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A History  
of  
Federal Aid to Education

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CORRASABLE  
BOND  
USA  
PERASHIT

COTTON FIBER CONTENT

A History of Federal Aid to Education

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A Master's Paper

Presented under plan B

to

Dr. F. Raymond McKenna

Department of Education

Eastern Illinois University

for

History of Educational Thought 554

Summer 1957

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

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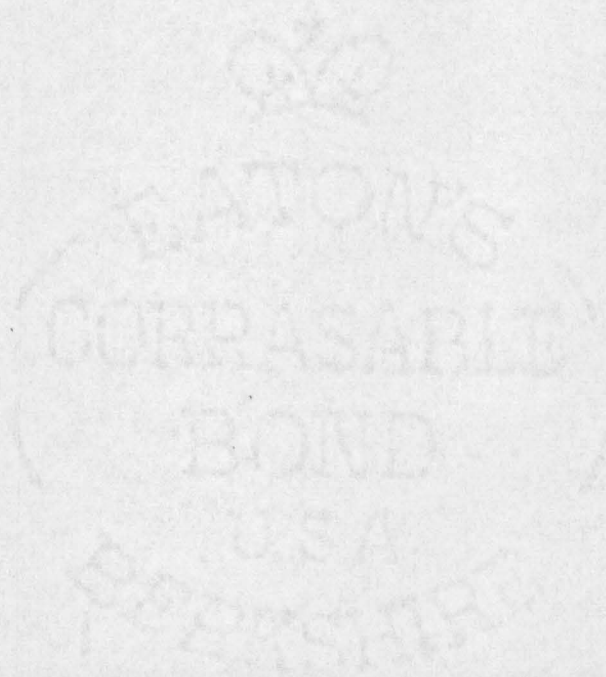
by

Rosemarie Orlea Lang

July, 1958

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EDUCATION'S  
CORRASABLE  
BOND  
USA  
BRITISH  
COTTON FIBRE CONTENT

## A History of Federal Aid to Education

As commonly used now in the United States, the term "federal aid to education" refers to financial aid made available by the Federal Government to the states and their political subdivisions for educational purposes. The term does not now ordinarily include educational programs administered and financed solely by the Federal Government.

Throughout the history of the United States the governments of the states and their political subdivisions have administered and have principally financed public education. From its infancy, however, the Federal Government has contributed continually and in ever increasing measures to the support of education.

In the report submitted in 1931 by the National Advisory Committee on Education appointed by President Hoover, and in the report by the Advisory Committee on Education appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938, both emphasized the national importance of education and the interest of the Federal Government in educational opportunities for the people. President Hoover's report said,

"If education is taken in its broadest sense as meaning all deliberate attempts to

inform people, to change their attitudes, or to perfect their skills, it may be said that there are few administrative units in the ten Executive Departments and the thirty-seven independent establishments of the Federal Government which are not concerned directly or indirectly with education."<sup>1</sup>

President Roosevelt's report stated that:

"When the long record of Federal activities in connection with education is considered, it is evident that the Federal Government has been increasingly concerned with the development of educational opportunities. This trend may be expected to continue."<sup>2</sup>

These two reports give the background for the present differences of opinion concerning aid and control of education. These differences will be discussed in a later section of this paper.

Certain facts concerning the Constitution of the United States are essential to an understanding of the history of Federal aid to education and its problems.

Elwood P. Cubberley has pointed out that the school arose everywhere as a child of the church. J. F. Messenger also reminds one that at the time of the framing of the Constitution education was generally regarded as a matter of church control. However, there were many

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1. Report of the National Advisory Committee on Education, Federal Relations To Education, (Washington, D. C., National Capital Press, Inc., 1931), I, 5.

2. The Encyclopedia Americana, (Chicago, Americana Corporation, 1954), XI, 77.



churches in America but there was no established state-church, so no church could be recognized by the Constitution as the sole controller of education. It would, therefore, have been impossible to agree on a constitution which contained the provisions for the administration of education by the Federal Government. Cubberley stated that even as late as 1825 publicly-controlled, nonsectarian schools were the "distant hope of statesmen and reformers."<sup>3</sup>

The 10th amendment to the Constitution in 1791, provided that the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution were reserved to the states. Therefore, as nonsectarian schools developed, they came under the power of the states. Thus, the United States, instead of developing a universal system of education as most European countries have, acquired as many systems as there were states or organized territories.

