

The Beginnings of Ambivalence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Federal Aid to Education Issue, 1949-1953

by James Duram

THE FEDERAL AID TO EDUCATION ISSUE stimulated by the post-World War II "baby boom" and its resultant classroom shortage was already in evidence during the Truman presidency. Earl J. McGrath, Truman's outspoken commissioner of education, stated publicly that federal aid for classroom construction and operating expenses (i.e. teachers' salaries) would be needed to overcome the crisis in the schools.¹ Early attempts of the Truman Administration to deal with the problem had been frustrated by a combination of causes that would prove to be incredibly persistent. Fears of federal control, concern about the racial implications of federal aid, problems surrounding the definitions of eligibility, questions of how to finance such aid, and arguments about whether parochial schools should receive such assistance all contributed to the complexity and volatility of the issue.

The political explosiveness evident in the combination of factors just cited caused the congressional leadership of the more ethnically and religiously diverse Democratic party to carefully avoid involvement in the federal aid issue despite the obvious magnitude of the school crisis. However, such conditions did not deter a

dedicated bipartisan group of federal aid advocates who persevered in attempts to secure federal aid to education legislation. As a matter of fact, the strategy of sticking to the narrow issue of school construction, developed by Ohio senator John Bricker and others beginning in 1950, was based on Bricker's belief that it would defuse the parochial school aid issue.² Though defeated in their initial attempts to use this strategy, senators such as Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota continued to build the case for school construction legislation in Senate committee hearings during the early fifties.

Though originally opposed to this strategy, the National Education Association leadership decided to go along, reasoning that federal support for school construction would free money already in the districts for teacher salary support. Other supporters of federal aid, including Commissioner of Education Earl McGrath, spokesmen for the American Association of School Administrators, the CIO, and their congressional supporters as well as the advocates of federal aid to the parochial schools, continued to press for more comprehensive forms of assistance. Thus, early on the advocates of federal aid reflected the disunity over tactics that would weaken their efforts throughout the long struggle.³ It was a disunity further complicated by the harsh reality that many of the committee chairmen and members of the House committees that dealt with federal aid for education bills were staunch enemies of such proposals.

Though President Truman urged Congress to pass federal aid for classroom construction and teachers' salaries in a 1950 message to Congress, heat from the religious controversy caused Congress to restrict federal aid to only school districts that were "impacted" because of the influx of large numbers of federal workers; this

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1. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Year of Decisions* vol. 1 (New York: Signet Books, 1955), 534; *New York Times Index, 1949* (New York: Times Publishing Co., 1950), 344. See especially: "Truman State of Union Urges Federal Aid," January 6, 1949, 1:8. Some idea of the intensity of the debate over the federal aid issue can be obtained by scanning the articles on the subject listed under "Federal Aid to Education" in the 1954-1960 volumes of the *Times Index*. Gilbert E. Smith, *The Limits of Reform: Politics and Federal Aid to Education, 1937-1950* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), is comprehensive in its analysis of the conflicting forces involved in the federal aid controversy up to 1950. See also Robert Bendiner, *Obstacle Course on Capitol Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), for an analysis of the complex congressional politics surrounding the federal aid issue. For a graphic illustration of the size of the classroom shortage, see Arthur S. Link, *American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's* vol. 3 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 653-57.

2. Richard F. Fenno and Frank J. Munger, *National Politics and Federal Aid to Education* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1962), 11.

3. *Ibid.*, 13; James L. Sundquist, *Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1968), 156.

included military installations and the District of Columbia. Congress' passage of P.L. 815 and P.L. 874 in 1950 provided money for both construction and operating expenses in such impacted districts.⁴ In addition, a number of advocates of federal aid tried to tie funding for education to the anticipated revenue bonanza of the tidelands oil fields: that proposal too got caught up in partisan wrangling after the federal courts held that title to the lands lay with the federal government.

The Truman presidency ended with the federal aid question in stalemate, though the impact legislation and the movement towards a narrower approach left some of its advocates with a glimmer of hope. This optimism was counterbalanced, however, because the new President, Dwight Eisenhower, and many of his advisors were far less convinced about the efficacy of federal aid to education than President Truman was. The concept seemed to run afoul of two cherished Republican conservative principles: fiscal prudence and the tradition that school issues were best resolved at the local level. The path through the political thicket surrounding the federal aid issue proved to be strewn with obstacles.

The immense complexities surrounding the federal aid issue had a profound impact upon the Eisenhower Administration's attempts to formulate its policies on education. In President Eisenhower's thinking, from 1953 to 1960, there was a somewhat halting transition from philosophical opposition to grudging acceptance of the need for limited temporary federal aid. It was, however, a painful transition tinged with doubts, perplexing questions about the amounts needed, the best means to administer the federal aid; and, during his second administration, a deepening sense of foreboding about its long-range consequences.⁵ Moreover, as in the evolution of his policy regarding school segregation, Eisenhower was the recipient of sharply divided counsel from within his own administration, the Congress, professional educational organizations, as well as conservative business groups and prominent individuals. It also should be remembered that his own concern for fiscal restraint, such an important part of the conservative

side of the complex Eisenhower political personality, came into play here as an important inhibiting factor.

