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## Big Brother Again

The National Defense Education Act of 1958, which was designed to "correct as rapidly as possible the existing imbalances in our educational programs which have led to an insufficient proportion of our population educated in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages and trained in technology," was passed in the last days of the 85th Congress [*Science* 128, 521 (5 Sept. 1958)]. One part of the act provides for loans to those students with superior backgrounds who intend to teach in elementary or secondary schools or who have "a superior capacity or preparation in science, mathematics, engineering, or a modern foreign language."

Some observers doubt the wisdom of thus restricting the loan and fellowship program in such a way as to set up a favored class of students. But if this class is favored in one way, it is the object of discrimination in another. In the confusion and haste that marked the closing sessions of the 85th Congress when the Senate and House were attempting to reconcile their differing versions of the education bill, the Senate Committee on Labor and Welfare approved an amendment that was passed by voice vote and without debate. This amendment, which has largely escaped public notice, prohibits the payment of student loans to anyone unless he has filed with the Commissioner of Education "an affidavit that he does not believe in, and is not a member of and does not support any organization that believes in or teaches, the overthrow of the United States Government by force or violence or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods, and has taken and subscribed to an oath or affirmation in the following form: 'I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America and will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States against all its enemies, foreign and domestic.'"

According to Senator Mundt this provision of the act assures the Senate that students who qualify will "be good Americans and not be people involved in Communist or any other subversive organizations." But, in effect, what the amendment does do is something else. It impugns the loyalty of one group of students—those eligible for loans—by requiring them to swear an oath not required of other students. The amendment also helps create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion inimical to that free and creative play of the mind which is as essential in science as it is in the arts. The fact that the organizations which might be subversive are not specified will lead any student who wants to be eligible for a loan to think twice before joining any organization, even a student discussion group. It will lead him to avoid the healthy give and take of intellectual battle and encourage him to be timid and conformist. He will be unable to escape the thought that he had better be careful of his associations, because Big Brother is watching. We hope the next Congress will strike out the amendment.—G.DuS.