The Federal Constitution says nothing about education, but it has nevertheless developed extensive relations to education. The government assists education in several ways: (1) by grants-in-aid; (2) by promoting education and related activities without providing financial aid for them; and (3) by offering such services as the collection and dissemination of information of

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3. Americana, XI, 78.

education. The latter comes through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.<sup>4</sup>

A number of clauses in the Constitution have served as warrants and guides for developing federal relations to education. The most important of these is the provision affecting federal aid to the states for education. It is found in Section 8 of Article I and states that Congress shall have the power to provide for the general welfare of the United States. Several decisions of the Supreme Court have held that Congress has the right to do this by grants of federal aid to the states, including aid to education.<sup>5</sup> The authority of the Federal Government touching education has never been exhaustively defined by the courts and since education is not mentioned in the Constitution this authority must be implied. Recently the Supreme Court has interpreted the general-welfare clause as conferring substantive powers upon Congress. Under this assumption, even though the limits of authority are still not clear, the Federal Government has continued to spend funds for support of education and to establish agencies with wide and varied educational obligations and responsibilities.

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4. Lloyd E. Blauch, "Federal Relations To Education", Encyclopedia of Educational Research, (New York, MacMillan Co., 1950), 435.

5. Americana, XI, 78.

A great deal of educational legislation is subject to review by the Supreme Court and, if found an "unwarranted exercise of police power", it can be declared unconstitutional. The authority of the Supreme Court to do this comes from the 14th Amendment which states:

"No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the Citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."<sup>6</sup>

Examples of some Supreme Court decisions can be found in the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 which, among other things, provided for aid to agriculture, trade or industry, home economics and the preparation of teachers in these fields. The Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act (Smith-Bankhead Act), 1920, 1930, extended the activities of the Federal Board for Vocational Education into the field of vocational rehabilitation of persons disabled in industry and their return to civil employment. The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G. I. Bill) is the most ambitious educational program undertaken by the Federal Government thus far. Over 6,200,000 veterans of World War II were educated

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6. Newton Edwards, "School Law II. Court Decisions", Encyclopedia of Educational Research, (New York, MacMillan Co., 1950), 1094.

at government expense from 1944 to 1949. Public Law 550 provided similar opportunities for Korean War Veterans.

Actually, Federal aid to education is two years older than the Constitution of the United States. It was begun four years before Washington took office as President. In 1785 the Congress of the Confederation initiated a policy of endowing the common schools in the Western Territory with public lands. Two years later Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance which declared that "Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."<sup>7</sup>

In 1787 the sale of a million and a half acres to the Ohio Company of Associates caused Congress to set aside section 16 in every township for schools and section 29 for religion and to grant, in addition, two entire townships or one full county for a university. The sale of a million acres to John C. Symmes in 1788 made similar restrictions.

In 1803, when Ohio was admitted to the Union as a state, Congress began setting aside certain lands for school support at the time of the admission of a state. As other states were formed from public dominions and

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7. Blauch, Educational Research, 436.

admitted to the Union, Congress made grants of land to be used for universities and other types of educational institutions. In addition to these grants, a number of states received land which they were permitted to use in whole or in part for public education. At this same time, Congress began granting to new states a small percentage of the proceeds of sales of federal lands within the state. Since 1889 the specific purpose of these grants has been the support of public education. States admitted after 1842 had to set aside two sections in each township for schools and after 1895 this was increased to four sections.

In 1837 Congress distributed among the states the surplus revenue of the Treasury of the United States. This amounted to about \$28,000,000 and was to be used for educational purposes. Technically this was in the form of a deposit with the states subject to recall and was prorated according to the number of Representatives and Senators the state had in Congress. Due to the Depression of 1837, all of this money was not used for its original purpose. However, some states did use all or part of their share for education.

