

1-10-2014

Deciphering Franklin D. Roosevelt's Educational Policies During the Great Depression (1933-1940)

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ABSTRACT

DECIPHERING FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S EDUCATIONAL POLICIES DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

(1933-1940)

by

Permeil Dass

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was the longest serving president in the history of the United States, and he served during the U.S.'s worst economic crisis. During his tenure, approximately 80,000 public school teachers were left unemployed and 145,700 students had their schools closed. Furthermore, public schools and their teachers were under attack for the large number of unemployed and illiterate people. Despite these public school challenges, the literature rarely mentions FDR's reactions or thoughts; instead, the literature focuses on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the National Youth Administration (NYA), two New Deal youth programs. The New Deal assisted many institutions, and educators assumed public schools would also receive assistance. Under FDR, the federal government became increasingly involved in the lives of its citizens in terms of housing, food, transportation, and employment, but it did not increase its involvement in education. In this dissertation, I decipher FDR's educational policies by analyzing his administrative actions that supported or hindered education from 1933-1940. In particular, did FDR's governmental programs emphasize or encourage the education of youth? Did his administrative decisions support public schools? What was FDR's policy towards federal aid to education and why? Additionally, by analyzing how educational policies were developed within FDR's administration, educators today will better discern how they can influence policies during each step of the policymaking

process. In doing so, educators will be better prepared and positioned to support American schools.

DECIPHERING FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S EDUCATIONAL POLICIES
DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION
(1933-1940)

by
Perneil Dass

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Policy Studies
in
the Department of Educational Policy Studies
in
the College of Education
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2013

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. Hutcheson for continuing to advise me after he was promoted to Department Chair of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies in the College of Education at the University of Alabama. His expertise in the history of education was invaluable in shaping this dissertation. I would also like to thank Dr. Boyles who encouraged me to begin the doctoral program and helped me through the comprehensive exams. I am grateful to have Dr. Bohan and Dr. Brattain on my committee who helped me consider the larger historical implications of my work. My family and friends have been supportive of me and I would not have been able to complete this without them. I would like to especially thank my husband, Lukasz Trzuskawski, who persevered with me throughout the process.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AVA	American Vocational Association
AYC	American Youth Congress
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CUA	Catholic University Archives, Washington, D.C.
CWA	Civilian Works Progress
EEP	Emergency Educational Program
EPC	Educational Policies Commission
FDRL	Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY
FERA	Federal Emergency Relief Administration
FSA	Federal Security Administration
GWA	George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAB	National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.
NAC	National Advisory Committee
NACP	National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD
NCWC	National Catholic Welfare Conference
NEA	National Education Association
NYA	National Youth Administration
PEA	Progressive Education Association
PWA	Public Works Administration

RFC Reconstruction Finance Corporation
RG Record Group
TVA Tennessee Valley Authority
USCCB United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
WPA Works Progress Administration

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) was born January 30, 1882 in Hyde Park, New York to a wealthy family. He had private tutors and attended an elite private high school, Groton. After high school, he went to Harvard University, where he focused on his social life and earned B's and C's. He then pursued a career in law and upon passing the bar he dropped out and went to work. He was not excited about what he learned at Harvard or law school since he did not learn much practical knowledge. Academics were boring to FDR and he started to pursue a political career. He knew he wanted to be the president of the United States early on and worked towards this ultimate goal.¹

FDR has captured people's interests for decades. Historians have described him as strategic, while others referred to him as indecisive. Even those who worked closely with him stated they had a hard time understanding his methods or administrative style.²

FDR's traits are not the only reason researchers are interested in studying him. He served as president of the United States from 1933-1945, which is the longest term ever served. During his presidency, many significant events occurred that forever changed the United States: the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor, World War II, and the Manhattan Project.

¹ Jeffrey W. Coker, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Biography* (West Port: Greenwood Press, 2005), 7-9. Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009), 99 and 100.

² John Q. Barrett, ed., *That Man: An Insider's Portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 111.

An increasingly desperate economic situation was well underway by the time Roosevelt began his presidency. The Great Depression was marked by the stock market crash in October 1929, during the presidency of Herbert Hoover. After the stock market crashed, a large number of banks failed, and the United States experienced high unemployment. Around 25% of the workforce, which was more than 15 million people, were unemployed and seeking jobs. As the Depression continued, cities, states, and charities became financially overwhelmed with the number of people who required assistance, and the public, out of desperation, waited for the federal government to intervene. FDR, during his election, promised change and won the trust of the public, providing them with the hope they so desperately needed. The foundation of American society was shaken due to national bank failures and wide-spread poverty; consequently, the public's belief in capitalism plummeted. Young people, as well as adults, became disillusioned. What concerned the adults about the effects of the Great Depression was the fear that youth would be easily co-opted by Communists, susceptible to totalitarianism, and become so jaded as to not value democracy. Between 1930 and 1937, young people comprised a larger proportion of the unemployed population, from 27.5% to 36%, which represented 16% of all youth. Without jobs, youth became idle and loitered in streets. Their unsupervised time made adults increasingly concerned; they became labeled as disrespectful or trouble-makers. Fueled by their increasing presence, concerns of an immoral and rebellious generation grew. Public concerns about

troublesome youth were fueled by the fact that 75% of all crime was perpetrated by 16-25 year olds.³

To move these young people from the streets and into the labor market, school attendance laws were more strictly enforced. Some students chose to stay in school because of the unlikely chance of finding employment. The number of high school students swelled. In 1929, only half of 14-17 year olds were in school, compared with 73.3% by the end of the next decade. As student enrollment grew by 2 million from 1930-1940, school funding was drastically cut due to the effects of the Great Depression. From 1929 to 1933, the tax base used to financially support schools decreased by nearly a third.⁴

To compensate for this economic decrease, schools were consolidated, and building repairs, new construction, classes (gym, art, health, home economics, and music), and programs (kindergartens, night school, Americanization classes) were cut or eliminated. Teachers' salaries were decreased, paid late, or not paid at all. Almost 80,000 teachers were left unemployed. Many school systems shortened the school year and one-fourth of all students had a school year that was half its normal length. Even

³ David B. Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 3; "National Youth Administration," 2003, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/nya.htm> (accessed September 18, 2009); Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal & American Youth: Ideas & Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 18–20, 32, and 143; Elmer Cook to Joseph T. Robinson, April 25, 1935, Folder Robinson, Joseph T., Box 96, Harry L. Hopkins Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), Hyde Park, NY.

⁴ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 360; Theresa Richardson, "Rethinking Progressive High School Reform in the 1930s: Youth, Mental Hygiene, and General Education," *American Educational History Journal* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 79; Gilbert E. Smith, *The Limits of Reform: Politics and Federal Aid to Education, 1937-1950*, ed. Frank Freidel (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 2.

more disconcerting, 2,269 schools, which affected 145,700 students, were closed entirely as a cost-saving measure.⁵

Research Questions and Methodology

During the Great Depression, public schools were certainly in need of the hope and change FDR promised. I will describe what administrative actions FDR took to support or hinder education from 1933-1940. An analysis of FDR's actions will be used to decipher his educational policies. In particular, I will address the following questions: Did FDR's governmental programs emphasize or encourage the education of youth? Did his administrative decisions support public schools? What was FDR's policy towards federal aid to education? Under FDR, the federal government became increasingly involved in the lives of its citizens in terms of housing, food, transportation, and employment, but as will be discussed, this level of government involvement with educational institutions did not occur. The New Deal assisted many federal institutions, and educators consequently assumed public schools would also receive assistance.⁶ Despite many attempts, particularly by the National Education Association (NEA), federal assistance for schools failed. Why this occurred and FDR's role in this issue will be discussed.

Another facet of this study is to learn about the complexities of how educational policies are made in order to help educators better understand the ways in which they can

⁵ John F. Lyons, "Regional Variations in Union Activism of American Public Schoolteachers," in *Education & the Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, ed. E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 23; Robert H. Bremner, ed., *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History*, vol. 3, 1-3 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 1580 and 1581.

influence federal educational policies. By understanding why and how policies are created and implemented, educators can be more effective policy advocates. The findings of this study will provide educators with additional information as to how educational policies are determined, which will then allow them to be better prepared and positioned to support schools.

A study of archival materials from the following repositories were used in this study: the New York State Archives in Albany, NY; FDR's Presidential Library in Hyde Park, NY; the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD and in Washington, D.C.; the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.; George Washington University in Washington, D.C.; and on-line transcripts of oral histories from the Truman Library. Dissertations, contemporary and historical newspaper and journal articles, and books were also reviewed for this study.

Despite the rich archival sources and secondary literature, one of the biggest limitations in this research is FDR. Like most political leaders, FDR made important decisions based on information provided to him during private meetings and gatherings. These types of meetings were often not transcribed, and when participants recounted what FDR said, the reader is reliant upon their memory and interpretation of the conversation. In the archives, there were many copies of unsigned letters that may or may not have been signed by FDR. At times, FDR requested another person to draft a response on his behalf so it is unclear whether the reader is viewing a rejected draft or correspondence that was actually accepted and signed. If I questioned whether a letter

⁶ Smith, 6.

was signed and accepted by FDR, I only used it if other literature sources confirmed what I was reading.

During FDR's presidency, the telephone became an increasingly used mode of communication, but most calls were not transcribed. To the researcher who is reviewing archival documents, at times there was a lack of documentation to pinpoint FDR's opinion on an issue until decisions are made by himself or staff members. A member of the Brain Trust and close adviser of FDR, Adolf A. Berle, Jr., commented in an oral history that:

“Roosevelt had one habit, however,” Berle recollected, “which I think made it hard on historians. He talked to everyone and he rarely gave any very clear forecast as to what he intended to do. All his political instinct was to keep all options open, as far as he was concerned, even though he might have a perfectly clear idea of what he wanted. He rarely said, ‘No, this is foolish,’ and he usually let someone go off thinking he’d scored a great point. Then they accused him of inconsistency because he decided something else. Actually, he listened to everyone, talked a bit himself, ranging over the subject, and rarely admitted the fact that he’d just about made up his mind and was going in that direction.”⁷

Within these limitations, I used a variety of sources to document FDR's actions and statements in order to construct FDR's educational policies.

To decipher FDR's educational policies, I examine what actions FDR took with regard to New Deal programs that had educational components. In the following chapter I examine FDR's communications and decisions he made with the Office of Education, educational groups, and his Advisory Committee on Education. The third chapter explores FDR's influence in Congress, particularly with bills relating to federal aid to education. At the end of each chapter I analyze the information and begin to outline a

⁷ James E. Sargent, “Oral History, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the New Deal: Some Recollections of Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Lewis W. Douglas, and Raymond Moley,” *The Oral History Review* 1 (1973): 99.

pattern of decisions FDR made with regard to education. In the final chapter, I summarize my ideas to try and understand the overall effect of FDR's educational policies on public schools.

The Policymaking Process

A large amount of literature is written on the creation and administration of New Deal programs. These details are critical because those involved in the policymaking process will have considerable influence on programs and policies. Although policies can be created in various ways, the general steps are to 1) identify a problem or issue, 2) gather information, 3) formulate what action(s) will be taken, 4) ensure the policy is accepted and made into law, 5) administer the policy's program, and 6) evaluate the policy and its program.⁸ Each step of the policymaking process provides an opportunity for individuals or groups to influence the policy.

Problems will be identified and defined differently depending on who is chosen by the president to complete the first two steps of the policy-making process. The president could select an individual, an advisory committee, an agency leader, a close associate, a nonprofit organization, a congressman, or himself to gather information. The background of an individual or the agendas of a group would steer how the policy is framed.⁹

As a policy begins to form, it undergoes more changes in steps three and four as the president negotiates with Congress and accommodates their requests. This step is

⁸ James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 3.

highly political and the duration of these negotiations can be lengthy. This step also leaves a window open for those who were not part of the policy formation to sway congressional leaders in their preferred direction. Once Congress and the president have accepted the policy, it is made into a law.

The person who the president or Congress delegates to administer the program will make major and minor decisions as he or she implements the program, based on his or her political agenda, local politics, and cultural interpretations. Moreover, the president has the right to reorganize the executive branch, which is the branch of government that administers the policy; in doing so, programs or their administrators can be created, strengthened, minimized, or collapsed.¹⁰ Approving a budget that is sufficient to administer the program is one way the president and/or Congress supports, disapproves, or ends a program. Lastly, Congress, the president and his administration, interest groups, the media, and the public will impact how the program is evaluated.

