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PUBLIC SPEAKING IN NEW ENGLAND COLLEGES¹

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THE growing interest in spoken English may be one more of those educational fads which have afflicted the youth of America. This interest may become permanent provided it rest upon a sound pedagogic basis, and provided the teachers be qualified to give the necessary instruction. Have we at present a substantial basis and have we the qualified instructors? Before we can venture an intelligent answer to such questions, we ought to examine the present status. This being a special session of the New England Conference, the examination may be confined with profit to conditions as they exist in New England.

As a first step in determining the pedagogy of spoken English we will inspect the catalogues of the various colleges. Such an investigation may be helpful, unless we have lost faith completely in the veracity of catalogues.

Very shortly after beginning our researches we discover that the makers of curricula have not been unanimous as to the department in which vocal English should be placed. In twelve colleges it is included under the general heading "English." Five call the subject "Public Speaking." One labels it "Oratory and Voice Culture." Another just "Oratory." A variant is found in "Public Speaking and Oratory." In some of the colleges the students meet with "Reading and Speaking," "Spoken English," and "Rhetoric and Composition," "Science and Art of Expression," "Special English," and "English Language and Literature." Simmons College for women seems to give no course at all; while Holy Cross refers to the subject as "Elocution." Thus we find eleven different titles for the departments in which instruction is given in some parts at least of the field of reading and speaking.

¹Read at a special session of the New England Public Speaking Conference, Harvard University, August 16, 1916.

Turning next to the courses offered, we find a wondrous variety. For convenience, two groups may be made arbitrarily: one labeled Public Speaking and the other Interpretation. Under the first heading "Public Speaking" seems to be the favorite. With this title the teacher has great lee way; he can impart instruction in voice, platform deportment, interpretation, extemporaneous speaking, oral expression, oratory, study of speeches, forms of public address, elocution, declamation, and argumentation. The details of the courses, often mentioned, such as intonation, articulation, poise, clear thinking, gesticulation, and so forth, are so numerous that they need not be mentioned. Three of the colleges are not satisfied with plain "Public Speaking," for they offer "Advanced Public Speaking." One goes so far as to give a course in "Occasional Public Speeches."

A second favorite heading in New England is "Argumentation and Debate," although seven colleges give "Argumentation" separately. Six colleges mention courses in "Debating," two in "Debate," and one in "Advanced Debate." As a tempting combination one college presents "Oratory and Argumentation." Eleven institutions do not mention "Argumentation," among them being three of the women's colleges. For some reason "Argumentation" does not appear in the Harvard catalogue, although "Debate" does. In the Yale yearbook neither "Argumentation" nor "Debating" are mentioned. Yet at Harvard there teaches George P. Baker, author of the textbook on "Argumentation and Debate" which led the way toward the establishment of courses in our colleges. At Harvard began the annual game of intercollegiate debating with Yale. It is to be presumed that somewhere in the courses of Harvard and Yale, probably in the composition courses, instruction is given in argumentation.

Leaving this favorite line, we are in danger of being submerged by the variety of courses offered. At one college "Oral English" may be taken. At another the students are introduced to "Logical Speaking." There can be found plain "Declamation," "Principles of Oratory," and "Extemporaneous Speaking." One can take his choice of "Reading and Speaking," "Public Address," "Public Addresses," "The Forms of Public Address," "Oratorical Writing and Extemporaneous Speaking," and "Composition and Oral Expression." If the ardent student

is not satisfied, there are provided courses in the "History of Oratory," "Demonstrative Oratory," and "Forensic Oratory." All told, Public Speaking appears under twenty-three titles.

