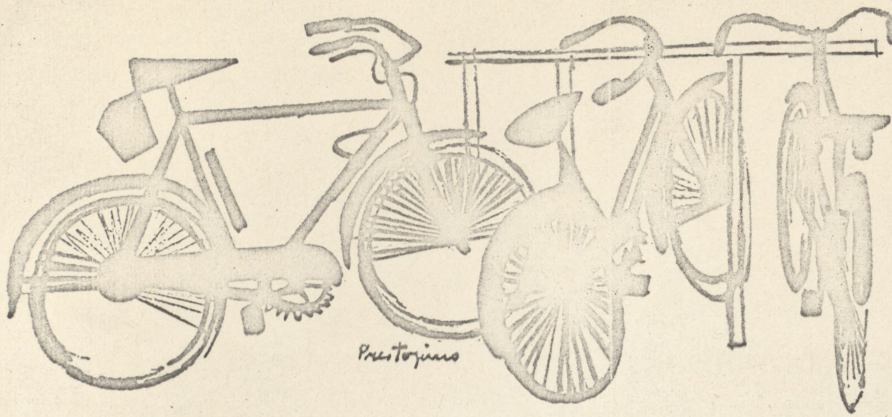


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## Education's Muddled Bureaucracy

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**M**ORE THAN any other domestic endeavor, education has been selected by President Johnson as the cornerstone of the "Great Society" he envisages. The administration's new program of Federal aid to education, now moving swiftly through Congress, along with increases in existing efforts, would raise Federal education appropriations to \$8.6 billion in the fiscal year starting July 1—almost thirty-seven per cent more than this year's expenditure.

Even if Congress doesn't fully satisfy Mr. Johnson's wishes this session, the long-range outlook is for even greater expansion in Federal education activities. There are a variety of reasons. Federal planners now regard education as a major antidote to joblessness and a means of assuring economic expansion. Long-needed improvements in the public schools and the equalization of education opportunities between suburbs and slums and urban North and rural South must now depend heavily on the Federal government. Most state and local governments, which have carried the bulk of the school-taxation burden, are strained to their limits. The rapid rise in college enrollments in this decade makes the financial plight of institutions of higher education increasingly precarious. Many will require Federal help to underwrite necessary expansion, while some may need

aid simply to ensure their solvency. Even education research has become so costly and complex that no single institution can make much progress without major help from Washington.

### Mr. Keppel's Office

In theory, the focus of all this Federal education activity is the Office of Education, a unit of the Health, Education and Welfare Department. Established in 1867, the Office of Education was endowed from the start with a broad mandate to "promote the cause of education." In practice, it has generally preferred to pursue narrower duties of gathering statistics and making surveys that have often been too tardy or poorly planned to be of much use.

Not until the passage of the "impacted areas" school program in 1950 did the office acquire a major operating responsibility. The impacted areas program now provides almost \$400 million a year for construction and operation of schools in districts that are excessively burdened by offspring of the military and other Federal employees. Then in 1958, the office received a second major grant of operating authority in the National Defense Education Act, which was spurred by the Soviet success in orbiting the first artificial satellite. Outlays by NDEA now amount to about \$400 million a year

for student loans, Ph.D. fellowships, acquisition of scientific equipment, and many other educational activities reaching from the elementary to the postgraduate years.

Though the Education Office discharged these important assignments adequately, it remained suspect of mediocrity if not of incompetence until the appointment in 1962 of its present commissioner, Francis Keppel. The perceptive and persuasive Mr. Keppel has sought with surprising success to convince Congress and the Executive Branch that his agency should be accorded far more important duties.

A former dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education, Keppel came to Washington assured of direct access to the Kennedy White House and with no outstanding obligations to the education lobbies that had successfully harassed many other commissioners. Moreover, a backlog of education legislation began to move through Congress soon after his arrival, partly because of the earlier efforts of other officials, including his predecessor, Sterling M. McMurrin.

But there is no question that Keppel has played a key role in bringing a new vigor and authority to the Education Office. He has insisted from the start that the agency give good service to other parts of the government, and has managed to preserve his political independence from the upper echelons of HEW. In contrast, McMurrin was bedeviled by interference from his superiors in HEW that seriously undermined his authority. But most important has been Keppel's handling of relations with Congress, as evidenced in part by the size and scope of the assignments gained by the office since his arrival:

¶ The Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963—providing aid for construction of classrooms and other academic facilities in technical institutes, junior colleges, colleges, and universities.

