

12/3-4/40

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National Theatre Conference  
Training Camps Drama

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National Theatre Conference

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It was, on motion,

NATIONAL  
THEATRE  
CONFERENCE

RESOLVED that the sum of Fifty-five thousand dollars (\$55,000), or  
RF 40131 as much thereof as may be necessary, be, and it hereby is,  
appropriated to the NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE for sup-  
port of activities and projects during the five-year period  
ending December 31, 1945, not more than \$15,000 to be  
available during any one year of the period.

The following were the considerations presented:

Humanities

Previous Interest: Contributions of the Foundation to the National Theatre Conference have been: January, 1936, \$750 for a meeting to define future program; February, 1937, \$2,750 for a field study by Professor E. C. Mabie of the University of Iowa; July, 1937, \$5,000 toward general expense and for a preliminary study of royalties paid by non-professional groups for use of the production rights of plays; April, 1938, \$15,000 to provide \$2,000 a year for five years toward general expenses and to set up a revolving fund for the royalty project; February, 1939, \$25,000 to provide for its fellowship project over a three-year period ending June 30, 1942.

General Description: The National Theatre Conference has gained place during the past four years as the primary agency in this country to develop the educational and recreational possibilities of dramatic production. Since 1937 most of its financial support has come from The Rockefeller Foundation. The Conference has its offices at Western Reserve University without maintenance costs, and its 50 members have carried much of the regional work as an addition to their duties as directors of community and university theatres. The desire is now to establish the program over a period of years in order to assure the success of plans either partly realized or proposed for action.

Plans of other organizations and of regional groups are aided by the Conference through members who are directors of community or university theatres in various parts of the country. These men assist with community activity in rural areas, in smaller towns, and in state programs of education. For example, one member of the Conference has charge of a rural project for Western New York State;

another is assisting the Board of Education in his state on plans of curriculum revision and of teacher training; a third is directing a state theatre company that visits regularly some 50 high schools in outlying communities. Those working in metropolitan areas or in universities have charge of more general investigations. New uses of sound for dramatic performance are now being developed in New York City with aid from specialists in industry; at Yale University experiments are going forward to produce economical, simplified lighting devices. Members who are specialists in problems of acoustics, lighting or building construction, are called upon by the Conference to act as consultants. The Conference has made available in two states large stocks of equipment previously used in the Federal Theatre Project, with the result that work in drama is rapidly being reorganized through the use of this material.

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Projects of the Conference are directed by officers and committees working through the headquarters in Cleveland. The Conference has now secured reduced royalty rights from publishers and playwrights on 250 quality plays so that schools, colleges, and communities can for the first time obtain the rights for their production at nominal rates. Other items are being added monthly. Through its central booking service for hundreds of dramatic organizations, the Conference not only benefits them, but also gives publishers a new market and playwrights a national audience for their works. Much of the success of this project is due to cordial co-operation from the Dramatists' Guild. Development of personnel for teaching in graduate schools and in larger community organizations is going forward under the fellowship plan supported by the Foundation. The committee in charge of this work relates its appointments to the known opportunities for positions of importance, and they have help from professional directors in New York City in the training of fellows. A third activity maintained from the Cleveland office is placement service for men and women trained in specialties of theatrical production or for teaching. These projects are aided constantly by the issue of the quarterly bulletin which carries current news from all parts of the country.

New plans for the ensuing years include the publication of reports of studies completed or now under way and the issue of teaching manuals on phases of rural and community work. The titles now ready for issue are a report on rural drama, another on standards of teacher training and school instruction, and still another on operation of a state theatre under the Department of Education. The need for field workers who will advise organizations on new plans is pressing. This past year the Secretary of the Conference visited the South and Southwest and was able to assist many administrative officers of colleges on plans for placing drama in the curriculum. Other parts of the country are asking for such service, and particularly from community groups requests come that virtually demand an extended visit. One of the needs is for direct advice on

the organization of library resources for all levels of secondary education and for work in colleges. A committee dealing with this matter has begun to find the way through lending libraries. Much more work is necessary to make state services for library distribution effective in help to small schools and to individuals.

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One possibility that is partially defined at present is to give advisory service on dramatic work in all the army training camps. A committee of the Conference has conferred with officers of the Morale Division and has had favorable response to proposals from the Commanders of the 9 Army Corps Areas. The Conference proposes to give advice in matters of play selection, choice of personnel, and on all aspects of dramatic entertainment by and for the men in camps throughout the country. An attempt now is being made to secure centralized control for all such work in the camps, and approval has been given to the idea of a central training camp for directors under administration of the Conference. A plan also is being discussed whereby the Conference will co-operate with the National Recreation Association, which may be called upon to direct similar activities in the camp areas.

The first requirement is for assured support over a term of years for the general administration of the office and for projects now in progress. Plans for regional activities, for publication, and for field work are equally important for the welfare of the program.

Finances: In five years the fund will be allocated approximately as follows:

General administration .....	\$22,500
Projects .....	13,500
Publications .....	9,000
Regional activities .....	<u>10,000</u>
	\$55,000

Expenditures would be approximately the same in each year, but special projects may call for temporary increases that would be equalized by reductions in subsequent years.

Future Implications: None.

Comment: Such organizations as the National Theatre Conference and the American Film Center have general values for planning and advisory service comparable to those of our national research councils. They are particularly useful as aids to the current program of Humanities.

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