Swinging over to the interpretative phase of spoken English, we find a bewildering variety of attractive courses. One may be initiated into the mysteries of "Reading" or of "Elocution." If inclined to dramatics "Shakespeare" is ready, together with "Development of Dramatic Instinct," "Dramatic Action and Characterization," and the "Interpretation of Modern Plays." For those who are particular about the sound of their voices ample training is provided. The catalogues mention "Voice and Expression," "Vocal Expression," "Advanced Vocal Expression," "Imagination and Vocal Expression," "Voice Training," "Training in Speech," and "Voice Training and Expression," both primary and advanced. When the mechanism of speech has been sufficiently trained, it is presumably fitted for the interpretation of literature; hence the introduction of "Vocal Interpretation," "Interpretation of Literature," "Vocal Interpretation of Literature," "Vocal Interpretation of English Prose and Poetry," "Oral Interpretation," and "Interpretative Reading." In some of the colleges the discovery has been made that in addition to the voice the whole body is concerned in speaking and reading, whereupon a course in "Body and Voice" is developed, and another in the "Body as an Agent of Expression." Finally, one ambitious college offers a course in "Methods of Teaching Elocution and Oratory," a course which seems to be confined to coaching prize speakers and graduating parts. Glancing over the interpretative phase of the subject one discovers that twenty-two different titles are employed. By this enumeration we perceive that New England educators, in their attempts to describe the courses which use the speaking voice, have forty-five expressions.

Drifting now from the courses to the hours allotted for recitation, we find the catalogues revealing a striking lack of unanimity. Some colleges allot a course one hour a week for a semester, some two hours, and others three hours. Some permit one hour for two semesters, some two hours, and others three hours. One offers one-half an hour a week throughout the entire four years. Reduced to percentages, 44% of the courses

are granted one hour per week, 30% are given three hours, 25% receive two hours, and 1% is allowed one-half an hour.

When such remarkably different standards as to time exist we may be sure that the conditions for admission to the courses will also display great variations. In some of the colleges a course on the part of Sophomores and Freshmen, mostly Freshmen, is required. Only one college demands work of Juniors and Seniors. With a large number of the colleges some course is required, while the other courses are elective. In many, all the courses are elective. A few make the subject a requirement in certain departments. Finally, in giving credit several colleges offer courses for which half credit is given, while at least one college has in its catalogue a course for which no credit is given.

Holding in mind now the present chaotic status of the curriculum, we are ready to bear down upon the number of students that a teacher is supposed to instruct. Without access to the books of the colleges no definite information on this point can be obtained. We can, however, make inferences, probably faulty, based on the number of teachers employed and the number of students in attendance. It is interesting to note that one college with an attendance of 3300 has two teachers. Of these one must have some leisure, for he also teaches in a neighboring college. Many teachers of speaking fill in their spare moments by instructing in composition. The number of students admitted to classes seems to be unrestricted, except in one college where a division is limited to ten. A prominent institution assigns five teachers to 4500 students. Evidently no plan has been worked out in New England as to the number of teachers required or the number of students who should receive instruction, nor is there any agreement as to who should take the subject.

If this lack of plan and lack of agreement indicate academic freedom, then that desirable state is further indicated by the happy circumstance that the teachers have apparently had full control over the naming of their courses and in determining what they will teach and how they will teach. Typical cases are found in Dartmouth and in two women's colleges. Dartmouth offers courses in "Declamation," "Argumentation," "Debate," "The History of Oratory," "Demonstrative Oratory," and "Forensic Oratory." Apparently no attention is paid to voice development

or to the interpretation of literature. Turn now to the women's colleges. Here we note courses in "Vocal Expression," "Imagination and Vocal Expression" "Extemporaneous Speaking," "Body and Voice," "Body as an Agent of Expression," "Interpretation of Literature," "Voice Training," "Interpretation of Modern Plays," and finally "Shakespeare." A glance at the catalogues of these women's colleges would lead one to suspect that women take no interest in argument and oratory. From the titles of the courses and from the use of Elocutionary texts, one may infer that the teachers are graduates of schools of elocution. It is only fair to add that Mt. Holyoke, a woman's college, does offer a course in Argumentation; but Simmons College, also for women, gives no courses whatever. Wellesley College has the unique distinction of giving one laboratory appointment each week.

