

FEPC members

Richard Hart

4/28/79

The FEPC will meet at the usual time and place to consider the following items:

- (1) Adams request
- (2) 308 PC texts
- (3) Approval of minutes (4/11 and 4/18)
- (4) Cameron lab proposal
- (5) Personnel

Minutes, Freshman English Policy Committee

April 18, 1979

Parlin 214

Members present: Kinneavy, Trimble, Ruszkiewicz, Witte, Newcomb,
Cameron, Byars, Hart

Agenda:

Approval of minutes

Textbooks

Lab

1. Approval of minutes was postponed to allow more time for discussing textbooks.

2. Dr. Ruszkiewicz said that the textbook subcommittee had decided to recommend offering Stubbs and Barnet's The Little, Brown Reader (Littel, Brown, 1977) as an option in 306 along with Decker. LBR, he said, has an attractive design, many selections with a great variety of lengths and time periods, and photographs for visually oriented students. Although it is thematically organized, he continued, its teacher's manual contains a rhetorical table of contents besides discussions of selections. He added that it contains more poetry and fiction, but in all, fewer literary selections than many readers. Dr. Trimble said that the subcommittee had rejected Contexts for Composition because its uniformly long selections are not suitable for our students and because it is visually unattractive.

Dr. Kinneavy asked if LBR would be compatible with the 306 syllabus, and Dr. Ruszkiewicz replied that it would be. Dr. Kinneavy then asked if it would be correct to say that LBR is characterized by a paraliterary style. Dr. Ruszkiewicz replied that although some selections are paraliterary, the book is well balanced. The subcommittee, he said, had rejected several readers on these grounds; Contexts, for example, offers little choice in range of difficulty. Dr. Kinneavy agreed, adding that Doug Tomas had analyzed one of Contexts' essays and found it to be written on the 19th grade level.

Mr. Cameron asked whether LBR contains anything on argument, and Dr. Ruszkiewicz replied that it does. Ms. Byars asked whether the book displays any interest in politics and women's issues, and Dr. Ruszkiewicz again replied affirmatively, saying that it contains a balance of sorts. He added that most readers nowadays treat women's issues to some extent.

Dr. Trimble then said that instructors might find some problems in LBR but that we would have to try the book out to know. At least, he said, it would offer instructors a genuine alternative to Decker. Dr. Witte agreed but said that he would have preferred a reader with some student essays. Dr. Ruszkiewicz said that he

likes to have student essays readily available, too, and that although one reader the subcommittee had examined contained several student essays, it was neither attractive nor useful. Dr. Kinneavy said that it would be good to include student essays in the syllabus, and Mr. Hart pointed out that the D'Angelo rhetoric contains many of them. Dr. Kinneavy then construed the textbook subcommittee's recommendation of Decker and LBR as a motion, and called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, Dr. Ruskiewicz passed around a sheet summarizing the subcommittee's notes on rhetorics and said a few words about Corder's Contemporary Writing: Process and Practice (Scott, Foresman, 1979). This book had generated much enthusiasm in the subcommittee, he said, especially because it takes account of nearly all current thinking about rhetoric and writing. He warned, however, that while the book's first 75 pages contain an excellent discussion of invention, they move languorously. Dr. Witte said that he had been impressed by Corder's thoroughness, but he had wondered if it might not be another Winterowd. Definitely not, replied Dr. Ruskiewicz. Mr. Cameron said that he had found Corder to be a very comprehensive and comprehensible process-oriented text. Dr. Kinneavy added with a smile that if we were to adopt Corder, we would at least have a rhetoric compatible with our handbook.

Dr. Ruskiewicz then called attention to Crews's The Random House Handbook (2nd ed., Random House, 1977), saying that the subcommittee had found it to be a well-written and solid subject-paragraph-sentence approach to writing. Dr. Trimble said that he had liked the first edition and had been enthusiastic about this one because it is practical and beautifully written. Corder is much fuller, though, he said. Dr. Witte agreed and pointed out that Crews has the twin defects of containing little on invention and devoting over half its pages to handbook material. Dr. Ruskiewicz said that of the five rhetorics it was presenting, the subcommittee would probably rank Crews last. Dr. Kinneavy said, however, that Crews might make a good choice for external reasons: the department's literature professors would likely be familiar with some of Crews's other work.

The discussion then turned to D'Angelo's Process and Thought in Composition (Winthrop, 1977). Dr. Ruskiewicz praised the book. It's excellent from the teacher's point of view, he said, because among other things it provides an outstanding treatment of two difficult subjects, organization and heuristics--in short, the composing process. It's also excellent from the student's point of view, he said, because it's clear, readable, and leavened with examples of student prose. The major shortcomings of the text are these: it offers nothing separate on persuasion; it offers perhaps too many sample essays and too little concrete advice on

how to apply what can be learned from them; it has no handbook section and it does not fit the syllabus--hence it would tend to take over the course. Dr. Kinneavy observed that this last shortcoming might be partially offset by the publisher's apparent willingness to provide us with some free copies of D'Angelo's theory book, A Conceptual Theory of Rhetoric. Dr. Kinneavy then pointed out that Process and Thought is basically a modes book, not an aims book. Dr. Witte agreed, but added that his students had been more receptive to D'Angelo's text than to any other freshman text he'd ever adopted.

