

destroyed by natural disasters, to provide temporary facilities while damaged facilities were being repaired or rebuilt, and to provide operating assistance as might be needed in any area declared by the President to be a major disaster area.

This was a new program for the Office of Education; prior to these amendments, such disaster assistance had been provided by the Office of Emergency Planning. For a new program, it has worked exceedingly well. The costs are relatively small, but the needs are urgent for those districts that experience disaster damage.

There were 11 disasters during fiscal year 1966 and 2 disasters thus far in fiscal year 1967 for which applications for aid have been received. The total cost of the disaster program for applications received, as of February 1967, exclusive of Hurricane Betsy, is estimated to be \$375,000.

The proposed amendments are as follows:

Extend coverage to a few special public schools that now provide elementary and secondary education, but are not covered by the Act because they are operated by a State rather than a local educational agency.

Eliminate the burden and effort test now required before emergency assistance can be authorized. This change is necessary because most school districts do not have in their yearly budget funds to meet emergency disaster needs, and they cannot get such funds until a new budget is approved for the following year. At present, the Office of Education cannot give assurance of Federal assistance when the disaster occurs and repairs must be made; the change would permit authorizing emergency aid when needed.

A minimum amount of \$1,000 or one-half of one percent of the agency's operating budget for the year would be established for any disaster claim. This would avoid handling requests for very small amounts of money.

The phrase "during the last full fiscal year" would be eliminated from Section 7 of Public Law 874. This section authorizes Federal assistance on a continuing basis to finance a school program equivalent to that maintained the last full year prior to the disaster. This is not practical, because school programs are improving each year.

A provision is proposed to be added to Section 7(b) of the Act to authorize minor repair under P.L. 874. This amendment makes possible repairing minor disaster damage from operating funds in accordance with the normal practice of schools for making such repairs.

The Commissioner of Education would be authorized to grant funds to a public agency in sufficient amount to house students who were in a private school which was destroyed by a disaster, if the private school is not to be rebuilt. Under present wording, this can be done only if there also is destruction of or damage to public schools; the amendment would permit granting such assistance to a public agency when a private school is destroyed and not to be rebuilt, although no public school has been destroyed or damaged.

Authority to provide disaster assistance under Public Laws 815 and 874 would be extended until June 30, 1972. The five-year extension is necessary in order to give continuity to the program.

Amendment to the definition of Federal property in subsection 1 of section 303 of Public Law 874

A principal purpose of Public Law 874 was to provide, insofar as possible, a uniform basis for compensating school districts for burdens imposed on them through Federal activities, in place of the unrelated and inadequate programs that were in existence prior to 1950. Until that time, the Federal Government permitted local governmental units to tax leasehold interests and private improvements on Federal property, and it also made payments to local jurisdictions of earnings from various types of Federal properties such as National forests and game refuges. In order to avoid duplicate payments to school districts for the same purpose, Public Law 874 provided that tax payments and other Federal payments made to a school district on account of Federal property should be deducted from the gross entitlement computed under its provision for any school district. This was consistent with the position that the Federal payments under Public Law 874 adequately compensated the district for the financial burden imposed by Federal activities and, therefore, there should be no duplicating Federal payments.