With these facts before us it ought not be impertinent to assert that in New England as a whole there is no pedagogic basis for the teaching of Public Speaking or of Interpretation. The college authorities apparently have not made up their minds in which departments the courses belong, they do not agree as to what courses should be offered, they are at sea as to who should take the subject, they do not know how much time should be given to it, they do not comprehend whether it is taught properly, and they have no way to determine whether the instructors are qualified to teach.

At first sight one would be inclined to say that a subject so chaotic in its pedagogy ought to be driven from the educational world. But another glance will reveal the fact that the world is tremendously interested in the human voice. Everywhere people are conversing, addressing audiences, reading literature, and interpreting dramas. Everybody admits that these things should be well done. We are therefore led irresistibly to the conclusion that the teaching of such a subject as Public Speaking and Interpretation should be placed upon a sound pedagogic basis and that qualified teachers should be provided.

At this point our work begins. We have the rare opportunity of developing a line towards which many other lines converge, a line which touches human life at innumerable points. As the first step in the huge task we ought to establish a minimum

course. In determining such work we must bear in mind the number of hours per semester or per annum and the subject matter to be taught. If we can settle upon this minimum course by joint action we will save the long see-saw of individual action which will probably produce in time the same result. When we have agreed upon the minimum we should place it before the proper authorities. Meanwhile we must let the educational world know through its journals and conferences that we are after a minimum. Judging by the fact that so many colleges have already exceeded our proposed modest minimum we can be quite certain that most of the backward institutions will grant the request.

But at this point, supposing our request be granted, a difficulty arises.—Have we the teachers who are qualified to give the proper instruction? “There’s the rub.” Let us look matters full in the face. Let us acknowledge frankly that as the profession stands today we cannot supply enough qualified teachers. Most of us have not had the technical training required. Many of us have been drafted, or have drifted, into the work. Some have had the training given in the schools of elocution, others have been good debaters while in college, a few have swung from written composition in argument and theme writing to oral composition as a means of relief from the drudgery of pencil correction. We are aware that most of us have little real knowledge of the voice. We are shrewd enough to suspect that the teachers of singing cannot help us, for there seems to be little agreement among them as to method, and their best products seldom sing after they are fifty years old. If we had set out deliberately to become teachers technically proficient, where could we have gone for instruction? Not a college in the land provided the necessary courses. It was a strange situation that confronted the teachers of the “art of Arts.” One could find numerous courses in written composition, but few or none in oral composition. There would be offered a course in the “Lives, Characters, and Times of Men of Letters, English and American,” but none in the “Lives, Characters, and Times of Orators, English and American.” A student could devote hours to “Johnson and His Circle,” but not a minute to “Burke and His Circle.” Three hours a week with “Eighteenth Cen-

ture Periodicals," but not a second to "Eighteenth Century Orations." A half year could be spent on "Bacon," but no attention was given to "Chatham." "The Drama in England from 1642 to 1900" looked enticing, but what about "Public Utterances in England from 1642 to 1900?" One could listen to lectures about "Emerson" for weeks, but never to lectures on "Webster." One New England college extends to the thirsty student forty-two courses dealing with German, without mentioning German oratory. Page after page of its catalogue is filled with courses concerning the writings of the French, Italians, Spaniards, Poles, Russians, Irish and Welsh, without mention of their speakers. Turn to the educational departments. There, one could listen by the month to lectures on methods of teaching everything except speech. Where could one learn the psychology of the spoken word? What college taught a word about the physiology and hygiene of the vocal mechanism. Cicero said that the orator should be well grounded in philosophy and political science. What college in the world connects those subjects with the training of a teacher of oratory. Where could the undergraduate learn the history of the spoken word? A graduate craving a degree would spend years in composing a thesis on the "Cessation of Mytosis in the Caudal Appendage of an Albino Rat," while his roommate might be afflicted with stuttering. What department would dream of offering research work in Public Speaking? Professors advertised Seminars in Philosophy, Mathematics, History, Languages, and Ologies of all kinds, but not a man could offer a Seminar in the organ which every one of them used—the human voice.