The International Improvement Act of 1841 created a distributive fund from sales of public lands for educational use. Twenty-six states, three territories, and the District of Columbia participated in this. With the

exception of a few grants for specific institutions, land and monetary grants to education have been for education in general. Congress made no attempt to influence the service of the school systems receiving aid.

Federal aid to education thus took two forms before 1862. The first of these was in the form of public land grants. When Ohio was admitted as a state in 1803 Congress started a practice of setting aside lands for the support of the public schools upon admittance of a state. As other states were admitted they were granted land to be used for school support and other land which they were permitted to use in whole or in part for public education. Throughout the 19th Century the Federal Government supported the common school, seminaries of learning, normal schools, universities, colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts, and other types of educational institutions in this manner. Much of the land has been mismanaged and dissipated, but some schools still receive annual funds from the land grants. The second form of Federal aid was in monetary grants for school support derived largely from the sale of federal lands within the state. Since 1889 the proceeds from the sale of these lands has had the specific purpose of supporting public education.

## Land-Grant Colleges and Related Services

Congress began giving aid to education in agriculture and the mechanic arts in the states during 1862. The Federal Government has given aid to education in a number of ways since this time. In addition, the Federal Government has set up various educational programs of its own. Most of these activities such as the educational programs of the armed services, have become very extensive and cover as a whole all educational levels and practically all subject fields.

The passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 introduced several new principles in making grants and marked the beginning of a new era in federal aid to education. This act introduced a federal policy of giving aid to special types of education in the states. The act granted federal lands to each state for the maintenance of colleges and for the benefit of agriculture and mechanic arts. Three additional acts concerned the annual appropriations for such institutions: (1) the Second Morrill Act of 1890; (2) The Nelson Amendment making appropriations for the Department of Agriculture for the fiscal year 1908; and (3) the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935.

Institutions of higher education which were designated to receive benefits from the first Morrill Act

were known as land-grant colleges and universities. There were a total of sixty-nine of these of which seventeen were for Negroes. All are in existence today. In 1887 Congress made appropriations for agricultural experiment stations under the direction of the land-grant colleges. Four acts authorized annual appropriations for these. They were the Hatch Act of 1887, the Adams Act of 1906, the Purnell Act of 1925, and the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935.

In the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 the Federal Government provided extension work in agriculture and home economics. This act required that the Federal Government match the state, college, or local funds. Additional federal funds were provided through the Capper-Ketcham Act of 1928, the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935 and several others.

The Clark-McNary Act of 1924 required federal appropriations to assist owners of farms in certain forestry undertakings. The Norris-Doxey Act of 1937 provided appropriations for cooperation in reforestation involving land-grant colleges and universities and also for extension.

From the very beginning of federal aid to education there was no attempt at federal control except in certain instances to specify types of institutions or beneficiaries such as agriculture, mechanic arts, and home



economics. The early land and monetary grants and following appropriations were for education in general and not for particular kinds of education.

Prior to 1862 Federal aid took place in two main forms, land grants and monetary grants. The First Morrill Act of 1862 changed the federal policy by singling out particular forms of education for aid. It stated that no state would get federal aid unless it accepted certain requirements of the act. The requirements were in the form of annual reports. This resulted in contracts between the states and the Federal Government.

After 1875, restrictions were included in federal aid to education. These were aimed at conserving the value of lands and assuring education the use of the funds and not at determining educational programs. As a result of these restrictions, many states received a sizeable amount of money for use in the public schools. In numerous instances, however, the management of the lands or funds was incompetent or in dishonest hands and much of it was lost. Still, these have been important factors in the development of public education in states formed from public domains.

The Hatch Act of 1887 initiated scientific investigation and experimentation in agricultural education. It also gave the Secretary of Agriculture discretionary powers with respect to agricultural experiment stations.

Another example of federal restrictions after 1862 appears in the Second Morrill Act of 1890. This act listed subjects for which expenditures could be made from federal funds. It also made the Secretary of Interior's job that of certifying annually to the Secretary of Treasury which states and territories were entitled to participate in the federal appropriations and the amount each would receive. He also had the power to withhold certification as long as he stated the facts and reasons therefore.

