

Ka Synjuk Nongthoh Katholik
(Catholic Authors' Guild.)

MEMORIAL LECTURE

**Kum ka jingkyrmaw burom ia I Babu Soso Tham ha ka Lyngkhuh
Sngi-iap Ba-Sanphewwei jong I.**

bad ka

SYMPOSIUM

Halor ki jingtrei jong u Rangbah R. S. Lyngdoh kum
ka jingrakhe ia ka Lyngkhuh Sngi-Iap Banyngong
jong U ha ka 19.12.1991.

Jaka Don Bosco Youth Centre, Laitumkhrach, Shillong.
Tarik 18th December 1991.
Por 11-30 mynstep.

“KA KTIEN KA TEI IA KA JAITBYNRIEW”

==== H. ELIAS ====

Inserted as a token of love and friendship
by **Bimal Bawri**
Akashi Book Depot, Laitumkhrach, Shillong.

Toward a Meaningful School of Languages

At the present moment, the English Department is the only member of the School of Languages. Before the University imposes its own concept of what a "School of Languages" should be on us, we would like to assert our prerogative as the senior-most member of the School to establish the direction which we feel it should take.

As we see it, the School of Languages can develop in one of three ways. First, it could develop as a series of language and literature departments. English could be joined by the hill languages of the region, Hindi, Russian, French, etc. This seems a every logical way of providing brothers and sisters for the English Department and transforming it into a School, but the method has many flaws. To begin with, the hill languages are not that developed as to be of the same caliber as English. They are interesting and valuable to study, but from an anthropological point of view rather than a literary one. Further, there will be no students who will be competent to study these languages on the M. A. level as they are not taught at the B. A. (Hons) levels: proficiency in speaking a language does not imply a corresponding proficiency in thinking critically about it as a literary structure. Thus, if the hill languages are brought into the School of Languages, they and their students would not be able to interact with the English Department, and vice versa. As far as the other languages go, they could not be taught at the M. A. level, either, as nobody in this region would have had sufficient previous training in them. Although there can be much interaction among French, English, Russian, etc., such interaction in the form of courses in comparative literature and language is simply not possible at this time and place. Each departments, therefore,

would go its own way, functioning at different levels; and the School of Languages would be merely a mechanical and artificial grouping of "languages", whose members would not be able to work as a team.

A second way the School of Languages could develop would be if it made itself into a School of British Studies. Under this scheme, the Department of English as it now exists, would also be transformed: it would turn itself into a less formal Committee that would spawn courses connecting British literature to British history, philosophy, politics, etc. The student would become a generalist rather than a specialist, or a contextualized specialist. The great disadvantage to this proposal, which is intellectually satisfying, is that it is irrelevant to the needs of the region which NEHU is supposed to serve.

The third way that the School of Languages could develop also involves transformation. We propose that the School of Languages be changed into the School of Communication Arts, in which there would be four other departments besides English, and at least four degree programs. These four other departments would be the departments of English Language and Linguistics, Literary Journalism, Creative Writing and Translation. The degrees that would be offered initially would be an M. A. in English Studies, an M. A. in Literary Communication, an M. A. in the Teaching of English, and an M. Phil. in English Studies with a greatly expanded library and with the addition of some linguistics people to the University, it should be possible to start a Ph. D. in English Studies and an M. A., M. Phil and Ph. D. in Linguistics. The Nature of these degrees is spelled out in detail below.

1. The M. A. Degree in English Studies (MAES). Essentially, this will be the traditional degree in English Literature. The courses which will be offered will run the gamut of English literature, from its inception to the present day; and its language component will consist of courses in stylistics, rhetoric and the theory of language. It will differ from the degree programs offered at other universities in two respects. First, it is envisaged that students will not have to follow a prescribed syllabus. They will have freedom to pick and choose the courses in English literature that they will to study, on the condition that their education doesn't become lopsided. Second, depending on the kinds of courses the student has chosen, he will be required to take particular courses in other disciplines, like History, Theology, Philosophy and Art, which will contextualize and enrich his study of a Particular area of English literature. For example, a student who does a course on English Romanticism will also do a course in the Philosophy Department on Kant. No student, however, will be allowed to spread himself out so thin that he will have merely a smattering of other disciplines. It is, thus, hoped, that the student, in pursuing his degree in English, will also acquire a substantive knowledge of one other discipline, and that therefore the degree which he will receive will be in English Studies rather than in English Literature.