The available evidence indicates that Eisenhower's views on the federal aid question were formulated by the time he became president of Columbia University in 1948. It seems significant that many of his references to the federal aid question appear in the passages of his diary where he expressed fears about deficit spending and excessive government centralization created by those who, for reasons of political expediency, sought to solve their financial problems by reliance on the federal government.⁶ In his January 14, 1949, entry he wrote:

In certain limited fields the federal government could properly take action that would have some indirect, beneficial results on privately endowed institutions. Scholarships in some fields could be established. Contractual arrangements for research seem economical and profitable. In a few areas, where the economic situation does not permit even adequate primary and junior high school education, some help should be given, in the effort to develop reasonably intelligent voters in a democratic system.⁷

Eisenhower expressed fear that when all institutions demanded federal help, there would be only one inevitable result:

This means federal control, eventually. And the best way to establish dictatorship is to get control of the educational process in any country. This trend must be halted in its tracks.⁸

Though he would grant the need for limited federal aid in very specific, limited instances, Eisenhower saw it as fraught with danger for American democracy. The tension between admitted need and fear of results was part of the perspective on federal aid that he brought to the presidency.

The diary entry was most certainly the result of the attendant controversy surrounding the remarks he had written in an earlier letter to Rep. Ralph W. Gwinn opposing federal aid to education. He was sharply attacked by Sen. Wayne Morse of Oregon, as well as the Parents Association of the New York Public Schools, for his lack of understanding of the crisis in public education.⁹ Despite the sharp reaction that his letter had provoked, Eisenhower stuck to his guns, and in a July 8, 1949, speech he reiterated his belief that the public schools were best left to local control and financing.¹⁰ Yet, Eisenhower's experience left him with unpleasant memories of the price he had paid for candidly expressing his beliefs about

4. Fenno and Munger, *National Politics and Federal Aid to Education*, 11.

5. Evidence for this generalization comes from a variety of sources including the President's own diary, his comments in his cabinet and legislative leaders meetings, and the clear-cut lack of enthusiasm that he expressed by word and deed at critical junctures during the prolonged legislative struggles for federal aid legislation during his two presidential terms. His attempt in his memoirs to cast blame for the failure of such legislation on the Democrats is, at best, only partially true. See Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (New York: Signet Books, 1963), 595, for a statement of this position. "Excerpt of Cabinet Discussion," January 16, 1959, Whitman File, Cabinet Series, Box 12, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [hereafter cited as EL], contains proof of Eisenhower's continued strong reservations about the wisdom of federal aid to education. See also Sundquist, *Politics and Policy*, 155-87, for an in-context discussion of the President's lack of enthusiasm and its impact. Fenno and Munger take the same position, see *National Politics and Federal Aid to Education*, 103-4.

6. Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Eisenhower Diaries* (New York: Norton and Co., 1981), 153.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 154.

9. *New York Times*, June 14, 1949, p. 26; June 15, p. 34; June 19, section 4, p. 9; June 20, p. 18; Arthur Krock, "Changeless in a World of Great Change," June 21, p. 24; June 20, p. 16; June 28, p. 25.

10. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1949, p. 11.

federal aid. It also brought into play his strong sense of caution, a trait that would play an increasingly important role in the future President's approach to that issue.

Just as he had done so many times in the past and as he would do in the future when faced with difficult situations, Eisenhower sought the advice of his brother, Milton, then president of Kansas State College in Manhattan. In a letter written on June 29, 1949, Eisenhower informed his brother that his position on education had been "...booted about a bit in the papers" though "...95% of the people who write to me about this vigorously support my stand."¹¹ Noting that the high rate of approval probably was not that significant since the ones most apt to write him were those who agreed with his position, Eisenhower made a frank confession.

Actually, I may have over-simplified this whole problem in my mind. If I had dreamed that my letter to the committee was going to get the publicity it did, I should undoubtedly have conferred with you before I wrote it. Even now, I should like your general reaction. I still think I am right in insisting that the matter be handled on the plane of principle; I am merely saying that it is possible you (and possibly only you) might convince me that I have made some error in my thinking.¹²

It was an embattled Dwight Eisenhower who awaited advice from his brother.

The long letter which Milton Eisenhower sent on July 1, 1949, provided a perspective on the federal aid question that had a lasting effect on Dwight Eisenhower.¹³ It reinforced his belief in the correctness of his general principles and the specific manner in which they should be applied. Milton began by emphasizing that the issue of federal aid to education was a complicated one. He then presented a brief historical summary, beginning with the importance Abraham Lincoln placed on education and the resulting Morrill Act that made federal aid to education permanently available, and the subsequent acts supporting agricultural research, and vocational education that followed. He then revealed his favorable attitude about these kinds of general federal aid:

It is possible that, in time, each of the States would have undertaken work in these fields without stimulation from the Federal government. But there is no doubt that the need was first seen nationally and that the Federal grants-in-aid (usually matched by the states) helped speed up desirable developments.¹⁴

Milton Eisenhower, the president of a land grant university, had no problems accepting the benefits of these kinds of federal aid to education.

At that point, however, he drew a sharp distinction, insisting that general federal aid to equalize educational opportunities was another matter. He noted that 24 of Kansas' 105 counties lacked the tax base to carry out their share of funding for the cooperative agreement with Kansas State College that provided their schools with agricultural education. Kansas had solved this problem very creatively.

But in those 24 counties we put additional money; we call it an equalization payment. Such differentiation is essential if these 24 counties are to have the same type of service as is available to all others.¹⁵

Milton presented the Kansas example as a sensible approach to the thorny problem of equalization. As he explained:

It seems to me—as it does to you, if I understand your position—that the same general position holds good for the country as a whole. If a state is intelligently doing all it can to support an educational system, yet the results fall below an acceptable American standard, I think it is all right for the Federal government to make an equalization payment.¹⁶

Here was a moderate, fiscally sensible approach to the equalization issue.