Here then is a vast untrodden field—one that touches a dozen phases of thought. By making the investigations it will be possible to give the spoken word a literature as formidable as that of many other branches of learning. It is for us to create this literature. By doing so we may become the teachers of the coming generations. Our large universities with their facilities for scholarship should lead the way, first seeking in their own force qualified men; or failing in that, drawing from the country at large those who have done creditable work. Such a plan if undertaken will in ten years revolutionize the teaching of Public Speaking and Interpretation throughout New England.

If the larger universities should not feel capable of undertaking the task, or if they should not consider the subject worth while, be sure that the work will be attempted elsewhere. Already the premonitory rumblings may be heard in the west. That body of teachers which organized the Eastern Conference seven or eight years ago and courageously began the publication of the *Public Speaking Review* has already seen the New England Conference born; it has seen a national organization spring up, bearing as its first fruit a Quarterly Journal. It has seen "Oral English" introduced into thousands of schools. It is aware that hundreds of teachers are seeking instruction during the summer (1916), in the colleges, 225 at Columbia, 377 at University of Wisconsin. It has seen the publishing firms vying with each other in the effort to place textbooks on the market. It finds today a renaissance of interest in all phases of the spoken word. Slowly but surely the educational world is orienting itself toward the disciplinary values of speech. If we had at times thought the task insuperable, we now feel that there is a way, a sure and safe one, though we may have missed it. Meanwhile we must stand shoulder even as that.

"One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
 triumph,
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake."

This paper was read at Special Session of the New England Public Speaking Conference on Wednesday evening, August 16, 1916.

A committee appointed by Chairman Corsa reported on Thursday afternoon the following resolutions:

1. "That the Summer Conference urge the New England Public Speaking Conference to recommend to the colleges of New England a minimum course in Public Speaking. We suggest that this course be entitled 'Elements of Public Speech' and that it be given three hours a week for two semesters." In commenting on the resolution the committee held that such

a course would permit much needed concentration on voice, delivery, organization of material, diction, etc. The resolution was adopted.

2. "That we urge the Conference to recommend that the larger colleges provide advanced courses of instruction for those who expect to become teachers and for those who may desire such courses."

3. "That we urge the Conference to recommend that opportunities be given for research work."

These two resolutions were tabled.

The following table shows in detail the work offered in the colleges and universities of New England:

Colleges	Department	Courses	Sem.	Hrs.		
MAINE Bates	Oratory and Voice Culture	Thought and Expression..	1	1		
		Logical Instruction in Speaking.....	1	1		
		Public Speaking.....	1	1		
		Public Speaking.....	1	1		
		Prize Speaking.....	1	1		
		Development of Dramatic Instinct.....	1	1		
		Methods of Teaching Elo- cution and Oratory...	1	1		
		Bowdoin	English	Public Speaking.....	1	1
				Argumentation and Debate	1	2
		Colby	Public Speaking	Advanced Public Speaking	1	2
Reading.....	2			1		
University of Maine	Public Speaking	Argumentation and Debate	1	3		
		Public Speaking.....	1	3		
		Advanced Public Speaking	1	3		
		Public Speaking.....	2	1		
		Public Speaking.....	2	1		
		Debating.....	2	2		
		Advanced Debating.....	2	2		
Van Buren NEW HAMPSHIRE College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts	English	Oral English.....	2	2		
		Occasional Public Speeches	2	2		
Dartmouth	English	No data				
		Argumentation and Debate	1	3		
		Declamation.....	1	1		
		Argumentation	1	3		
		Debate.....	1	3		
		The History of Oratory..	1	3		
		Demonstrative Oratory...	1	3		
Forensic Oratory.....	1	3				

