

THE OHIO COLLEGE BIOLOGY TEACHERS CONFERENCE

A Brief History

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In the fall of 1956 a committee of physiologists from The Ohio State University consisting of Drs. Fred A. Hitchcock, Ralph W. Stacy, Milton Lessler, and Leo E. Lipetz, invited Ohio college biology teachers to meet on The Ohio State University campus for the purpose of forming an organization to improve the teaching of the biological sciences in Ohio. Eighty-four biology teachers from 29 colleges accepted the invitation and, meeting in Columbus on February 22, 1957, organized the Ohio College Biology Teachers Conference. In addition to organizational activities the program for the day consisted of an address by Dr. George LeFevre, Jr., of the National Science Foundation, on "NSF Programs for the Improvement of High School Science Teaching" and group discussions of various problems involved in the teaching of biology at both the high school and college levels. Dr. Hitchcock was elected Chairman of the Conference for the ensuing year and directed to further its operation with the aid of a Steering Committee.

The work of the Steering Committee during 1957 resulted in (1) division of the state into five regions—NW, NE, Central, SW, SE—and appointment of regional chairmen to coordinate intra-regional activities, (2) setting up of a Constitution Committee, (3) setting up of standing committees on (a) NSF programs for Summer, In-service and Saturday Science Institutes, (b) Syllabus for a Modern Biology Course, (c) Speaker's Bureau and Information Center, (d) Certification Requirements for High School Biology Teachers. In addition a special committee was formed to ascertain the status of the recently reconstituted (elective) State Board of Education.

The second annual meeting of the Conference was held at The Ohio State University on February 22, 1958, with over 70 in attendance. The morning session was divided between reports of the above constituted committees and an address by Dr. Louis Levin of NSF on "U.S. Government Programs for Research and Teaching." The afternoon session involved additional committee reports, reports from the regional chairmen and a demonstration of various pieces of experimental equipment which had been arranged by Dr. Stacy. The proposed Constitution was adopted, committing the Conference to the following purpose and aims: ". . . the promotion of the biological sciences in the schools and colleges of Ohio. The aims are to improve the teaching of the biological sciences, to encourage able students to enter the biological sciences professionally and to adopt such other measures as shall tend to promote the biological sciences as useful and cultural disciplines." Annual dues for the Conference were set at \$1.00 and the following officers were elected for the 1958-59 year: President, Fred A. Hitchcock; President-elect, Ralph W. Stacy; Secretary, Milton A. Lessler; Treasurer, Sister Thomas Aquin (St. Mary of the Springs).

The third annual meeting of the Conference took place at The Ohio State University Union on March 14, 1959. Unfortunately, circulation of the meeting notice was delayed and as a result only 35 persons found it possible to attend. All of the morning session and part of the afternoon session were devoted to the reports of the standing committees, the highlight of these being Dr. George Morgan's presentation of the report prepared by the committee on a Syllabus for a Modern Biology Course. The syllabus constructed by this group of ten consisted of eight pages of single spaced and minutely typed material. As is to be expected

in a field as varied as biology, the completed syllabus did not meet with universal approval but the Conference expressed commendation of the report and gratitude to the committee for its conscientious and worthwhile effort. As a result of the general reaction to the report it was decided to make the next annual meeting a discussion of the college biology syllabus with stress on methods of approach. A portion of the afternoon was given over to an address by Dr. William H. Ewing, Associate Director of WOSU, on "The Demand for Expanding Knowledge and Quality of Instruction via Educational TV," after which he led a discussion on the question of educational TV and Drs. Hitchcock and Stacy commented on their experience with it. Officers elected for the 1959-60 year were: President-elect, Warren Walker (Oberlin); Secretary, Andrew Stauffer (Ohio Northern); Treasurer, Charles A. Evans (Youngstown).

The fourth annual meeting of the Conference was held on the campus of Denison University (Granville) on March 5, 1960. Inclement weather in the form of a heavy snowstorm held attendance to 33. A short morning session included reports of standing committees and regional chairmen plus a business meeting at which the following officers were elected for 1960-61: President-elect, A. S. Bradshaw (Ohio Wesleyan); Secretary, E. Eloise Whitwer (Bowling Green); Treasurer, Charles A. Evans. It had been planned that the afternoon session on "The College Biology Syllabus" would consist of brief presentations on (a) Aims (b) Content and Emphasis (c) the Pre-professional & Liberal Arts Student Mixture (d) the Value of the Laboratory Approach and (e) Special Devices for Biology Teaching, followed by a general discussion of each topic. Because of the inclement weather some of those chosen for the introductory presentations were unable to be present but this did not prevent the topics from being fully considered in what all present felt was a very worthwhile exchange of ideas.