FDR's Policymaking Process

Franklin D. Roosevelt and the programs developed under his presidency have been the topic of many academic publications. Past research about FDR explores the development of his various policies, paying particular attention to how he conceptualized, created, and implemented a wide variety of federal programs. As much of the literature explains, FDR's personality and managerial style played an essential role in the development of his policies and programs. With FDR's approval, policymakers

⁹ James G. Benze Jr., "Presidential Reorganization as a Tactical Weapon: Putting Politics Back into Administration," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 147.

generated innovative programs. By indirectly generating policies, FDR could strategically dissociate himself from those policies if they became unpopular or drew criticism. The head of agencies knew they had to fend for themselves when problems developed.¹¹ In the following section, I summarize how FDR used his presidential powers, personality, decision-making style, and publicity to insert his influence into educational policies.

FDR's policymaking process ushered in a new era for presidential powers. For the first time, Congress consented to permitting the executive branch to participate in the creation of policies and programs. The shift in legislative power from the Congress to the executive branch occurred because the country was in a state of emergency brought on by the Great Depression. FDR used the economic crisis to justify why Congress should give him powers reserved only for presidents during a war. Money from private, local, and state resources was not enough to financially assist the public; the country needed the federal government to act quickly. FDR used his delegated powers to create new government programs and agencies. Congress placed few restrictions on these agencies, allowing them to determine their own course of action. These new presidential powers were unprecedented.¹²

FDR's personality matched the innovative character of his policies, and he was described as someone who liked:

¹⁰ Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 21; Benze Jr., 147 and 148.

¹¹ Patrick D. Reagan, *Designing a New America: The Origins of New Deal Planning, 1890-1943* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 193.

¹² Theodore J. Lowi, *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 52; Anthony J. Badger, *FDR: The First Hundred Days* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2008), 166.

novel ideas, bold courses, and dramatic actions, and he liked the sort of men who could come up with such suggestions. Some associates had influence in the sense that many of their suggestions bore fruit. But I knew of none who did not have many of his suggestions rejected also.

The man who influenced Roosevelt most, as is the case with most of us, was the one who would marshal him the way that he was going, would provide reasons and arguments for doing what he wanted to do. I never knew any man to dominate him – there was no one to whom he would surrender his own judgment. No one could overbear him and he never abdicated.¹³

People were drawn to FDR and desired his attention. His close associates and staff were loyal to him, which he thought was key to having good workers. Those who were faithful and loyal were rewarded by FDR in many ways. Specifically, they were allowed to spend more time with him, their programs and projects were more likely to be financed, and they were often given more administrative power. He purposefully orchestrated a sense of intimacy with his personal phone calls, one-on-one conversations, and social invitations. Staff members paid attention to and became envious of those who interacted with FDR, and consequently they often vied for his attention. His administration spent many hours designing policies and programs for which he would advocate. Working hard became an incentive for FDR's staff, which resulted in competitive, industrious, and resolute staff members.¹⁴

In order to assess staff members' loyalty and to show he knew what was happening beforehand, he placed informers in departments to monitor and keep him abreast of activities. When a staff member's work was contrary to his policies, he would

¹³ Barrett, 15.

¹⁴ Charles E. Jacob, *Leadership in the New Deal: The Administrative Challenge* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 29 and 30.

not confront the individual. Instead, he would usurp his or her decision-making power and transfer it to a new agency, thereby provoking him or her to resign.¹⁵

FDR intentionally assigned different people or agencies, without their knowledge, the same task of creating a program or policy, realizing and anticipating a conflict. In the end, after power struggles and bickering, the conflict would subside when FDR either formed a compromise or waited until he was needed to settle the issue by making a unilateral decision as to how they would proceed. A competitive environment not only gave FDR the opportunity to finalize decisions, but it also gave him the opportunity to hear and discuss diverse ideas. Through his use of conflict and the desire of his staff to please him, FDR believed his administration produced higher quality, prudent, and unique programs.¹⁶

His policymaking style was advantageous for FDR, but it frustrated his staff members. Adding to their difficulties, his often undefined goals and plans gave staff members only a vague idea of what their assignment was and what he was trying to achieve. This indecisiveness vexed many of them, and his administration was noted for its chaotic way of functioning.¹⁷

Unlike FDR, many presidents relied on their cabinet members as a hub for information and used meetings to make collective decisions. FDR, however, did not pay attention to or show interest in cabinet meetings. Instead, he preferred private meetings

¹⁵ Richard E. Neustadt, "Approaches to Staffing the Presidency: Notes on FDR and JFK," *The American Political Science Review* 57, no. 4 (December 1, 1963): 857 and 858; Jacob, 30.

¹⁶ Patrick Anderson, *The Presidents' Men: White House Assistants of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson* (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday, 1969), 70; Barrett, 111; Jacob, 25; William W. Lammers, *The Presidency and Domestic Policy: Comparing Leadership Styles, FDR to Clinton* (Washington, D.C: CQ Press, 2000), 46.

¹⁷ Jacob, 23; Barrett, 111; Neustadt, 23 and 24.

where major decisions were made.¹⁸ During these meetings, FDR relied heavily on his administration and advisers throughout the policymaking process. They brought their personal perspectives, professional training, and past work experiences to his administration.

The way FDR made decisions could explain why he vacillated between ideas. Denton and Hahn, in their book, *Presidential Communication*, identified FDR's decision making process as collegial; he consulted with a diverse group of advisers, assessed and analyzed their ideas, and then decided which ones were the most practical and useful. FDR was cautious about his sources of information. He became wary if his knowledge base emanated from a single source without any alternate perspectives. It would seem that it would be difficult and time-consuming to generate and compile a decision after consulting many advisers, but, "There was nothing he liked more than to be able to bring together divergent ideas and have them apparently complement one another."¹⁹ Although FDR enjoyed and benefited from the interactions of diverse (or even divergent) perspectives and ideas, his apparent wavering gave his staff mixed signals, making their work more complicated.

While being characterized as indecisive and one who conferred with multiple advisers, the literature conversely described FDR as impulsive. FDR sought out and was excited by new ideas. At times he prematurely approved of plans instead of deeply investigating their quality or before they were fully developed. His hasty decisions were sometimes based on his gut feelings; consequently, he made decisions without consulting

¹⁸ Barrett, 28–31.

¹⁹ Robert E. Denton and Dan F. Hahn, *Presidential Communication: Description and Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 233; Neustadt, 858; Carl N. Degler, *The New Deal* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 7.

the department head whose jurisdiction was involved. After the decision became known, he would have to quickly find solutions for any conflicts it may have caused.²⁰

Roosevelt was not a thinker; as such, Hoover was much more effective. Roosevelt was a broker, an eclectic, a pragmatist, an improviser, one who lived comfortably with great inconsistencies. Nevertheless, when there were conflicts among organized interests over what to do and how to do it, Roosevelt displayed a consistent preference for writing the conflicts into the legislation and providing for the group interactions to continue within the administrative process itself.²¹

FDR's characteristics spilled over into his policies, which meant that many of his policies were criticized as not well thought out and inconsistent. FDR often marketed his policies in order to ensure they would gain congressional approval and be treated favorably by the media and public. Through the use of press conferences, radio addresses, fireside chats, speeches, and press releases, FDR educated the public on his plans for the future, how his current programs were helping the country, and the support needed for his policies. He tried to push Congress to act in accordance with his will by using the media and by dedicating time to working with congressional leaders on legislative issues. He gained voters' trust with his enjoyable personality and friendly manner. Although he lacked knowledge and relied on the ideas of others, he was a very confident leader and talented at getting people to agree with him.²²

During his campaign and into his presidency, FDR addressed the public to describe his policies with few details. FDR's ambiguous way of speaking was intentional so that he could appeal to a wider range of voters. He could then worry about the details

²⁰ Jacob, 12 and 26; Adam Cohen, *Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 6; Barrett, 111.

²¹ Lowi, 59.

²² Reiman, 192; John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1967), 79; Degler, 6; Lammers, 33, 36, and 49.

later because it was easier for the public to agree on broad ideas and concepts. According to FDR, when details were provided, voters were turned off. Being vague gave him the freedom to tweak his plans and make changes as he went along.²³

The way FDR managed his staff, created a competitive environment, spoke in vague terms, occasionally made major decisions impulsively, negotiated in private meetings, and obtained unprecedented presidential authority provided him with indirect decision-making power in the policymaking process. Neustadt concluded that FDR, “relied on contention underneath him to produce a show and test of bureaucratic stresses, congressional reactions, interest-group alignments, political pressures, which he could weigh before he chose his timing and his course.”²⁴ The way his administration functioned under FDR may have seemed disordered to the outside, but I agree with Sherwood, a historian, that FDR’s disorganization was actually well thought out.²⁵

The following chapters will provide examples of FDR’s managerial style impacting his educational policies. Because of youth’s high unemployment, FDR had different agency leaders competing to create a youth program. By waiting to announce who would control the youth program, FDR create tension amongst his administration until his interference was needed to resolve the problem. These tense moments provide FDR opportunities to steer educational policies. Such policymaking steps can be analyzed to reveal FDR’s own educational policies. In doing so, a pattern of FDR being

²³ Lammers, 34, 47, and 66; Anderson, *Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, 7.

²⁴ Neustadt, 859.

²⁵ Robert E. Sherwood, *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins: An Intimate History* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1949), 73.

indifferent towards education, avoiding and having little respects for educators, and not supporting public schools emerges.

CHAPTER 2

NEW DEAL PROGRAMS WITH EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS

The stark conditions of the Great Depression allowed FDR to ask Congress for unusual presidential powers. FDR was thus able to quickly create large relief programs. In the first few months of his presidency new relief agencies were put into place with large budgets: the Public Works Administration (PWA) was allocated \$3.3 billion, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) had a budget of \$400 million, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was provided with approximately \$323 million. These New Deal agencies administered the majority of education and youth programs. By analyzing their creation, implementation, and administration a better understanding of FDR's educational policies will be deciphered.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

Having been given unusual presidential powers by Congress, FDR was able to create the CCC program three weeks after his inauguration, and he consequently was able to place 250,000 young men working in camps within three months. The CCC was one of the first New Deal programs to be implemented and, unlike other programs under the New Deal, FDR was directly responsible for its creation. During his childhood FDR was exposed to the benefits of the outdoors as his family spent their summers at Campobello Island in New Brunswick, Canada where he hiked and sailed. His interests in nature as a young boy lead him to catalogue birds where he grew up in Dutchess County, New York. His enthusiasm for the natural world triggered his family to give him a lifetime

membership to the American Museum of Natural History as a gift when he was a boy. Like his cousin Theodore Roosevelt, FDR wanted to be a conservationist. FDR's love of nature grounded him in the belief that nature could strengthen and heal people. His belief in nature as a source of healing was true not only for one's body but also for the mind and soul. This belief brought him to Warm Springs, Georgia to seek comfort and rehabilitation after he contracted polio, which consequently left him bilaterally paralyzed at the age of 39. Despite his diagnosis and accompanying paralysis, FDR continued his involvement with the outdoors and became an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts.¹

The hardships of young people looking for work during the Depression left them frustrated and dispirited. Based on FDR's belief in the benefits of nature and his passion for conservation, the CCC employed young men to preserve the country's natural resources.² The concept of youth camps was not new to the world and had already been implemented in European countries like Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and Poland, providing FDR examples to emulate. The administrators chosen by FDR to assist with running the CCC were from the Army, the Department of Interior, the Forest Service, and the National Parks Service. These selections suggest that FDR thought of the CCC as primarily a forest and conservation program that would follow strict routines set by the Army.

FDR designed the CCC's organizational structure by placing its administration within the Department of War and choosing and monitoring its personnel. The daily

¹ Cohen, 208; "Birds of Roosevelt's Little White House," http://www.gastateparks.org/content/georgia/pdf/lwh_checklist.pdf (accessed August 23, 2011); "The National Parks: America's Best Idea: History Episode 5 Page 2," <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/history/ep5/2/> (accessed February 5, 2012); Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 8; Thomas P. Campbell, "A Best Friend in the White House," April 2003, <http://scoutingmagazine.org/issues/0303/d-wwas.html> (accessed March 3, 2012).