The Smith-Lever Act in 1914 created a cooperative relationship between the Department of Agriculture and land-grant colleges and universities in respect to the agriculture extension program. Work plans were to be submitted and approved before aid was given. The 1917 Smith-Hughes Act also contained this matching feature.

## Federal Aid to Elementary and Secondary Schools

With the exception of the early land and monetary grants for public education, federal aid to elementary and secondary schools has been limited almost entirely to emergency aid and financing of special types of training. Since 1919, bills proposing federal appropriations to aid states in general elementary and secondary education have been introduced to Congress in ever increasing numbers. These bills have been receiving more and more consideration by Congress and the American people. Although several of the bills have been reported favorably by the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, none of them has been enacted. The principle question at issue has been whether the Federal Government should aid the states in maintaining a fairly high level of education, and, if so, to what extent and under what conditions.

Some of the important factors which have entered into this discussion have been: (1) the extreme variation in the size, population and wealth of the states and the local units; (2) the general mobility of the national population; and (3) the widely varying number of children in relation to the number of adults in different areas of the country.

A study of the possible means by which the Federal Government could participate in the financing of

education has produced various answers. Probably the following policies are the most important of these answers: (1) initiation of new educational activities entirely financed and administered by the Federal Government; (2) increases of subsidies for the education of special groups, such as veterans, at below college level, or extension of such subsidies to other special groups; (3) increase of support given to special types of education such as agricultural training in the public schools, under existing or modified federal controls; and (4) appropriation of funds to aid the states in financing their school systems as a whole, and in more nearly equalizing educational opportunities, under state and local controls.<sup>9</sup>

Congressman Hoar of Massachusetts introduced a bill in 1870 which proposed federal aid to elementary and secondary schools. This bill proposed a federal system of educational aid and control for the entire nation, but especially the southern states. It did not become a law. Senator Blaw of New Hampshire in 1881 introduced a bill for seventy-seven million dollars in appropriations to states for the education of illiterates within the states. The money would have been divided according to the number of illiterates the state contained.

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9. Americana, XI, 78B.

The bill was passed by the Senate and three successive Congresses, but each time the House of Representatives did nothing about it.

In 1876 President Grant recommended an amendment to the Constitution against public appropriations for sectarian schools. At the same time Congressman Blaine of Maine introduced a bill for an amendment to the constitution forbidding "appropriation of any public property or revenues, or a loan of credit, by the United States or any state, territory, district, or municipal corporation, for the support of any school or educational or other institution under the control of any religious or antireligious sect."<sup>10</sup> These bills passed the House of Representatives, but failed in the Senate by a narrow margin.

After World War I, an NEA Commission prepared an educational measure which became known as the Smith-Towner bill. It provided for a new executive department of education with a secretary having a seat in the President's cabinet and also for federal aid for elementary and secondary education. Powerful opponents succeeded in preventing the enactment of this into law.

The bills for aid to elementary and secondary schools recognize state control of education. In

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10. Blauch, Educational Research, 446.

general, they contain federal control only to the extent necessary to assure that federal funds are expended for purposes of federal intent, and disavowed general federal control of education.

A new principle was introduced with the Marine School Act in 1911. Its purpose was to offer training for those contemplating a sea-faring career and said that a state could not receive aid over that appropriated by the state or municipality.

Although the Northwest Ordinance endowed the common schools in the Western Territory with public lands, Federal aid to education below the college level really began with the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. The Act provided for the appropriation of federal funds to aid the states in financing vocational education in secondary schools. It also provided funds for the training of teachers of industrial subjects in these schools. The grants were only given to those states which would provide equal sums of money for the same purpose. Additional appropriations were provided in the George-Reed Act of 1929 for four years; the George-Ellzy Act of 1934 for three years; the George-Deen Act of 1936 which added and extended the scope by adding education in distributive occupations; and the George-Barden Act of 1946 which replaced the George-Deen Act and added new functions and services to supplement the Smith-Hughes Act.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was formed in 1933 as a form of work relief. This pioneered the development of a new type of public program in which work was combined with other varieties of education. Approximately 1,800,000 men were enrolled in this organization.

