

its concern for English as a subject is based upon the premise that English underlies the total educational program. Actually this is more than a premise. It is a fact, and it has been documented.⁴ Consequently, if at any time general funds allotted to a school district were distributed proportionally among the subject-matter disciplines on the basis of students enrolled, English would have nothing to fear. It would receive its cut of the pie. But this is not our point. We favor the retention of categorical aid for reasons more fundamental to what we believe to be our national educational goals.

We share the concern of Congress for education as a means of improving the lot of all citizens and increasing the chances of all children for a better life. We are convinced that teachers of English have a profound contribution to make to the education of the disadvantaged. "The strength of the English component in our school programs will largely determine whether students will someday be able to surmount the social, economic, and educational barriers which have given rise to the present conditions."⁵ We extend our concern to those who are held back because English is not their native language. This can result in desperate loneliness, social rejection, and economic handicap.⁶ Our society cannot afford to tolerate situations where children are held back by unsound teaching, poor materials, and frustrating home environments, so that after years of studying English they lack even comprehensible control of it. In order for English teachers to deal adequately with these situations they need special training which is not now available to them.

The continuation of categorical aid while education is tackling these challenges of the sixties would insure success where programs have made a good start, improvement where they have been faltering, stimulus where school districts have remained indifferent to crucial needs. Until boards of education awaken to their full responsibilities, until administrators act to meet nationwide problems crystallized locally, until all teachers are educated to teach the children of today for the world of today and tomorrow, categorical aid would seem the better way to safeguard the national interest.

Schools structured by subjects

Retaining the principle of categorical aid will better enable the schools and colleges, in terms of their present structure, to execute the intentions and plans of Congress. Throughout the entire range of our educational system, curricula are organized by subject matter. In the secondary schools, instruction in the traditional subject-matter disciplines has been improved by strengthening the areas of specialization. Following that example, elementary schools have recently been able to capitalize upon the specializations of their teachers. Such innovations in method as team teaching, computerized instruction, and language laboratories have required well-developed subject-matter competence.

Current demands upon the schools for upgrading competence in subject-matter have resulted in new sources of support and counsel for the teachers. Many school districts are now appointing supervisors who are subject-matter specialists—in English, in mathematics, in social studies, and so on. In the fifty state departments of education there are now 456 supervisors in all subjects, as against only 33 before NDEA in 1958. There are 74 each in English and reading; there were only 10 in English before 1964. Teachers have been joining professional subject-matter organizations in increasing numbers, and as the NCTE well knows, have placed upon these organizations demands for increased services and professional publications. Until recently local teachers and supervisors, state supervisors, and subject-matter specialists in colleges of education were able to find their counterparts among subject-matter specialists in the United States Office of Education. For a brief period, the utmost cooperation prevailed and worked to the benefit of all—and to the benefit of elementary and secondary students.

School-college cooperation

The organization of curricula by subject matter has also led in recent years, under the stimulus of the National Defense Education Act and as a result of certain activities on the part of the Bureau of Cooperative Research, to a profit-

⁴ *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, pp. 15, 19.

⁵ Richard Corbin and Muriel Crosby (cochairmen), *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. 17.

⁶ Harold B. Allen, *A Survey of the Teaching of English to Non-English Speakers in the United States* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966), p. vii (Introduction).