² Badger, 58; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 3-11.

activities were delegated to former labor union leader Robert Fechner, who became the Director of the CCC. General Douglas MacArthur, from The Department of War, was in charge of running the camps. The National Parks and the Forest Service oversaw the conservation and work projects including: constructing public facilities, cleaning beaches, planting trees, building dams, assisting flood relief organizations, preventing soil erosion, fighting fires, laying telephone lines, and maintaining roads. The young men were provided with housing, board, and paid for their work. The majority of their pay went to support their families. FDR believed that “the way to economic recovery lies through increased purchasing power for the masses who have the desire but lack the means to consume the products of industry.”³ The main goals for the CCC program were to decrease unemployment and competition for jobs, to make young men productive, to conserve natural resources, to provide money directly to the public, and to build character and discipline amongst the enrollees.⁴

Despite its mission, a CCC advisory council member W. Frank Persons, from the Department of Labor, suggested in 1933 that the CCC have more educational activities. He stressed that no formal schooling should occur. Prior to this recommended educational plan, MacArthur had called for a “welfare program,” to create activities including reading, worship services, sports, forestry education by the Forest Service, and a minimal vocational program by the Army to keep the young men occupied after work.

³ The Roosevelt Recovery Program, June 1934, Folder 10, Box 64, Ryan Collection, Catholic University Archives (CUA), Washington, D.C.

⁴ Thinkquest, “*Franklin Delano Roosevelt*,” http://library.thinkquest.org/11492/cgi-bin/pres.cgi/roosevelt_franklin?domestic (accessed May 9, 2009); Paula Fass, “Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal,” *American Journal of Education* 91, no. 1 (1982): 43; Paul Clifford Pickett, “Contributions of John Ward Studebaker to American Education” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967), 97.

Such activities were not created out of concern for the youth's academic skills but to provide productive activities for the evenings after their work was complete.⁵

Of the men who were enrolled in the CCC in 1934, approximately 20% were either illiterate or lacked basic academic skills. This fact emphasized the importance of Persons' suggestions regarding the development of an educational program for the young men. In early August of 1933, George Zook, who was the U.S. Commissioner of Education, received a letter from the Dean of the School of Education at the University of Michigan promoting the idea that an educational program be developed in the CCC due to the enrollees' low academic skills. In late October, H.C. Bryant of the National Park Service, along with representatives from higher education institutions submitted plans for a CCC educational program. By this time Zook was already pushing for a well-developed CCC educational plan.⁶

Zook laid out a proposal for Fechner, but he and the Army officials resisted the idea of its establishment. Zook received positive feedback from the president. FDR was interested in educating the enrollees but in the subject of forestry.⁷ For FDR, Fechner, and the Army officials, the work program was the primary objective of the CCC and they were concerned that an educational program would detract from CCC's main function.

⁵ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 48; Joseph M. Speakman, "Into the Woods: The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Prologue* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2006), <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/fall/ccc.html> (accessed December 24, 2010); Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004), 270; Calvin W. Gower, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and American Education: Threat to Local Control?," *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1967): 59 and 60; Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 116.

⁶ Gower, 61; J.B. Edmonson to George F. Zook, August 9, 1933, Box 1, Records of Special Projects and Programs, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Education, Record Group (RG) 12, National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP); H.C. Bryant to George F. Zook, October 25, 1933, Box 1, Records of Special Projects and Programs, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Education, RG 12, NACP.

⁷ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 48-49.

Colonel Duncan Major, from the War Department, also complained about the increased pressure he was receiving from educators to Louis Howe, a closer advisor to FDR:⁸

We are going to be hounded to death by all sorts of educators. Instead of teaching the boys how to do an honest day's work we are going to be forced to accede to the wishes of the long-haired men and short-haired women and spend most of the time on some kind of an educational course.⁹

FDR also did not want the education program to overshadow CCC's conservation plan. Politically, a focus on helping youth through physical activities was more palatable than formalized educational training. The pressure from state selecting agencies was pressuring Fechner to have a formal education program. Eventually Fechner and General MacArthur recognized the importance of preparing the young men with poor academic skills to become productive citizens upon returning to society and agreed to an educational program.¹⁰

In November of 1933, Zook submitted an education plan for the CCC to the War Department. One part was altered by the War Department, giving it more control over the program. For example, Zook stated the Office of Education would "...recommend to the Secretary of War the courses of instruction."¹¹ The War Department changed it to state, "The Office of Education will recommend to the Secretary of War the outlines of

⁸ Andre Roger O'Coin, "Vocational Education During the Great Depression and World War II: Challenge, Innovation and Continuity" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1988), 113 and 122; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 78.

⁹ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education, the Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 312.

¹⁰ Reiman, 44; Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 122; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 48 and 49; General MacArthur to FDR, November 22, 1933, Folder CCC Organization General 1937 Box 22, Civilian Conservation Corp, RG 95, NACP.

¹¹ General Chief of Staff and George Zook to FDR, November 22, 1933, Folder Civilian Conservation Corps Educational Program, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

instruction, teaching procedures and types of teaching materials for use in the camps.”¹² Zook’s administrative plan placed ultimate responsibility of the educational program with the Secretary of War. The Office of Education served as the advisor for CCC’s educational program. Administration of the program became the duty of the Corps Area Commander and instruction was conducted by the Camp Commanders, with assistance of the Army workers, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service. All of these entities reported to the War Department.¹³ Zook, Fechner, and the War Department agreed on this educational plan. It was then submitted to FDR and approved in November of 1933. Although no documentation was found indicating why FDR decided to accept CCC’s educational program, the educational need of the enrollees, the fact that the classes would include forestry conservation work, and agreement on an educational program by Zook, Fechner, and the War Department most likely made him more comfortable with the idea. FDR’s personal goal for the education program was based on his ideas and values of nature and outdoor living:

It is the hope of the President that the educational program, by emphasizing forestry, agriculture, and like subjects will assist the men in readjusting themselves to a new mode of living – to country life instead of city life – and to assist them to improve themselves educationally and vocationally.¹⁴

Unlike Fechner and the War Department, Zook was excited about the unique teaching opportunities in the CCC camps. Each camp, depending on the needs of the enrollees, created its own unique educational program. Based on students’ interests and

¹² Ibid.

¹³ War Department to George Zook, Folder Civilian Conservation Corps Educational Program, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

¹⁴ J.C. Wright to State Directors of Vocational Education, State Directors of Agricultural Extension Service, and Directors of Extension in State Universities, November 13, 1933, Folder Civilian Conservation Corps Educational Program, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

experiences, self-paced student programs were designed by educational advisers. Zook stated, “If the conservation camps continue we may be able to develop a program which will be a new departure in America education.”¹⁵ Zook told the educational advisers that “the exact character of the program which they carry on in these camps will depend on what they themselves feel is the desirable thing to do in the camps. They are very largely on their own initiative....”¹⁶ The educational program was not mandatory for enrollees in the earlier years of the CCC yet the program had seven main objectives:

- 1) Elimination of illiteracy, 2) Removal of deficiencies in common school subjects, 3) Training on the job, 4) Cultural and general education, 5) Health and safety education, 6) Character and citizenship training, and 7) Assisting enrollees in finding employment.¹⁷

Of the men who were enrolled in the CCC in 1934 approximately 20% were learning literacy and basic skills, 30% were working on high schools diplomas, 7% were taking college level courses, 12% were enrolled in the arts and crafts, and 30% were in vocational training.¹⁸ The CCC education program was primarily focused on vocation and basic skills.

The Army estimated the cost of the educational program as \$3.45 million per year. But FDR’s lack of enthusiasm for this program was demonstrated by the amount of money he allocated for it, a mere \$2.5 million. The American Council on Education, in a letter to FDR, confronted him regarding the insufficient funds for the CCC’s educational program. In their letter, they asserted that the money allocated was not enough to support

¹⁵ Fechner to FDR, January 28, 1935, Folder CCC 1933-1938, Box 9, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Education Department Records, CUA.

¹⁶ Transcript of meeting on the emergency education program, May 21, 1934, Folder April-May 1934, Box 1, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69, NACP.

¹⁷ Pickett, 97.

¹⁸ Gower, 61.

an educational adviser in every camp. An educational program where one adviser is assigned to two camps rather than one camp was shown to be less effective. At the time, only 1,092 of the 1,468 camps had education advisers. In addition to under-funding the established camps, the budget did not include any of the new CCC camps created in the severe drought areas in the West. The Office of Education applied for educational programming funds for the 50,000 men enrolled in these new CCC camps, but Fechner's office denied the request after the War Department had approved it.¹⁹ The American Council on Education further criticized FDR's budget by stating:

Only \$146,800 is included in the budget for books, equipment, and study materials. This is an average of only 50 cents per enrolled man during the year. On account of this parsimony in a critical place the Commissioner of Education found it necessary to appeal to the General Education Board for assistance. That organization came to the rescue with an appropriation of \$40,000 for study materials. It ought not to be necessary for the educational service to depend on subsidies of this kind to carry on a clear obligation of the Federal Government.²⁰

Two years later, in 1936, a similar situation with the budget arose when the Office of Education and the CCC Education Director requested more money for the educational program. The president told Fechner that, "it is regretted that additional funds cannot be provided for this work, and that the problem will have to be worked out within the funds available."²¹

More problems with the CCC's educational program were revealed by the U.S. Army, represented by Major General A.J. Bowley, who wrote a memorandum on

¹⁹ War Department to George Zook, Folder Civilian Conservation Corps Educational Program, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP; Clarence S. Marsh to George F. Zook, October 13, 1934, Folder American Council on Education May 1933-March 31, 1935, Box 6, Records of Special Projects and Programs, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Education, RG 12, NACP.

²⁰ American Council on Education to FDR, October 17, 1934, Folder American Council on Education May 1933-March 31, 1935, Box 6, Records of Special Projects and Programs, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Education, RG 12, NACP.

²¹ FDR to Fechner, February 17, 1936, Folder Education 1936 Jan-May, Box 2, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

August 9, 1934 titled, "Value of the Educational Program in the CCC Camps." He summarized his thoughts on the program:

1. When the idea of adopting an educational program for use in the CCC Camps was first broached, it was the opinion of this headquarters that any program adopted which was suitable to the needs of the enrollees could be carried out better by the military personnel than it could be by any other agency. The experience of the past six months has proved the correctness of this opinion. 2. With few exceptions, the Camp Educational Advisers selected lack [sic] initiative and imagination, and appear to lack experience and aptitude necessary to initiate and carry on the Educational Program which has been adopted. They have, however, contributed substantially to the promotion of camp recreation, moral and social activities. 3. The present educational program is too ambitious in its scope, considering the facilities available, the length of the enrollment period, the time the enrollees can devote to it, and the qualifications of the present Camp Educational Advisers. 4. Most of the literature recommended for use in the camps is of excellent character, but scattered thru its pages, one finds material of a subversive nature, material which tends to tear down our existing order of society and which is inimical to national defense.²²

In 1934 the educational community erupted when a piece of literature, *You and Machines*, created under the direction of the Office of Education and the CCC's Educational Director, became an example of subversive material. *You and Machines* was written by William F. Ogburn, a sociology professor and member of the American Council on Education. It was written to provide the CCC enrollees engaging reading material at an appropriate reading level on U.S. social structures. The story described how rapid industrialization can lead to unemployment and loss of family time. Fechner thought the book might lead the young men to think that the economic and social structures of the U.S. were to blame for the Great Depression. Banning this piece of literature added to the complaints that CCC was an attempt to militarize young men. Fechner's rationale for prohibited reading material was that he did not want enrollees to

²² A.J. Bowley to The Adjutant General, August 9, 1934, Folder Corps Area Advisers, General (Jan. 1, 1934-Jan. 31, 1935), Box 1, Memorandums and Related Materials of the Director, RG 12, NACP.

become despondent after reading stories that questioned capitalism and analyzed socio-economic structures. Many educators were upset that Fechner was suppressing discussions and censoring enrollees' reading material.²³ John W. Studebaker, FDR's second U.S. Commissioner of Education, and Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, shared their concerns with FDR and asked to administer the CCC's educational program. Willard W. Beatty, president of the Progressive Education Association (PEA), wrote to FDR with a similar request and also shared his outrage that "educational activities of such a federal projects as the CCC should be in the hands of a layman..."²⁴ After receiving this letter, the president requested to see Mr. Studebaker. I found no documents that described their conversation, however. John S. Nollen of Grinnell College disagreed with Fechner's decision to ban the material and was less flattering of him. He thought it was unfortunate that "efforts to introduce proper educational methods and materials should be systemically nullified by a man who is thinking with his adrenal glands."²⁵

The placement of the Office of Education in the CCC's structure described earlier left the office with limited power:

The Office of Education can only recommend to the War Department concerning educational procedures and materials. In turn the War Department recommends to the Director. If he disapproves, the War Department is disposed to accept his judgment without debate.²⁶

²³ Arlene L. Barry, "Censorship During the Depression: The Banning of 'You and Machines'," *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* 16, no. 1, The Great Depression (Fall 2001): 56 and 57; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 81.