¶ The Vocational Education Act of 1963—modernizing Federally supported vocational education programs, previously limited mainly to home economics and agriculture, to encompass all occupations, with special stress on technician training.

¶ The Library Services and Con-



struction Act of 1964—enlarging existing Federal library aid to cover not only services and equipment but also construction, and benefiting cities as well as small towns.

AS A RESULT of these additions, the Office of Education budget more than doubled in the current fiscal year, rising from \$702 million to \$1.5 billion. If Mr. Johnson's new education proposals—including \$1 billion in aid to schools primarily serving the children of poverty-stricken families—are approved by Congress, the office's budget will more than double again to \$3.4 billion in the coming fiscal year.

Along with the new money and growth have come new problems for Commissioner Keppel. Administrative difficulties within the agency are increasing, perhaps partly because Keppel has devoted so much of his time and energy to Capitol Hill. Some critics contend that he has not yet had much success with the overdue shake-up of the agency's bureaucracy. According to an unfriendly Republican congressman: "The place is still set up like a state office of education, with a lot of old fuddydud broken-down former school superintendent types. A lot of people there have spent twenty years writing asinine monographs." But another official, favorably inclined to the commissioner, insists that "Things are getting better, but improvement has been slow."

Keppel has sought advice and assistance outside the agency wherever possible. He has emphasized broadening the composition of its advisory panels to include persons other than educators and has helped sponsor efforts to attract talented young people for long-term government careers. The cost in morale has been considerable within the agency. Not all of the old-timers deserved to be shunted aside. "Some of these people here are surprisingly good," one new member of the agency admitted, "but it's hard to tell because they've never been given a job to do."

Nevertheless, key jobs have remained unfilled for longer than a year while Keppel searched outside the office for the kind of men he needed. Ultimately, he had no choice but to promote officials with-

in the agency to important new assignments.

More serious, however, is the agency's inability so far to direct effectively or even co-ordinate the sprawling educational activities of other units of the Federal government. This task is undoubtedly the toughest that Keppel must tackle.

### The Education Jungle

In the past, Congress has assigned most of the major new education programs to agencies other than the Education Office. The G.I. bill, the biggest college scholarship program in the nation's history, was handled by the Veterans Administration; a program to provide construction loans for college housing was assigned to the Housing and Home Finance Agency; education and research in the nation's universities has been supported by such agencies as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Defense.



Consequently, education programs are now scattered among more than a dozen departments or agencies, as a partial rundown of the appropriations for this fiscal year illustrates: the Public Health Service, \$550 million for the training of medical researchers, doctors, dentists, nurses, and other health personnel; the Agriculture Department, \$508 million for school lunches, agricultural extension efforts, and other research

and development work in universities; NSF, \$408 million for the support of science education and basic research; the Labor Department, \$362 million for the education and training of the jobless; the Housing and Home Finance Agency, \$333 million for college housing loans; the Defense Department, \$200 million for research and development in U.S. universities; the Atomic Energy Commission, \$128 million for education and research in nuclear sciences; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, \$115 million for education and research.

This diffusion has been abetted by Congress and the Executive branch. Frequently, competing committees of Congress have been eager to foster larger appropriations for the agencies they supervise. The agencies in turn have tried to establish independent ties with the academic world so as to accomplish their particular missions more effectively. Hence, the lawmakers could more easily assuage their fears of monolithic Federal control of education so long as government funds were spread out among many agencies. For their part, the agencies could justify larger appropriations since their mandates covered such diverse responsibilities as space, unemployment, science, and defense.

WASHINGTON officials are increasingly aware of the disadvantages that also result from educational sprawl. The dangers of duplication and the problems of co-ordination have become deeply perplexing. There is obvious overlapping, for example, between the graduate-aid programs of NASA and NSF. Both agencies provide fellowships for students seeking Ph.D.'s in the sciences. To confuse matters, the terms of each agency's awards differ. NASA grants \$2,400 a year for each student, while the university receives a separate sum, negotiated in each instance, which averages \$2,700 a year. NSF student stipends, which must be renewed annually, increase gradually from \$2,400 to \$2,800 during a three-year period, but the institution's cost-of-education allowance is limited to \$2,500 a year.

To justify its involvement, NASA argues that since it is a major



consumer of technical manpower, it has an obligation to replenish the supply. Other education experts insist that this objective could be more efficiently accomplished by expanding NSF's already established efforts. But NASA's academic program, begun in 1962, is now well under way, and with almost two thousand students being supported, it would be difficult to curtail or transfer.