During the depression funds to rural areas became necessary. These totaled about \$22,000,000 during 1934 and 1935. With this assistance the Federal Government recognized its obligation to keep a low minimum of educational opportunity in the nation and to relieve acute local financial stress. These acts born of the depression were one way in which the Federal Government chose to undermine the financial situation of the nation.

To the end of 1937 the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works authorized \$263,000,000 in grants for construction and repair of educational buildings. This was supplemented by loans of \$83,000,000. The money was used largely in the enlargement and replacement of hazardous, outworn, and obsolete buildings. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration was established in 1934 for a program of student aid on a work basis. In 1935 the national Youth Administration took over and by the end of 1938 they had spent about \$87,000,000 for aid to education. This organization reached its peak of performance in 1936-37 when more than 435,000 high school, college, and university students received aid.

The Works Progress Administration supplemented the country's educational facilities in many ways. Federal work relief funds administered by them and their predecessor totaled more than \$250,000,000 for the repair of old and the construction of new educational building and recreation centers. They had an emergency education program which employed 44,000 unemployed teachers and had enrollments in excess of 1,725,000. Books and other school equipment was repaired, libraries were maintained, school lunches were served and provided, and other useful activities of this type were carried on in connection with the educational system.<sup>11</sup>

These acts, born of the depression, were emergency measures only. They were not readily accepted by school personnel because they were temporary measures and under the control of the Federal Government. None of these measures are in existence today.

Even with the newer developments which have taken place, the Federal Government has continued to expand its older activities to assist education. For example, the grants for instruction and research to the original land-grant colleges, agriculture and home economic extension work for farm area, and vocational education in the public schools have all be expanded. Emergency

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11. Advisory Committee, Report, 35-37.



activities arose out of pressures that could not be denied and were taken care of in the only means possible at that time.

## Arguments Concerning Federal Aid

The debates and arguments advanced by the proponents of federal aid have had wide ramifications. The proponents have declared that federal aid is essential and justifiable because: (1) great educational inequalities exist; (2) the support of education is more of a national than a local problem; and (3) the principle of federal action and appropriations for education has long been established.

The proponents also contend that a program of federal participation in education through annual grants for the equalization of educational opportunities would be feasible and beneficial because: (1) provisions to control the setting up and administration of such aid could be wisely and beneficially shaped; (2) federal grants to education would make education become equalized to an extent not otherwise possible; (3) federal grants to education would otherwise be a beneficial step; (4) it is unlikely that federal grants would bring about any serious drawbacks or evils; and (5) federal grants would not lead to federal control of or interference with the educational program.<sup>12</sup>

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12. Julia E. Johnsen, Federal Aid for Education, (New York, The H. W. Wilson Co., 1941), XIV, 239-247.

More recently the proponents have stated that the tax systems of the local areas and the state are incompetent and the federal tax collecting machinery needs to be put into use for school support. Also mentioned is the fact that federal taxation has expanded until it has pre-empted many former local and state tax sources, but the one source which still remains a state responsibility is public education.

President Eisenhower, in his 1957 State-of-the Union message, urged the people of America to approach this problem of education with calm and reason. He asked that we give high priority to the school construction bill for the benefit of all children throughout the country.<sup>13</sup>

In defending federal aid, Lloyd E. Blauch says the biggest factor to remember is that federal aid has changed considerably since its early days. The early aid was granted to the states to assist in their educational programs. The aid of later years has been to pay for services the Federal Government needs. This principle is shown in such services as agricultural experiment stations, scientific research contracts, and the like. In explaining his position, Blauch said that Federal relationships were twofold: (1) there has been no clearly

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13. Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Providing for Education", School Life (February, 1957), XXXIX, 3-4.

discernible Federal policy toward higher education. Many federal programs have existed, but there has not been an overall policy; and (2) the situation of federal aid is a dynamic one. The recent years have seen many and diverse developments arise. Congress is more and more flooded with proposals about federal aid. Some of these are urgent in tone. It seems clearly understandable then that the "do-nothing" attitude of the past can no longer exist. Thus an expansion of federal appropriations can be expected.<sup>14</sup> It is my impression that Blauch feels that the earlier means of federal support--those of assisting the existing educational programs--is more valuable than the later ones.

