

Mr. ACKERMAN. I am Joe Ackerman, a member of the Elmhurst, Ill., Board of Education, and president of National School Boards Association and it is really in this capacity that I am here before you today.

Just a little background on the National School Boards Association. It is a nonprofit federation of State school board associations. We have approximately 15,000 local school boards or districts in which over 95 percent of the elementary and secondary school students are enrolled.

I would say that the objective of our association is primarily to work for the improvement of public education and as such we try to expand our services to better assist our State associations to do a better job.

Our schools in general began as local institutions and our association has been set up to support them. We have over 137,000 citizens that serve on school boards, most of them without pay. For many of them this is a part-time job actually with full-time responsibility. I would say that the NSBA is the only national organization representing school boards throughout the United States, and as such it is recognized as one of the Nation's major education associations. We did sponsor a series of meetings a year ago, five area conferences involving a broad representation of those interested in education around the country. The main topic of those conferences was concerned with the role of the National, the State, and the local level of government and education.

We really welcome this opportunity to appear before this subcommittee today studying the Office of Education and related matters.

I think what I would like to do is to present our concerns under five major headings, the first of which regards the fragmentation of educational programs among governmental agencies. Our own association in its 1966 meeting stated that—

The NSBA Delegate Assembly urges that Federal education programs affecting elementary and secondary education be administered at the Federal level through the United States Office of Education, at the State level by State departments of education; and at the local level by public school boards.

The NSBA endorses Federal aid to education, but we will continue to concern ourselves with the effect of this aid upon the local and the State responsibility for the public schools.

Mr. BRADEMAS. Did the NSBA enforce the Elementary and Secondary Education Act?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, for years NSBA was anti-Federal aid. Then 2 years ago, being somewhat realistic and also the fact that a good many of the larger cities particularly were having difficulty financing, they passed a resolution that though they have been—and this I will bring out a little bit later—have been opposed to it categorically, they have always been for the general aid to education.

I would say the one thing that we have been concerned with all along has been the channeling of the educational programs through the proper educational authorities in order to preserve, let's say, State and local initiative and involvement in such programs.

We think that these necessary educational programs that are supported by public funds should be administered by the public school agency so that the total educational programs will not be fragmented,