FEDERAL AID TO EDUCATION

February 7, 1963

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Dear ______:

The enclosure sets forth my position on the question of federal aid for both public and private education and represents essentially the same view I would expect to take if this issue comes to the Senate Floor again this year.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen

Enclosure
SCHOOL ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961

The Senate resumed the consideration of the bill (S. 1021) to authorize a program of Federal financial assistance for education.

Mr. DIRKSEN. Mr. President, as a member of the committee which reported the aid-to-education bill, I wish to state that the record will show that in the committee there were two votes against reporting the bill. One of those votes was mine; the other was that of the distinguished Senator from Arizona (Mr. GOLDFWATER).

I am opposed to the bill on principle; and before the debate concludes, I wish to be certain that I make my views manifest and explain why I take that position.

First, let me say that I think of the old preacher in the Old Testament—Ecclesiastes—who uttered a great bit of wisdom, centuries ago. He said:

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Mr. President, this bill indicates that there is no new thing under the sun, because the first aid-to-education bill was introduced in Congress in the year 1870, some 91 years ago; and the agitation for the enactment of such a bill has continued ever since then. I may say that is not far short of a century ago; and it indicates the continuing pressures on the part of persons who would intrude the Federal Government deeper and deeper into a field of this kind—and, for that matter, into other fields, as well.

There were intense debates in the period from 1870 until 1890 as continuing bills, of which there were literally dozens, were introduced in the House and the Senate. In some cases, the Senate approved. In other cases, the House approved. But at no time was there a concurrence of the House and the Senate with respect to an aid-to-education bill, whether it dealt with construction or for any other purpose.

Then there came a period of 30 years, between 1890 and 1920, when there was less interest in the matter, and probably so because there was a tremendous increase in the amount of funds that were devoted to this purpose by the localities, the school districts, and the States.

It is rather interesting to note that as early as 1886, when Woodrow Wilson was probably still on the faculty at the University of Princeton, one of these bills was being rather roundly discussed. I think the record ought to show that the distinguished professor, later president of the university, later Governor of his State, and later President of the United States, had to say. His remarks appear on page 622 of the hearings, and I read one excerpt. He said:

It was evident that no increase in the State appropriation for public education would be voted as long as there was the least prospect of aid from Washington. There was deliberate determination to enjoy the easy position of a beneficiary of the National Government to the fullest possible extent, rather than to be independent and support a good school system by its own unaided efforts.

Mr. President, there was a great liberal. There was a great Democratic President, in the days when he was deeply immersed in the educational field, who indicated only too well that when the Federal Government intrudes itself into this picture, the net result will be that the States and localities will rest upon their ears and let the Federal Government undertake the whole job.

Mr. President, since 1870 there have been at least 100 Federal aid programs, of one kind or another, proposed. They dealt with nearly every subject under the sun. But the interesting thing is that in all of this period, going back 90 years, there have been no aid programs for schools enacted. That fact indicates how deeply, not only the Congress, but the people, felt upon this issue.

Incidentally, as I think of grants-in-aid, they have tripled every 10 years since 1940. Now if we add a program for aid to schools, and that same formula persists in the future, the impact upon the Federal budget and the tax structure of the Federal Government will be an astonishing burden before we get through.

It has been argued, in connection with this bill, that we have aided schools in other respects before. But I doubt very much whether those arguments will stand up in any respect as they relate to the bill which is presently before us. Take, for instance, the question of land-grant colleges. Attempts were made to indicate that in a sample of Federal aid to education. The suggestion came as early as 1850 that the land-grant colleges were too academic in their curricula and that therefore they should go in more for agriculture and the mechanic arts. So a bill was introduced and finally passed in 1859. It was vetoed by President Buchanan, and the veto message appears in the hearings. It is, by all odds, one of the most vigorous veto messages and one of the most all-inclusive I have ever seen. But even in 1859, just before the Civil War, President Buchanan would have nothing to do with land-grant colleges and the intrusion of the Federal Government in that field.

