw University
Binney Gunnison.....	Lombard College
C. D. Hardy.....	Northwestern University
J. L. Lardner.....	Northwestern University
G. N. Merry.....	University of Iowa
J. M. O'Neill.....	University of Wisconsin
J. M. Phelps.....	University of Illinois
F. M. Rarig.....	University of Minnesota
L. R. Sarett.....	University of Illinois
B. C. Van Wye.....	University of Cincinnati
J. A. Winans.....	Cornell University
I. L. Winter.....	Harvard University
C. H. Woolbert.....	University of Illinois

The following elections and appointments resulted:

#### OFFICERS

*President*, Professor J. M. O'Neill, University of Wisconsin  
*Vice-President*, Professor J. A. Winans, Cornell University  
*Secretary*, Professor H. B. Gislason, University of Minnesota  
*Treasurer*, Professor Glenn N. Merry, University of Iowa

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The foregoing officers and Professor F. M. Rarig, University of Minnesota, Chairman, Public-Speaking Section of the National Council of Teachers of English:

#### MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The President, Chairman  
 Professor H. B. Gough, DePauw  
 Professor C. D. Hardy, Northwestern

## COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH WORK

Professor J. S. Gaylord, Chairman, Winona Normal  
 Dr. Smiley Blanton, Wisconsin  
 Professor H. B. Gislason, Minnesota  
 Professor J. L. Lardner, Northwestern  
 Professor A. T. Robinson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
 Professor C. H. Woolbert, Illinois

## PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

Voted that the Executive Committee act as Publication Committee.

## COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Professor F. M. Rarig, Minnesota. Professor J. A. Winans, Cornell

The following are eligible to memberships in this association:

- A. Any teacher engaged in giving regular academic courses in separate and independent departments of Public Speaking in universities, colleges, normal schools, or secondary schools in the United States.
- B. Any teacher giving such courses in universities, colleges, and normal schools in any department other than the department of Public Speaking.
- C. Any member of a secondary school faculty whose work is *primarily or exclusively* in public speaking, regardless of departmental organization.
- D. Any person not included in A, B, or C whose application for membership shall be favorably acted upon by the membership committee.

The first annual convention will be held in Chicago, on November 26 and 27, 1915.

The dues are \$2.00 per year, plus \$1.00 registration fee for the first year. These dues paid by any teacher eligible for membership entitles to: full voting membership, all circulars, announcements, etc., and one year's subscription to the *Quarterly Journal*. Subscription to the *Journal* for those outside of this association will be \$2.00 per year.

The response from all sections of the country has shown conclusively that the academic teachers of public speaking approve of the actions taken at this meeting. As a result we are as a profession at last united in a nation-wide association, and we have a publication devoted exclusively to the interests of our profession.

So much for what lies behind us. Now what of the future?

The National Association has the following purposes in view. First, we wish to promote and encourage research work in various

parts of the field of public speaking; we wish to encourage and assist individuals and committees who will undertake by scientific investigation to discover the true answer to certain problems. Elsewhere in this number we publish the first report of the Research Committee as well as articles and editorial comment on this subject. Our second main purpose is to publish the *Quarterly Journal*. Through this periodical we hope to distribute to all the profession the results of research investigation. We intend that it shall be the organ of the teachers of public speaking throughout the country, and as such shall contain reviews, articles, discussions, and news items of vital interest to teachers of public speaking. In short we propose a national organ owned and controlled by the public-speaking teachers of the whole country, of a character that will stand comparison with the professional journals of our colleagues in other departments. We expect the *Quarterly Journal* to serve the teachers of public speaking as other professional journals serve teachers in other fields. The success of our whole movement for more thorough scholarship and better teaching is closely dependent upon the success of the *Quarterly Journal*. It is through the *Journal* that we must always reach the majority of teachers; and through the *Journal* that those who cannot attend conventions may keep in touch with what is being done by others and give the results of their work to their fellow-workers. Here we will have at once a means of communication between ourselves and the gathering together of much of that tangible part of the products of our labor by which the profession as a profession will largely be judged by others.

In the third place the National Association wishes to assist in every possible way the organization and activity of local or sectional associations and conferences. We wish to serve as a medium of co-operation and co-ordination. We hope to publish in the *Quarterly Journal* full reports of all meetings wherever held which have to do with work of any kind in public speaking. Through the *Quarterly Journal* teachers may keep in touch with the activities of all conferences.

Finally, it may be well to state, what we trust would be taken for granted anyway, that in this movement there is no desire for



seclusion and aloofness. It is for the purpose of making ourselves better members of the educational family, more able to co-operate with other departments, and more capable of performing our part of the work of education, that we are taking these steps. Of course we propose at all times in all ways to co-operate cordially with English teachers as individual co-workers and in professional organizations, especially the National Council of Teachers of English. We realize that in many ways our interests coincide. We wish to promote mutually helpful relations in every possible way. To this end we have decided to hold our annual convention at the same time and place as that chosen by the National Council of Teachers of English—Chicago, on the week end following Thanksgiving. This will enable the many teachers interested in both departments to attend meetings of both associations.

For the carrying out of these plans and purposes there are already enlisted the great majority of "forward-looking" teachers who are eligible to the ranks. We want all to whom this characterization can apply. The few of this class who have not yet formally enrolled will, we trust, give their support to this movement very soon. There is much to be done. All who believe that it is worth while should help in the doing of it. Those who take part in all the work that is before us can with better grace and better appetite enjoy whatever benefits this work produces.