

Higher Education Bill in House

The Senate last week gave final passage to the Higher Education Amendments of 1972, a legislative portmanteau full of education programs, school desegregation aid, and controversial antibusing provisions (*Science*, 26 May). The surprisingly ample 63 to 15 margin in the Senate appeared to give the bill momentum for the vote in the House of Representatives, where it faces a much sterner test.

A decision by House leadership to delay a vote at least until next week indicates that the bill's proponents feel they lack the votes to ensure passage. The thorniest issue in the House centers on school busing, since antibusing provisions in the compromise bill produced by a House-Senate conference were milder than the House had demanded. Supporters of the bill took heart because such strongly antibusing senators as Harry Byrd (I-Va.) and John Stennis (D-Miss.) voted for the bill. However, opposition to the bill remains strong on both flanks in the House. Civil rights groups are demanding that liberals vote to defeat the measure, and antibusing congressmen are insisting that the bill be rejected and original House busing strictures be reimposed. Under the rules, the bill cannot be amended or recommitted to committee, but must be voted up or down.

An ambiguous note is the attitude of the higher education community. The associations of universities and colleges which form the higher education lobby in Washington have given an uncharacteristically slow and uncoordinated reaction to the bill, offering either halfhearted endorsement for the bill or engaging in extended consultations with their constituents. Advocates of the bill have been counting on support from university and college officials to counterbalance the busing issue. There is considerable reluctance in the higher education community to accept even the modified antibusing features added to the bill, and there are also objections to several of the educational provisions of the bill. The bill's institutional aid formula, in particular, is viewed unenthusiastically by academia's policy-makers, who would have preferred a program of direct grants to institutions to the bill's complicated formula stressing aid based on federal funds received by an institution's students.

There appears to be some acceptance of the view associated with Representative Edith Green (D-Ore.) that it would be better if the bill were defeated, a simple extension of existing legislation enacted this year without new educational programs or the desegregation or busing amendments attached. A more attractive institutional aid format could then be fashioned in a coming session. Proponents of the bill argue that such a course involves high risks, including the likely loss of any institutional aid program in the near future. In the Senate debate, Senator Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), chief sponsor of the bill in the Senate, offered the following assessment:

I would remind my colleagues that if the bill is to be attacked, from the right and from the left, those efforts can result in the defeat of the bill. If that should happen and the conference report is not approved, I can see that with the mood of the country and the intensity of feeling on these subjects, that there would be no higher education bill through this and perhaps next year. Even a continuing resolution would become subject to this same problem. If this were the case with the expiration of the higher education programs on June 30—the Federal support of higher education would end. Is this the result we want?

While it is hard to believe that Congress would actually allow the whole corpus of higher education legislation to die, it seems likely that defeat of the present bill would entail serious consequences. There could well be some losses among existing programs in the process, and it is probable that any extension bill would have antibusing provisions attached to it, probably stiffer ones than those in the current measure.

—J.W.

and advised that they be chosen for their manageability. "We'd do well to pick a few early winners," he said, adding in line with that the feeling that the IOM "should not become a center for policy research. Rather, it should be a place where the knowledge of its members and their colleagues is distilled [for use in formulating health policy]."

In an address opening the meeting, William Schwartz, of Tufts University School of Medicine, took virtually the opposite tack, declaring that what this country needs most is a body of men and women whose full-time occupation is health policy research and whose purpose is to be in close contact with congressional offices and government agencies. In Schwartz's opinion, there are many issues that cannot be resolved through what has been facetiously called the system of "problem solving through the casual assembly of great men." Schwartz's point is that, in the case of many major policy questions, we lack the data base from which to make decisions and need, therefore, to engage in some initial policy research. "The Institute of Medicine, because of the composition of its membership and its primary commitment to problems of health, would appear to offer a particularly felicitous setting in which to establish a center for health policy research."

There was no resolution of these differences of opinion; nor, as Hogness points out, was there intended to be. "This meeting," he says, "was a chance for us to talk, to try out various ideas. We neither sought nor expected decisions."

When the institute does get to the issue of whether to engage in primary research, and if so, to what extent, it will have experience from within its own walls to use as a guide.

The predecessor to the Institute of Medicine was the Board on Medicine, a group within the NAS. In 1968, when that now-defunct board was a year old—having since merged with the IOM—it generated a study of the delivery of health services which has operated under the direction of David Kessner, a former Yale University internist. "At the time this study was getting under way," Kessner recalls, "NAS president Handler and the Council had qualms about our becoming involved in field research, but they have backed us all the way. Now, we're part of the IOM, and I consider this the first major study of the Institute." The "Kessner study," which should be complete by the end of the summer and ready for presentation to