

Science in the News

The Education Bills. A Few Items of Controversy: Parochial Schools; the Yellin Case; Teaching Communism

The Administration's public school bill, as of the beginning of this week, had nowhere to go but up. At the beginning of the month the path seemed clear (and so it was erroneously reported here) for the bill to come before the House with the fight over money for private (that is, essentially for parochial) schools muffled as much as could be expected. The bill would have had the additional advantage that consideration would come just after the President's return from his round of meetings with Macmillan, De Gaulle, and Khrushchev, a time when the House would be especially leery of handing the President his first major defeat.

The problem of the Rules Committee had been, it was thought, taken care of last January. The deadlock between six liberal Democrats and a conservative bloc of two Southern Democrats and four conservative Republicans had been broken by allowing the Republican leadership, stoutly conservative, to add another member to its liking, while the Democrats added two liberals. The liberals now had an 8-to-7 majority, and the Democratic leadership had, so it seemed, control of the committee. Yet, for what at the time seemed inexplicable reasons, the leadership put off asking the committee for the necessary rule governing the terms of debate on the bill. The reason for the delay, it turned out, was that the Democratic leadership did not, after all, have a majority. The liberal bloc on the committee included two Catholics, and more important, Catholics representing predominantly Catholic districts (one of the leaders on the Catholic side of the private school controversy, Representative Zelenko of New York, is Jewish, but he too represents a predominantly Catholic district). The two Catholics were prepared

to vote with the conservative seven to refuse a rule to the school bill, and they threatened to continue to oppose a rule for the bill until the Education and Labor Committee had voted out a version of the National Defense Education Act, which is up for renewal this year, that would include a loan program for private schools.

Last week, the threats became fact, and the committee voted 9 to 6 against considering a rule for the school bill until the NDEA extension had been reported out of committee. Speaker Sam Rayburn was reported to have told the President that the school bill looked "dead as slavery," and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, called a press conference to announce that things looked very bleak indeed and that it was up to "someone higher up [the President, of course] to blow the whistle."

Powell went back to work with his committee to try to get out an NDEA extension satisfactory to the Catholics, but whether he succeeds or not the school bill has taken a bad blow.

The Catholic position is that nearly 15 percent of school age children in the country attend parochial schools, saving their non-Catholic fellow citizens a large part of the immense amount of money that would otherwise be needed to take care of the added enrollment that would result if the parochial schools closed. If the federal government is going in heavily for aid to schools, and the Administration bill implies a permanent and very substantial program, the Catholic view is that some consideration should be given to the 15 percent of the students who do not attend public schools. It is generally agreed that grants would be unconstitutional. But long-term, low-interest loans, although costing the federal government nothing, would be a substantial help to the parochial schools, probably would not be held unconsti-

tutional by the Supreme Court, and seem to the Catholics to be a modest and reasonable compromise.

The Catholic demands, then, are by no means entirely unreasonable. The Administration's efforts to go at least part way in accommodating them are not, in themselves, unusual. It is a commonplace situation in politics, whether at the level of the departmental factions in a university or at the highest level of international politics, for *A* to make certain demands on *B* as the price for supporting something that *B* wants. The parochial school bloc wants at least a fighting chance to get a bill incorporating loans (not grants) through Congress as the price for supporting the Administration's large-scale grant program for the public schools. This would involve getting a loan bill through committees and to the floor of both Houses of Congress. If all this had been done quietly, and the issue involved had not been one so capable of arousing strong passions, then the maneuvering on the school bill would have been essentially no different from that which paves the way for the passage (or defeat) of any piece of controversial legislation. But as with a magician's performance, for the maneuvering to show spoils the performance.

President's Role

The maneuvering on the school bill, which became a matter of public record with the vote in the Rules Committee, has reached a point where it has become distasteful to everybody, and unless counteracted it would assuredly cost enough votes among the wavering members who hold the balance of power to defeat the bill. The Administration has not given up. Abraham Ribicoff, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, cancelled his scheduled appearance at the governors' conference in Hawaii this week to be on hand in Washington to help on the bill. Kennedy sent a message to the National Education Association convention assuring them that he still saw "every reason to believe" that he would sign a school aid bill into law "before the summer is out." But the chances of passage, more than ever, depend on the President.

What the situation seems to call for, on the part of supporters of the bill, is to let things lie for a bit, until the passions generated last week can cool off, and then to try to get off to a fresh start just before bringing the bill be-

fore the House. The most effective fresh start, of course, would take the form of a Presidential address over television. But no announcement can be expected on this, if it is to happen, until a day or two before the event, not only because the President would not commit himself to using this last resort unless it had become clear that nothing else would do, but because in any case it would be bad tactics to telegraph the punch by announcing it prematurely.

