

1146 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION AMENDMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE,
Washington, D.C., December 22, 1966.

MR. AUSTIN D. SWANSON,
*Acting Executive Secretary, Western New York School Study Council, State
University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, N.Y.*

DEAR MR. SWANSON: After a thorough study of your latest letter of December 7, I whole heartily agree with the last paragraph which reads,

"This Committee does not deny that the Federal Government has an interest in the status of education. It only asks that the Federal Government not approach these tasks lightly; that in such instances where it finds categorical aids necessary, it not disclaim any interest in control of the public schools; and that such programs, unlike the NDEA, be financed wholly from Federal funds."

We obviously agree in philosophy and perhaps also agree in the application of this philosophy. For example, the Office of Education has supported a more categorical approach to Federal aid as evidenced by expanding the NDEA categories, elimination of categories under the Higher Education Facilities Act, and the general aid approach for programs under P.L. 89-10.

My reference to support categorical aid was perhaps prompted by my interpretation of general tenor of your study council report rather than any one specific item, or perhaps by the comments of many other educators of this subject. In short, I simply wish to emphasize our continued interest in categorical programs.

Thank you again for giving us much food for thought.

Sincerely yours,

AUGUST W. STEINHILBER,
Specialist for Legislation

Dr. SWANSON. There is no doubt but that the categorical aid made a much greater impact upon foreign language instruction in most school districts than if the determination of the use of the money had been left to the State and local agencies. But was this the best educational use of the money? Were the guides prescribed the most effective way of improving language instruction? Was this condition really a threat to the national security? Was it more of a threat than multitudes of other aspects of well-rounded educational programs which were not aided? Which level of government is best able to judge each kind of educational issue?

Perhaps the reason the States have made such wide use of general aid to local educational agencies is that they can control local educational agencies without the use of financial coercion. The schools are State institutions, locally operated, and as such are subject to State regulation.

The Federal Government has no direct authority over State and local educational agencies; therefore, Congress must rely upon financial coercion through categorical type aids if it is to have any influence over their decisions.

But, if Congress concern is over the general health of publicly supported education with no desire to exert any specific control over what goes on in the schools—as it has stated on several occasions—then it is not necessary to persist in this cumbersome manner of distributing money.

I believe that the principal national concern should be for a well-rounded comprehensive educational program for all youth. Categorical aid is disfunctional for this purpose. I can conceive of instances where Congress, with perfect justification, may wish to lead State and local agencies to certain type decisions. In such instances, categorical aids are the vehicles to use.

But I urge you to fully recognize that when you legislate such aid, you are in effect superseding decisions made at another level of