The fifth annual meeting of the Conference met at Capital University (Columbus) on March 18, 1961, with over fifty persons in attendance. The general theme for the day was "The Relationship between High School and College Biology." During the morning session two outstanding high school teachers—guests of the Conference—described high school programs designed for admission to college with advanced standing and a college teacher discussed the national trend toward the granting of advanced placement by colleges. A general discussion of pros and cons followed. The afternoon session was devoted to the problems of identifying and teaching the unusually well-prepared student in Introductory College Biology. Three speakers introduced the questions of overlap between high school and college biology, placement tests; and special sections for superior students—each being followed by general discussion. Also during the afternoon representatives of the NE Region presented a report involving specific recommendations for the upgrading (content-wise) of the certification requirements for high school biology teachers. After considerable discussion the Conference approved the report in principle and ordered that copies of it be sent to all members of the State Board of Education and to officials of The Ohio Academy of Science concerned with such matters. During the morning business meeting the following officers were elected for the year 1961-62: President-elect, Dwight H. Berg (Hiram); Secretary, Sister Margaret Ann (St. Mary of the Springs); Treasurer, Charles A. Evans.

Aside from the annual meetings the record of activities of the Conference has, from the standpoint of concrete results, been spotty. Dr. Stacy compiled and circulated a fine News Letter in August, 1959, but to date his good example has not been followed up. Dr. Stauffer began, and Prof. Whitwer expanded, a mailing list of Ohio College Biologists, the 1960-61 edition of which includes 366 individuals from 50 institutions. It is planned to bring it up to date this fall. Intra-regional activity would appear to have been governed by latitude and has varied directly with it. Geographic realities plagued the SE region organization from the begin-

ning and, following the 1961 annual meeting, it was merged with the Central region. The SW and Central region organizations were moderately active in the early years but more recently have undergone aestivation. On the other hand the NW region has carried on regional visitation meetings (the most recent one, on the Finlay campus, was attended by over half the college biology teachers in the region) and the NE region program has been both extensive and vital. For example, a three-day joint field trip to Stone Laboratory (Erie islands) last October drew 54 faculty and students from eight institutions. The November 4th regional meeting at Youngstown featured a panel discussion on "Undergraduate Research" (which had been planned on the field trip) and a proposal for a meeting to hear undergraduate research papers was initiated at that time. Several members of this region have commented on the worthwhileness of the region program.

At the time of its inception at least one Ohio biologist said frankly that the Conference was merely another futile organization and he saw no point in becoming associated with it. By their failure to accept repeated invitations to attend its meetings a good many others have indicated an apparently similar judgement. It is also probably true that some of the original participants lost interest because they felt the Conference was becoming too preoccupied with plans for "benefitting" and "regulating" biology at the high school level. And, perhaps because the impetus for organization of the Conference came from a group of animal physiologists, botanists as a group have not participated in it to the extent that we who have continued association with it would like to see.

What the absentee critics may not realize is the fact that the Conference has undergone considerable change of emphasis since its inception. For instance, in 1957 NSF Institute programs were in their infancy and there was a problem of communication between such opportunities and the individuals they were designed to serve. Further, at the time there was no active visiting scientist program in the state. As a result two of the original standing committees of the Conference were concerned with these matters. In the intervening years publicity on NSF programs has made them common knowledge among high school biologists and The Ohio Academy of Science has developed a full program of academic visitations. The two Conference standing committees concerned have therefore ceased to exist. In addition, although the Conference continues an active interest in problems of the biology syllabus and improved standards for the teaching of the subject, these will not be the sole or even, necessarily, the major concern of future annual meetings.

We "regulars" (and we are not particularly extrovert) have always been impressed with the opportunities which the annual and regional meetings offer for extending professional acquaintance, exchanging ideas and swapping tricks of the trade and observing the niche and habitat ecology of the brothers in our chosen field. I have heard it said (irreverently but significantly?) that the most important part of an annual meeting was the discussions taking place during lunch. To those who ask, "Why this in addition to the Academy meeting?" our answer is—a smaller, more homogeneous, more informal group that, without the time problem of a multi-paper program and such distractions as exhibit judging, etc., has a real opportunity to get acquainted.

In line with such ideas the Conference Steering Committee, at its meeting last January, decided to shift the annual meeting from a Spring to a Fall date and to attempt to "traditionalize" the date if possible. After some discussion the second Saturday in November was selected and plans are now being made for both the 1962 and 1963 annual meetings.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Conference will be held on the Oberlin campus on Saturday, November 10, 1962. The theme of the meeting will be "*Opportunities and Responsibilities of Ohio College Biologists with Respect to Ohio's*

Natural Areas." We hope to have an up-to-the-minute report on the Natural Areas program and will hear presentations by Dr. Kenneth Hunt on "The Educational Use of Natural Areas" and Dr. Charles Dambach on "The Ohio Biological Survey—A Mechanism Contributing to Management of the State's Biotic Resources Through Inter-Institutional Cooperative Research." There will also be an opportunity to inspect Oberlin's recently dedicated science building.

The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Conference will meet on the Ohio Wesleyan campus on Saturday, November 9, 1963. The theme of the meeting will be "Molecular Biology—How Far?" and President-elect Dwight Berg hopes to arrange for two perhaps nationally known speakers to present the pros and cons of the matter. Sessions will be held in Ohio Wesleyan's recently occupied but as yet undedicated Bigelow-Rice biological sciences building.