Problems would arise, Milton warned, if the equalization principle was distorted to include all of the states:

If, however, minimum payments are made to all the States—surplus as well as deficit States—then we are complicating the idea of equalization with a shift in taxing and responsibility from local and state units of government to the Federal. This does not seem to me to be sound, though it may be politically appealing.¹⁷

Fears about the implications of such a shift in responsibility to the federal level became one of the dominant assumptions that shaped the Eisenhower Administration's approach to federal aid for classroom construction.

Milton Eisenhower's letter reinforced his brother's beliefs that federal aid was an action of last resort fraught with dangers and that the equalization principle be carefully defined and limited to areas of genuine need. It had much to do with the crystallization of Eisenhower's position on the entire federal aid to education issue. While subsequent events during his presidency pushed him beyond the strictly limited federal aid program that he first enunciated, they did not create enthusiasm for these expanded programs. The ideas expressed in Milton Eisenhower's letter remained the basis of Dwight Eisenhower's preferred approach to the entire question.

11. Ike to Milton, June 20, 1949, Eisenhower Papers, Box 181, EL.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Milton to Ike, July 1, 1949, Eisenhower Papers, Box 181, EL.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

Summarizing then, Eisenhower's precandidacy experiences left him with unpleasant memories about his attempts to state his principles on the issue of federal aid to education. It also left him with a sense of caution about the potential explosiveness of the issue. His subsequent approach to the question saw him caught in a crossfire between those who felt he favored too much and those who felt he favored too little federal aid. As in many other aspects of his presidency, he was to discover that his characteristic moderation did not insulate him from controversy. It insured his involvement in it.

Despite the controversy created by his previous remarks, presidential candidate Eisenhower was able to keep his comments on education limited and within the requirements of his well-orchestrated moderate, conservative position during the 1952 campaign. Speaking at Abilene, Kansas, on June 22, 1952, he reiterated the importance of local control of education.

Education is one of those local functions that we should guard jealously because I found in every totalitarian state that I know anything about one of the earliest efforts was to get charge of the educational processes.¹⁸

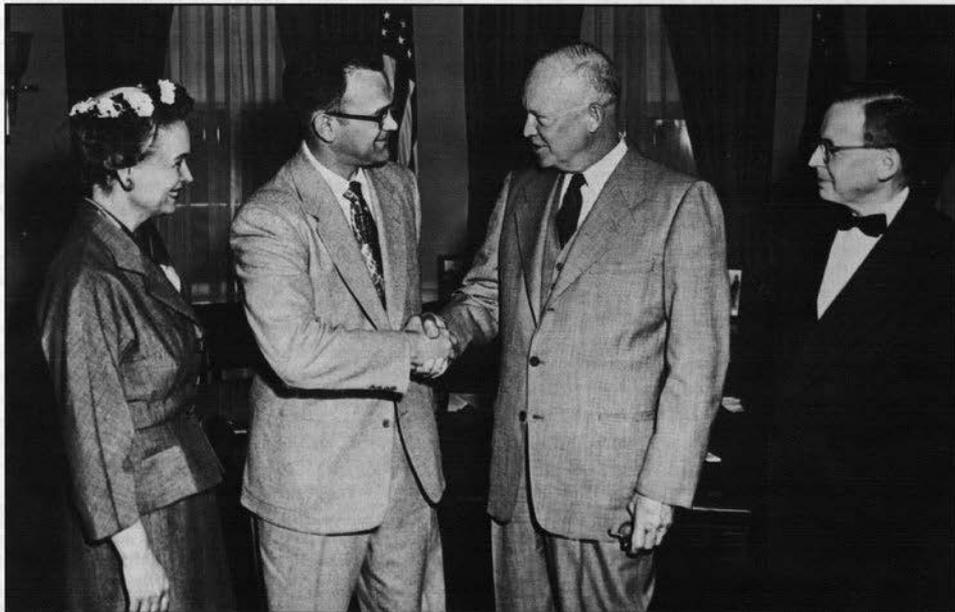
18. Elsie Gallagher, ed., *The Quotable Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Anderson, S.C.: Drake House, 1967), 57.

One can find little to quibble with in such a fundamentally American position. That theme, straight out of his 1949 diary, was one that he would repeat many times during the campaign: improvements must be made in education while still preserving local control.

He applied the same approach when the question of federal aid arose. Easily harmonizing his position with the education plank in the Republican platform, candidate Eisenhower used his position as the basis of an attack on the dangers of New Deal-Fair Deal bureaucracy. Speaking in early October in Los Angeles, Eisenhower called for limited federal aid for the most needy school districts while condemning the Truman Administration's federal aid proposals as hopelessly bureaucratic and thus dangerous to the American tradition of local control.¹⁹ Truman responded in a New York City speech a day later condemning the Republican position as "me-tooism" and reminding his listeners that Eisenhower had opposed federal aid while president of Columbia.²⁰ As with other Democratic charges, Eisenhower ignored them.

19. Text of speech printed in *New York Times*, October 10, 1952, p. 18.

20. "Truman Calls Stand 'Me Tooism,' Recalls General Eisenhower Opposed Aid," *New York Times*, October 12, 1952, p. 76.



HEW secretary Oveta Culp Hobby, President Eisenhower and Commissioner of Education Samuel M. Brownell greet the 1954 Teacher of the Year, Willard Widerberg (second from left) of DeKalb, Illinois. Despite such recognition of individual achievements in education, the President faced difficult choices in the question of federal aid to the nation's schools.