²⁴ Williard W. Beatty to FDR, January 16, 1935, Folder Education 1935 Jan-June, Box 1, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

²⁵ John S. Nollen to FDR, December 1, 1934, Folder Education 1934 April-Dec, Box 1, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

²⁶ C.S. Marsh to John W. Studebaker, January 17, 1935, Folder CCC Permanent Feb. 1-Mar. 31, 1937, Box 16, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

General Andrew Moses, Assistant Chief of Staff of the War Department, reiterated Fechner's control and decision-making power in an advisory committee meeting. "We consider that Mr. Fechner represents the president in these matters. His decisions are Fechner's prerogative."²⁷ Indeed they were; despite the large volume of complaints against Fechner's decision to ban the piece of literature, FDR supported his decision.²⁸

Such incidents informed Clarence S. Marsh, the CCC's educational director, of Fechner's sentiment as Marsh's attempts to build up the educational program were rebuffed. Eventually, Marsh's inability to perform his duties as educational director led to his resignation in March 1935; he stayed in the position for only a little over a year.²⁹ Two months before resigning, Marsh sent Studebaker a four-page memorandum with "Barriers to Success of the CCC Educational Program" as the subject. Marsh criticized the CCC's structure:

There are too many controls.... Special study materials prepared for specific use in CCC Camps have little chance of approval because they must pass through the War Department to be sanctioned by the Director and his staff whose training and experience are inadequate to qualify them for final judgment of such materials.... The fact that every major recommendation to strengthen and enrich the Educational Program has been disapproved by the Director seems to indicate on his part, either lack of interest in or active hostility to the Educational Program.³⁰

When Studebaker discussed the problems of administering the CCC educational program with FDR, FDR stated, "This work must be under final control of the Director, Mr.

²⁷ Minutes of meeting of advisory committee on educational program for CCC, November 16, 1934, Folder Advisory Committee (Nov. 1933-Nov. 30, 1934), Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

²⁸ Smith, 29.

²⁹ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 121; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 53.

³⁰ C.S. Marsh to John W. Studebaker, January 17, 1935, Folder CCC Permanent Feb. 1-March 31, 1937, Box 16, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

Robert Fechner– that Mr. Fechner is the responsible head and he must have the final say.”³¹

Howard Oxley succeeded Marsh, becoming the second CCC educational director. In 1937, Fechner made an attempt to have increased control over the CCC educational program by trying to garner support to have this position removed from the Office of Education and transferred to his own office. Upon learning of this information, Studebaker wrote to the head of his department to warn him of such an attempt:

Mr. Fechner’s proposal would likewise remove the Office of Education and thereby the forces of education throughout the Nation from the proper relationship to and control of the educational program in the camps. I presume he feels that his proposal would provide a certain amount of administrative convenience which he desires, but it would without doubt add another influence toward the destruction of proper coordination of educational functions and would thereby dissipate the control and effectiveness of these functions.³²

FDR supported Studebaker and kept the position in the Office of Education.

When Harry Hopkins, head of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), wanted to remove the WPA teachers from all the CCC camps and place them on other projects, FDR did not show concern for the CCC’s education program. Approximately 1,800 teachers were assisting the camps with educational programs but were reassigned to other relief programs.³³ FDR’s response to Fechner’s letter informing him of the problem was delayed and merely stated that he, “did not care to interfere with decisions made by the Administrator....”³⁴

³¹ FDR to Harold Ickes, July 17, 1937, Folder Education 1937 July-Dec, Box 2, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

³² John W. Studebaker to Secretary, March 29, 1937, Folder CCC Permanent April 1, 1937, Box 16, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

³³ Robert Fechner to FDR, December 21, 1938, Folder CCC Director’s Office 1938-39, Box 15, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

³⁴ Robert Fechner to Malvina C. Thompson, May 4, 1939, Folder CCC Director’s Office 1938-39, Box 15, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

Support for the CCC's educational program came from Congress in 1937 during its hearing and discussions on a bill to make the CCC permanent. During Fechner's testimony in the House Committee on Labor, he angered congressmen during his questioning. Fechner was not in agreement with many of the congressmen's views on the value of the CCC's educational program. He referred to the objective of helping the boys with their future as an "incidental objective."³⁵ He stated, "I wish to emphasize that the CCC is a work organization."³⁶ He then stated that the work catered to those who were not interested in academic training. According to Fechner, the kind of vocational training that the boys received in the CCC "recognizes the special needs of the type of boy who has been neglected in other educational plans."³⁷ Some of the congressmen refuted Fechner's ideas. They argued that teaching an enrollee to shovel did not prepare him for a productive and financially stable future. Their main point was that this government-sponsored program should prepare the young men to be able to earn a living, and that consequently these young men would not require relief in the future. They argued that the enrollees represented the underprivileged population in society, and they should be given every opportunity to succeed.³⁸ After the hearings the committee bolstered their support for vocational and citizenship training by making the educational program mandatory, even if it cut into the eight hour work day. For both the House and the Senate, a surprising amount of time was spent discussing the education program. There was agreement that the education program needed to be strengthened and that it needed to

³⁵ Howard Oxley to John W. Studebaker, July 2, 1937, Folder CCC Folder #2 July 1, 1937, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

³⁶ Statement of Robert Fechner with regard to the proposed bill for making the CCC permanent, Folder CCC Legislation 1937, Box 22, CCC General Correspondence, 1933-42, RG 95, NACP.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Howard Oxley to John W. Studebaker, July 2, 1937, Folder CCC Folder #2 July 1, 1937, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

be mandatory, but the terms vocational education, general education, and citizenship training were debated. Following the lively debates in the House and the Senate, FDR addressed the Congress on April 5, 1937 to provide reasons why he supported making the CCC permanent. Although he fully supported making the CCC permanent, not once did he mention the benefits of the CCC's educational program. Instead, FDR only focused on the benefits of the work projects. To him the benefits of the CCC for the enrollees were improvements in "moral and physical well-being...."³⁹ Contrary to FDR's wishes, Congress did not follow through with his desire for a permanent CCC, despite knowing the CCC was considered his pet project.⁴⁰ Congress did extend the CCC for three years, and education was made mandatory and was elevated as a major objective of the CCC. The new purpose became: "providing employment, as well as vocational training, for youthful citizens.... at least ten hours each week may be devoted to general educational and vocational training."⁴¹ Moreover, they, unlike FDR, focused on the value and importance of the CCC's educational program. When Oxley and Studebaker tried to incorporate the ten hours of educational programs into CCC's weekly schedule by decreasing time spent on work projects, Fechner defended the forty hours of work each week. FDR upheld Fechner's decision and agreed work was the most important component in the CCC program.⁴²

Although Congress showed support for the CCC's education program by making participation mandatory, the purpose of the educational program continued to be debated.

³⁹ FDR to Congress, 75th Cong., 1st Sess, April 5, 1937, Folder CCC Permanent Feb. 1-Mar. 31, 1937, Box 16, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

⁴⁰ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 153.

⁴¹ Howard Oxley to Studebaker, January 19, 1938, Folder MEMO to C.A.E.A. January thru March, 1938, Box 3, Memorandum and Related Materials of the Director, 01/01/1936-01/12/1938, RG 12, NACP.

⁴² O'Coin, 122.

For example, the Technical Services (the National Parks Service and the Forest Service) argued that the emphasis on CCC's education program should be job training rather than studying for a high school diploma since enrollees were from the working-class.⁴³ A member of the educational advisory committee, H.R. Kylie, representing the Forest Service, stated in April 1940:

All academic training in the camps should be related to the project and camp work jobs. All applicants for CCC should be excluded from enrollment who are more interested in continuing their academic education than in the training to be secured on the job and in related work in the camps.⁴⁴

The fact that this discussion was still occurring in 1940 indicates that the disagreement over the type of education the CCC enrollees should receive continued throughout the program's existence.

J.C. Wright of the Office of Education commented on Technical Service's attitude towards the CCC's educational program:

Although no survey was made, it was a common thing to encounter individuals from the technical staff - - foremen and others - - who felt that the educational program belonged to those in charge of the project.... It is plain to be seen, however, that some camp superintendents, foremen, and members of the technical staff do not feel their responsibility for the educational program. They are responsible for the training of their own workers, but feel little responsibility for the success of the educational program.⁴⁵

Technical services promoted learning that occurred through their work projects, which consisted of on-the-job training, and they believed that hands-on training was the type of

⁴³ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 164.

⁴⁴ Summary of the meeting of the CCC advisory committee on education, April 9, 1940, Folder Advisory Committee on Ed. 1939-40, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

⁴⁵ Mr. Bass to J. C. Wright, July 2, 1935, Folder CCC re: Bulletins Only, Box 1, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

education best suited for the CCC enrollees. They resisted programs that competed with their job training and work program.

Tensions rose further between those who wanted the CCC to focus on work projects, such as Fechner, the Army, and the Technical Services, with those who wanted the CCC to have a stronger education program, such as the Office of Education, Ickes, and the Director of the CCC education program. Studebaker, at a CCC Educational Advisory Committee meeting in 1938, stated clearly that his office was not pleased with the current CCC educational program.⁴⁶ The attempts by his office to improve the program were often rejected by Fechner's office. Some of the challenges educators struggled with in the camps were: the limited hours available devoted to the educational program, the quality of the educational facilities, the lack of freedom educational advisers were allowed to have by the Army, the lack of cooperation from people in Technical Services, and the lack of decision-making power in the educational program overall.

Similar to the wishes of Congress, Studebaker wanted the enrollees to do more than work because the jobs available to them would likely not be in forest, soil, and park related jobs. He wanted to see general education courses tie into the work projects, like math and measurement. According to a Corps Area Educational Adviser, the organizational setup of the CCC itself contributed to problems. A duality between the Army, who oversaw the activities on the campsite, and the Technical Services, who controlled the work projects offsite, left authority in two entities, often resulting in

⁴⁶ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 164-168; Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee on CCC Education, May 21, 1938, Folder Advisory Committee on Education July, 1937 to June, 1938, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

conflict and confusion. The educational adviser, not overtly welcomed by either, had to contend with both men.⁴⁷

Although Studebaker wanted an educational program that tied into the work projects, he did not instruct educational advisers to learn more about the work projects and watch what was happening in the field. A meeting of representatives from Technical Services indicated that they also wanted learning about conservation projects to be incorporated into the education program, but not one person could say they ever saw an educational adviser on the field. They wondered how this goal could be achieved when the educational adviser did not have any idea of what is going on outside of the camp. There was agreement that more of their staff should teach workshops in the evenings. The problem was many of these people were busy preparing for work the next day and tired from working on the work projects for eight hours. Additionally, not all of the staff had college degrees; some foremen had less education than the enrollees themselves and might have been intimidated by educational advisers and the classroom setting. Technical staff members felt that their knowledge was not valued by other CCC staff members and therefore were resistant when people tried to tell them what to do.⁴⁸ In the end, the educational program for the CCC enrollees never became fully developed.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee on CCC Education, May 21, 1938, Folder Advisory Committee on Education July, 1937 to June, 1938, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP; Howard Oxley and Joel Nystrom report for Suggestions Regarding a Permanent Form of Organization for the C.C.C., Folder CCC Perm. Sept 10/36-Apr 17/37. Box 16, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

⁴⁸ Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee on CCC Education, May 21, 1938, Folder Advisory Committee on Education July, 1937 to June, 1938, Box 2, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP; Minutes of the meeting with representative of the Technical Services, July 22, 1936, Folder Advisory Committee on Education Meeting (Aug 10, 1936) June 30, 1935-July 1, 1936, Box 1, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

Despite the arguments among educators and the CCC staff, the organization was highly regarded by the general public and both parties in Congress. FDR's fireside chats advertised the CCC's goals and accomplishments to ensure it maintained its popularity. Those educators who did not support the CCC knew it would be ineffective and damaging to their image to publicly criticize a program that was so well liked.⁴⁹ Educators continued to try and promote CCC's educational program and make it valuable to enrollees.

