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Committee Tables
Education Bills

WASHINGTON (BP)--- The three House bills providing Federal aid to education were tabled by the House Rules Committee in an 8 to 7 vote.

Defeat of the bills was further cemented when a motion for immediate reconsideration was tabled, also by an 8 to 7 vote, preventing the bills from being called up again in the Rules Committee.

One of the bills was the proposed amendment to the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which would have provided \$375,000,000 in loans to parochial and private schools for classroom construction for teaching science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical fitness. This was the bill chosen to meet the Roman Catholic demands for Federal help to parochial and private schools if such was made available for public schools.

Another of the bills was the Administration's education proposal which would have provided \$2,484,000,000 in aid to public elementary and secondary education for school construction and teachers' salaries. Also in this bill were provisions for continuing school aid to Federally impacted areas.

The third bill would have authorized \$300,000,000 in loans and grants to colleges, public and private, for scholarships and construction programs.

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Committee Approves
Private School Aid

(7-21-61)

WASHINGTON (BP)--- Federal aid to private nonprofit schools is provided in the Senate's new version of the National Defense Education Act of 1958.

A bill to amend and extend the NDEA was approved and reported out of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. A similar bill in the House of Representatives was tabled by the House Rules Committee.

The old National Defense Education Act expires in 1962. Private school provisions in it include loans for equipment used in teaching science, mathematics and foreign languages, and minor remodeling for use of such equipment.

The new bill reported by the Senate committee would expand NDEA to cover loans to private schools for the construction of classrooms for teaching science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical fitness. The House version included the teaching of English to students whose primary language is not English. The Senate bill provides for this in public schools but not in private schools.

As in the companion House bill, aid would not be available for construction of classrooms to be used for general or religious educational purposes. The length of the loan is extended from 10 to 40 years.

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Another church-state feature in the committee's new bill appears in the student loan forgiveness provision. Under the old act up to 50% forgiveness of student loans was granted to those who became teachers in public schools. The new version would extend the forgiveness feature to include teachers in private nonprofit elementary or secondary schools, and in institutions of higher education.

The Senate bill contains no provision that private schools must be in operation a specific time before enactment of the new bill in order to receive loans. The House bill provided that private schools or school systems in operation less than four years prior to enactment of the new bill would not be eligible for aid.

The bill, as reported out by the committee, now awaits action in the Senate.

July 21, 1961 - From the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The following reports are for your general information and may be used in any way you like.--W. Barry Garrett

Meaning of the House
Rules Committee Vote

By C. Emanuel Carlson

On July 18, 1961, the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives voted 8 to 7 to table all three education bills so laboriously produced by the House Committee on Education and Labor. With proper legislative ritual for burial a motion to reconsider was defeated by the same vote. This is supposed to mean that these bills are "dead" for this session, since a second motion to reconsider cannot be made in the same session. How "dead," then, is a "dead bill"?

The next day there were two evidences that the issues are not dead. (1) In his news conference, the President reasserted both the need and the nationwide support for his aid-to-public-schools proposals. (2) In the meantime, the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare was voting approval for a new National Defense Education Act bill which meets the Catholic hierarchy's demand for loans to church schools.

The President forthrightly called on the House to find ways of enacting his program for the public schools, and indicated that he cannot agree to piece-meal aid such as that formerly given to "Federally impacted areas." This placed 319 Congressmen under the combined pressures of the Administration and their home school districts previously covered by the "impacted areas" aid bills. There may be changes of horses and vehicles, but the battle over cargo goes on.

In the Rules Committee vote of 8 to 7 the President's program met a temporary defeat at the hands of an alignment of three kinds of opposition. Their cooperation is incidental if not forced. They are not in any positive agreement except that they want to guarantee the protection of some special concern. The vote was "secret," but reports soon listed the opposition: five Republicans, two Southern Democrats, and one Roman Catholic Democrat from New York.

