

South Australian Chapter – Beginnings (May 1959 – May 1961)

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*Without Chapters there is no College – they are the essential body of the College. The whole intent of the College in some way is influence and you influence by broad involvement, not by a little group getting together centrally.*¹
(Haydn Williams)

Genesis

It is accepted that the genesis of the Australian College of Educators was the meeting referred to variously as the *Corio Convention* or the *Founders Convention*, a residential gathering of *interested persons* held at Geelong Grammar School, 15-18 May 1959. Prior to that meeting a select group of prominent Victorian educators had been meeting during 1958 and 1959 with a view to establishing a professional organisation to be known as The Australian College of Education. The group had formed a Provisional Council to plan the formation of the College. With Rev T H Timpson as Secretary and Dr James Darling as Chairman, the group invited 118 educators from around Australia to participate in the Convention and to plan the formation and expansion of the College. While not all could attend, all 118 became known as *Founders* of the College. Eleven Founders from South Australia attended.

Chapter Preparation

On their return to South Australia the Founders were enthused and empowered to work speedily towards formation of a local Chapter of the College. To this end they agreed to meet, at first informally and then, on 3 August 1959, in what may be termed the first formal meeting of the South Australian Founders group, with Rev. Michael Scott SJ in the chair. While no formal Minutes of that meeting appear extant, a set of typed notes signed by the Secretary, A W Jones, is in the Archives.² These notes indicate the major items discussed as:

- Chapter membership and recruitment;
- Types of membership;
- Projects – national (College), and local (Chapter);
- Relationships and communications – College/Chapter/Members; and
- Planning for the Inaugural Chapter meeting.

On 9 October 1959 the College Council met in Melbourne. Rev. Scott, representing the embryonic South Australian Chapter, attended. In reporting back on 20 October on the Council deliberations he highlighted three items of special significance:

- Preparing for the First Annual Meeting of the College planned for Sydney in May 1960;
- His lodgement of an application for the Second Annual Meeting of the College to be held in Adelaide in 1961; and
- Chapters were asked to accept for their guidance for the time being the draft Constitution of the College, while Council prepared a 'model' Constitution for Chapters; any variations by a Chapter would be subject to Council approval.³

That 20 October 1959 meeting was particularly important in the Chapter's early history in that its participants finalised the planning of the Inaugural Chapter Meeting, set for 20 November. Part of the planning included the preselection for nomination of Office Bearers and Committee members of the first Chapter Committee, such action not to preclude other nominations at the Inaugural Chapter Meeting. According to Albert Jones,⁴ it had been agreed that Colin Gordon would stand as Chairman and

Wybert Simonds as Secretary. In the event, Gordon declined due to serious ill health and Simonds also withdrew, preferring to see Jones in the role.

Foundation

Thus the scene was set for the actual formation of the South Australian Chapter of the College. Sadly, Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting on 20 November 1959 do not seem to have survived in the Archives. Nevertheless there are references which indicate a successful and enthusiastic launch of the Chapter. Of particular significance is the summary in the First Annual Report of the Chapter.⁵ This states that the meeting was held at the Staff Club of the University of Adelaide and was attended by 35 of the Founders and other invited members. A highlight of the Inaugural Chapter Meeting was the Inaugural Address, given by Dr James Darling, President of the College. Of the elected 12-member Chapter Committee, seven were Foundation members, including the Chairman (Rev. Michael Scott), Deputy Chairs (Colonel Evan Mander-Jones and Mr Colin Gordon) and Secretary (Mr Albert Jones).

In its first full year of existence the Chapter was clearly driven by an enthusiastic and motivated Committee of highly credible senior educators. As stated in its First Annual Report:

*'Chapter policy was directed towards building up a strong representative membership, creating a sufficient body of fellows, and conducting annually three well attended Chapter meetings.'*⁶

These meetings were highlighted by addresses on major educational issues by prominent educators. An important symposium was also conducted on the topic, 'Educational Needs of Students of Different Abilities, Aptitudes and Interests at the Primary Level, the Secondary Level and the Tertiary Level'.