2. The M. A. Degree in Literature Communication:

a) Journalism, b) Translation, c) Creative Writing (MALC). While the M. A. Degree in English Studies is a purely academic degree, the M. A. Degree in Literary Communication is a practical one, catering to the needs of those students for whom the study of English literature is a means rather than an end.

Students who wish to become translators or journalists or creative writers will do courses in these respective departments, which, it is hoped, will be set up under the aegis of the School of Languages. Apart from "core" courses in their chosen areas, they will be expected to take a certain number of courses in English literature and in other disciplines as well. It would be desirable if they also received on-the-spot practical training from such organizations, centers or institutes in Shillong which already exist for those purposes. For example, a student wishing to become a journalist would be expected to take courses in political science, sociology, English literature and journalism; and it would be desirable if he could spend one term working on the staff of a newspaper.

3. The M. A. Degree in the Teaching of English (MATE). This degree course is meant for prospective secondary school teachers. The difference between this degree and the M. A. in English Studies is that this one will have a much higher language component. It is envisaged that the M. A. in the Teaching of English will, to begin with, have a 50% language component, and a 50% literature component. The percentage of the literature component may be reduced in favour of courses in educational theory as and when a School of Education comes to Shillong.

4. The M. Phil in English Studies. This is a post M. A. degree program meant particularly for the teachers of the schools and colleges of this region who desire advanced training. It is envisaged that the students enrolled for an M. Phil degree would engage in independent study of particular areas, specialize in one of them, and present their investigations in the form of term papers or small theses. The department plans to encourage students in the M. Phil program to choose such areas for investigation as will require reading in other

disciplines besides English, such as Philosophy, Art, History, Theology, etc. The M. Phil will be a two year program, leading on to the Ph. D.

The advantages of this third scheme are obvious. There will be interaction, and creative interaction at that, between the departments in the School and between Schools. The School will serve the needs of the area as well as enrich the minds of its students.

Once we reorganize ourselves into the School of Communication Arts, then all thinking will be at the level of the School rather than the Department. Admission will also be at the level of the School; only after a student has been admitted to the School will he be admitted to one of the departments. Students will be admitted on the basis of a test administered by the School, the purpose of which will be to see his ability to handle the English Language and think critically in it. Students who fail outright will not get admission into the School; and those who pass without any reservations on the part of the School will be admitted directly into a department. Those whose English is weak but who show promise will be admitted into a one-year probationary course, which, if they complete successfully, will enable them to join the M. A. (Prev) of the department of their choice. This probationary M. A. course program will be taught by all members of the School, and may also involve teachers from other schools. (Details of this M. A. Probationary year are worked out in 'Toward a new M. A. in English') As for the instructors in the School, they will be appointed at least three months in advance of the semester, so that they will be able to prepare adequately for their courses. Coordinating the activities of the departments will be a Dean of the School, who will be the final

authority on all matters pertaining to the School:

Every semester each department will put out a list of the courses it is offering. Students in the School will be free to pick and choose from among these courses, provided they take no more than four and no less than two courses per semester, and fulfill the requirements of their degree program. Each student will have a faculty advisor, who will help him map out his courses every semester, enabling him to choose wisely. Once the advisor has approved the student's program, it will be considered as an acceptable way for the student to complete his degree requirements. Given that the number of students in the School will be in direct relation to the man-power requirements of the region, and that each department will offer many courses and classes, the total number of students in each class is likely to be small. Therefore, classes can be conducted on the seminar and/or tutorial pattern. It is understood that teachers will have full freedom in framing their courses, devising methods of instruction and conducting testing and examinations.