The bill was resubmitted in 1862. That was when Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States. It was in wartime, and there was a shortage of manpower. There was a demand for greater emphasis on agriculture and the mechanic arts, certainly in the North, and I would suppose in the South, although they could probably not share in it at the time. So without too much ceremony, and with very little discussion, the land-grant college bill finally went through.

When all is said and done, it involves, even as of today, only $500 million, which is a drop in the bucket compared to the bill before us. Here is a grant program in which the U.S. Government will spend $21/2 billion in a period of 3 years. I trust there is no one in this Chamber so naive as to believe that is where it is going to stop. This is just a beginning, and year after year it will snowball, it will increase, it will expand, other items will be added, and it will be interesting to see what will happen to this measure, if ever enacted into law, 10 years hence. Second, it has been pointed out that Federal aid is as old as the Constitution, if not older. It is rather interesting how these singular ideas are bandied about when they are a departure from the historical facts.
It has been pointed out that we aid the vocational courses in schools over the country, and very notably, agricultural schools. The fact of the matter is that the first aid to vocational schools was enacted by the Congress a few weeks after we got into World War I. As a result, there was a clamor that more emphasis be placed upon the things which might be conducive to the training of youngsters, who might become of greater value to the war effort. It was a war measure.

I pointed out administratively that it was a control measure. I reread the language of the act of 1916. The Congress specifically spelled out what the schools would have to do with respect to curricular and control measures. The bill before us contains a paragraph which abjures in solemn terms all control and all intention to control, but the vocational aid bill was a control-curriculum bill, as surely as the English language can express it.

It was pointed out that a few months after sputnik began to excite the imagination and to cause some concern, we passed the National Defense Education Act. What did we do? The great cry was for people who would devote their language, their physics, to mathematics, to science. That was a curricular control measure, no less, born out of an incident which, in my judgment, cannot be so considered when we have before us a general support bill for aid to education.

At no point, Mr. President, in all the recitals or in all the exhibits which have been presented, has anyone come forth with a single page of past history to support the fact that the Federal Government has gone in for general school support before and that school aid is as old as the Constitution. That is simply one of those manufactured cliches which under no circumstances will hold water. It is a tribute to our careless examination of what the history books really indicate.

I thought those items ought to be disposed of first, since Senators have talked about the various acts upon the statute books, seeking to indicate there is ample evidence, or even mere evidence, to indicate the Federal Government’s interest in the field, and that the Federal Government has followed this kind of course before. In 90 years the Congress has always resisted a so-called general support to education bill; but it is before us, and I am opposed to it. There are reasons for being opposed to it.

The first reason I cite, Mr. President, is the controls which can be found in the bill itself. One need only go into the provisions of section 110, which must specify the proportion that will be needed when we have before us a general support bill for aid to education.

The third requirement is that the application must contain criteria and procedures to insure that in allocating funds the neediest shall have priority. The second provision is that States must specify the proportion that will be expended for public schoolteachers’ salaries and construction of public school facilities.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the method of that provision. There was no intent to hold the States too strictly to the line. But that is the question we are voting on.

The bill before us contains a paragraph which abjures in solemn terms all control and all intention to control, but the vocational aid bill was a control-curriculum bill, as surely as the English language can express it.

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committee did not merely say, "In the administration of this title there shall be no direction, control, or supervision of any kind whatsoever," and let it go at that. That is not what the bill provides. Section 103 provides:

No department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States shall exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the policy determination, personnel, curriculum, program of instruction, or the administration or operation of any school or school system.

We think we can nail it down by language, and things pop up that we never quite anticipated. Yesterday the Senator from Georgia [Mr. Talmadge] attempted to add a proviso that no withholding of funds should obtain under any obligation under this act. The proposed amendment raised a very curious question. The bill would authorize funds for 3 years. Then we must appropriate according to the law. What will happen in 3 years? Mr. President. What will happen in 3 years?

It is not necessary to read any more. Anyone who is curious about it will find that quotation in the proceedings of the convention and the hearings. There is another quotation, on page 627. It is by Theodore Braemeld, professor of education, Boston University. He says:

The National Government should exercise the same authority over the spending of school funds as it does in other areas; otherwise, there would always be the danger of Federal money being squandered by dominant minorities in States or localities.

