

2. SOME PROBLEMS IN FEDERAL SUPPORT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

It may be profitable to your committee for us to point out certain problems that our experience with various federal programs seems to have revealed.

It should be remarked that the personnel in the United States Office of Education, both at the national and regional levels, are quite sensitive to the needs and the prerogatives of the institutions with which they deal. These people go far beyond the call of duty in order to be accommodating and helpful. We have found, however, that the people in this as well as in other agencies have a very human tendency to categorize institutions upon a status continuum that may well be out of date. In short, there is a tendency to award the truly important projects and grants to the "big name" institutions. It seems to be difficult for people to recognize or, if they recognize, difficult for them to accept the rather massive competencies and worthy achievements of Southern Illinois University which admittedly is a newcomer to the lists of large, complex multipurpose universities with faculties of diverse and significant achievement. We feel this to be true in spite of the obvious attempts of the federal government to generate competence and participation among the emerging institutions in the United States.

Another problem which we have encountered is often found in large bureaucratic enterprises. It is the general problem of "red tape", the proliferation of forms and reports, and the apparent inability to introduce a kind of standardization into these matters which would streamline the matter of communication.

Often the reasons for federal support for higher education appear to be unclear or confused. The Congress appears to lack guidelines or succinct statements of long-range purpose in these matters. This makes it difficult to initiate proposals based on new ideas and innovation and occasionally results in the assumption that whatever it is, let's get the federal government to do it.

Finally, it appears to us that the increase of federal support of and attention to higher education increases policy problems, both for the federal government and for higher education. Many of these problems turn around the issue of accountability—the accountability of the federal government to itself and its citizenry that its support is wisely and efficiently used, and is directed toward appropriate aims and desirable consequences; accountability of institutions of higher education to maintain and lift the quality of and the preservation, discovery, and dissemination of knowledge and wisdom, to serve an increasing number of students and an increasing number of national and even world needs, and to exercise those standards of freedom and examination and validation required for discharge of its commitment—a commitment which, at the risk of pushing around an apparent platitude, is still indicated by the word "truth."

Some friends both of higher education and of federal government are thus disturbed by the prospect of these polarities: an expanding and seemingly monolithic bureaucracy against the desired diversity of institutions of higher education; the demands for governmental supervision for the nature and efficiency of operations against the demands of individual and institutional freedom—which can produce its own kind of efficiency; the pressures of "political" constituencies to obtain a "slice of the federal pie" against the pressures of educational constituencies to make and in fact to expand their own decision-making powers; the introduction of mass criteria and methods against the importance in the giving and getting of education of individual initiative and inquiry; short-term "crash" programs linked with yearly budget schedules against the need of long-range planning and the fact of long-range fruition. These are a sample of prevalent concerns. The pressing problem is to exercise both federal practicality and educational autonomy. Under that relationship, which should err, if it be in error, on the side of educational freedom, there are needs both to scrutinize current operations and to explore new, or untapped, areas.

3. SOME PROPOSALS

Accordingly, we should like to offer some proposals for current and possible future development.

Continuing scrutiny should be maintained of current types of budget controls and approval procedures for grants to specific programs. There should be some effort made toward the standardization of forms and reports.

The recent recommendation of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and the Association of State Colleges and Universities