In recent years the Republican Party has advocated Federal funds for school construction as a stop-gap for the school crisis, but most Republicans have objected to the use of Federal funds for such school operation as teachers' salaries. The President's proposals formulated in H.R. 7300 would leave this determination of educational policy to the States. Both sides of this argument have important values in view. The one is concerned for the preservation of local control and support, even though the burden of educating the next generation continues to fall on real estate taxes and such revenue as can be gathered locally. The other looks toward more adequate schools by giving them the support of income tax funds which can be collected by the Federal Government from business, industry and private citizens.

Early in the session some support from Republicans for the Federal aid bill for public schools was expected. However, Republicans have increasingly treated the school proposals as a party issue. In the Rules Committee, all five Republicans favored the motion to table. The advancement of party interests calls forth that definition of public policy which pleases the economic and social segments of the Nation which support that party. Also, both parties want credit for making policy which most people believe to be the policy of the future.

While Republicans and Democrats vie for the future, the Democrats are divided on the basis of the past. Two Democratic members (Howard W. Smith, Va., and William M. Colmer, Miss.) joined the Republican five to make tabling possible. The President, in his news conference, pointed out that 7 of the 8 had opposed him in the election. Here is a conflict of political interests which reaches back through American history. It refuses to heal, because culture traits die slowly, especially when they are nurtured by conflicting regional and economic interests.

To account for the differences between the Administration and Rep. Smith, of Virginia, is beyond the task of this report, but no understanding of the present educational stalemate is complete without some such accounting. Into that account must go a recognition of the normal tensions between an agricultural and urban area, between labor policies in those areas, between racial attitudes handed down through different societies. Also, a recognition of the struggle for power within the party and of the balance of power between the States and the Federal Government must be added. All of this has been embroidered into fancy patterns by the years of politicking. And so the past reaches forward to prevent a nationwide appraisal of what constitutes sound educational policy for the present and the future.

The above divisions give the opportunity for the play of the special concerns of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. With seven supporters and seven opponents, one Roman Catholic Democrat (James J. Delaney, Queens, N.Y.), out of a strong Roman Catholic constituency, held the balance of power. When he voted with the hierarchy against the President, all was tabled.

In spite of the President's desire to treat the aid to public schools as an issue completely separated from the parochial issue, the Education and Labor Committee followed a bargaining course. The representative bishops early declared opposition to any Federal aid to public schools unless they got help for their schools. The education committee and some lesser lights in the Administration believed that they had a better chance to pass the public school bill if they met the demands of the bishops. When Delaney, in the Rules Committee, refused to vote for sending the bill to the floor until a bill had been prepared to help the parochial schools, the education committee meekly complied and went to work on amendments for the National Defense Education Act as the best way to do it. When it was done, Delaney wanted to table everything and produce one "non-discriminatory" bill which would include Federal aid to church schools.

For weeks, personal conversations in Washington have regretted the "emotional," the "bitter," the "vindictive" tone of correspondence regarding the parochial issue. Children's letters, and children's pictures carried the regimented expressions of an immature citizenry. Congressmen tore their hair. There was no rational response to such pressures, and they could not divest themselves of their responsible role in a critical world.

To many observers, this operation represented "ransom" and "blackmail." One must admit at least that the Roman Catholic leadership did not rise above its special sectarian interests to consider the Nation's educational needs as such. Modern technological change, current international tension meant nothing as its spokesmen contended that the Federal Government must not adopt an educational policy like that of most of the States which denies church schools the benefit of the tax collector's power.

This episode has much in it that is to be regretted. For the present, the democratic process has been blocked and the Nation denied the chance to seriously consider its educational needs. The convergence of three special concerns has blocked the deliberation on the larger national issues. The optimism about an American type of Catholicism which is non-political and unwilling to use political powers for religious ends has suffered serious loss. The public press has printed more evidence than good public relations can erase in a decade.

On the affirmative side, the episode has widely served to educate the American public. The ageless insights regarding the importance of religious liberty have come more alive than they have been for half a century or more. The friends of liberty have found each other. A measure has been taken of the size of the educational task with reference to church-state relations. Millions of Roman Catholic laymen have been compelled to analyze the goals and the strategies of their leaders.

