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A Minimal Program

Today it is no longer a question of whether federal aid should be given to colleges and universities, but rather of how to give aid equitably and of how much to give: it is a question of means and not ends. If support is to be given, how should it be allocated?

A bill that comes closest to satisfying the diverse interests concerned was reported out by the House Rules Committee last week. This bill (H.R. 8900), which was introduced by Representative Edith Green of Oregon, is known as the College Facilities Administration Act. It has had bipartisan support in the House Education and Labor Committee and in the Rules Committee. It has been strongly endorsed by the American Council on Education, the American Association of Junior Colleges, the Association of American Colleges, the Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the State Universities Association. On 23 January these organizations issued a joint statement in support of the bill: "Congress has before it no more important or potentially helpful legislation in the field of higher education, and there is no other legislative issue on which such unity prevails in higher education."

Although some \$1.5 billion in low-cost federal loans for revenue-producing college buildings have been dispensed since 1950, no money has been available for undergraduate teaching facilities. In the face of rising enrollments, this is where institutions are feeling the pinch. H.R. 8900 has provisions for both grants and loans for building and equipping academic facilities.

The bill offers \$180 million annually for 5-year matching grants to pay for up to one-third of the building costs and \$120 million annually for 5-year loans to cover not more than three-fourths of the building costs. Equitable distribution is a knotty problem that can only be met by some kind of formula. The bill provides that half of the grants will be divided among the states in proportion to the number of undergraduates enrolled in accredited institutions in each state and half in proportion to the number of students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. The first provision gives states that already have a large number of students in college a proportionately larger share of the grants, but it is a good pragmatic solution. The second provision to some extent offsets this advantage to the wealthier states by making the grants proportional to the potential college population. The formula for loans is much simpler: no state may receive more than 12.5 percent of the funds, and loans can pay up to three-fourths of the total costs of construction.

The primary aim of H.R. 8900 is to increase the enrollment capacity in higher education for the country as a whole, without regard to whether institutions are public or private, sectarian or nonsectarian. The bill seeks to avoid the touchy issue of separation of church and state by denying grants or loans for construction of any facility for religious instruction. It explicitly prohibits federal control over "the personnel, curriculum, methods of instruction, or administration of any educational institution." The method of administration further guarantees freedom from federal control: although the grant and loan program will be administered by the U.S. Commissioner of Education, state boards will make all allocations on the basis of proposals they will submit to the commissioner.

The College Facilities Administration Act is carefully drawn up to aid the colleges and universities. It is a minimal program with a modest and well-defined aim, and thus should stand a good chance of becoming law—G. DuS.