Sensing a popular theme, one that could be used to shape his emerging electoral consensus, Eisenhower continued to hammer away at the antibureaucratic-anti big government theme. In remarks prepared on October 22 for the *Harvard Crimson*, for example, he stated:

Let federal funds help needy states build schools and supply other capital equipment. But let the cost of maintenance and the actual business of teaching be borne by the localities and states themselves. That is the answer to federal compulsion. It is the American defense against federal thought control.²¹

Again in speeches in Pittsburgh and New York City during the closing phases of his campaign, he restated his theme: educational improvement without regimentation.²² The President-elect reiterated his position in a December 1952 speech to the National Citizens Committee for the Public Schools in which he expressed his preference for individual initiative and local action rather than government action as the proper means to solve the nation's educational crisis.²³

There is no evidence in the existing campaign materials that Eisenhower had developed a program to match his campaign rhetoric. His thinking on the federal aid question was still dominated by a mixture of personal philosophic principles and the ideas his brother Milton had presented him in 1949. Appealing as it was to those enamored with free enterprise shibboleths like individual initiative and local responsibility, the gap between his position and a viable, politically possible program would prove to be a wide one.

The antibureaucratic strategy of the Republicans proved to be highly effective. It enabled Eisenhower to stand as an advocate of fundamental American ideas on education without having to define with any degree of clarity how he would dispense the limited federal aid that he advocated. Whether by accident or design, the President's remarks accurately reflected his own mixed feelings about the issue. Regardless, the educational issue did not prove to be as troublesome or dominant as other issues in the 1952 campaign. The massive majority that swept Eisenhower into the presidency did not base its judgment on his pragmatism, consistency, or his rather mixed views on the continuing educational crisis. The electorate opted instead for a candidate who

seemed to promise stability, hope, sincerity, and a return to good old-fashioned American values. His was a personality who seemed to promise Americans security in a hostile, changing world. It would take the new realities created by the responsibilities of power to illuminate the President-elect's mixed mind and the complex politics involved in the federal aid question. In that atmosphere, the preservation of principles would prove just as challenging for Eisenhower as it had for all other Presidents.

1953—Straws in the Wind: Position vs. Program

The first year of any presidency is a time of transition. This was especially true of the Eisenhower presidency. Pledged as it was to rid the country of the mismanagement, corruption, creeping socialism, and softness towards communism under twenty years of New Deal-Fair Deal liberalism, many Americans expected the Eisenhower Administration to make striking new departures in the realms of domestic and foreign policies. Those who held such great expectations (or apprehensions) were soon disappointed (or relieved). The permanence and complexity of the problems confronting the President-elect and his natural sense of caution combined to slow the anticipated pace of change.

Many of the administration's policies went through a relatively slow process of formulation and maturation. It took time before the principles, theories, and hopes of the President and his major advisors were brought into line with the political and economic realities that dominated American society.²⁴ Whether by intent, accident, or a combination of both, this was to be the pattern of evolution for the administration's approach to the federal aid to education issue.

From the time of his election through most of 1953, the President and his new administration had no formal federal aid to education program. Though President Eisenhower continued to maintain his pre-election position acknowledging the existence of a classroom shortage and his willingness to help overcome it with limited federal assistance based on proven need, a position he restated in his February 2, 1953, State of the Union message, he stopped short of offering Congress a specific program.²⁵ He developed, instead, a wait-and-see position accompanied by a great deal of administration public handwringing on the difficulties of defining true need

21. Draft statement for the *Harvard Crimson* on federal aid to education, October 24, 1952, President's Personal File, Box 670, EL. See also in Box 670, telegram from Arthur A. Vandenberg, Jr., to Ruth Winter, October 10, 1952.

22. Text of the Pittsburgh speech was reprinted in the *New York Times* on October 28, 1952, p. 20. The New York speech was reprinted in *New York Times*, October 30, 1952, p. 26.

23. C. P. Jackson to A. W. Vandenberg, Jr., December 16, 1952, President's Personal File, Box 834, EL. For an analysis of the close ties of Eisenhower to the American business community and its impact on his administration's education policies, see David Marder, "The Cold War and American Education," (doctoral dissertation, Kansas, 1975), 1:130, microfilm 3595, EL.

24. Memo for Governor Adams, September 29, 1953, Whitman File, Administrative Series, Box 1, EL. Here the President discusses the lessons of his first year in office including the reasons for departures from his planned decentralization of the government and the reasons he had been frustrated in these efforts.

25. "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," February 2, 1953, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 32. See also the *Congressional Quarterly* issue of the week ending October 30, 1953, p. 128; *New York Times*, February 3, 1953, p. 15. See also Bryce Harlow interview, Columbia Oral History #402, pp. 7-15, EL.

and frequent calls for more study of the topic. By subsequently assigning this responsibility to his newly formed Committee on Intergovernmental Relations as one of its designated federal-state study areas and awaiting the results of a proposed White House Conference on Education, the Eisenhower Administration was able to acknowledge the existence of a problem while at the same time resisting pressure for immediate action in a highly controversial area.

The wait-and-see attitude did not prevent the administration from becoming deeply involved, perhaps embroiled is more appropriate, with significant aspects of the continuing controversy over federal aid to education. Questions about the extension of aid to federally impacted school districts, the breadth of the classroom shortage, the role of the Office of Education in the newly formed Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the selection of a new commissioner of education, congressional proposals for school construction aid, and the fiscal implications of the administration's education policies succeeded in absorbing a great deal of the President's time and attention. Much of this was the result of the divided mind of the President on the federal aid issue. It seemed to reflect a conflict between his more humane social views and his more conservative fiscal beliefs.