It was a sad day for the Chapter when Colin Gordon died in mid-year. He had been highly regarded by all his colleagues and had the distinction of becoming the first South Australian Fellow of the College shortly before his death.

The First Annual Conference of the College in Sydney in May 1960 was attended by eight members of the South Australian Chapter. One of the major papers presented was by Professor B J Bok, in which he drew attention to serious concerns expressed by academics about the state of science teaching in Australia. The College agreed with his proposal that it might work with the Academy of Science 'in trying to find a way of helping science teaching in secondary schools in Australia'.⁷ A series of discussions followed, involving the College, the ACER, Sir John Eccles, Sir Mark Oliphant and the Australian Science Teachers Association. Subsequently a special committee, convened by Dr William Radford, was formed to oversee the task and to seek and consider submissions, one of which was prepared by members of the South Australian Chapter.⁸ A report on progress was made by Dr Radford at the Second Annual Conference of the College in Adelaide in 1961.⁹

Membership and Expansion

One of the contentious issues which exercised the minds and discussions of the Founders and early members was the optimum numbers for the College and its respective Chapters, together with the desirable representation from the various education sectors. The issue initially surfaced at the Founders Convention, with James Darling (Geelong Grammar School) and Brian Hone (Melbourne Grammar School) the main protagonists. According to Albert Jones, Darling originally had in mind a prestigious professional association of up to 500 elite educators, to raise the status of the teaching profession, with entry by examination and all admitted to be called Fellows.¹⁰ Hone, however, sought a broader membership involving leaders

from the private and public education sectors, providing a meeting place for all sectors to work together in a collaborative way. Discussion brought an accommodating compromise, with Darling formally and successfully proposing two levels of membership – Fellows and Members.

While the College Council stipulated no specific numbers for the Chapter membership and sector representation, the Chapter Committee at its meeting on 8 December 1959¹¹ considered a College Council suggestion, provided as a guide only. That suggestion was that South Australia might aim for a membership quota of 100, with approximate representation of university (15), school (50), education administration (18) and miscellaneous (17).¹² The Committee treated the proposal seriously, even further categorising school representation between State (25), Independent (10) and Catholic (15).

It is clear from a perusal of the Minutes of the seven Chapter Committee meetings held in 1960¹³ that membership recruitment and growth remained a prominent agenda item. It is equally clear that little notice was taken subsequently of the suggested numerical quota, in that Chapter membership grew from 43 (January) to 76 (May) to 113 (November) and continued to increase at a similar rate for some time. One obvious reason for the increase could be attributed to the 'Jones factor' of the State Education Department. Evan Mander-Jones (Director of Education) and Albert Jones (Inspector and soon to be Superintendent) were enthusiastic and committed to the success of the College and strongly promoted it within departmental ranks. This support even extended to using departmental mailing and incorporating the acronyms MACE and FACE in listing departmental personnel,¹⁴ thus providing an attractive and enticing degree of prestige.

Tertiary Concerns

At the same time, concern was expressed at the difficulty in recruiting membership from the tertiary sector. Such concern is understandable when one considers that the list of 96 Chapter members as at August 1960¹⁵ contains only seven names of tertiary personnel – this despite the fact that three of the 11 South Australians at the Founders Convention were University of Adelaide personnel. One can only offer conjecture for this state of affairs. One possible factor may have been some reticence on the part of the Professor of Education at the University of Adelaide, Professor L F Neal. The only evidence for such a proposition is his letter of 14 June 1960¹⁶ in which he graciously declined the invitation to become a member of the College, hinting at possible conflict of interest. Such evidence is far from compelling, however, as Neal agreed to address the first Chapter meeting of 1960 on 25 March. Besides, it must be borne in mind that the first Chapter Chairman, Rev. Michael Scott, represented the University, as did another Committee member, Henry Basten, Vice-Chancellor of the University. A second possible factor may have been the great Matriculation debate of the time, about which more will be mentioned shortly. In retrospect, however, the relative dearth of tertiary members must be considered a conundrum.