Dr. Ruszkiewicz next summarized the subcommittee's evaluation of Ebbitt & Ebbitt's Writer's Guide and Index to English (Scott, Foresman, 1979). It's an unusually thorough, traditional rhetoric, he said. Because of its more elevated style, heavy format, and occasional abstractness, our students aren't apt to read it as eagerly as either the Corder or D'Angelo text, but the whole look of the book will be lightened considerably this fall when Scott, Foresman brings out an edition stripped of the Index section. The book's chief strength, Dr. Ruszkiewicz said, is that it's closely attuned to our syllabus. Significantly, it's very good on both induction and deduction, and its 40-page treatment of persuasion is outstanding--far better than either Corder or D'Angelo provides. Mr. Cameron agreed. But for its neglect of expressive writing, he added, Ebbitt & Ebbitt dovetails wonderfully with our syllabus. Moreover, the chapters are complete entities unto themselves, and the sentence-combining chapter is the best single overview of the subject that he's ever read.

The last of the proposed rhetorics was Klarnier, Williams, & Harp's Writing by Design (Houghton Mifflin, 1977). Dr. Ruszkiewicz recommended the book for its handling of the Christensen approach, pointing out that it succeeds in going beyond description and narration, the two preoccupations of Christensen. It also offers solid, challenging readings, and does a better job than The Writer's Options of teaching the whole essay. The book does have two problems, however. First, it has "fill-in-the-blanks" sections, which will lead some instructors to erroneously assume that the book was designed for basic writers. Second, the book might end up being adopted by some instructors who aren't familiar with the Christensen approach and assume they're getting something more traditional. Mr. Cameron agreed, though he added that he found it to be a really exciting little book.

Dr. Kinneavy then raised the question, "How many of these texts do you recommend that we adopt?" Dr. Ruszkiewicz replied that his subcommittee wished to leave that decision to the full committee. He thought it prudent, though, to have us first discuss the advantages and disadvantages of multiple adoptions.

Mr. Cameron said that if we can get course assignments made early, there's probably no reason why we couldn't adopt four texts. Dr. Kinneavy then remarked that Dr. Moldenhauer wanted to get together with him this week and send out a memo to the whole staff asking them to designate what composition courses they preferred to teach next fall and spring. This memo would be a convenient time, he said, to announce our alternative freshman texts and solicit faculty preferences.

Mr. Cameron voiced some caution about adopting Writing by Design for the lab. Before doing that, he said, he'd prefer to have someone like Martha King try it out with the view toward using it later in the lab. Dr. Kinneavy agreed, saying that maybe we ought to reserve that text for use on a tightly controlled, probationary, experimental basis.

At this point, Dr. Witte, eager to bring matters to a vote, moved that we not offer Crews' Random House Handbook as an alternative text. His motion passed unanimously.

He then offered another motion, namely, that we have a choice between at least two rhetorics. This motion also passed unanimously.

He then offered still another motion, namely, that we offer Corder, D'Angelo, and Ebbitt & Ebbitt as choices for 306 rhetorics.

This last motion prompted some discussion. Mr. Cameron raised the question of whether we'd made a decision about how to make the syllabus compatible with these texts. Dr. Kinneavy replied that he'd have to write a skeletal syllabus this summer for all three texts. Dr. Ruszkiewicz then proposed that Dr. Kinneavy, after writing the syllabus, might farm it out to three people to plug in the relevant readings. Dr. Kinneavy said he'd be grateful for that help. Dr. Newcomb expressed thorough approval of offering alternative texts. He was impressed by the D'Angelo text, he said, and now that he had looked at Corder's text, he saw that it too is strong and complete. He speculated, though, that some people will reject that D'Angelo text for looking like a high school text, opting instead for Corder's because it looks more packed; he himself, however, would choose D'Angelo's text because it leaves him some things to do on his own. Dr. Witte's third motion was finally brought to a vote and passed unanimously.

Discussion then returned to Writing by Design. Mr. Cameron moved that the textbook subcommittee be authorized to find teachers for 5-8 sections of 306 for the Klerner text and report back to the full committee their reactions to the text before the end of the Fall '79 semester. That motion was passed unanimously.

Dr. Ruszkiewicz then observed that Mr. Creel (absent from the meeting) felt we ought to have available as a text one that's

primarily concerned with language. Mr. Creel's own choice was Goshgarian's Exploring Language. Dr. Ruszkiewicz agreed that Exploring Language offers more selections than the other two proposed texts (Eschholz's Language Awareness and MacKillop's Speaking of Words) but noted that they're all linguistically-oriented, which means that few of their selections could be used for writing models. Still, he admitted, the texts would help 306 focus on the language. One other problem he mentioned was that Language Awareness doesn't easily fit the syllabus.

After further discussion, Dr. Witte moved that we not have a language reader in 306. His motion was passed unanimously.

The discussion finally turned to 307 and 308PC texts. Dr. Ruszkiewicz observed that his subcommittee was not reporting on 307 texts because the full committee had decided to stay with our current ones. As for 308PC texts, the subcommittee had had a problem there because its members lacked expertise in Popular Culture. As a result, they were awaiting feedback from the PC people. This prompted Miss Byars to observe that a meeting of the 308 PC staff had been scheduled for the near future and that she'd report the results of their discussion. Dr. Newcomb said that, speaking for himself, he was disappointed that the PC books offer no PC content--they merely talk about PC. He conceded, though, that some PC teachers prefer a theoretical approach, and thus speculated that people will ask for one or the other. Right now, he said, most PC teachers feel uneasy about McQuade & Atwan, but they don't know anything to replace it.

Dr. Kinneavy suggested that we defer a decision on 308PC texts until next week, at which time we can also discuss the lab and Mike Adams. Dr. Trimble's motion to adjourn was passed unanimously.