This division was reinforced (accentuated) by Republican calls for fiscal prudence and sharp cuts in the final budget President Truman had presented to Congress. Eisenhower's decision to submit all departmental spending proposals to Bureau of the Budget director Joseph Dodge for prior approval stands as proof of his concern for fiscal restraint. The policy created continuing pressure on those who advocated increasing levels of federal spending and also worked to perpetuate tension between conservatives and moderates within the Eisenhower Administration.²⁶

To say that the administration lacked a coherent, cohesive education policy during its first year is not the same thing as saying there was no movement toward policy formulation. Even when the question of the administration's position regarding school segregation court cases is left aside, a number of other events and circumstances combined to push the administration and the President towards the creation of a more clearly defined policy during 1953. Some of the events led to formal statements of policy, or nonpolicy as its critics charged. Others remained hidden in the realm of closed discussions in the cabinet, legislative leaders meetings, and the actions of the White House and HEW staffs until unearthed by recent historical access to the records of the Eisenhower presidency. Such events deserve careful examination for what they reveal about

the attitudes of the President and his advisors concerning the federal aid question.

The administration's decision to move slowly on the federal aid for classroom construction issue, then, raises a number of questions of more than passing relevance to the historian. Because of recent revisionist upgrading of Eisenhower's political skills the question most frequently asked is whether the President's position on program approach in 1953-1954 was a willful delay caused by the precedence of conservative political and fiscal beliefs over the obvious need for federal aid to education. Did concern about costs and/or the political explosiveness of the issue create or merely reinforce presidential and administration reticence? Was the administration unconvinced of the magnitude of the classroom shortage? Was the President caught on a philosophic snag, one reinforced by his own fiscal conservatism and the divided counsel of his advisors and his party's congressional leadership? Was there an honest desire to wait for informed citizen input on the issue? Why the tendency to lump the professional education organizations with other advocacy groups? Answers to these and similar kinds of questions will, hopefully, emerge from an examination of the administration's response to the issue during its first year in office. This approach also should create the basis for a comparative examination of Eisenhower's initial response to the federal aid issue with his later actions.

Little time was lost in directing President-elect Eisenhower's attention to the federal aid for education issue. On January 5, 1953, the leadership of the National Education Association met with Eisenhower and urged him to end the dispute over the need for federal aid with a statement of support.²⁷ Close on the heels of that meeting, the outgoing Truman Administration presented its final budget, one that included a request for federally supported classroom construction.²⁸ Other groups with strong vested interests in the formulation and financing of education started lining up on both sides of the issue by publically reaffirming the stances they had taken during the Truman years. A number of major unions including the CIO and the ILGWU came out strongly for federal aid, while the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the DAR insisted that education was a matter of state and local responsibility.²⁹ The debate was further complicated by calls of Roman Catholic spokesmen for parochial school aid without federal controls.³⁰ The same coalition that had caused stalemate on the federal aid issue during the Truman years was bringing its

27. *New York Times*, January 6, 1953, p. 18. See also Elaine Eastman to Arthur Vandenberg, January 9, 1953, General File, Box 972, EL.

28. *New York Times*, January 10, 1953, p. 10.

29. Lee to President, January 7, 1953, Central Files, Box 392, EL; *New York Times*, March 23, 1953, p. 18.

30. *New York Times*, April 7, 1953, p. 19; April 23, 1953, p. 11; June 24, 1953, p. 15.

26. Written notes of cabinet meeting, January 30, 1953, pp. 31-33, Files of the Office of Staff Secretary, Minnich Series, Box 1, EL.

Ah, Yes, But Still an Honor Not Lightly Come By

"TEACHER'S PET!
TEACHER'S PET!"



Above: Topeka Daily Capital, January 9, 1953: With a Republican administration, educators hoped that the need for new schools, increased teacher salaries, and a stronger economic base for school districts would be addressed.

Topeka Daily Capital, January 20, 1953: A survey, released in early 1953, showed that the average salary of Kansas teachers and administrators was \$3,149, slightly below the national average of \$3,530.

Teacher Pay Up This Year

Salaries in Kansas Still Below Average

Kansas teachers and school administrators are earning about \$214 more than last year.

But they still are underpaid by national standards.

A survey released Monday by the Kansas State Teachers Association shows that the average teacher's and administrator's salary in Kansas is \$3,149. This is \$381 below the national average of \$3,530.

The KSTA survey of 18,407 teachers also showed the Kansas teachers are better prepared today than several years ago. Only 1.1 per cent have less than 30 college hours, compared to 28 per cent in 1947-48. Only 9.6 per cent have less than 60 college hours.

The third phase of the survey covered mobility of teachers—how often they change jobs, and how many of them do.

forces into line before an uncertain chief executive for the prolongation of the long political war.

Eisenhower's January 1953 discussions with his own cabinet members and Republican legislators about the education portions of his State of the Union message underscore the divisive impact of the federal aid issue in his own administration. In his initial discussion of that address with his cabinet on January 23, he expressed concern about the lack of substance and detail in his forthcoming speech. He expressed uneasiness about assembling Congress without having something to give its members. It was decided that he would tell the Republican legislative leaders that he was still working out the details of his program.³¹

The President did give some idea of his sense of direction emphasizing the scope of what he called the federal-nation problem that turned up wherever he looked. It was, he said, "... immoral to shove money out of the federal treasury and not send some measure for supervision."³² He then announced that his belief in decentralization had led him to take much care in selecting the members of his cabinet. The President's tough, conservative rhetoric did not save him from criticism when he discussed the education portions of his State of the Union message with the Republican legislative leadership and his cabinet members.