College Conference, Adelaide

Activities in the later months of 1960 were geared largely towards preparing for the Second Annual Conference of the College, scheduled for May 1961 in Adelaide. The ambitious project, which the fledgling Chapter had requested in late 1959, meant a heavy commitment, especially for all Committee members. Minutes from the time reflect a sense of excitement and willing participation as well as meticulous planning. An intriguing piece of detail appears in the 30 November Committee Minutes, referring to the Official Opening of the Conference. The Committee agreed that 'Local light wines, eg Barossa Pearl, should be served in moderation at the supper'.¹⁷

By early 1961 the Chapter had developed a solid foundation, with a membership already exceeding its long term projected quota. The April Committee meeting reported as follows:

*'The Committee considered that now that the building up process was in hand thoughts should be directed to a topic for research and discussion involving Chapter members at large.'*¹⁸

The opportunity would certainly come; meantime the Chapter had the task of hosting the Second Annual Conference of the College, an activity which was successfully accomplished and which contributed greatly to the consolidation of the Chapter.

Chapter First Annual Meeting

The First Annual Meeting of the Chapter was held on 22 May 1961, during the Second Annual College Conference. This gathering set the scene for an extremely busy year of activity because of local and national issues. As a result of a College Conference resolution,¹⁹ a major national project on the teaching profession was adopted, requiring each Chapter to undertake major research at the local level for subsequent input to a national report, *Teachers in Australian Schools*. In addition, the Chapter was faced with the unanticipated prospect of dealing with a controversial draft report on Matriculation, prepared by the Matriculation Subcommittee of the Education Committee of the University of Adelaide. Both matters were to engage large numbers of South Australian Chapter members in a great deal of work worthy of a professional body.

Conclusion

In much less than two years of existence the Chapter had truly come of age and the faith of its Founders had certainly been justified. As summarised by Albert Jones:

*'The Founders were concerned that the College should exist for leaders in the teaching profession, from all kinds of educational institutions, to meet, share and discuss developments in education. They avoided controversial issues until the unity of the College was established. They saw that this unified body might become a leader in educational thought and innovation, but not in industrial matters.'*²⁰

References

- 1 Ashford K, Unpublished draft document: A History of the Australian College of Education, p.65. Australian College of Educators Official Archive (ACEOA), Box 513-20.
- 2 ACEOA, Box 502-01.
- 3 ACEOA, ibid.
- 4 Jones A W, 2003. Interview, in ACEOA.
- 5 ACEOA, Box 502-01.
- 6 ACEOA, ibid.
- 7 Restricted report, in ACEOA, Box 502-01.
- 8 The Australian College of Education (ACE). 1961. Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference, 19th – 22nd May 1961. Hawthorn Vic., author, p. 2.
- 9 ACE, ibid., p. 11.
- 10 Jones, op. cit., 2003.
- 11 ACEOA, Box 502-01.
- 12 ACEOA, ibid.
- 13 ACEOA, ibid.
- 14 Jones, op. cit., 2003.
- 15 ACEOA, Box 502-01.
- 16 ACEOA, ibid.

- 17 ACEOA, *ibid.*
18 ACEOA, *ibid.*
19 ACE, *op. cit.*, 1961, p. 10.
20 Jones A W, 1994. Interview, in ACEOA.

Following an early career in education, James G Dwyer undertook studies in librarianship and worked at the National Library of Australia and subsequently as Chief Librarian of the Canberra Public Library Service. He returned to education as Superintendent of Curriculum (Libraries) in the Education Department of South Australia for 25 years and later as Executive Director of the South Australian Institute for Catholic Teacher Education, retiring in 1997. He was a member of the Libraries Committee of the Australian Schools Commission, Chairman of the Australian Schools Catalogue Information Service, Chairman of the Australian Bibliographic Network Committee, and President of the Australian Library and Information Association. He was elected Fellow of the Australian Library and Information Association in 1982 and Fellow of the Australian College of Educators in 1980.