There is also uncertainty concerning the dividing line between NSF's educational activities and those of the Office of Education. The foundation, though chiefly concerned with the physical sciences, has been giving increasing support to such social sciences as anthropology and psychology, maintaining that its basic responsibility is to foster all fields of science. But the Office of Education is also aiding the social sciences. Although the National Science Foundation and the Education Office have attempted to draw boundaries, some educational specialists are convinced that it is just a matter of time before the two agencies begin competing to support the same graduate students.

NSF's progress in elementary- and secondary-school activities involving teacher training and curricula revisions can also be questioned. NSF became involved in these areas because, in the past, the Education Office did not desire to or was prevented by Congress. Many education experts, not only in the Education Office but elsewhere in the Executive branch, now think it would be logical for Keppel's agency to take over NSF's elementary- and secondary-school programs. But even the suggestion of such a shift would incur the wrath of the foundation's friends in Congress and the universities, who fought to establish NSF in 1950 and are determined to preserve its integrity and independence.

### Competing for the Poor

The confused and overlapping responsibilities of various units of the Federal government become even more pronounced in the area of training the unemployed. President Johnson's newly created Office of Economic Opportunity, the Education Office, the Labor Department,

and the Welfare Administration are all deeply involved. The justification for multiple efforts is that the task is so tremendous. If one agency fails,



there is hope that another with more imagination will succeed.

Sargent Shriver's Job Corps stresses a search for new educational techniques and wants to involve many agencies besides the public schools. It is establishing rural centers for boys, located on national forests or state lands administered by the Forest Service, National Park Service, and other Federal agencies. Urban centers for boys and girls will provide vocational training and homemaking in addition to basic education. Private industries, universities, and public-school systems will operate the urban centers under contract to the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Vocational-education programs in public schools are also beginning to emphasize special courses for the deprived and poverty-stricken. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 provides funds for schools that develop training for students unable to succeed in the regular vocational-education curricula because of "socio-economic" handicaps. Also planned are residential schools to teach out-of-work, out-of-school youths a trade in a healthy environment away from home. The first of these will probably be established in the Washington area by the Education Office. Vocational educators are also starting a \$25-million work-study program to provide needy students with funds to enable them to stay in school.

Control or even co-ordination of all these educational endeavors poses great problems. A convincing case history is afforded by the Man-

power Development and Training Act (MDTA), passed in 1962 to alleviate unemployment. The educational programs started under the act represent a joint endeavor of the Labor and HEW Departments: Labor is responsible for determining the types of training based on market needs as well as selecting the individuals to be trained; HEW's Office of Education supplies and supervises the actual training, primarily through state and local vocational-education systems.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS of such programs have been impressive. Three hundred thousand jobless have received or been approved for training, and over seventy per cent of the graduates have obtained employment. But the dependence on two departments instead of one has caused much complication. Even the reduction to manageable proportions of the paper work required by this dual direction has proved a major administrative hurdle. More significantly, Labor and HEW officials continue to bicker over the details and the direction of the program itself, although both sides insist that the situation has improved.

Part of the trouble stems from different perspectives. The Labor Department experts regard vocational training primarily as a means of placing people in jobs. Keppel's staff tends to view vocational education in broader terms as a valuable aid to increase a student's personal development and social adjustment as well as his employability. Each department would prefer to administer the program alone. Labor officials, for example, contend that the Education Office should make more use of laymen with actual work experience in the conducting of training courses. But Keppel's agency, perhaps responding to pressure from the education groups, has preferred to rely mainly on accredited teachers. HEW officials complain that labor has shortsightedly selected the easy-to-train types, such as high-school graduates, in order to compile a creditable record for Congress. While Labor specialists admit that this happened at the start, they insist that more difficult students are now being sought.

Within each department, there



have been unhappy bureaucratic battles, the most serious in Labor. Here, two units, the Office of Manpower, Automation, and Training (OMAT) and the Bureau of Employment Security, struggle for the dominant role in Labor's share of MDTA. OMAT hastened to set up fourteen regional offices to approve local training courses. The Bureau of Employment Security, which supervises the state employment services, already had a network of field offices.