Control of funds, and how they should be spent. If this is not control, then I do not know the meaning of the word "control."

Here is still another quotation from a great educator, John A. Hannah, president of Michigan State University, in a speech before the National War College. The preceding President appointed Mr. Hannah chairman of the Civil Rights Commission. He said that education must be "a primary instrument of national policy."

There are other quotations, from Harold W. Stote, president of Queens College; Mr. H. Thomas James, of the School of Education, Stanford University.

I shall give the country the benefit of the whole quotation. He said:

As the States have denied, first to the family, and then to local communities, the right to make decisions on education contrary to State-defined policy, so the Nation may be expected to deny to the States the right to make decisions on educational policy that are not in accord with the emerging national policy for education.

There are others. I need not read any more. However, if they do not clinch this matter of what the ultimate objective is, namely Federal control of education and education as an instrumentality of national policy, then all I can say is those who read this and still disagree are beyond redemption. I use that expression in the most refined sense.

So I summarize at this point to say that what is before us is not new. It has been here for 90 years or more.

There is nothing in the arguments which have been advanced that the Federal Government has immersed itself in this field of aid to education. All one needs to do is to look at the qualifying circumstances. There are controls already in the bill. The basic objective finally is to give the Federal Government control over the educational system and make it an instrument of national policy.

Here is a partisan note that I must intrude—and yet it is not so badly par- tisan. In 1960 the Republicans were talking about the National Republican Convention in Chicago in 1960. I have served on resolutions committees of national conventions for years, first in one capacity and then in another capacity in many subcommittees, and I have served as chairman of some of these subcommittees, once on civil rights. In that connection my recommendation was adopted by the full committee and it was transmitted finally to the convention as such, and it was adopted by the convention.

But, Mr. President, I notice that delegates try not to make too much of these arguments. When it is pointed out that this was subscribed to by the Republican Party in solemn conclave in 1960 and 1969, the president of a western university went to the trouble of polling every delegate who attended the convention in Chicago in 1960. There were 1,331 delegates. He polled them on two questions: Did they favor salaries for teachers in a Federal aid bill? The answer was: Yea, 3 percent; nay, 96 percent. Then he polled them on this question: Are they interested in Federal aid for classroom construction? The answer was: Yea, 18 percent; nay, 81 percent. There is the story.

Far be it from me to reflect upon the solemn deliberations of the party and the convention in which I had a modest part. However, so often these things do not come fully to the attention of the delegates. Time is of the essence. We have to move forward with a great party platform. There is the usual timidity on the part of the delegates who do not want to provoke a floor fight.

But when they got back there and took count of themselves, here was what they said on the question. So when someone rises up to say to me, "Your party endorsed it," well, I can only say that here is a very careful poll, and the delegates themselves, certainly in the light of hindsight, were absolutely opposed both to Federal aid for teachers' salaries and Federal aid for construction.

The third reason for opposition to the bill is that when all is said and done it is only a token. The present expenditures for education are in the range of $16 billion per year. The additional amounts proposed in the pending bill for the 3-year period are only of token size and would have only a modest impact. The best authorities in this field insist that gradually local and State appropriations and expenditures for this purpose will gradually increase. The greatest authority in the school field—in fact, the one man who could speak with authority and who came before the committee—indicated that the school districts could take care of themselves, and he anticipated on a historical basis that the $16 billion in expenditures at the local level could be expected gradually to increase to $24 billion and then perhaps to $31 billion. At the local level the States can do this job pretty well for themselves, and so can the local districts.
Mr. DIRksen. Mr. President, I can understand people who emotionally and romantically think this is a great business. But we are dealing with millions of dollars; and once that threshold has been crossed, what will subsequent Congresses do, now shall we go? I have an idea, after a long experience in legislative halls having seen the mushrooming of these functions once they have been undertaken, that we can almost predict what will happen to this program. The billions which will be added will be an onus.

