

THE LISTENING POST

Pending Federal Legislation

THERE ARE MANY KINDS of legislation pending in Congress which have direct implications for education throughout the nation. Space will not permit a detailed description of individual bills; however, the number and scope of bills should be of interest to all school people.

Direct Aid to Schools

By far the greatest number of bills which have been introduced would make possible federal aid to education. About twenty bills have been presented in the House (some being identical bills), and far fewer in the Senate. In much of the discussion to date, health services to children of school age (S-496) have been part of the general aid proposal in the Senate. The Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare has met several times in executive session to discuss the general federal aid to education bills. Bills S-246 and S-496 have been given the greatest consideration by the Committee. On February 1, the Committee agreed that proposed legislation for federal aid to education and health service to children of school age should be considered in separate bills.

The dangers pointed out in the last article of "The Listening Post" are still very much apparent and cannot be overlooked by those interested in public education. (See "The Listening Post" for March, 1949.)

A bill has been presented in the House (H.R. 793) to appropriate money for aid to public kindergartens or kindergarten and nursery school education.

General Grants-in-Aid

For a number of years bills have appeared in Congress to provide assistance to local school agencies because of increased enrollments due to war-incurred or defense-incurred activities, proximity to federal reservations, reclamation projects, and federal government activities. A number

of bills have again been introduced. Their intent is to provide assistance to local school agencies commensurate with the loss of local revenues due to the activities of various branches of the federal government.

One bill would enable the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior, to make payment to school districts as compensation for education of children of federal employees residing on federally owned property. Another would authorize an annual payment to states, territories, and insular governments for the benefit of their local political sub-divisions, based on the fair value of the national forest lands. Still another would provide money in lieu of taxes on real property held by the federal government. A fourth bill would authorize a transfer of a percentage of tax collections from individual and corporate income taxes to the states and territories for use for educational purposes only. A fifth bill would provide assistance to local school agencies in providing educational opportunities for children on federal reservations or in defense areas and for other purposes.

Aid for School Plant Construction

A number of bills have been presented which would authorize federal funds to aid states in the construction of needed school plants. There is a very good possibility that Congress will not act on these bills until a careful survey of needs has been made. A sum undoubtedly will be appropriated in the near future to make possible such a survey. The President's 1950 budget specifies an appropriation for this purpose. States individually will be encouraged to enter into such a study. A few states have already completed such a project and could furnish most of the necessary information for their own states.

Several bills have been introduced which would authorize grants to enable local

school agencies overburdened with war-incurred or defense-incurred school enrollments to build needed school facilities. An amendment to S-834 includes the school districts which are overburdened as a result of activities by any department or establishment of the government.

Three bills have alarming designs. Senate Bill 834, H. R. 2423, and H. S. 2617 are for the purpose of constructing, extending, remodeling, acquiring, equipping, or improving elementary or secondary school buildings. Eligibility as written into the bills would be most difficult to determine. The wording does not clearly define specificity of need. Eligibility and allotment of funds would be determined by the Federal Works Administrator. The Federal Works Agency would deal directly with local school districts. Local districts would be expected to provide part of the funds. The direct federal-local agreements would by-pass completely state departments of education. There could be a complete disregard of over-all state-wide planning by state educational agencies. If one of these bills passes there could be a great deal of indiscriminate and unplanned construction with little if any regard to reorganization studies now in progress in many states.

Government Reorganization

Bills have again been introduced which would make possible the reorganization of health services and educational activities of the federal government. One bill would create an executive department of the government known as the Department of Health, Education, and Security. A second bill is very similarly worded. The need for coordinating the many educational activities of the federal government still seems to go unnoticed.

Increased and Improved Services

There are bills before Congress which would contribute to increased and improved services to adults, children, and youth. How some of these proposed programs would fit in with the programs as carried on by local schools in conjunction

with state departments is hard to conceive.

One bill provides for the removal of adult illiteracy by the development of special programs for basic elementary education of adults and for other purposes. Another bill proposes the promotion of moral, temperance, and character education. It provides for cooperation with the states in the promotion of such education, and also in the preparation of teachers for moral, temperance, character, and good citizenship education.

A House bill proposes the establishment of a United States Commission for the promotion of physical fitness. This also calls for the appropriation of money and the selection of a trained staff to promote the program.

A Senate bill proposes to provide for a survey of physically handicapped persons. This would include school-age children, and make possible the enumeration of all physically handicapped individuals.

A library service demonstration bill has received a great deal of attention. The bill has been introduced in both Houses to date. Such a bill passed the Senate during the 80th Congress, but did not come up for vote in the House. The bill provides money to the states each year for five years. States are encouraged to set up samples of free library service in areas where there are no libraries or where library services are inadequate.

Another bill would authorize the Federal Security Administration to assist the states in the development of community recreation programs for all the people.

This by no means points out all the pending legislation in regard to educational services. It does indicate certain areas of emphasis by the lawmakers. School people should watch all pending federal legislation with interest. Their thinking in regard to individual bills should be expressed either individually or through organized groups. Since not a single bill enumerated has passed either House, it is difficult to predict just what ones will receive favorable consideration.—*ASCD Legislative Committee.*

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