National Youth Administration (NYA)

In an article published in *School Life* during FDR's first month as president, FDR was quoted as acknowledging the worth of young people and the schools that support them. Specifically he stated, "Our schools need the appreciation and cooperation of all those who depend upon them for the education of our youth – the state's most valuable asset."⁵⁰ FDR was not the only one who was concerned about youth; Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady, told Hopkins, "The youth of the country is still very much on my mind."⁵¹ The young adults in the United States were frustrated for many reasons. Many could not afford to attend secondary or post-secondary schools, as even the cost of food, clothing, school supplies, and transportation were too high for most. Jobs were scarce, and they consequently could not earn their own money. In short, the youth faced an insecure

⁴⁹ John Field, *Learning through Labour: Training, Unemployment and the State 1890-1939*. (Leeds, England: Leeds University, School of Education, 1992), 152; Smith, 94.

⁵⁰ Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, "Public Education and the New Deal," September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, National Education Association (NEA) Records, George Washington University (GWU), Washington, D.C.

⁵¹ Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Hopkins, March 23, 1934, Folder Roosevelt, Eleanor, Box 96, Harry L. Hopkins Papers, FDRL.

future. To speak out about the issues that youth faced, a group of active youth formed an organization called the American Youth Congress (AYC) in 1934. AYC gained the attention of Mrs. Roosevelt and Charles W. Taussig, FDR's close adviser, not only for its Communist leanings but also because of its frustrations with FDR and the New Deal. Observing youth activities in Europe, the Roosevelt administration was well aware of how susceptible youth could be to groups with a strong figurehead.

Mrs. Roosevelt had sincere concerns for youth; according to an AYC member, "her interest was not primarily a political interest, it was concerned with young people and what was happening to them in the Depression."⁵² Through her wit and warm disposition she was able to influence the leaders of AYC. She encouraged them to believe that their goals could be accomplished more easily if they worked alongside the White House as opposed to against it.⁵³ Under Mrs. Roosevelt's care, the AYC became an ally of the New Deal and participated in creating the National Youth Administration (NYA).

Before the NYA was created, college officials acted as a sounding board for students who were upset over their inability to afford college. Institutions of higher education were also struggling financially as states cut their budgets, and they looked to the federal government to help bring students back. They campaigned for aiding needy students and were able to bring this issue to the attention of the Congress and the president. Attuned to these concerns was George Zook, as head of the Office of

⁵² "The Student Movement of the 1930s Joseph P. Lash Interview," *Activist Impulses: Campus Radicalism in the 1930s (Cohen)*, para. 26, <http://newdeal.feri.org/students/lash.htm#26> (accessed January 31, 2011).

⁵³ "American Youth Congress," *American Youth Congress*, para. 2, <http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/american-youth-congress.cfm> (accessed December 25, 2011).

Education, and a former college official himself, he helped put into place a student-aid program. Zook, in the early part of 1934, had suggested to Harry Hopkins, who was in charge of a \$500 million program - the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), to use some of the relief funds to financially support needy college students. The program would provide students with a campus job to help pay for their education. A 15% decrease in college attendance warranted his recommendation.⁵⁴ By early February 1934, Hopkins announced a student-aid program providing \$5 million of relief funds to help students pay for their college education.

Zook also proposed a position in the federal government under the Office of Education to focus on people under the age of 30 years old. He recognized that youth needed guidance to help with job placement, counseling, and schooling. He advocated for learners receiving:

a subsistence wage in the later years of education for pursuing an approved educational program. In this program, both through their participation in active community life and through further preparation for greater social, economic, and civic helpfulness, youths are performing a service to the State, and should be paid accordingly just as military training is today subsidized.⁵⁵

John W. Studebaker, who succeeded Zook as Commissioner of Education, also devoted time to the youth issue by developing a long-term and emergency youth program. The long-term youth program would have created a Division of Youth in the Office of Education and assisted two million young men and women who lived at home

⁵⁴ Reiman, 59 and 60; Zook was the former president of the University of Akron; Zook to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 21, 1934, Folder Personal Letters 1934 White-Z, Box 606, Eleanor Roosevelt, White House Correspondence 100, FDRL; Transcript of meeting on the emergency education program, May 21, 1934, Folder April-May 1934, Box 1, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69, NACP.

⁵⁵ Meeting for National Commission on Youth Problems Proposed, June 8, 1934, Folder 5, Box 100, General Secretary National Catholic Welfare Organization, USCCB, CUA.

and were between the ages of 16 and 25. Under Studebaker's proposal, the youth program would be administered by the educational system and provide guidance assistance, educational programs, recreation, and part-time employment, for a cost of \$480 million per year.⁵⁶

After much deliberation a proposal was drafted and submitted for criticism on February 11, 1935, to a small group of national leaders in the various aspects of youth activities. After a full day's conference the proposal was endorsed in all of its essentials and became the program actively advocated by the Office of Education. The Commissioner of Education conferred with many Government representatives concerning the proposal, and finally, on April 26, released to the press its outlines in order to obtain the reactions and criticisms of interested persons throughout the country. The proposed program was discussed in radio addresses and on the platform. The response appeared to be not only generous but enthusiastically favorable to the type of program advocated.⁵⁷

Studebaker's youth plan was not the only one in the making; the Department of Labor, the WPA, Taussig, and Mrs. Roosevelt were also involved in formulating a youth plan. Taussig and Mrs. Roosevelt spent a lot of time discussing what could be done with troubled youth. Taussig feared that students who dropped out-of-school due to a lack of financial resources or those youth who could not find a job would view America's democratic system as unfair. The youth's frustration could make them susceptible to Communist ideas. Taussig realized the best way to resolve this dilemma would be to give youth jobs and not just relief. His hope was that by providing students with jobs, they would be allowed to pursue their interests and in doing so, renew their belief in democracy. Because of the high unemployment of youth, assistance from the federal

⁵⁶ Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1935, Folder Interior Department, Office of Education (Source Material), Box 21, President's Interdepartmental Committee to Coordinate Health and Welfare Activities General Records, Source Materials 1936-1938, FDRL.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

government was required to move youth from being excluded from society to being socially integrated.⁵⁸

Hopkins and Aubrey Williams, Deputy Administrator of the WPA, proposed that youth in school train for a particular vocation while working within that same field for a small stipend. According to their proposal, student aid should be expanded in order to keep poorer students in school. Frances Perkins, Secretary of the Department of Labor, wanted to recreate the WPA for youth to provide them with jobs. From her perspective, learning was implicit with any job and it did not need to be a major part of the program. She also called for agency cooperation for all the various youth organizations, including the Office of Education, in order to come together and design a youth program.⁵⁹

FDR tried to remain diplomatic but pressure was building on him to make a decision on the youth program's administration. FDR was not satisfied with Studebaker's, Perkins', or the Hopkins and Williams' youth proposals. According to FDR, the program needed to accomplish three goals: provide youth with jobs, vocational training, and citizenship education, meaning understanding the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy and the importance of civic duties. He asked Taussig to design one youth program that would address all three of these needs. Taussig organized a group of people to assist him, including Mrs. Roosevelt. The result of these meetings reflected what Williams had previously suggested, a program that integrated jobs, student aid, and vocational training, most likely because Taussig consulted with Williams throughout the

⁵⁸ Reiman, 42 and 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 105, 112, and 113.

process. Enrollees would have direct experience with citizenship education through their experiences of democratic principles in action within the NYA.⁶⁰

Competition for controlling the new youth plan was becoming intense and in June 1935, FDR created the NYA program by executive order and provided the following rationale to the public:

I have determined that we shall do something for the Nation's unemployed youth because we can ill afford to lose the skill and energy of these young men and women. They must have their chance in school, their turn as apprentices and their opportunity for jobs - - a chance to work and earn for themselves.⁶¹

The decision of which agency FDR wanted to place the youth program under and who would administer it required some deliberation. Placing the youth program under Studebaker in the Office of Education was expected by educators.

Prior to the setting up of the National Youth Administration considerable research to discover the needs of youth in various sections of the country and to find plans for meeting the needs of unemployed youth and those who are not financially able to continue their education, had been carried on through the United States Office of Education. The Commissioner of Education had formulated and announced certain plans for carrying on a national program for youth. He had delivered several addresses on the subject and had published articles in the leading newspapers of the country. He had requested that funds be allocated to the Office of Education for the administration of the youth program. It was generally thought by educators throughout the country that his request would be honored.⁶²

⁶⁰ O'Coin, 150; Reiman, 10 and 116–124.

⁶¹ FDR's establishment of the NYA, June 26, 1935, Folder 1935, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69, NACP.

⁶² Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, "Public Education and the New Deal," September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

The problem with having the program under the Office of Education was the focus would be primarily on education. FDR wanted the NYA to focus on education in conjunction with work relief.

Eleven days before the NYA's Executive Order was given, FDR requested Hopkins to call Father John Burke, General Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), for advice about the administration of the NYA. FDR viewed Catholics as an important political group that had influence that he needed to use.⁶³ Hopkins asked Father Burke what his opinions were on having the youth administration under Studebaker. Father Burke's response was it would be "a grave mistake...putting it in under the Office of Education would give the impression it was Federal Education and would be an opening wedge to Federal control of education."⁶⁴ He told Hopkins that FDR had spoken previously to him about this issue and FDR confirmed Studebaker would not be administering the program. Father Burke then inquired if funds would be available under the youth program for private institutions and Hopkins could not see a reason why funds would be withheld from private institutions since they assist with education and recreation. Next he asked to have a Catholic on the National Committee and Hopkins said he would speak to him about that in the near future. Hopkins returned to the question of Studebaker and told him FDR was interested in offering Studebaker the position of Chairman of the National Committee. Father Burke again stated it would be a bad idea and Hopkins concurred. Four days later, Hopkins called Father Burke again and

⁶³ Smith, 36.

⁶⁴ Transcript of telephone call between Harry Hopkins and Father John Burke, June 15, 1935, Folder 2, Box 153, Private Files of Burke, National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), CUA.

informed him that there were “great influences that persuaded the president” to have Studebaker administer the youth agency.⁶⁵

The pressure to assign Studebaker as the administrator of the NYA was apparently not as great as Hopkins had thought. FDR outraged educators by placing the youth program under Hopkins’ WPA and assigned Aubrey Williams as its Executive Director. Studebaker was placed on the NYA’s executive committee to placate educators, but it was a committee with little control over the NYA’s decisions. The decision-making power resided with the National Advisory Committee (NAC), chaired by Taussig. FDR created the NYA without congressional approval under an Executive Order, and its \$50 million budget came from the WPA’s \$5 billion budget.⁶⁶ Williams, under Hopkins, was chosen to head the NYA program, which showed FDR’s support of his ideas and skills.

FDR explained to the National Education Association (NEA) that the NYA was designed to provide relief to youth, and Williams, with his background in social work, was more experienced in relief.⁶⁷ Williams believed that:

the schools had failed to adequately train youth before the depression, and that the schools were continuing to fail youth during economic hard times. He was willing to work with educators, but he felt that the professional educator could not be trusted to give all the youth of America the help and training they needed. Williams believed that someone or some outside agency had to force the educational system to do what had to be done. He consistently and publicly expressed his belief that the NYA could do for youth what the schools could not or would not do. This criticism of education was a basic rationale for the NYA’s efforts to provide

⁶⁵ Ibid.; Transcript of telephone call between Harry Hopkins and Father John Burke, June 14, 1935, Folder 2, Box 153, Private Files of Burke, NCWC, CUA.

⁶⁶ D. Boutwell to Mr. Strauss, July 1, 1935, Folder Dept of Ed, 1933-1935, Box 12, OF 6e-6g Department of Interior, FDRL; T.H. Watkins, *The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1999), 269 and 270.