When I say that the school districts and the States can finance themselves, I turn to page 650 of the hearings, which indicates the number of school-bond issues which were approved in 1960. The voters went to the polls, and 1,168 bond issues for schools were approved for a total of $1,762 million. The number which were disapproved was 333, for a total of $401 million. Does that indicate whether there is an abiding and intense interest in education at the local level or at the State level? Of course there are people who vociferously do, and how far shall we go? I have been crossed, what will subsequent Congresses do, and what will the voters have expressed themselves on?

The percentage of bond issues approved was 81.4 percent on the basis of the dollars involved, and 77.1 percent on the basis of the number of bond issues. So three-quarters of the bond issues in number and four-fifths of the bond issues in terms of dollars were approved by the voters in 1960.

With respect to the first month in 1961, the only figures available as of now indicate that the number had increased by another 19 percent. Who can stand up in the face of actuality and in the face of unrepudiated facts and say that the grassroots are not doing their work?

The next reason I assign is: Give the bill a chance, and after a while, notwithstanding any of the amazing formulas, it will take a look at logarithms, a knowledge of trigonometry, and a slide ruler to comprehend that little by little, and despite a definition of school index effort and whatever the States will want to do, whether there is not more and more largess to be had from the Federal Treasury. If Senators want something explicit on that point, let me read a reference to a statement by the distinguished Governor Lawrence, of Pennsylvania, on that subject. It appears at page 622 of the hearings:

In Pennsylvania, Governor Lawrence holds of impressing any substantial increase in State aid for schools in the new budget; he looks instead to Congress to authorize Federal educational grants for States.

What Governor would not, if he could, press this budget, when he knows that all he has to do is to look at the great white illuminated dome in Washington and say, 'From this cometh my succor and my assistance.'

Here was a Governor who was honorable enough to express himself in that way.

So the bill will destroy initiative; I have the slightest doubt about it. It only will live in humankind. That probably will be one of the side effects, as the druggists say, if and when the bill is enacted.

I go further. This was the very thing on which Woodrow Wilson commented in 1866, when he said:

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It was evident that no increase in the State appropriation for public education would be voted so long as there was the prospect of aid from Washington. * * * * *(There was) deliberate determination to enhance the national Government to the fullest possible extent, rather than to be independent and support a good school system by its own unaided effort.

It is fair to assume that Federal aid, instead of being an addition to State expenditures, will become a substitute for State expenditures. Oh, I know there are administrators who will measure the State index effort and all the other complicated terms; but how much will they ultimately amount to when the pressures are on and when the political pressure gets a chance to vent itself? They will not mean too much.

I said this was, after all, token assistance. Let us see. Let us divide the aid which will go to the States and assume they will spend half of it for school district purposes, the other half for teachers' salaries. If that be the case, approximately 7,500 classrooms a year will be built. What is that? The people now, without Federal aid, are building 700 classrooms a year. So here comes a dubious venture which would add 10 percent to the number of classrooms, if these allegations can be taken at face value. But I have grave doubts about it. But if it is very best, it will probably amount to 10 percent of what is being done at the present time.

Then comes the argument that the bill will stimulate the employment of the non-instructional staff, the teaching corps throughout the country, if something is done in the field of salaries. It has been pointed out that they lag so far behind. I had planned to interpose in the colloquy the other day between the distinguished Senator from Oregon [Mr. Morse] and the distinguished senior Senator from Illinois [Mr. Douglas] on matters of question and answer. The question always begins, "Is it not true?" Of course, one invites the answer. Then, "Is it not a fact," and the answer is invited. I will not do you wrong. I simply open the book for the answer, and here it is. It has been carefully documented. If anyone is curious about it, let him look at page 631 of the hearings. Here are the facts as submitted to the committee. With respect to salaries for all professional workers who have had 4 years of college, the salary given is $3,533; for public school teachers, it is $3,680. So there is a disparity, rather than to be independent and support a good school system by its own unaided effort.