<i>Colleges</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Courses</i>	<i>Sem.</i>	<i>Hrs.</i>
VERMONT Middlebury College	English	Public Speaking.....		3
Norwich University	English Language and Literature	Composition: Oral and Written.....	2	3
St. Michael's College		No data		
University of Vermont	English	Argumentation..... Declamation		1
MASSACHUSETTS Amherst	Public Speaking	Oral Interpretation..... Oral Interpretation..... Oratory and Argumenta- tion.....	2 2 2	1 1 1
Boston University	Public Speaking	Debating..... Elocution..... Public Speaking..... Argumentation..... Debating..... Shakespeare.....	1 2 2 1 1 2	1/2 2 2 1 1 2
Clark College	Special English	Debating..... Public Speaking.....	2 2	3 3
College of Holy Cross	Elocution	Elocution (four years)...		1/2
Harvard	English	Training in Speech..... Public Speaking..... Vocal Interpretation of English Prose and Poetry..... The Forms of Public Address..... Debating..... Public Addresses..... Rhetoric and English Composition: Oral and Written.....	1 2 2 2 2 1 1 2	1 2 2 3 2 2 3
Mass. Agricul- tural College		No data		
Mass. Institute of Technology	English	Argumentation and Debate Public Speaking.....	1 1	
Mount Holyoke	English	Vocal Expression..... Advanced Voice Training Argumentation..... Vocal Interpretation of Literature..... Dramatic Action and Char- acterization.....	2 1 1 1 1	3 3 3 2 1
Radcliffe	English	Public Speaking..... Vocal Interpretation of Prose and Poetry.....	2 2	2 2
Simmons Smith	Spoken English	None Vocal Expression..... Advanced Vocal Expres- sion..... Imagination and Vocal Expression.....	2 2 2 2	2 2 2 2

Colleges	Department	Courses	Sem.	Hrs.
Tufts	Oratory	Extemporaneous Speaking	2	1
		Body as an Agent of Expression	2	1
		Interpretation of Literature	2	2
		Voice Training.....	2	1
		Interpretation of Modern Plays	2	1
		Principles of Oratory....	1	3
		Argumentation and Debate	1	3
		Body and Voice.....	2	2
		Body and Voice.....	2	3
		Shakespeare	2	2
Wellesley	Reading and Speaking	Intellectual and Emotional Discourse	1	3
		Volitional Discourse.....	1	3
Wheaton	Science and Art of Expression	Argumentation	2	3
		Argumentation	2	3
Williams Worcester Polytechnic	English English	Argumentation	1	2
		Interpretative Reading....	1	1
		Debating	2	1
		Oratorical Writing and Extemporaneous Speaking	2	1
		Elementary English-Composition and Oratory	2	1
Brown	English	Debate	1	3
		Public Speaking.....	2	3
		Advanced Public Speaking	2	3
CONNECTICUT Agricultural College	Public Speaking	Public Speaking.....	1	1
		Public Speaking.....	2	3
Trinity Wesleyan	English Public Speaking	Vocal Expression.....	1	1
		Argumentation and Debate	1	1
		Forms of Public Address	1	1
Yale		Public Speaking.....	1	1

For purposes of comparison I append the courses announced by the University of Wisconsin.

Public Speaking	Courses	Sem.	Hrs.
	For undergraduates		
	A. Composition Courses		
	1. Argumentation	1	3
	2. Argumentative Addresses (written argument)	1	2
	3. Composition of Public Address	1	2
	4. Advanced Composition and the History of Oratory.....	1	2
	B. Courses including delivery		

<i>Colleges</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Courses</i>	<i>Sem.</i>	<i>Hrs.</i>
		1. Practical Public Speaking	I	4
		2. Extemporaneous Speaking	I	4
		3. Debating	I	2
		4. Formal Oratory.....	I	2
		C. Interpretation		
		1. Fundamentals of Vocal Expression.....	2	3
		2. Interpretative Reading	2	2
		3. Dramatic Personation	I	2
		D. Voice Training and Correction of Speech Defects		
		1. Voice Training and Phonetics	I	2
		2. Correction of Speech Defects	I	2
		3. Speech Clinic for all students		
		For undergraduates and graduates:		
		1. Teachers' Problems—In Reading and Drama	I	2
		2. Teachers' Problems—In Speech Making and Debate	I	2
		3. Correction of Speech Defects	I	2
		For Graduates Only:		
		1. Seminar in Voice and Speech.....		
		2. Seminar in Rhetoric and Oratory.....		