⁶⁷ O’Coin, 154 and 155.

vocational training for youth who had been unable to get that training in school.⁶⁸

Since Williams publicly expressed his disappointment of educators and schools, it seems likely that FDR must have been aware of Williams' distaste for public schools and educators, yet Williams was the person FDR decided to have administer the youth program. Disagreements and tense relations continued to persist between Williams, Studebaker, and other educators, however, FDR showed approval for the NYA by upholding Williams' decisions.⁶⁹

FDR's placement of the NYA in a relief agency rather than the Office of Education was supported by the President's Advisory Committee on Education which studied the NYA a few years after its inception. This committee was formed to study federal aid to vocational education within the context of general education and was chaired by FDR appointee, Floyd W. Reeves. They concluded that the NYA was not an educational organization. The student-aid program was regarded as a way to help students obtain an education and the work projects were purely an employment program.⁷⁰

In June 1935, high school, undergraduate, and graduate students received NYA money for the work they provided their schools. The hope was the money would be enough to keep them in school. As FDR wanted, money went directly to the youth. Those who were not in school saw their first work relief jobs in January of 1936. During

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, under the direction of Doak S. Campbell, October 1937, Folder New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, Box 17, Staff Studies, Presidential Advisory Committee on Education, FDRL.

the day they were apprentices and at night they would take courses to reinforce the skills learned during the day. Community service projects were assigned to youth based on their interests. The skills gained would help make the youth more competitive in the future.⁷¹ Providing youth with a job was a key relief measure, but the job training component allowed the NYA program to also act as a reform program. The NYA, in the end, became a mixture of relief and reform measures.

The NYA training programs were primarily conducted outside of public vocational schools with uncertified instructors. Educators complained about the NYA training programs, arguing that they followed their own curriculum and did not conform to traditional vocational education standards. Educators complained of duplication, inferior instruction, and poor training. The Office of Education wanted to take over the training aspect of the NYA and in doing so obtain federal money to implement its program. By November 1939 Williams agreed that traditional vocational educators did a better job of training youth, but he argued that they should cooperate with him since he was more experienced with handling youth on relief. By the summer of 1940, Studebaker and Williams agreed to let the Office of Education have control over the NYA's training program, but Williams ignored that agreement.⁷²

In 1941, the National Education Association (NEA), at the time an educational organization of educational administrators and teachers, and the American Association of School Administrators wrote a report stating their reasons for not supporting the CCC or the NYA. The report was entitled *The Civilian Conservation Corps, The National Youth Administration, and the Public Schools*. The NEA went further than stating their

⁷¹ Urban and Wagoner, Jr., 272; Smith, 31.

⁷² O'Coin, 326–330.

disagreements with the CCC and the NYA; it called for their termination. Their rationale for wanting these programs to end was: 1) educational programs are to be created and administered by state and local authorities; the federal government's function was to support these authorities without interference; 2) it was a waste of public funds to create a second educational system; and 3) the intent of Congress was to provide relief and assistance with conservation activities, and the CCC's educational programs were above and beyond its original mandate. With the same amount of financial support, states would be able to assist more students than the NYA and the CCC, and individual states would be able to expand services such as career support, job placement, and vocational education.⁷³

By the time NEA's report came out, Studebaker and members in the Defense department had overhauled the CCC's education program to benefit the Army. Enrollees were learning skills such as cooking, electronics, demolition, and radio operations to make their transition into the Army easier. This transition was, in part, because FDR and his administration in the late 1930s were preparing for war. By this time, CCC's program was already progressing to an end. There were fewer young men enrolling into the program since they no longer required work relief. Employment opportunities in the war industry were opening up and the armed forces needed young men.⁷⁴ FDR, who did not want to see his CCC program end, cautioned, "the conduct of the war must not cause the loss of 'social gains.'"⁷⁵ He suggested combining the NYA and the CCC into one

⁷³ Gower, 66; Sol Cohen, "Remember the CCC?," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 49, no. 7 (March 1968): 371.

⁷⁴ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 197; Gower, 68.

⁷⁵ "Civilian Conservation Corps and National Youth Administration Face Attacks in Congress," *Congressional Digest* 21, no. 6-7 (July 1942): 163, Box 294 The LaFollette Family Collection Series C, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

program but Congress was uninterested.⁷⁶ A congressional committee, the Joint Commission for the Reduction of Non-Essential Federal Expenditures, officially disbanded the CCC in 1942.

Like the CCC, the NYA switched its focus to national defense training. Taussig suggested to Mrs. Roosevelt, who was close with Williams, that the NYA should participate in the war effort. By revamping the premise of the NYA, Williams did his best to maintain the NYA's importance. Defense training was occurring in both the NYA and through the Office of Education. The fact that the NYA duplicated defense training provided by the Office of Education became an obvious issue and Congress ended the NYA in 1943.⁷⁷

The difference between the educational components in CCC and NYA are attributed to their leaders. Fechner and Williams were in many ways opposites of each other. CCC educational programs focused on basic skills, literacy, and job training for the poor people instead of providing them with general education that is associated with middle and upper classes, which was represented more in NYA programs. Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot summarized these differences well:

CCC stressed conservation and the discipline of work, the NYA embodied alternative values. Aubrey Williams, director of NYA, had such a different conception of both relief and education that it is a tribute to the President's catholicity—or inconsistency—that he could have supported both Fechner and Williams. Both the CCC and the NYA were work-relief projects aimed at youth. But one can hardly imagine a sharper contrast between their directors, their guiding philosophies, or their modes of

⁷⁶ "ECONOMY: Where is the Waste?," *Time Magazine*, January 5, 1942, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,795686,00.html> (accessed October 4, 2011).

⁷⁷ John A. Salmond, "Aubrey Williams: Atypical New Dealer?," in *The New Deal: The National Level*, ed. John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody, vol. 1 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), 228; Mildred W. Abramowitz, "Eleanor Roosevelt and the National Youth Administration 1935-1943: An Extension of the Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 573; O'Coin, 330-335.

operation. Fechner was a conservative trade unionist who endorsed the army's hierarchical operating procedures [who] feared radicalism ... Williams was a social worker and lay minister who sought to use the government's resources to bring about social justice.... Like Hopkins, his boss, Williams sympathized most "with these people at the bottom of the heap" and wanted to redistribute economic and cultural rewards....⁷⁸

FDR was able to support both leaders because the two programs that helped youth had different political benefits for him. According to Reiman, FDR allowed Williams to design NYA as a radical reform program because he needed to gain the support of those who were extremely liberal. To the public, NYA was presented as Mrs. Roosevelt's idea in order to appear as a nurturing program for youth. NYA was introduced a few months before the elections for FDR's second term and he needed NYA to unify his party and help him win the election. CCC, which was a relief rather than a reform program, captured voters' approval who thought young men required discipline and would benefit from hard work. FDR knew youth were a special group in society that could cause the country much anguish if neglected. FDR acted strategically when he introduced his youth plans so as to gain political and popular support for his various initiatives.⁷⁹ Knowing the public was also concerned about schools closing due to a lack of funds, FDR supported Hopkins giving financial aid to schools in need.

Emergency Educational Program (EEP)

In late 1933, Hopkins, under the FERA, created the Emergency Educational Program (EEP), which was later transferred to the WPA in 1935. The EEP began as a result of Zook calling a meeting to discuss the emergency in public schools. The main

⁷⁸ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 122 and 123.

⁷⁹ Reiman, 29, 30, and 184–187.

issues facing public schools were: 80,000 unemployed school teachers on or about to be on relief rolls, rural schools in poor conditions, vocational training needed for those who were unemployed, pre-school children in need of social services, and a disproportionate number of illiterate citizens. Hopkins, as the head of the FERA, immediately began to address these issues under the umbrella program of the EEP. Two individuals from the Office of Education were borrowed to administer this program, Lewis R. Alderman and Cyril F. Klinefelter.⁸⁰

The EEP courses were taught by unemployed adults knowledgeable about a subject or field. It was difficult for educators to understand that EEP classes did not require certified teachers. Quite often adults with non-academic expertise were sought for EEP teaching positions. People who had experience in a field were selected to teach. The EEP classes included: literacy, vocational training (trades, home economics, agricultural, bookkeeping, accounting, typing, industrial, and vocational adjustment and counseling), vocational rehabilitation for adults with physical impairments, and general education (workers' education, parent education, arts & crafts, general academics, and cultural education).⁸¹ Adult education was available to those people who were on relief rolls. The EEP program also included nursery schools and college student-aid. The one EEP program that required certified teachers was the rural school teacher program, which paid the salaries of rural school teachers on relief in public elementary and secondary schools. Hopkins, in early February 1934, notified FDR that "every rural school in

⁸⁰ Relief and Education, Folder Miscellaneous, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

⁸¹ Ibid.; Harry Hopkins to State Emergency Relief Administrators, July 2, 1934, Folder Miscellaneous, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

America which had made reasonable effort to remain open but had been closed because of lack of funds, will be reopened.”⁸²

Zook, during a White House conference in 1934, told the audience of educators that the Office of Education had no administrative authority over relief funds for education but had been serving the FERA in an advisory capacity.⁸³ The FERA and the Office of Education worked together in developing the EEP:

We quite consciously selected fields of work that were outside of the field regularly occupied by the present school system. We did that because we did not want, through the use of Federal funds, to form a relief program to interfere too much with the regular conduct and responsibility of the educational work in the States.... It is our conception that education is primarily the State and local responsibility. Hence, we have attempted to place upon you people the real responsibility for the conduct of this work, interfering as little as possible in an administrative way with the actual conduct of it.⁸⁴

The EEP varied by state and was created by the State Superintendent of Education and the State Relief Administrator.⁸⁵ In a memorandum to state relief administrators Hopkins stated:

It is my desire that the emergency educational program covering various phases of adult education and nursery schools shall be so administered in the States as to build toward a permanent and integral part of the regular established public school programs....⁸⁶

⁸² Harry Hopkins to FDR, February 3, 1934, Folder 1934 Jan-Mar, Box 1, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁸³ Transcript for White House Conference, Folder White House Conference, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ L. R. Alderman to George B. Baker, November 17, 1933, Folder 1935, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

⁸⁶ Harry Hopkins to State Relief Administrators, Folder April-May 1934, Box 1, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

Through local administration of the EEP programs, Hopkins hoped they would become incorporated into the public school system. Zook shared these sentiments.⁸⁷

In terms of vocational programming, state educational administrators were not including the EEP in their established adult education programs. Klinefelter, in the early years of the EEP, was disappointed with state education officials for not wanting to incorporate the EEP into their current vocational programs. State officials instead used the EEP funds to create auxiliary programs. Klinefelter reported many cases where state rehabilitation officials wanted the EEP money to pay workers to continue programs that the state was already offering and resisted hiring staff to work on new EEP. Because of this resistance, the Emergency Relief Administration stated it would be looking in reports for an appropriately sized staff to show that the EEP was being sufficiently supported or else funds would be stopped.⁸⁸

In a letter to state officials, Hopkins mentioned that a lump sum of money would be given to the State Relief Administrators to provide unemployment relief to rural school teachers. Hopkins had to resort to dispersing money in lump sums because “of the slowness with which States are gathering the needed information on weak school districts, and the pressure to make funds available to take care of unpaid teachers...”⁸⁹

Conversely, the people working in the states complained that the WPA and Hopkins’ administration was working too slowly in getting the funds to the states. One educational group from Chicago was baffled at the “demoralizing delay” when funds

⁸⁷ Transcript for White House Conference, Folder White House Conference, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

⁸⁸ C.F. Klinefelter to J. C. Wright, September 29, 1933, Folder 1935, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

⁸⁹ Harry Hopkins to State Emergency Relief Administrations and Chief School Officers, March 23, 1934, Folder Miscellaneous, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69. NACP.

were allocated and teachers were financially suffering.⁹⁰ A more condemning statement of Hopkins, as well as FDR himself, came in a letter to Studebaker from Charles W.

Taylor, Nebraska State Superintendent of Public Instruction:

You will recall that during the last two years the commissioners of education and the state superintendents of the various states have repeatedly urged upon Congress the necessity of appropriating a definite amount to be used in supplementing the available resources of the various states in order that the schools might remain open. At various times when the state superintendent and commissioners of education were urging this matter upon their representatives in Washington and appealing to the President of the United States, we were told that a reasonable amount of the relief funds would be set aside for education.

