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Statement of  
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FEDERAL AID TO EDUCATION

Mr. President, the Senate has before it a bill calling for a program of massive Federal aid to local elementary and secondary education, in which it is proposed that the Federal Government undertake great new responsibilities in an area of our citizens' lives which has traditionally been reserved to the States and local communities. It is on this subject of Federal aid to education that I would like to speak at this time.

I have always taken the position that our education system should be strengthened wherever possible, and as a taxpayer I have been perfectly willing to pay whatever taxes are necessary to support our school system. However, I feel very strongly that public education is something that must continue to be financed and directed by the State and local communities.

There is not a Member of this body who does not agree on the desirability of an improved education system. We are all aware of the tremendous strides that have been made in science in recent years and the vastly growing need for more scientists and engineers. I am sure that we would agree, also, that too many of our youngsters leave school today without having obtained a good knowledge of such basic subjects as reading, spelling, composition, arithmetic, history, and literature.

There are shortcomings in American education today; that is granted by virtually everyone who has concerned himself with this subject at all. And I am equally certain that the vast majority of our citizens not only recognize that we are not perfect in elementary and secondary education, but agree with the need to move forward and make vitally needed improvements in those areas which are found lacking.

The answer that we hear for these problems, however, has an all too familiar ring about it. It is that we should simply begin another new massive Federal program, pour billions of dollars somewhere, and another problem will be solved. The argument has much appeal to it, but unfortunately the majority of its appeal is purely emotional, not logical.

I am constantly amazed by the seemingly endless variety of confused and contradictory reasoning which is used to support the allegation that the Federal Government simply must rush in with billions of dollars to solve some newly discovered problem in education. During the years following World War II, when the great influx of youngsters born during and immediately following the war was milking its way into the school system, there was certainly a rational basis for the argument that more classrooms and teachers were needed. Simple arithmetic showed that. But from that unarguable premise the "Federal aiders" jumped to the conclusion that only the Federal Government could handle the job. It was the first in a long series of leaping non sequiturs which were designed to convince the unthinking that what was so, really was not so.

That argument for an infusion of massive Federal aid was demolished by the American people in their communities through the land when they responded to the crisis in education by setting about to solve it, by themselves. In the decade just past, while pupil enrollment in the public schools soared by 43 percent, revenues for education purposes skyrocketed 157 percent, a good 95 percent of which was supplied by State and local governments-without Federal assistance. The number of classrooms was increased by 58 percent; the instructional staff increased by 55 percent. At the same time, in the midst of what is referred to as the school population explosion, the number of pupils per classroom actually decreased; from 30.5 to 27.6; and the number of pupils per teacher decreased from 26 to 23.9. While the frantic proponents of massive Central Government were crying "panic," the American people were, on the local level, calmly solving a problem of enormous magnitude in what was certainly one of the greatest tributes to the workings of a free local government that we have seen in a good many years.

The achievement was fantastic. It was so amazing that the Federal aiders must have been badly caught off base. For their next attack was based on an utterly incredible piece of tortured logic. It was an inversion in thinking that is virtually unparalleled in politics. The Federal aiders looked at what the local communities were doing-which they said could not be done-and, instead of being delighted that the problem was being solved, raised their hands in horror. The tragedy now was that there was some terrible "imbalance," heretofore undiscovered, between local and Federal expenditures for education. It followed, logically, they said, that the only way to cope with this new dilemma was to enact a vast program of Federal aid to offset-to counteract, if you will the problem of so much local support for education.

That argument, fortunately, fell on unreceptive ears and when the Federal aid program died a deserving death, Americans in their local communities continued to do the job that was needed as they knew it should be done.

Today the problem created for the local school systems by the influx of children born in the war years is virtually solved. The local communities met the challenge and the peak has now tapered off. The period of rapid enrollment is over for the elementary and secondary school systems in general. The rate of enrollment which was up around the 43 percent mark during the past 10 years will fall rapidly to about 15 percent for the next decade. Furthermore, the national birthrate is presently at a near record low in our history. So the old bugaboos have been largely overcome; the classroom shortage has been substantially met, and with enrollment dropping in the coming years, it will be possible for more funds to be channeled into teachers' salaries, textbooks, libraries, and better teaching facilities.

One might have expected that these glowing statistics would warm the hearts of those who predicted such calamitous results in the past decade or so. But such is not the case. They have simply worked up another leaping non sequitur which should jar the sensibilities of any rational thinker and have hit upon another new discovery: poverty.

