

The North Carolina Adult Education Committee

By CHARLESANNA FOX* AND LUCY S. MORGAN†

This new committee has brought to many people, including librarians, the opportunity they have sought of working with others in improving educational resources for adults. Its success is of great concern to those who are participating in its activities. Librarians have a responsibility in sharing in its work and an opportunity to benefit from its undertakings.

How It Began

April 11, 1953, was a "red letter day" in nine southern states for it was on that day that members of the Southeastern Adult Education Association, meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, agreed to explore through a two-year regional project ways of improving communication in adult education in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. A Project Committee was appointed by the President of the Association to design the plan and set it in motion in the states. The immediate goal was to improve the quality of the regional conferences, but an anticipated by-product was the stimulation of adult education activities in the region. The plan was a simple one, using channels already set up. The Executive Committee member from each state was asked to set up a State Project Committee consisting of four persons in addition to himself. The state committees were asked to identify local resources people, to explain the project to them and to seek their suggestions for the 1954 Regional Conference.

How It Grew

North Carolina followed the plan suggested by the Regional Project Committee. As a first step, all members of the Adult Education Association of the USA residing in the state were called together to consider the communication project which was presented by a member of the Regional Project Committee. This occasion also provided an opportunity for this group to discuss adult education as it was being developed in North Carolina. The group accepted the communication project and recommended the formation of a State Committee. It also suggested that as soon as this committee was organized, consideration should be given not only to planning for the Regional Conference, but also to planning for adult education activities in the state. The first meeting of the committee which was selected from AEA membership was held in July 1953.

It was decided to hold the first conference at Chapel Hill on February 10, 1954, and a local planning committee was appointed to arrange for this meeting. This one-day session was called an "Informal Get-Acquainted Meeting of Lay and Professional Leaders in Adult Education." One hundred and sixty-one persons attended and many more expressed an interest. They came from all parts of the state and represented churches, colleges, universities, schools, Home Demonstration Clubs, business and industry, voluntary agencies, health and welfare agencies, libraries and community groups of several kinds.

*Librarian, Randolph Public Library, Asheboro.

†Professor of Public Health Education, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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The program was based on the many ways by which people communicate with each other: speeches, buzz sessions, films, television, drama, panel discussions, etc. Before the conference was over the group registered approval of the meeting and asked that not only state-wide conferences be considered but that the Committee find ways of carrying the program to the local level.

Local Plans

The North Carolina Adult Education Committee began its second year by considering the charges received from participants at the first conference. After several sessions, the Committee decided that before February 1955, an attempt should be made to get local meetings scheduled in the hundred counties of the state. The plan developed was kept as simple as possible. Conveners of local meetings would be Home Demonstration Agents, County Librarians, Chamber of Commerce Secretaries, Public Health Educators, Women's Council representatives, and other interested persons who had attended the first conference. Only *one* person in each county, however, would be designated as the convener of the first local planning meeting. He would receive a kit of materials to be used as background information in getting committee work started, but his responsibilities would end with the calling of a group together unless he were elected chairman of the committee. Several of the counties did hold meetings and have continued their activities.

The purposes or goals of the local meetings were to be as broad as the local communities wished and no committees were to be organized unless the people in those communities realized the need for improvement in educational resources for adults. Some ideas suggested were: to explore ways of providing better communication between groups and individuals interested in adult education in the local community and in the state; to gain a better understanding of the work of other organizations and individuals in adult education; to improve cooperative endeavors among local adult education agencies and organizations; to gain familiarity with the literature and resource materials of adult education; to plan for leadership training; to study community needs in adult education and to make plans to provide for them; and to suggest to the state committee the kind of program desired for the 1955 conference.

Second State Conference

The second state-wide conference was held on February 9, 1955, in Chapel Hill and 197 persons attended. The theme which was "A Panorama of Adult Education in North Carolina" was colorfully portrayed in the program covers and the life-size figures used as background on the stage.

The program allowed for maximum participation by all those present from the Registration and informal Coffee Hour through the final buzz and evaluation session. The original dramatic sketch by the Carolina Playmakers served to emphasize that adult education is not the prerogative of any one group, but a part of life to which all adults in the state could contribute.

Business Meeting

The state committee held a business meeting at State College in Raleigh October 7, 1955, to which local groups were asked to send representatives. Eleven committee members were present and thirty-two representatives of local groups, representing 13 counties. The group accepted this state's part in the program plans for the Southeastern Association Conference to be held at Clemson College, South Carolina, March 23-25.

1956, and voted to hold the next state conference in April 1956 following the Southeastern Conference in order to benefit by the program of the regional conference. Other business of the committee was discussed, including the relationship of the committee to the AEA.

Third State Conference

On April 17, 1956, the third state conference was held in Chapel Hill with 150 persons in attendance. The theme "Facts for Action" was based on the Southeastern Association's conference program, and materials from that conference were available for the state conference. New ways of presenting information to a group, notably the interviewer method, enabled the participants to receive a vast amount of significant material about "North Carolina in the Changing South."

Committee Organization

The activities of the committee other than the state conference each spring have developed as the need has arisen. The committee has a very informal organization, operating to date as a steering committee. A committee has been appointed to study kinds of organizations and make recommendations to the full committee. In view of the fact that the Adult Education Association of the USA is making a study of patterns of affiliation, the state committee is awaiting the results of this study before making a decision. In the meantime, a program meeting will be held each spring and a business meeting during the fall.

The enthusiasm with which groups have cooperated to make activities of the committee possible has been a thrilling experience for the committee members. There were no funds for the committee's activities until a registration fee was charged at the 1956 conference to cover costs of programs, proceedings, etc. Each group represented has lent a hand and the job has been done. And it has been clearly demonstrated that when the channels of communication are opened the many organizations, agencies and individuals working in the field of adult education will soon discover common goals and find ways of working together for a better world.

State Committee Membership

At the present time the North Carolina Adult Education Committee is composed of the following members as the steering committee: Mrs. Annette Boutwell, Miss Ruth Current, Miss Charlesanna Fox, Mr. William Friday, Mr. Hoyt Galvin, Mr. Russell M. Grumman, Dr. Guion G. Johnson, Dr. Lucy S. Morgan, Mrs. Frances S. McConnell, Mr. Kenneth McIntyre, Mrs. Carl Plonk, Mr. Dwight C. Rhyne, Dr. W. Carson Ryan, Dr. C. C. Scarborough, Dr. Samuel Selden and Dr. Rex S. Winslow. Since October 1955, the full committee has included representatives of local groups and now numbers approximately forty-five members. Chairmen of the committee have been Dr. Lucy S. Morgan, 1953-1955; Miss Charlesanna Fox, 1955-1956; and Mr. Russell Grumman, 1956. Mr. Grumman is resigning in September and will be succeeded by the Chairman-Elect, Mr. Hoyt Galvin. Mrs. Annette Boutwell is Secretary-Treasurer.

Enlargement of the committee will come through the local committees which will be invited to send representatives to the business meetings each fall. The state conference each spring is open to all persons interested in adult education. Since there

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are more than two million, three hundred thousand adults in North Carolina and since there are myriad problems waiting for study by the committee, there are many opportunities for all those who have a reason for being concerned about educational resources for adults to work on a cooperative program for solving some of the problems which effect the welfare of North Carolina.