The President's January 26 meeting with the Republican leadership saw him restate his opposition to federal aid for education in general and his highly qualified willingness to extend it to help backward areas. Several of the leaders expressed skepticism about federal aid and Ohio senator Robert Taft suggested that the question of federal aid in all fields be subjected to very careful study. In both this and a March 10 meeting, the leaders informed the President that federal aid to education legislation beyond aid to impacted areas, even if limited to classroom construction, would run into a storm of controversy because of parochial school and racial discrimination problems.³³

Members of his cabinet also questioned his stand when they discussed the State of the Union message in the January 30 cabinet meeting. The discussion of the education aspects of the message occurred in the midst of a discussion where Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey and the President reiterated their determination to cut the federal budget. Prodded by Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson about his support of even limited federal aid, Eisenhower responded that he was concerned about money for school construction and not for school operations. The President, not sur-

prisingly, recalled that many educators considered him a reactionary for his advocacy of limited federal aid when he was president of Columbia University.³⁴

After some discussion of the problem of the complexities related to distinguishing the poor, needy states from the more affluent ones, Commerce Secretary Sinclair Weeks asked the President if his education policy jibed with his call for budget restraints. The President responded with arguments that he had first stated in 1949 in his diary: "There is a certain minimum of education needed for all people or this Republic is not going to survive enough to exercise the privilege of voting fairly and intelligently."³⁵ The President concluded by emphasizing that the critical factor in his approach to federal aid for education was the ability of the locality to provide the money. The President stood firm against his opponents in the cabinet and Republican legislative leadership and left his call for limited federal aid for classroom construction in his February 2 State of the Union message, though he did emphasize that the applicants for such aid would have to prove need and lack of income.³⁶ He did not, however, follow up his call with a specific program until two years later. The reticence of his political colleagues, many of whom argued on grounds of fiscal restraint and reduced federal powers, the situation in Congress, and his own mixed feelings on the issue combined to convince him that position was all that was possible in 1953.

There was, then, no question that the President was aware of the classroom shortage. The problem came when advocates tried to move him towards a substantive program. The administration set a precedent that it would adhere to for two years in its response to a February 20, 1953, letter from Sen. Earle Clements, Kentucky Democrat. Clements had urged federal assistance to needy school districts in generally the same manner it was presented to federally impacted ones.³⁷ The "suggested noncommittal reply" drafted by Gen. Wilton B. Persons and forwarded to Presidential Secretary Sherman Adams for the President's signature became a model for many subsequent letters to those urging rapid passage of federal aid legislation, regardless of their party affiliation. The letter stated:

I am not unmindful of the seriousness of the school construction situation to which your thoughtful letter of February 20 refers and will see that careful consideration is given to your S. 359 and to its companion bill, H.R. 1612. As I mentioned in my State of the Union Message, the subject requires thorough Congressional

31. Written notes of cabinet meeting, January 23, 1953, p. 16, Files of the Office of Staff Secretary, Minnich Series, Box 1, EL.

32. *Ibid.*, 20.

33. Memo for Mr. Joseph Dodge from Sherman Adams, March 10, 1953, Whitman File, Legislative Meetings Series, Box 1, EL.

34. Written notes of cabinet meeting, January 30, 1953, p. 53, Files of the Office of Staff Secretary, Minnich Series, Box 1, EL.

35. *Ibid.*, 54.

36. *New York Times*, February 3, 1953, p. 15.

37. Memo for Governor Adams, February 25, 1953, Official File, Box 546, EL.

study and action, and I assure you that the Executive Branch of the Government will examine it with the thoroughness and care it so obviously warrants.³⁸

Though later letters made more specific references to the study of the federal aid issue by the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations and the State and White House Conferences on Education, the noncommittal position remained the same, even when the trickle of 1953 became the torrent of 1954.

Such a position proved very frustrating to many who questioned why the administration would take such a casual approach to such an obvious crisis. Critics such as Senators James E. Murray and Lister Hill and Rep. Charles Howell criticized the study-before-action approach as a delaying tactic.³⁹ Divided as it was on the federal aid issue, the administration proved unable to provide any effective leadership to resolve the classroom shortage. It decided that such criticism was the price it would have to pay for its position. That approach did not, however, make the classroom issue go away. Nor did it create the kind of consensus on the issue in the administration that would allow it to provide badly needed executive leadership. The mixed results of the two years of administration-appointed studies left the opponents and proponents locked in battle and the President put in a position where he was finally forced by political rather than educational circumstances in 1955 to present a very limited program.

The administration's experience with legislation granting aid to federally impacted school districts also made it wary of the potential impact aid-to-education programs would have on its desires for fiscal responsibility and reductions in the federal budget. Many conservative members of the administration expressed concern about the ballooning cost of such legislation. When P.L. 815 and P.L. 874, the initial laws creating grants in aid for federally impacted school districts, came up for renewal in 1953, HEW secretary Oveta Culp Hobby informed the cabinet that the administration would present bills by which savings could be made.⁴⁰ The difference between Secretary Hobby's February prediction and the bills approved in July was substantial.

On March 10, Sherman Adams informed Bureau of the Budget director Joseph Dodge that the legislative leaders had urged the administration to submit its impact aid revisions as soon as possible.⁴¹ The administration complied, and bills reflecting its position were introduced to Congress. It tried, for example, to reduce the

cost of impact assistance by changing the federal share of the construction cost from sixty percent to forty-five percent of schools for children whose parents worked or lived on federal property. It also pushed to change the free absorption rate of "federal children" from two percent in some districts to three percent in all districts before federal impact funds would be granted.⁴²

The impact aid bills that emerged from the House Committee on Education and Labor called for far larger appropriations than those recommended in the administration's proposals. The President questioned Hobby about the proposed increases during the July 3 cabinet meeting in the midst of a discussion about the proposed House cuts in other aspects of the Office of Education budget. After hearing her explanation in which she noted with some bitterness the irony of the House's behavior, Eisenhower expressed dismay over the cut in Office of Education appropriations but stated that he had no objection to the impact increase since the support of federally impacted schools was an administration position.⁴³ The rationalization that such aid was a product of our national defense effort came into play here.

