

children in the grades and the students in higher education, whose continuing needs make English the largest single concern of the schools and one of the major concerns of colleges and universities. These needs are urgent because the shortage of qualified English teachers and elementary teachers remains on a par with shortages in mathematics and science, shortages to which the President pointed so dramatically in his 1967 "Message on Education and Health in America."

National concern for national needs

The leaders and members of the National Council of Teachers of English share in the American conviction that education is the province of the states and local school districts. The Council has long encouraged its affiliated state and local English associations to work for the improvement of English instruction within their respective areas. But just as the affiliates have found professional strength and betterment in working through their National Council, so the NCTE has called for federal involvement when the needs of the profession were so great as to require national attention. As the Council reported to the Congress in 1961: "If the teaching of English is to be improved throughout the country, bold and immediate action must be undertaken on a national scale . . . The basic problems of improving the preparation of teachers and of articulating the study [of English] at all levels of education are so important and so large that they can be undertaken only by a national supported program."¹

Viewed in this light, 1963 and 1964 stand out as momentous years for American education. The passage of the Amendments to the National Defense Education Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the National Arts and Cultural Development Act of 1964, were notable achievements of the Eight-eighth Congress. In all of this legislation the prestige of the federal government was brought to bear on educational problems which local school districts and states had been unable to solve alone or which had remained unsolved because community pressures stood in the way of a national perspective. Much of the legislation consisted of categorical aid.

Categorical aid from the federal government has resulted in the upgrading of teachers and instruction in such subject-matter areas as English and reading, which are basic to all education. Categorical aid has insured the allocation of funds to such programs as teaching English as a second language and the teaching of English and reading to disadvantaged children, programs which dovetail with the civil rights goals of the federal government and with federal aims for economic opportunity. Categorical aid has provided federal funds to give students experience with artistic achievement² and to balance education in science and mathematics with education in the humanities.³ Although there have been gains all along the line, no one of these tasks has been completed. The Council believes it is too early to jeopardize these educational gains by abandoning categorical for general aid at the present time.

The leaders of the National Council of Teachers of English can understand the position of local boards of education, who wish to receive general funds for allocation to what they see as their greatest needs. But they realize that not all local boards of education are prepared, without federal and professional encouragement, to minister fully to the needs of all their students. They are also aware that local boards often fail to take into account national as well as purely parochial educational concerns.

In anticipation of the opportunity to present testimony at these hearings, the Executive Committees of the National Council of Teachers of English and its constituent body, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, unanimously endorsed the principle of categorical aid to subject areas in the schools and institutes, as the federal government has been furnishing over the past several years.

English basic to education

We, in the National Council, realize that by advocating categorical aid we open ourselves to the charge of proceeding from motives of self-interest. To this we would reply that our profession has already given evidence to the Congress that

¹ Committee on National Interest, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1961), p. 3.

² Through P.L. 88-759.

³ Through the NDEA amendments and the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965.