National Defense Education Act

Meanwhile, although the NDEA extension has been getting attention mostly because of the effort to attach an amendment for private school loans, the bill, of course, is an important one in its own right.

The Administration draft, except for the addition of the special loan program for private schools, is likely to be reported out of the House and Senate committees substantially unchanged. It will put NDEA on a permanent basis, with a yearly appropriation limit of about double the \$250 million that is now being spent. The present act provides support for secondary school teaching in mathematics, science, and foreign languages, as well as the better-known programs of loans for college students and fellowships for graduate students. Kennedy asked that English and physical fitness be added to the secondary school subject areas, with the provision that money for physical fitness could not be spent on a facility for holding athletics contests to which admission would be charged. It appeared that English would be added, but there was substantial opposition to the physical fitness program.

Another fellowship program, this time the engineering and science fellowships set up in the National Science Foundation Act, was also in the news.

The Yellin case, described in the editorial at the front of this issue, brought a Congressional demand for changes in the National Science Foundation Act to prevent the award of a grant to a student of questionable loyalty. A bill produced by Overton Brooks, chairman of the House Science and Astronautics Committee, writes into the law the interpretation of "ability" which the Foundation used as part of the basis for rescinding Yellin's grant. In effect, it provides that intellectual competence will not be the sole criterion for deciding who will get a

fellowship, but that in assessing a student's ability the Foundation should also consider the student's motivation and his loyalty to democratic principles. The bill appeared extremely likely to pass.

The question of communism also got into the discussion of the NDEA, but in a way which aroused nothing like the fuss the Yellin case provoked.

Senator Goldwater called a press conference to announce that he would offer an amendment to add to the bill support for studies concerned with the threat of communism. Goldwater criticized the Administration for trying to add support for English and physical fitness at the same time it was trying to delete the provision requiring a non-communist affidavit from applicants for the student loans provided in the act. "It is difficult for me to see," Goldwater said, "how any intelligent person can genuinely believe that improving and expanding educational courses in English and physical fitness is more essential to the national defense than a provision designed to protect the American taxpayer against having his tax money used to benefit the enemies of the Nation."

Goldwater said he was opposed to the bill, as he was opposed to all federal aid to education, but that since it was certain to pass anyway he would vote for it himself if the threat of communism was added to the subject areas to be supported. But there was not much likelihood that the amendment would pass, for the way in which one defines the precise nature of the communist threat implies in large measure what should be done to meet the threat. The result is that it would be extremely difficult to design a course in the threat of communism that would not strike some substantial group as a gross, and perhaps treasonable, misuse of public money.

Satellite Communications

At the beginning of the week the White House took its first formal notice of the imminent need to lay out a policy for the development of a worldwide satellite communications system. It made public a letter from the President to Vice President Johnson requesting Johnson, in his role as chairman of the Federal Space Council, to "make the necessary studies and Government-wide policy recommendations

for bringing into optimum use at the earliest practicable time operational communications satellites. The letter, dated 15 June, was made public last Sunday, the 25th.

Some of the policy problems this involves were reported here a few weeks ago (*Science*, 9 June). The economics of the situation was discussed in an article in *Science* (16 June) by William Mechling, of the Rand Corporation. The most politically touchy problem is the very basic one of the extent of federal financing and perhaps ownership that will be involved.

The President asked for recommendations of the "nature and diversity of ownership and operation" of the system. The President said that in making these recommendations "public-interest objectives should be given the highest priority." Nothing was said of any preference for private, rather than public, ownership. The release of the letter thus announced, in effect, that the new Administration feels no commitment to carry on the policy laid down in the closing days of the Eisenhower Administration that the satellite system should be developed by private industry.

Japanese Agreement

The Prime Minister of Japan, Hayato Ikeda, was in Washington last week, and his visit, primarily concerned with trade and tariff matters, provided the occasion for announcing what the State Department hopes will be the most elaborate cultural and scientific agreement we have set up with any country. Earlier in the month the Department negotiated a settlement of the debts Japan owed the U.S. for occupation costs after the war. The bulk of the \$490 million settlement has been set aside for aid to underdeveloped Asian countries, but \$25 million will be used to finance a program of cultural and scientific cooperation. The announcement last week simply made public the decision to set up binational committees, which will work out the details of the program. But the program the Department has in mind will involve financing joint projects to be worked on by Japanese and American scholars and scientists, thus going beyond the usual exchange of visits associated with such agreements. If the program works well it will presumably be used as a pattern for similar arrangements with other nations.—H.M.