Others in the administration saw the proposed increases in impact aid as an alarming threat to fiscal policies. In early July, the Bureau of the Budget sent a memorandum to Gen. Wilton B. Persons, Eisenhower's personal staff aide, reporting with alarm the House's approval of the bills.

The bills in their present form go considerably beyond the Administration's recommendations. The House approved Committee amendments which raise the total cost of the construction bill to \$227 million during fiscal 1954 and 1955, compared with the \$94-\$130 million for the Administration recommendations.⁴⁴

Even conservative GOP congressmen had discovered the political popularity of impact aid and its accompanying national defense rationale, as the unanimous House vote on the legislation proved.

Of particular cause for concern was the House bill inclusion of a minimum federal contribution rate on school operations applicable to the federally affected districts based on half the average expenditures per pupil for all school districts in the state. Besides the extra cost, the Bureau of the Budget memorandum noted: "This provision would alter the basic philosophy of the Act, i.e., that the Federal Government shares only in the cost to localities and not in the cost to states."⁴⁵ The author of the memorandum concluded that the help of the Senate Committee on Education would be crucial if the admin-

38. Eisenhower to Sen. Earle Clements, February 25, 1953, Official File, Box 546, EL.

39. *New York Times*, May 2, 1953, p. 9; Sundquist, *Politics and Policy*, 158-61.

40. File card labeled "Education 2/6/53, Cabinet Meeting 2/6 (Item 6)," in Cabinet and Legislative Meetings Index, Files of the Staff Secretary, Minnich Series, Box 20, EL.

41. Memo for Mr. Dodge from Sherman Adams, March 10, 1953, EL.

42. Memorandum for General Wilton B. Persons [by context between July 9 and July 12, 1953], Official File, Box 546, EL.

43. Written notes of cabinet meeting, July 3, 1953, p. 3, Files of the Office of Staff Secretary, Minnich Series, Box 1, EL.

44. Memorandum for General Wilton B. Persons, July 1953, EL.

45. *Ibid.*, 2.

istration hoped to eliminate the costly and objectionable changes made by the House committee to the administration's bills. A handwritten note at the bottom of the memorandum noted that HEW and Budget had been invited to an executive session of the Senate committee and that unless directed to do otherwise, they would urge cuts in the increases that the House had made to the original administration bills.⁴⁶

Hopes that the Senate would slash the House's impact aid appropriation came to naught. After turning back, by a two vote margin, a determined effort by Alabama senator Lister Hill to tie the revenues from the federal government's tidelands oil to the bill, the Senate proceeded to pass an appropriations bill that was \$95 million larger than its Appropriations Committee had recommended. The largest item in the increase was an \$84 million increase for school construction in impacted areas. Both houses of Congress approved the appropriation on July 30.⁴⁷ Surrendering to the inevitable, the Bureau of the Budget recommended passage of the two-year extension of impact aid on August 8, 1953.

A terse statement in its "Report to the Cabinet" previewing the 1954 budget mentioned the impact of the increased appropriations on HEW.

Operational savings were partially offset by increased expenditures for assistance to schools in areas affected by Federal activities largely due to the extension of the program of school construction grants to these areas.⁴⁸

Though the President had approved the principle of impact assistance, he had questioned the size of the increase. The Bureau of the Budget continued to warn of the ballooning cost of such legislation. Congressional unwillingness to oppose such politically popular legislation stood as a warning to fiscal conservatives and opponents of federal aid. Once established, such grant programs became self-preserving and tended to create pressure for increased federal spending. Many looked with uneasiness at the growing pressure for the extension of federal school construction assistance to needy districts unimpacted by federal activities. To them, impact aid, patriotic or not, looked like a dangerous foot in the door, one that threatened both the fiscal integrity of the federal government and the local control of the schools.

Deliberation as a means of delaying action proved to be a useful tactic for many opponents of such assistance. The existence of this motive is sometimes hard to prove because it closely parallels and even imitates precisely

the rhetoric of those who, like the President, accepted the need for limited temporary assistance, but insisted that the complexity of the issue made it imperative that both the need and means to overcome it be defined very precisely before any legislation be formulated. It was a tactic used, for example, by Congressman Graham Barden of North Carolina once the Democrats regained control of the House in 1954.⁴⁹ The important point is clear: the calls for further study of the issue involved a variety of motives.

The search for a replacement for Commissioner of Education Earl McGrath, a Truman appointee who resigned in April 1953 in protest of proposed congressional cuts in the Office of Education's operating budget, presented the administration with an opportunity to appoint someone more sympathetic with its education policies.⁵⁰ McGrath, an outspoken advocate of federal aid for classroom construction and teacher salaries, had made many enemies in Congress and in the new administration. The comments in the folders of the list of candidates considered for the commissioner appointment reveal that partisan political considerations ranked high in the selection process. Democrats with New Deal-Fair Deal connections were excluded, and congressional intervention on behalf of some of the candidates was noted. References to the candidates' abilities to do the "necessary house-cleaning" in the Office of Education appear, as do favorable references to those candidates who were opposed to federal support and in favor of local control of the public schools.⁵¹

The appointment of Lee M. Thurston, Michigan superintendent of public instruction, as the new commissioner of education on July 1, 1952, seemed to give the administration exactly what it wanted. An experienced schoolman, Thurston had close ties to the Michigan Republican party and its National Committee chairman, Arthur Summerfield. Most significantly, Thurston was a strong advocate of local and state financing of public education.⁵² Shortly after he assumed office, Thurston suggested the idea of a series of state education conferences to be followed by a national White House Conference on Education in which informed citizens could study, discuss, and suggest solutions to the problems confronting American education.⁵³ After Thurston's death in October 1953, the conference idea was picked up and repeated by his successor, Dr. Samuel M. Brownell, longtime superintendent of the Detroit public schools. The conference

49. Bendiner, *Obstacle Course on Capitol Hill*, 122; Fenno and Munger, *National Politics and Federal Aid to Education*, 128.