Mr. Hopkins now definitely states that the FERA has no intention of extending this type of relief. It seems to us that we should now appeal to our Representatives and Senators at Washington, knowing that we need no longer hope for favorable action from Mr. Hopkins.

Mr. Hopkins may say that certain funds are being earmarked and made available to the various states for an Emergency Educational Program. The fact remains that this program is limited to emergency nursery schools and adult education, all of which means that nothing can be done for the boys and girls who will be deprived of their opportunities for a common school education....

When we were in Washington last spring and again last fall, we were given rather definitely to understand that there would be such a thing as aid for needy school districts. Now Mr. Hopkins insists that it is a matter of relief for the individual school teacher, rather than to the school district. Such an arrangement is wholly unsatisfactory insofar as Nebraska is concerned. It does not serve the best interests of the boys and girls residing in districts that are unable to carry on their normal program.

In conclusion, may we say that as we view the situation, it appears that we may as well definitely decide that, insofar as the allocation of relief funds is concerned, Mr. Hopkins and the President of the United States are determined that almost every other agency of government shall take precedence over the education of the youth of the nation. We have reached this conclusion reluctantly. Why cannot the people at Washington see that the education of the children of people on relief is a fundamental relief program?⁹¹

⁹⁰ Mabel P. Simpson to Harry Hopkins, November 8, 1935, Folder 1935 July-Dec, Box 2, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁹¹ Charles W. Taylor to John W. Studebaker, February 25, 1935, Folder HR4745, Box 84, 74th Congress Committee on Education HR 4745-HR12120, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C.

After the creation of the WPA on May 6, 1935, by Executive Order 7034, the cooperation between states and the federal government decreased further. The WPA programs, in comparison to the FERA, had more federal oversight and authority.⁹² Tensions were also building between the two personnel borrowed from the Office of Education (Lewis R. Alderman and Cyril F. Klinefelter) and the WPA administration. The NEA stated, in a document entitled “Public Education and the New Deal,” that the Office of Education personnel do not have an influence on the FERA’s educational programs since they are without administrative authority. “Judging from the action which has been taken on the recommendation of these professional people, the use of their services is apparently a gesture of cooperation with educational people rather than an intention to administer educational affairs in a professional manner.”⁹³ One memorandum, sent from Aubrey Williams to Alderman, supported the NEA’s conclusions as Williams told him to not give out instructions or information to state or local officials without approval. There was no additional information in the memorandum to provide a reason for his directive. Klinefelter stated to Williams that he felt the education division was subconsciously thought of as a “stepchild” of the FERA because the personnel were actually from another department.⁹⁴

Despite the FERA having an education division, the rural teacher program of the EEP was primarily a relief program to help teachers who were unemployed rather than an

⁹² O’Coin, 143.

⁹³ Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, “Public Education and the New Deal,” September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁴ Aubrey Williams to Dr. Alderman, May 4, 1934, Folder April-May 1934, Box 1, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69, NACP; C. Klinefelter to Aubrey Williams, August 1, 1934, Folder July-Dec 1934, Box 2, Records of the Emergency Education Program, RG 69, NACP.

educational program. This conclusion was made by the President's Advisory Committee on Education that reviewed the EEP's rural teacher program. Additionally, the federal government created, administered, and controlled the program, leaving needy states to comply with their decisions and requests. Because state administrators felt educational programs are under their jurisdiction, they did not continue the rural teacher program when their economic situation improved. Their dislike for federal control over education contributed to the discontinuation of the rural teacher program.⁹⁵

The President's Advisory Committee on Education also noted some of the problems with the EEP in general. Those teachers who were unemployed tended to lack experience and were either very old or very young. The low salaries for the teaching positions attracted this segment of teachers. Other issues included "poor and ineffectual coordination and integration ... Lack of cooperation from some state and local officials or agencies. Lack of assurance of the work's continuing over fixed and effective terms. Frequent unexpected and radical change of policy."⁹⁶ Even though there were problems with the EEP, the President's Advisory Committee on Education concluded it should be made permanent. Its educational programs had decreased illiteracy in the U.S. by 16%, operated 1,600 nursery schools, provided jobs to unemployed teachers, educated groups that were previously not given consideration such as adults, and developed new techniques that were "free from orthodox educational traditions" relying heavily upon

⁹⁵ Federal Aid for Education in the States and Territories, August 16, 1937, Folder Federal Aid for Education in the States and Territories- Cooking, Box 12, Subject Files: Special Reports and Background Materials, President's Advisory Committee on Education 1936-1939, FDRL.

⁹⁶ The Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance The Works Progress Administration, prepared by Frederick H. Bair, October 1937, Box 12, Subject Files: Special Reports and Background Materials, President's Advisory Committee on Education 1936-1939, FDRL.

individual teacher's ability.⁹⁷ The experiences and results of the EEP highlighted problems within the public school system.

Not only did the educational programs of the New Deal address indigent students, they were also able to make them literate. New Dealers were frustrated that schools under-served and even excluded students who had the capacity to excel in their studies. The teachers in the programs were aghast when they learned the large number of people who were illiterate or those who had obsolete job skills. Because students lacked relevant job skills, the bulk of New Deal educational programs were vocational. The ability of the New Deal leaders, who were not educators, to design and implement educational programs that attracted and assisted many students was a critique of professional educators and the public school system in general.⁹⁸

The NEA had a different opinion on the EEP programs and its relationship to public schools:

Much of the emergency educational program was concerned with fields of work which for a long time had been fostered by state and local educational authorities. For example, a definite part of the Smith-Hughes vocational work was concerned with the organization of part-time and evening classes for adults. Many state departments of education had been engaged in campaigns for the eradication of illiteracy and marked results had been attained through this work. Vocational rehabilitation has for some years been carried on through state departments of education by the aid of federal and state funds. Nursery schools have been developed in our better city school systems. It is quite evident that what was needed in these fields was further financial support for the regularly constituted public school systems.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, under the direction of Doak S. Campbell, October 1937, Folder New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, Box 17, Staff Studies, Presidential Advisory Committee on Education, FDRL.

⁹⁸ Fass, 47; Urban and Wagoner, Jr., 272.

⁹⁹ Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, "Public Education and the New Deal," September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

The NEA thought of EEP programs as primarily educational and argued its funds should go be allocated to regular school channels. FDR avoided this funding structure by labeling the EEP as a relief program. FDR stated that the New Deal's federal educational programs were created as a way to provide work relief.

“It has been the relief feature which has justified the Federal Government's supplying funds for programs so largely educational. Had these programs been wholly educational and had they represented essentially a Federal plan to aid in the support of education, it would have been my policy to use only the regularly constituted agencies of education to administer them.”¹⁰⁰

The President's Advisory Committee on Education agreed that new educational programs like those found in the EEP should be placed in public schools. The accomplishments of adult education programs helped to highlight problems with similar programs in the regular education system. The committee suggested that the best parts of the programs be maintained and transferred from their relief programs and incorporated into permanent educational systems.¹⁰¹ In fact, the President's Advisory Committee on Education's recommendations for the EEP emphasized a program

founded on an educational basis and not on a relief basis. It will be operated by educators and not be relief administrators. This statement should not be taken to imply that nothing good has evolved from the emergency education programs. The statement is made entirely on the thesis that education carried on by trained educators and administered through regularly constituted and equipped educational agencies promises

¹⁰⁰ Joyce L. Kornbluh, *A New Deal for Workers' Education: The Workers' Service Program, 1933-1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 118.

¹⁰¹ Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, under the direction of Doak S. Campbell, October 1937, Folder New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, Box 17, Staff Studies, Presidential Advisory Committee on Education, FDRL; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, Hearing on S. 1305, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 1939, 58 and 59.

to be the most effective, as well as the most economical type of educational program.¹⁰²

Of all the New Deal programs, the EEP was unique in that it was directly related to educational programming. Unlike the CCC and the NYA, it provided services to pre-school children through adults. CCC and NYA focused on helping youth learn basic academic skills and to secure employment. Vocational training was emphasized in all programs.

Analysis of FDR's Educational Policies in New Deal Programs

Since policies are derived from the people that create and administer programs, it is noteworthy that all of the New Deal programs were headed by non-educators. The administrative decision was a logical choice for FDR because public and vocational schools failed to assist youth in gaining employable skills. According to FDR, the New Deal programs were centered around relief, not education. FDR never intended for New Deal educational programs to become permanent. The educational components in the New Deal youth programs were to help youth train for jobs. The target population for New Deal programs was for people who were unemployed and not being served by public schools.¹⁰³ Zook was a key person in the inspiration of the educational components of the CCC and some of the EEP programs, but that is where his role ended. The power and funds to carry out these programs were left with Hopkins, Williams, and

¹⁰² Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, under the direction of Doak S. Campbell, October 1937, Folder New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, Box 17, Staff Studies, Presidential Advisory Committee on Education, FDRL.

¹⁰³ O'Coin, 5, 22, 23, and 320; Fass, 47.

Fechner. Having personally selected these individuals, FDR knew the policies they would adhere to and therefore FDR's educational policies were aligned with those developed in New Deal programs.

The NEA, which wanted a prominent role in education, became frustrated that educators were not included in New Deal programs. The NEA reacted by repetitiously demanding that educational programs be handed over to the experts but that did not happen. Even after the government reorganization in 1939, the EEP remained a WPA program and the Office of Education, the NYA, and the CCC were transferred to the Federal Security Administration (FSA). Moreover, the majority of those who taught classes in the CCC, the NYA, and the EEP (besides those in public schools) were not certified instructors, resulting in a distrust and lack of support from educational administrators. Complaints regarding quality of instruction ensued and these problems upset the NEA because it gave the title of teacher to people without teaching certificates.¹⁰⁴ In doing so, New Deal programs stripped educators of their professionalism and made certificates in teaching insignificant. To FDR, people other than educators were capable of developing educational programs; in other words, in FDR's mind, educators are not professionals with specialized knowledge.

FDR's decision to not have Studebaker head the NYA despite pressure from educators showed that educators influence over the president was weak and that he cared more for Father Burke's opinion. FDR needed Williams' reformist ideas to capture left-wing Democrats, and the NYA to FDR was not primarily an educational program but a

¹⁰⁴ William G. Carr, "Uncle Sam: Educator," December 14, 1939, Folder Carr-Papers, Box 1292, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA, GWU, Washington, D.C.; O'Coin, 137 and 147; Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 98.

relief program. In its review of the NYA, the President's Advisory Committee on Education agreed that the NYA's programs required expertise from education, public works, labor, and relief. Its recommendation was to combine the NYA and the CCC into a new agency since their programs held many similarities. They believed it should be placed under a department that included public health, education, and welfare.¹⁰⁵ This recommendation made sense since the NYA helped youth through work projects, student-aid, and apprentice programs. The only activity that was clearly educational was the supplemental evening classes taken by youth in the apprentice program.

FDR's silence after Congress had elevated the educational program as a main goal for the CCC in 1937 revealed his indifference towards the CCC's educational program. Had FDR wanted to bolster CCC's educational programs but his concern over being accused of providing federal aid to education or trying to initiate federal controls on education prevented him from doing so would have been diminished since Congress initiated this push. But FDR did not emphasize CCC's educational program and it continued to exist in the background of the CCC. The actions and decisions of FDR regarding the CCC's educational program illustrates that he did not support or value education for the CCC enrollees. In the end, the failure of the CCC's educational program to reach its full potential and have a positive impact on the enrollees rests with FDR himself.

FDR's decisions regarding the CCC's educational program indicated he did not consider it an important component to the CCC. Marsh's statement before his resignation

¹⁰⁵ Report of the Advisory Committee on Education, February 23, 1938, Box 336, 75th Congress Committee Papers, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C.; This proposed department may have been the precursor to the 1953 Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

summarizes these sentiments, “While the CCC Camps were established in the spring of 1933, the present Educational Program was not set up until December, 1933. It was, therefore, given an incidental rather than a major place in the CCC scheme of things.”¹⁰⁶

The CCC, envisioned by FDR, was a conservation program. Educational programming was only added into the camps after Zook and other educators pressured FDR. FDR had no intention of education becoming a main objective for the CCC, indicated by his removal of decision-making power from Marsh and Studebaker in the Office of Education and depriving the program of financial resources. Fechner proved to be a good representative of FDR’s views as Director of the CCC. On the majority of occasions, whenever FDR was asked to step in to resolve an issue, he took Fechner’s side.