Concern for freedom is not cut by party lines, at denominational borders, nor even by economic or cultural regions. Could it be that even the frustrations of democracy are on the path to new strength? Thinking people of good will cannot watch the democratic process frustrated without serious reflections.

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Possible New Plans
For School Bills

By C. Emanuel Carlson

For weeks before the eventful day, July 18, when the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives voted to table all education bills, the sponsors had sought ways of dealing with the "Delaney problem." As a Northern Democrat, James J. Delaney, from Queens, N.Y., might have been expected to support the President's program for Federal aid to public schools. But an apparent close balance placed Delaney in a position to bargain. He first demanded the completion of another bill which would include loans to parochial schools, and finally he demanded one bill that would aid all schools without "discrimination." Toward this objective the House bills were buried.

"Now what?" is the question in Washington and across the United States. Unfortunately, while much history is made in Washington, it is seldom written in advance. New strategies are in the making but they have not yet been agreed upon. An exploration of some possibilities may still be useful.

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The House does have the power to bring bills to the floor by a petition signed by a majority of the members. This may well be what the President had in mind when he spoke of "procedures available." The use of that procedure had been previously discussed and was considered to be ineffective because a bill brought to the floor in that way would probably be defeated. Some legislation, however, has been enacted this way in the past.

Probably the main error of judgment made by the friends of the President's proposed program was that it had a better chance of passing when it was accompanied by a bill that would appease the Roman Catholic pressures. To this end the National Defense Education Act was amended and reported out of the education committee. While full responsibility for this error is difficult to place, many were involved, including Abraham Ribicoff, Secretary of HEW, Adam Clayton Powell (D., N.Y.), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, probably Frank Thompson (D., N.J.), the sponsor of the bill, and sundry other counsellors and lieutenants, including some Senators. While the development in the House Rules Committee was unfortunate, it was undoubtedly true that this combination of bills was unacceptable to the Nation. Whether new light has dawned on the strategists we do not yet know. If this became clear as an error, and the elements favorable to Federal aid to public schools definitely discarded the parochial bargaining approach, they could probably pass a Federal aid bill such as was recommended by the President.

The likelihood of achieving this new focus is reduced by a number of facts. First, some of the men have made public statements, and committee voting record is a matter of public awareness. One of the strong lobby interests favoring Federal aid to education, namely AFL-CIO, announced a position which favored the previous strategy. Secretary Ribicoff, and perhaps other members of the Administration, have involved themselves in this approach enough so a reversal may be difficult for them.

For these complications there could be several different remedies. Strong-arm leadership from the White House would certainly clear the Administration's role. Strong response from the home districts of the legislators would go far in that area. The influential Roman Catholic leaders who led into the teaming of the bills could easily release the pressures on the Congressmen and the Administration.

The expiration, June 30, 1961, of two old laws which have given Federal aid to 3,800 school districts in many States is likely to arouse local pressures affecting 319 Congressmen, more or less severely. The President said he cannot favor re-enactment of these measures for "Federally impacted areas" only, when the whole Nation needs to strengthen the public schools. He has not said whether or not he would veto such legislation. If he holds firm on this position, which he may well do, the opposition of a number of Southern Democrats may melt down, including perchance that of Howard W. Smith (Va.), the chairman of the Rules Committee. While Smith's district may have few Federal Government employes, the State of Virginia is heavily "impacted" and the State Democratic leadership could be interested in the issue. As the legislative vehicle the old "Federally impacted areas" bills could be amended to include broad Federal aid and recommended to the House by the education committee. That might even pass the Rules Committee.

It must not be forgotten that all the Senate bills are still alive with much the same content as the bills which died in the House. If the Senate sends one or more of its bills to the House a number of legislative gimmicks exist for moving them ahead.

The one safe prediction is that the battle will go on. None of the forces are crippled, and none of the issues are dead. In all probability this country will make new educational policy soon. What it will be will depend on the balances between the special interests and national interests. At least it may be hoped that the broad national needs become the focus of the next strategy, rather than the special or a few local concerns.