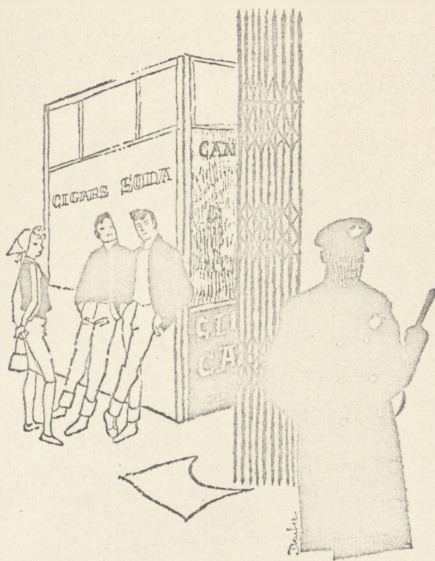
**T**HE MANPOWER LAW requires that HEW and Labor representatives approve projects jointly. But for a while the signatures of three Federal functionaries were needed—one from the Education Office and two from Labor. The confusion was not resolved until February, 1963, when Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz set up a Manpower Administrator over both agencies, and OMAT was eased into a more restricted role of research and evaluation.

The divided responsibility for MDTA programs has also caused clashes between Federal and state functionaries. "It was not just the Feds going in, but the Feds going in on two different channels and acting for two different agencies," said one Labor official who participated in many of the disputes. For instance, in North Carolina there was little objection to the establishment of racially integrated manpower courses. But until last fall, the state employment service frequently undermined the program by honoring local employers' requests for "white only" MDTA graduates. In other areas, Labor representatives complained that the state vocational educators simply refused to provide integrated courses.

Additional trouble arose because some Labor and HEW officials initially attempted to bypass the state employment services and the state vocational-education boards in the hope of achieving greater flexibility in direct Federal-state relations. Naturally, the state vocational educators have fought vigorously to prevent the state boards from being ignored. And even though HEW is authorized by the manpower law to contract with any suitable public or private agencies for conduct of the courses, it has continued to rely almost en-

tirely on the public-school vocational system.

If it is difficult for two Federal agencies to co-operate effectively in an educational endeavor, what hope is there when more than a dozen are involved? Since education is so



deeply enmeshed in all aspects of American life, it might be argued that it is impossible to set up neat dividing lines of responsibility in Washington. Yet somehow the duplication and confusion must be controlled. The White House has neither the desire nor the staff to become involved in such administrative details. Nor can Congress do much to help, since neither chamber has a committee with jurisdiction over all Federal education activities.

### Untangling the Web

The most hopeful omen is the creation last year of the Interagency Committee on Education. This committee, headed by Commissioner Keppel, is the first formal step toward greater co-ordination of Federal education activities, and it reflects the administration's intention to make the Office of Education the center of the effort. The committee was formed partly to bolster Keppel's leadership without undertaking any controversial reorganization and partly to answer growing Congressional complaints of inadequate co-ordination.

The committee is composed of representatives from the major educational agencies such as HEW, Labor, NSF, and Defense. One of its

first and more modest tasks will be to simplify the confusing and unnecessary variations in Federal agency arrangements with the universities: for instance, the different terms and conditions governing graduate stipends, and the lack of uniform accounting by the universities for expenditure under government grants and contracts. The committee will also examine such basic issues as the ways in which educational institutions can better meet the nation's changing manpower needs, and will seek to assess the educational responsibilities of various levels of government.

Keppel intends to appoint a ten-to fifteen-member "policy planning" group, drawn from many academic disciplines, to serve as a secretariat, in the hope that the members will contribute some constructive suggestions on Federal education policies. As one official explained: "Basic issues now tend to get worked out in the frantic rush of writing major pieces of legislation. No one really takes a long-range look."

But it is also true that interagency committees are often powerless. Contention and competition, the very factors that lead to their creation, may render them ineffective.

**E**VENTUALLY more drastic solutions may be required. Some legislators, among them Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff (D., Connecticut), the former Secretary of HEW, are convinced that the creation of a Department of Education is the only answer. But such a reform would encounter massive resistance from the agencies and interests affected, and it is not likely that President Johnson will move rapidly in that direction.

In the short term, more modest steps would seem to be in order. One possibility is the elevation of Commissioner Keppel to the rank of an Under Secretary at HEW, a promotion that would increase the prestige of the agency and make it easier to attract the talent the Office of Education needs to fulfill its growing mission. Such a promotion would help underscore the administration's intention to make the Education Office the effective co-ordinator of the government's vast and tangled involvement in the educational affairs of the nation.