I said this was, after all, token assistance. Let us see. Let us divide the aid which will go to the States and assume they will spend half of it for school district purposes, the other half for teachers' salaries. If that be the case, approximately 7,500 classrooms a year will be built. What is that? The people now, without Federal aid, are building 700 classrooms a year. So here comes a dubious venture which would add 10 percent to the number of classrooms, if these allegations can be taken at face value. But I have grave doubts about it. But if it is very best, it will probably amount to 10 percent of what is being done at the present time.

Then comes the argument that the bill will elevate the general tone of the school district at face value. But I have grave doubts about it. But if it is very best, it will probably amount to 10 percent of what is being done at the present time.
Furthermore, the Office of Education had to report that, as stated in the Congressional Record:

In the past 4 years the number of classrooms in use has increased 281,000. Now, the number required to take care of the additional enrollment in that time, which was 4.8 million, would have been 170,000 which means that the net increase in classrooms that were available for the reduction of shortages was 81,000.

Mr. President, statistics are wonderful things. It simply depends on which one sits and how one uses them.

Some observation was made to the effect that we are way behind the Soviet Union, and that should inspire fear, dread, and misgivings, and we should ladle out Federal largess in order to meet that situation. It was said that the Soviet Union has claimed that since the war they built enough classrooms for 9 million children. What did we do? We built enough classrooms for 26 million children—more than twice as many.

The Budget Bureau had its own doubts about these classroom shortage figures, and it made a field survey. But it has never been satisfied with the figures that have come before it.

Mr. President, there are so many things to say, but I know that I am now close to the time when I must conclude this discourse.

But there is one other thing I must say—namely, that in a short time we shall listen to the President; and I apprehend—without knowing—that he may talk about the fevers in the world and about the need for more funds in the field of space and the need for more funds for this, that, and the other thing. I couple that with a statement made last Friday night, in New York, by the Deputy Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Elmer B. Staats, when he addressed the Business Advisory Council. I talked to him only this morning, and the figure does not appear in his manuscript: It was given in a response made to a question which was asked. He said that the deficit in the fiscal year 1961 will probably be twice what the President indicated to the Congress; and that would mean a budget deficit, in the current fiscal year, not of $2,300 million, but of $5,500 million or more; and there will be an even greater deficit in the following year.

So I survey the bills that are in the making and the demands that are going to be made, and then there occurs to me the old question, "Is it guns and butter, or is it guns or butter?"

If the world situation is as feverish as is intimated from time to time to the various congressional committees, how far do we go in fields of policy and expenditure where we should not venture, since the defense of the country, our national security, is the first consideration—for without national security there can be no individual security and no individual freedom. So we had better be giving thought to the appropriation bills and the authorizations which are building up these built-in increases in the budget; and this is one good way to start.

No need has been demonstrated, in any of the testimony, for the bill that is before us. In addition, we have the fact that we had better "mind our knitting" if in Laos, in Vietnam, in the Congo, in Cuba, in Latin America, in East Berlin, in Iran, and elsewhere, the situation is so sensitive and so fraught with danger that the taxpayers of the country will be called upon for larger and larger outlays for our security. There had better be a point at which we cut back, and I can think of no better point in the whole field at which to do so than to reject the bill before us, because it is unnecessary. The case has not been made. We may need the money necessary to implement it for other purposes far more important than those described in the bill.

Mr. President, I could go on and amplify the case, but I see no further point in it. I sincerely hope the Senate will give serious thought to what I have urged.

I add one point in conclusion. If there is any Senator on this floor who thinks $2,500 million is the limit for this bill, oh, what a tragic illusion that will prove to be. The distinguished Presiding Officer who sits in the chair today (Mr. Metcalf)—and I am sure he does not mind my referring to him—was the coauthor of a bill called the Murray-Metcalf bill. What did it call for? It went, for that period of years, to $11.4 billion. As I recall, it tailed off at $5 billion a year. So let there be no mistake as to what we are doing today. We are opening the door. Then the millions will flow freely, because how can a political body finally withstand the pressures?

This, I think, is the time to stand up and be counted, in the durable and basic interest of the country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.