The opponents of federal aid to education contend that it would be undesirable and unwise to institute grants by the Federal Government for the equalization of educational opportunities because: (1) education is not primarily a function of the Federal Government; (2) there is not an adequate need for federal funds to support educational programs throughout the nation; (3) increased spending by the national government at this time would be unwise; and (4) the proposed grants for education would not bring about a real equalization of educational opportunities.

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14. Lloyd E. Blauch, "Higher Education and the Federal Government", Higher Education (December, 1956), XIII, 53-59.

They also argue that any feasible equalization of educational opportunity could be otherwise attained and with less danger and more ultimate benefit to the nation because; (1) federal grants would cause possible dangers both to our educational processes and to our democracy; (2) The objectives sought by federal grants can in most instances be adequately realized without recourse to federal aid; and (3) the federal government could more desirably contribute to education progresses through channels it has already utilized.<sup>15</sup>

Another view of the opponents of federal aid to education comes from a recent article by Felix Morley. He does not believe federal money will meet the greatest need of education. This is poor training of today's students, says Morley, and mass production cannot be applied to education. Therefore, the primary need is not money, but a careful examination of the educational objectives in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Why act as though there are not and have never been any federal intrusions into public education and face the facts? It is obvious, when one examines the facts, that the Federal Government was interested in education before there was a president or a Supreme Court and has

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15. Johnsen, Federal Aid, 247-253.

16. Felix Morley, "The State of the Nation", Nation's Business (January, 1957), XLV, 17-18.

been at it in one way or another ever since. There has not been a session of Congress, even during the time of war, which has not had an educational problem of some kind to deal with. The present trend of socio-economic standards seem to prove that if we are to give equal educational opportunity to every American child regardless of his birthplace or parent's status, federal taxes will have to play an important part of education.<sup>17</sup>

There is a growing conviction among some that the inefficiency of public education is so general and so serious that the only remedy is federal aid. However, there is a sharp difference of opinion as to how this aid should be rendered. Many persons feel that the appropriation of federal funds to the states on the basis of school population should be the method used. Others strongly oppose this and feel the only method is that of allotting funds according to state need and not pupil-population. The persons holding this view propose the need to be determined by qualified administrators in Washington.<sup>18</sup>

Personally, I do not know which method would be the best. However, since I have been working on this paper,

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17. Johnsen, Federal Aid, 18.

18. Helen M. Muller, Federal Aid for the Equalization of Educational Opportunities, (New York, the H. W. Wilson Co., 1934), IX, 33-34.

my views on federal aid have changed considerably. I can see no reason for lack of federal aid where necessary. Nor do I feel that federal aid means federal control. Perhaps people are largely ignorant of the facts and intention of federal assistance. Then, too, there is a stigma attached to the word "aid". Beardsley Ruml thinks we should say "Federal support for the public schools" and not "Federal aid to education". Aid means to help the poor; support means to provide substance needed without the stigma usually associated with federal funds.<sup>19</sup>

I think he may have a point worth considering. There are many words which automatically suggest a stereotype. For instance, mention Harvard man, teacher, negro, teenager, and others, people immediately have a picture in their minds. Thus it is with the word aid, people have it stereotyped too. It means (as Ruml suggested) to help the poor. The proud American cannot accept charity, consequently he cannot accept federal aid. Give the same measure a new title and publicity and it will meet a different public. The American public wants better and higher education. So it seems the question is not should we have "federal aid," but rather how can "federal support of public schools" be used effectively?

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19. Beardsley Ruml, "Federal Support for the Public Schools", Phi Delta Kappan (April, 1957), XXXVIII, 261-265.

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