

if perhaps some of our present-day special interests have not distracted us from the main goal to which the humanities can attain.

The CANE programs year after year show clearly that school teachers want and profit from straight-forward presentation of classical learning, and can supply a good bit of it themselves. What the regional associations lack was made shamefully clear several years ago by Ward Briggs in his presidential address to CAMWS (*CJ* 86 [1991-2] 272), and rephrased more gently by Allen Ward in his opening remarks in our newsletter for the past year (*NECNJ* 19.4 [1992] 2): "CANE needs to encourage restoration of the close cooperation which once existed between teachers of Classics in the schools and colleges."

The APA and the Regional Associations: A Reply

Jerry Clack

Duquesne University

I have profound sympathy for the concern and frustration expressed by the author of "The APA and the Regional Associations." He feels, as many of us do, that regardless of some of the more positive diagnoses which have been made recently, the profession of Classics is in a parlous state. Nor is he mis-directed in looking to the American Philological Association for encouragement, even action. It is his hope that closer cooperation between its membership and regional organizations will slow or reverse the Classics slide into dysfunction at the secondary level.

To draw attention to his appeal, he expresses deep dismay at the seeming callowness of the APA's membership toward regional associations, suggesting that many members comport themselves like nabobs, oblivious to the problems of the profession, immersed in the lotus pool of their specialties and intolerant of those who do not share their interests.

It is with this generalization that I take issue, while at the same time admitting that there are specialists in every profession who live in other worlds and breath other air. I will even go so far as to insist that it is important for the survival of Classics that these specialists—among other pursuits—subject Latin and Greek texts to "the latest fad in French literary criticism or whatever." Our discipline (and every other significant discipline) has traditionally been tested against the "whatever," has profited from it, and has survived it. We are,

are we not, chiefly the products of the intellectual currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

To suggest, however, that the *rank and file* of APA members (a term used, it appears, to designate college and university professors) is not concerned about regional organizations and by extension about the survival of Classics at a grass roots level is a fallacy. The majority of Classicists (including many from the “centers of the mighty”) is painfully aware of the problem of “fostering Classics on the secondary level.” All are aware that the continued existence of the Classics is being seriously compromised by a dwindling number of students fed into their departments by the nation’s secondary schools. Such is especially the case with small classics departments whose number (if I may direct our readers to the *Classical World’s Directory of College and University Classicists*) is as countless as flocks of birds.

Some CANE members may have good reason to believe that their organization has been abandoned by its universities. I do not know. CAAS, on the other hand, appears over the past years to have gained increasing support from many—although not enough. Frequently, biannual CAAS meetings are sponsored and organized by an important university. This is not to say that the CAAS programs (often most effectively put together by such university representatives) always engender the enthusiasm of secondary school teachers, but there is consciousness of their needs in the planning of each event. For regional organizations elsewhere, I cannot speak.

The thrust of “The APA and the Regional Associations,” if my interpretation is correct, is that a greater interaction between APA members and the membership of regional organizations might help to remedy the shaky status of our discipline as it faces the uncertainties of the twenty-first century. This, I regret to say, appears to me to be a sentimental, not a realistic argument. My reasons for saying so are these.

First, although I believe, as our author does, that our calling is a high one, to suggest that we are “the salt of the academic earth” is scarcely the view of our colleagues in other fields or of our society as a whole. Classics is viewed more often as salt on the academic earth.

The reality of our situation is plainly that the profession of Classics is no longer felt to be of great importance to the academe or to twentieth-century society where the glamour surrounding the arcana of Greek and Latin verb paradigms has given way to the impenetrable language of the computer. If our prestige is to be regained (and thereby our educational clout), we shall have to mount an action and propaganda campaign at all levels—academic and political—as ambitious (although I would hope more sensible) than that mount-

ed by the National Rifle Association or the tobacco industry. The likelihood of such an undertaking is, even when stated most optimistically, nil.

Secondly, as regards the central question raised by "The APA and the Regional Organizations:" What has the APA done or might do more effectively to "collaborate with the other Classical Associations . . . in fostering Classics on a secondary level?"

For some years I have been chairman of the APA's Committee on Regional Classics Organizations and so can answer with at least a modicum of authority, "little." This committee was established by the APA in 1982 and launched in 1984 under the chairmanship of our estimable colleague, Zeph Stewart. Its express purpose is "to improve communications among our professional associations, especially between the regional associations and the APA."

Such a mandate is broad. Its focus has not been sharpened over the years. CRCO's meetings (which occur at the annual APA meeting) have afforded an opportunity for officers of the APA and regional organizations to meet one another. But these meetings have dealt for the most part with such activities as concern the APA: geographical representation on the APA Board of Directors, recruitment of APA members through regional organizations and vice versa, a national speakers' bureau, a national lecture program, and most recently with the organization of a nationwide celebration centered on the upcoming Olympic Games in Atlanta. It is not a notable record.

At the Committee's 1993 meeting there may be a serious attempt to address regional issues, or perhaps the coordination of a national "crisis" program for colleges and secondary schools—or a protracted discussion on the subject of national standards. If something can be effected in one of these areas, we shall, I hope, be able to point to significant cooperation between our organizations.

Quite candidly, there are two factors which hinder the APA's significant (I did not say effective) support in the promotion of Classics in the secondary schools. On a very practical level, the Association is neither sufficiently financed or properly staffed to be an "action" organization as many professional organizations are, among these, the AMA to which our author refers very negatively in another context. Quite simply, APA does not have a staff in the traditional sense which might support specific large-scale programs aimed at bolstering faltering secondary school programs.

Equally noteworthy, as remiss as the APA may seem in the pursuit of such programs which might guarantee its bread and butter, regional organizations have not been at all vocal in seeking APA cooperation and APA assistance, at least to my knowledge. It is not from a sense of awe or inadequacy.

A mandate from a regional organization, that is, a concrete and reasonable plan, would be listened to and certainly taken seriously. Neither the Board of Directors nor the constituency of the APA is insensitive to “what has been going on for years.”

Although I may seem on certain matters to disagree with our author, I hasten, in closing, to concur—perhaps reflecting the political tradition in which Americans are raised—that at moments of crisis public obloquy does occasionally produce miracles. There *are*, I admit, those in our ranks who appear contemptuous of others at lower levels in the profession, who simply lack the manners to attend to other peoples’ needs. But the fact that such people pay dues to the APA but no attention to their regional associations will have little effect on the future of our profession.