We are now being told that since some children in this country live in poorer areas than others-and again no one denies the truth of the premise-we must, therefore, enact a massive Federal aid to education program to solve this newly discovered problem. The proposed solution might have some validity if two factors were true: if it were proved that the States and local communities were not capable of doing the job and if the bill were aimed at the so-called pockets of poverty which it purports to eliminate. However, neither is true.

I have indicated earlier the tremendous job the States and local communities have been doing to meet the challenge of the peak postwar enrollment years, and how they have met the challenge without the aid of the Federal Government. I have also indicated-and these are matters of facts, not merely judgments-that the peak has passed, that new enrollments will be drastically reduced over the next decade, and that if ever the local communities were in a good position to devote their attentions to the special problems which this bill seeks to cure they are in that position now. Clearly, then, the bill cannot be justified on the thoroughly discredited grounds that the local communities need help and that only the Federal Government, through a grab bag such as this bill is, can help.

What, then, about the "pockets of poverty" question? Is the bill aimed at those areas that simply cannot afford to do the job themselves? I do not deny that they may exist, and for years I have urged that the Congress face this problem squarely and honestly. But the proposal for Federal aid to education that is before us today carries no distinction between those school districts which may honestly need help and those which obviously do not. In fact, it makes a mockery of its stated purpose.

If Federal assistance to education were being advanced on the premise that certain areas of our country, after making every effort possible to support their own school systems, were still unable to meet the desired standards of excellence, I would be willing to support Federal assistance to those specific areas. But certainly that is a far cry from any Federal aid to education proposal which has ever been advanced to the Congress or from the one presently pending.

Under the present bill, according to the Office of Education, money will be sent to 94.6 percent of the counties in this country. That means, then, that the administration considers that only 5.4 percent of the counties in this Nation are able to take care of themselves and that they must, therefore, be called upon to eliminate the abject poverty which apparently exists in the rest of the Nation. That is as wild an assertion as I have ever heard. It is even more wild when one considers that among the 94.6 percent of the poverty-stricken counties are Montgomery County, Md.-the wealthiest in the Nation-which will receive over a half-million dollars in the first year under this bill to stamp out its poverty; Arlington County, Va.-the second most wealthy-which will be given more than a quarter-million dollars to do the job which it apparently is unable to do by itself; and Westchester County, N.Y., which will receive more than \$2 million to strike at the blight in its midst. I have not seen the list of counties which comprise the 5.4 percent now being called upon to save the rest of the Nation, and how they manage to be better able to care for their problems than the wealthiest counties in the country is a question which I will leave to the sponsors of this bill to answer.

But let us assume for a moment that the States are unable to provide adequate schooling for children in the poverty category, we are justified in asking whether this bill supplies the proper answer. My conclusion after studying the manner in which the funds are apportioned is that it most definitely does not.

Under the formula approved by the committee, the State of New York-generally considered one of the richest States in the United States-receives \$353 for each child the Office of Education says is in the poverty category in that State. On the other hand, the State of Mississippi-the poorest State in the Union from the standpoint of per capita income-receives the least amount per underprivileged child of all the States, just \$120.

How, in the name of combating poverty, can this administration justify a grotesque formula which offers approximately one-third the assistance to a child in Mississippi as it offers to a child in New York? Why is the underprivileged child in New York worth more than twice the expenditure that the children in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia are worth? I do not agree for a moment that the States and local communities are unable to handle this problem. But if they are unable, and Federal assistance is required, can anyone justify this thoroughly discriminatory formula for distribution of funds?

There is another point on this question of financial need and effort which needs to be explored. Many of the States which will receive generous sums under the proposed bill have the ability to do more for their education systems than they are presently doing. For example:

The State of Texas, which certainly has some citizens who are financially able to contribute toward the support of their schools, has no individual income tax, no tax on corporations operating in that State. Yet Texas, which thus far is not taxing its own citizens as other States are doing, would, under title 1 of this bill, receive \$74,581,048 in the first year and in turn would pay into the Federal Treasury only \$46,022,442. Texas last year collected \$196,360,000 in severance tax on oil. This tax in turn is passed on to all gas and oil consumers in the United States. In addition, Texas has a per capita gross State debt of only \$42. Surely, Texas can afford to combat the poverty which may exist in its school system.