50. *New York Times*, April 23, 1953, p. 18.

51. "Endorsements, Commissioner of Education," *passim*, Central File, Box 392, EL. See, for example, references to Dr. Ward W. Keesecker.

52. Interview of Thurston by Benjamin Fine, "Local Responsibility for Schools is stressed by New Commissioner of Education," *New York Times*, July 26, 1953, section 4, p. 7.

53. Samuel Brownell interview, *Columbia Oral History #18*, pp. 26-27, EL; *New York Times*, December 29, 1953, p. 29.

46. *Ibid.*, 3.

47. "Legislation Approved on 8/8/53," Reports to the President on Pending Legislation, White House Records Office, Bill File, Box 11, EL; *New York Times*, July 31, 1953, p. 75.

48. "Preview of 1954 Budget," p. 112, presented to the cabinet meeting on August 27, 1953, by Bureau of the Budget, Microfilm of Eisenhower Cabinet Minutes, reel 1, Ablah Library, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas.

idea proved very appealing to HEW Secretary Hobby and the President, both of whom were looking for ways to indicate administration action without commitment to a specific program. However, opponents of federal aid including Francis Keppel, dean of the Harvard School of Education, opposed the conference idea fearing that it would be used by the advocates of federal aid to education to rally support for their cause.⁵⁴

The President's decision to proceed with the conference approach despite the warnings of federal aid opponents suggests his confidence that the agenda and composition of the conferences could be controlled to prevent their dominance by groups advocating federal aid; or his decision may indicate that he underestimated the influence of such groups. The available evidence suggests that he relied upon the advice of those who felt the former was possible.⁵⁵

In one important instance regarding education, the administration's calls for cuts in the Truman budget allowed it to be hoisted on its own petard. The U.S. Office of Education, one of the three major agencies merged into the new cabinet level Department of Health, Education and Welfare during early 1953, had been allocated \$3.25 million for salaries and expenses in the Truman budget. The Eisenhower budget had recommended a ten percent decrease to \$2.926 million. The Republican-controlled House slashed that request to \$2.5 million. The additional cut evoked a strong protest from HEW Secretary Hobby in the July 3, 1953, cabinet meeting. Such a severe cut, she argued, would cripple the ability of the Office of Education to administer its programs. Secretary Hobby explained that she felt part of the reason for the cuts could be attributed to congressional dislike of former commissioner of education Earl McGrath, who many saw as an advocate of too much federal interference in local school affairs. (A provision of the renewed aid legislation for federally impacted areas, formulated in July 1953, forbade the Office of Education from running any school under the sponsorship of any other agency of the federal government; this was apparently aimed at preventing the OE from being used as a tool to enforce school desegregation in the event the administration moved in that direction.)⁵⁶

When questioned by the President about whether or not the cut was vital, Secretary Hobby responded that it

was. Eisenhower expressed amazement that the Congress could make such a cut in what he believed was the most important area of American society. He concluded that the administration should make every effort to get the cut rescinded.⁵⁷

Discussion of the proposed cut was an important topic during the President's meeting with GOP legislative leaders on July 7, 1953.⁵⁸ After Secretary Hobby stressed the difficult administrative situation that the proposed cut would create for her agency, both the President and Vice-President expressed fear that the opposition would make political capital out of the cut. Sen. Leverett Saltonstall played down partisanship and viewed the cut as a result of the increase in other parts of the HEW appropriation. California senator William Knowland and Indiana congressman Charles Halleck, the respective GOP majority leaders, expressed a more conservative viewpoint, contending that federal action in the field of education should be restricted to stimulating action in the states and not relieving states of their basic responsibilities. Halleck did admit, though, that Secretary Hobby should be provided with enough funds for effective supervision. Senators Saltonstall and Knowland pointed out the difficult position occupied by Minnesota senator Edward Thye, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The legislative leaders agreed that the President should confer with Thye regarding restoration of the Office of Education funds and that General Persons should inform Senator Knowland of the outcome.⁵⁹ The President did this, and the Senate approved the original \$2.926 million request, which the Joint Conference Committee lowered to \$2.8 million.⁶⁰

The appropriation squabble was significant. It reflects wide disagreement between administration leaders and GOP congressmen about the role of the Office of Education. It indicates strong conservative distrust within the President's own party about the potential activities of that agency. It also shows that the President was only partially successful in exerting his influence on behalf of the OE appropriation. Most significantly, the affair underscored the necessity for caution in the entire area of educational policy, a conclusion that Eisenhower most certainly accepted and applied throughout the remainder of his presidency with results that proved frustrating to the advocates of federal aid to education. KH

54. Brownell Interview, 28-31.

55. Written Notes on Cabinet Meeting of July 3, 1953, pp. 1-3, Office of the Staff Secretary, Minnich Series, Box 1, EL.

56. *Ibid.*, 3.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Memo from Paul F. Carrol to Mr. Dodge, July 7, 1953, pp. 1-2, Whitman File, Legislative Leaders Series, Box 1, EL.

59. *Ibid.*, 2.

60. *Congressional Quarterly*, week ending October 23, 1953, p. 128.