

Fall 1966
Midcontinent American Studies Association (MASA) Bulletin

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MASA BULLETIN

- **FIRST NATIONAL ASA CONFERENCE:** The Midcontinent American Studies Association will serve as host chapter for the first national convention of the American Studies Association; ASA in the past has always had its major meetings in conjunction with one of the "disciplinary" organizations. A good deal of commendable and creative planning has gone into the design of the meetings; the hope is to produce sections of unusual coherence.

Professors George Ehrlich of the University of Kansas City at Missouri and Jerzy Hauptmann of Park College, Parkville, Missouri are serving as co-chairmen of the meeting, with Robert Lucid providing liason with the national office in Philadelphia. The committee chairmen are as follows:

Attendance: Martin F. Hasting, S.J. (Saint Louis University)
Displays and Exhibits: Peter Hilty (Southeast Missouri State College)
Finance: Edward F. Grier (University of Kansas)
Major Speakers: Stuart Levine (University of Kansas)
Operations: Warren French (University of Missouri at Kansas City)
Norman Yetman (University of Kansas)
Placement Service: Robert Lucid (University of Pennsylvania)
Program: John Flanagan (University of Illinois)
Publications: Stuart Levine (University of Kansas)
Publicity and Advertisement: James Nickell (Park College)
Program Publishing: Nicholas Joost (University of Southern Illinois at
Edwardsville)
Trips and Visitations: Kenneth J. LaBudde (University of Missouri at
Kansas City).

Conference treasurer is Mr. Irvin Youngberg of the Endowment Association at the University of Kansas.

The conference will take place at the Hotel President in Kansas City, Missouri on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 26-28, 1967. There will, for the first time, be a specifically-American-Studies "meat-market," a placement service for department chairmen and job candidates.

The structure of the program is unusual. There will, of course, be a couple of addresses by major speakers. There will also be a series of "theme" papers delivered by well-known scholars in different fields. These will be followed, in the section meetings, by papers from people in different disciplines whose subjects "cross" those of the "theme" speakers in some significant way. The

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authors of these papers will in no sense be "discussants" of the theme papers; their papers rather will be the results of independent, though related, research.

The idea is to avoid those two situations which make so many scholarly conventions so deadly: the sessions in which a stream of bright young men trot across the stage reading papers unrelated to one another and of interest only to specialists very close to their own fields of investigation; and the sessions in which a major paper is followed by a series of commentaries by commentators who all too often have nothing to say, or feel that they must find something to nag about. The authors of the "theme" papers will be required to submit their talks to Professor Flanagan well in advance, so that copies may be distributed to interested scholars in related fields. The structure of these sessions, then, should in itself help reinforce the interdisciplinary nature of our profession. ASA members interested in appearing on the program should contact Professor Flanagan so that they can be sent copies of the theme papers when they are ready.

An editorial apparatus has been erected to review all papers read before national ASA conventions. Foundation support is being sought to underwrite publication of any of these symposia which seem especially significant and coherent. A related American Studies Monograph Series is also established, under the general editorship of Stuart Levine at the University of Kansas.

- A letter from Alexander S. Birkos informs us that "for a number of years... MASJ has been abstracted regularly in Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life.
- Dates for the annual meeting of the Midcontinent American Studies Association have been announced. The conference will happen at Iowa State University in Ames on April 1st, 1967, with a meeting of the Executive Committee and the Editorial Board in the same city on the evening of March 31. Norris Yates is chairman of the program; he has the following information on participants and subjects: Allen H. Davis of the University of Missouri, speaking on the spiderweb conspiracy: the radical right in the 1920's; Martin F. Hasting, Saint Louis University, the American: typical and heroic, a paper based on the results of a survey; Dudley T. Cornish, Kansas State College at Pittsburg, speaking about Civil War music; James C. Austin, University of Southern Illinois at Edwardsville, on American humor in France; and Robert A. Corrigan, of the State University of Iowa, speaking on Ezra Pound and the Bollingen Prize controversy. The subjects as listed are not necessarily the final titles of these papers, nor is the list of speakers and subjects quite complete. Annual meetings of MASA have been notably bouyant in the past, and the notorious

hospitality of Messrs. Yates and Herrstadt, our most vigorous members at Iowa State University, should help make the 1967 meeting another good one. If you are interested in attending and are not a member of MASA, drop a card to Professor Jerzy Hauptmann so that he will put you on the list for more detailed announcements.

- A great many nice things have been said about our special issue, "The Indian Today." One of the nicest, and most extensive, appears in an article by D'Arcy McNickle, "The Indian Tests the Mainstream," in the September 26 number of The Nation. Mr. McNickle says that the issue "deserves special mention here because its collection of articles... attempts to let the Indian stand forth as a person and a group member in our contemporary industrialized society--to give some meaning to the values that operate in Indian life." He turns next to a detailed discussion of a number of the individual articles: "The most perceptive of them reveal an acquaintanceship with contemporary Indian life and a sophistication in interpreting the observed event which was not encountered in... earlier discussion of the situation of the Indian ." Copies of the special issue have been purchased by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, by several other government agencies, by social welfare organizations and by a great many individual Indian people; the issue has also been adopted as a text-book at a number of universities.
- Ray Browne asks us to announce the dates for the Purdue Conference on American Studies: April 21-22, 1967. Frederick Hoffman, Leslie Fiedler, Arthur Mizener and others are on the program. Sounds lively.
- CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: As things now stand in the ASA, there are Regional Societies (MASA, the ASA of the Lower Mississippi, etc.), and there are also geographic areas made up (with some anomalies) of groups of the regions. The larger "areas," and not the smaller "regions," form the basis of representation on the ASA's governing Executive Committee. The rationale, as it has been explained to MASA, is that there are eighteen Regional Societies, and that, if all were represented, the resulting committee would be too cumbersome to function effectively. Yet MASA is governed effectively by an Executive Board of fifteen members, and the MASA-ASA committee which is planning the first national meeting of the ASA operates very smoothly with its seventeen members. Moreover, since the ASA Executive Committee is elected from the arbitrarily-designated "areas," the area representative elected is almost always a member of the largest chapter in the area. To pick an example close to home, our own furiously-active chapter has never had a member on the committee, because it is smaller than the American Studies Group, Minnesota and the Dakotas, with which it is lumped to form an "area." A splendid group, no doubt, those Minnesotans and Dakotans, but we would like a voice, too. Minneapolis is "a fur piece" from Carbondale and other

hotbeds of MASA activity--Columbia, St. Louis, Urbana, Lawrence, Kansas City, Ames, Iowa City and so forth. The "area" has no real basis in personal and professional contact.

So MASA is proposing a constitutional amendment, about which you will shortly hear in a communication from our agents. It involves a redesigned ASA Executive Committee, with each Regional Society assured of a seat each year. The Regional Societies are vigorous, for the most part; the "areas" seem paper organizations. Why not, the thinking runs, let the Regional Societies represent themselves?

Your support of the amendment is solicited. Jerzy Hauptmann says that he will be happy to answer questions about MASA reasoning.