On the other hand, our own State of Delaware has the highest per capita gross State debt of any State in the Union-\$506. Much of this debt represents our endeavor to support our own school system and, in addition, in Delaware we levy one of the heaviest State income taxes on our citizens, we have an inheritance tax, and we tax corporations doing business in the State. Yet under title 1 of this bill Delaware would receive a total of \$1,966,851, while contributing to the Federal Treasury \$4,778,854 toward the overall cost of this title. Under the formula used in the bill, then, those States which tax their citizens to provide for their own schools are penalized, while those States which do not are offered assistance. Clearly, the way to get more money from Washington is to be lax on the job at home.

This bill is certainly not justified on the basis that the States cannot handle this new problem by themselves. In most cases they are doing a splendid job, and the prospects for improvement were never brighter. In other cases the means exist for the States to improve the lot of their poorer schoolchildren, if they have the desire to do it. In any event, if 94.6 percent of the counties in this country are too poor to educate their children, where will the Federal Government get the money to hand out to them? The answer, of course, is from the very same people who apparently do not have enough for their own needs.

We must, then, look elsewhere for the motivating reasons behind this bill. It is not that the States and communities do not have the money to do the job; they clearly do. And we are told that it is not that the States and communities do not have the know-how to solve their problems. The Senate committee report on this bill states that-

It is the intention of the proposed legislation not to prescribe the specific types of programs or projects that will be required in the school districts. Rather, such matters are left to the discretion and judgment of the local public education agencies.

Why, then, pass the bill?

Perhaps Mr. Roger Freeman, senior staff member of the Hoover Institutions of War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University, summed it up best in his testimony before the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. Mr. Freeman said the following:

The conclusion to be drawn is that the conflict over Federal aid is really not one over money but over the control of activities which constitutionally and traditionally have been in the realm of State and local governments. Grants-in-aid are the primary method by which Federal departments can control State functions. The issue is not one of the magnitude of expenditures for education. The question is, Who should decide how to spend the funds? Or, plainly, Who should run the schools?

It is obvious that the purpose of the pending proposal is not just to supply Federal funds to States and local districts. This plan aims at a fundamental change in the structure of American education. Its underlying assumption is that the present school authorities lack the knowledge and judgment of what the educational needs in their areas are and that only a program according to the concepts of the Office of Education can meet the requirements. Once Congress acts on that assumption, where will it stop?

Make no mistake about it. This bill, which is a sham on its face, is merely the beginning. It contains within it the seeds of the first Federal education system which will be well nurtured by its supporters in the years to come long after the current excuse of aiding the poverty stricken is forgotten. The tragedy of this legislation is that it plays on the honest desire of people across the country to assist the needy, now that the approaches used through the years have been thoroughly discredited. The needy are being used as a wedge to open the floodgates, and you may be absolutely certain that the flood of Federal control is ready to sweep the land.

We should perhaps stop now before acting on this bill and ask ourselves very seriously whether we are now prepared to make our State governments merely administrative offices of the Federal Government. It is long past time when we should ask what we believe to be the rightful future role of our 50 States. And we may as well be honest with ourselves, for in passing this legislation we would have taken one more great step in the direction of the dissolution of our States as the political entities that we know them to be today.

We are told by the proponents of this legislation that the educational fabric of our Nation needs strengthening. I agree that it does. But, Mr. President, the educational fabric of our country is not only made up of new classrooms, fancy buildings, and higher teachers' salaries desirable though they may be. These things in and of themselves do not guarantee the education of a child.

It seems to me that the greatest need in our education system today is a strong, burning curiosity on the part of our children. More than anything else, they need to have instilled in them the desire to learn, to seek out for themselves, and to acquire knowledge.

Mr. President, this entire concept of massive infusions of Federal aid is in itself symptomatic of the state of our thinking. How are our children ever to acquire the curiosity essential to increased learning if they are constantly being told that there is no reason for them to do anything? How do they become inventive, from where do they acquire traits of self-reliance and imagination if they are taught to look to Washington for the solution to all their problems?

How can we expect our children to grow up to be intelligent, thinking, reliable adults when we constantly drill into their minds the fallacious doctrine that for anything to be done right it must be done by the Federal Government?

It seems clear to me that the solutions that are proposed to somewhat imaginary problems and the manner in which such action is justified are in themselves the keys to the cause of the problem which is said to exist. So long as we hear pleas for more and more Federal intervention into purely local matters, so long as we continue to move government farther and farther from the people of this country, just so long will our educational fabric and individual incentive continue to deteriorate.