FDR communicated to the public that the educational components in relief programs were only created because of their ability to provide economic relief. When the need changed from relief to war preparation, youth programs were quickly adjusted to meet war needs. Relief programs, along with their educational components, ended shortly after the economy improved and unemployment decreased, suggesting the main purpose of the programs was indeed relief.¹⁰⁷

In short, New Deal programs were focused on unemployment and providing youth a structured and productive environment. For the CCC, the educational program was not valued or considered desirable by FDR since conservation was its primary purpose. The NYA’s educational component was only one part of the youth program but student aid and work projects were the main objectives. The EEP was an educational

¹⁰⁶ C.S. Marsh to John W. Studebaker, January 17, 1935, Folder CCC Permanent Feb. 1-Mar. 31, 1937, Box 16, Records of Special Projects and Programs, RG 12, NACP.

¹⁰⁷ Reiman, 178; William A. Mitchell, “Religion and Federal Aid to Education,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 14, no. 1, Religion and the State (Winter 1949): 115.

program that was kept under Hopkins as a relief program despite educators' concerns. FDR's decision not to place the program in the Office of Education could have been justified out of his concern of being accused of trying to control education at the federal level, but the fact that the staff from the Office of Education under Hopkins was devoid of decision-making power leads one to believe FDR was wary of educators. An examination of the educational components of New Deal programs showed that FDR's educational policies indicated that education was viewed broadly and was valuable to assist in employment and job skills.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCATES AND RESEARCHERS

Despite little attention to statements made by Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) regarding education in the literature, he was consistent when he spoke of his views and values on education.¹ Even as governor of New York, before his first presidential term, FDR not only talked of the value of education, but he supported schools financially.

There is another reason why the expenditures of the states have gone up. The educational standards are higher. In 1920 the State of New York was extending state aid for education at a cost of ten million dollars; it is now extending it at the cost of more than one hundred million. Nearly one-third of all the expenditures of the State government are going as aids to education. Perhaps this is not the right policy, but it seems to be in line with modern thought, and I do not believe there is anybody who can suggest any alternative that would not be reactionary.²

FDR was aware of the financial disparities between school districts in his state and spoke about educational inequalities. He was particularly concerned for poorer districts that “fail to receive their fair share. The method of apportionment should be simplified and made to conform more closely to the relative wealth of the districts.”³

As president, he gave a speech at Temple University where he reiterated his belief that all children have the right to equal education no matter where they reside.⁴ To him the education of citizens was important because their security forms the basis of the security for the country. All levels of government were responsible to make sure as many

¹ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 103.

² Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, “Public Education and the New Deal,” September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

³ FDR, State of New York, Governor’s Message, January 2, 1929, Folder Roosevelt, Franklin D. Messages, Box 3 Graves, Marks Papers, New York State Archives, Albany, NY.

citizens were provided an education. Without a proper education, the people would not be able to “react intelligently to public problems.”⁵ In a message sent to the National Education Association (NEA), FDR stated “that it is the responsibility of government to carry out the will of the people. But it is the responsibility of organized education to make sure that the people understand their problems and are prepared to make intelligent choices when they express their will.”⁶ If democracy was to thrive, then its citizenry must be able to participate in government.

Although FDR valued education, he shared his concerns with educators about schools. He thought teachers needed to be better trained and schools must change with their students. Since the students have diverse interests and needs, the schools must match those interests and needs. He also thought that education should not begin and end with elementary and secondary education, but that people should be able to receive an education at any age.⁷ In a speech to the Citizens’ Conference on the Crisis in Education on April 5, 1934, FDR stated that “the scope of education becomes such as to provide educational opportunities for every person from early childhood on into adult life.”⁸

In terms of the relationship of the federal government to education in the states, FDR as governor stated that education fell under the jurisdiction of states and noted that

⁴ Miss Hale, Radio transcript of “Our American School,” May 9, 1936, Folder Florence Hale’s Visit to White House (May 5, 1936), Box 1 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵ Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, “Public Education and the New Deal,” September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

⁶ FDR to Studebaker, February 18, 1937, Folder Studebaker, John W., Box President’s Personal File (PPF) 2893-2911, FDRL.

⁷ Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, “Public Education and the New Deal,” September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

⁸ Ibid.

the federal government “can act as a clearinghouse of information and as an incentive to higher standards.”⁹ Even though this statement was made during his governorship, FDR as president seemed to continue this view of the Office of Education.

FDR and the Office of Education

The Office of Education was in the Department of Interior and administered by Harold L. Ickes, who recommended George Zook to be FDR’s first Commissioner of Education. Roughly a year later Zook resigned from his position and started a career with the American Council on Education. Unfortunately, I found no personal insight in the archives with respect to why Zook resigned. Warren, author of *To Enforce Education: A History of the Founding Years of the United States Office of Education* stated Zook expected FDR’s New Deal would include federal aid to education and when that did not occur, he resigned.¹⁰ Zook’s desire for federal aid to education without federal control was well known. He also wanted the Office of Education to have departmental status. John W. Studebaker became the next Commissioner of Education in mid-1934. Studebaker’s first few months allowed him to become acclimated to his new work under FDR’s administration. Unfortunately, he quickly butted heads with those around him as indicated by rumors that Robert Fechner, director of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and Studebaker were not getting along in their administration

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Donald R. Warren, *To Enforce Education: A History of the Founding Years of the United States Office of Education* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 179.

of the CCC educational program.¹¹ The “limited results [in CCC education programs] infuriated government education officials, and bitter inter-departmental outbursts erupted periodically.”¹² Moreover, Harry N. Rosenfield, assistant to the Federal Security Administration (FSA), admitted years later that “Studebaker wasn’t liked in many quarters.”¹³

In April 1935, a representative from the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), Father George Johnson, sent a concerning letter to Father John Burke regarding Studebaker’s activities:

The United States Commissioner of Education, John Ward Studebaker, has been working very actively in the past two months to have the direction and control of the educational phases of the emergency program concentrated in the Office of Education.... Studebaker is asking for control of the \$300,000,000 allocated under the Works Bill for clerical, professional and educational services. A large portion of this money will no doubt be used to pay the salaries of teachers in impoverished school districts. Studebaker wants this money distributed through the state departments of education by the United States Office of Education.... If Studebaker is successful in accomplishing his present purposes, the Office of Education will assume a place in the direction of Federal affairs that is was never supposed to hold, and a long step will be taken toward the establishment of a Federal Department of Education with legal and financial power by which it may control the social purposes and specific processes of American education.¹⁴

The next day Father Burke wrote to FDR and advised him to not give the Office of Education control over emergency relief funds. He furthered stated that if these funds

¹¹ John W. Rieken, “George Frederick Zook: Educational Leader in a Crucial Decade” (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 2005), 44, 57, 72, and 76; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 163; FDR to Harold Ickes, February 19, 1935, Folder Studebaker, John W., Box PPF 2893-2911, FDRL.

¹² Smith, 29.

¹³ James R. Fuchs, “Oral History Interview with Harry N. Rosenfield,” *Truman Library - Harry Rosenfield Oral History Interview*, July 23, 1980, para. 46, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/rosenfld.htm> (accessed December 26, 2011).

were placed under Studebaker it would be a step towards federal control of education.¹⁵

A few days later FDR told Father Burke, “Your letter presents very clearly a point of view that will be taken into consideration in determining this matter.”¹⁶ Whether Father Burke convinced FDR or if FDR was already against Studebaker’s idea is not clear, but nearly all of the relief funds remained with Harry Hopkins, head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which was replaced by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935.

On July 1, 1935, Mr. Strauss, the Director of Press Relations in the Department of Interior, received a letter from a news reporter named Mr. Boutwell. Harold Ickes, the Secretary of the Department of Interior, after having read the letter, was concerned enough with its contents to send it to FDR. Mr. Boutwell was covering the American Library Association and the NEA conventions and wanted Mr. Strauss to know how negatively the members were talking about FDR. Their shock was due to the fact that Studebaker’s youth program ideas were used to create the National Youth Administration (NYA), yet he was not given any administrative leadership in the agency. Studebaker was questioned by other educators as to why he would tolerate such treatment and has not resigned yet. The reporter described Studebaker as loyal to FDR and unwilling to side with those present at the conference. Mr. Boutwell then summarized the problem educators were having with FDR:

¹⁴ Dr. Johnson to Burke, April 11, 1935, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

¹⁵ Father Burke to FDR, April 12, 1935, Folder 1 U.S. Government Executive 1934-1936, Box 123 NCWC, CUA.

¹⁶ FDR to Father Burke, April 25, 1935, Folder 1 U.S. Government Executive 1934-1936, Box 123 NCWC, CUA.

These groups are ready and eager to be friendly to the President. His declared aims to help the common people are the aims they have pursued for years. But when it comes to carrying out some of these social improvements the leadership of these groups has been flouted. Their proposals have received a chilly reception. Writing as an objective reporter I can say that person after person in education, librarianship and recreation feels that the President has gone out of his way to kick their professions in the shins. The only group that gets a break is the social service group... In my opinion the growing gulf between the White House and these professional groups is quite unnecessary. By moving along two lines which requires little effort and little money the President could win their goodwill. The first is that by messages and statements he pay tribute to the work and achievements of these professional groups. The second is that the President place in the hands of leaders of these groups -- (and especially the Office of Education) -- responsibility for carrying out Government emergency activities that fall within their fields of work.¹⁷

Had FDR followed Studebaker's youth program and placed the NYA under him, the program would have gone through state and local units of public schools. There was tension between FDR as well as his staff and public schools. Many of his staff members' stereotyped educators as lacking ingenuity, being reactionary, and being protective of the continuance of a traditional educational system.¹⁸ "New Deal leaders, including President Roosevelt and Hopkins, were often irked by inertia in the state and local education hierarchy and these reactions created tensions and distrust."¹⁹

The head of the NYA, Aubrey Williams, like other New Dealers, thought educators did not think most people could learn, would not be honest in their teaching about social problems in society, and were not bothered by an educational system that focused on preparing a small wealthier segment of society to go to college.²⁰

¹⁷ D. Boutwell to Mr. Strauss, July 1, 1935, Folder Dept of Ed, 1933-1935, Box 12, OF 6e-6g Department of Interior, FDRL.

¹⁸ Smith, 36; Cohen, "Remember the CCC?," 371.

¹⁹ Kornbluh, 118.

²⁰ Smith, 39.

The New Dealers who were developing a new style of education were primarily concerned with the poor and with the working class. By contrast, educators who had long trumpeted the notion that schools should be class-blind blamed the New Dealers for creating programs designed primarily for those on the bottom of society. People like Williams knew that the schools were in fact neither class-blind nor color-blind, and they believed it a virtue that the educational programs of the NYA, the CCC, and the WPA deliberately favored families on relief.²¹

Because of Mr. Boutwell's letter FDR asked Studebaker to come and see him.²² The topics discussed during the meeting were not recorded but Studebaker's letter to FDR after the meeting provides some insight. Studebaker met with FDR and Hopkins and was excited about the projects the Office of Education could get involved in to help "our common cause [in education] ... I want to arouse to a state of enthusiasm the million public school workers of this country and all of their intimate friends and relatives. I need concrete evidence of Federal interest in the organization of public education in order to do this."²³ Essentially, Studebaker told FDR he would not be able to have educators on his side unless FDR showed them he was willing to trust educators such as himself. One way he suggested FDR to provide evidence of his confidence in educators was to approve his budget for the Office of Education.

Making sure he maximized the benefit of his meeting with FDR and Hopkins, Studebaker sent a follow up letter to FDR in late August because he had not heard from Hopkins regarding his plans for relief funds in the Office of Education.

I bring this problem directly to your attention because I am discouraged and embarrassed. My feeling of discouragement and

²¹ Ibid.

²² FDR to Harold Ickes, July 13, 1935, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

²³ John Studebaker to FDR, July 23, 1935, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

embarrassment is daily becoming intensified as I realize how the conditions which affect me will inevitably embarrass you and your Administration. Moreover, I am growing restive in a situation in which a peculiar combination of circumstances restrains me from administering educational activities which educators in the country believe should be administered through this office.

And, Mr. President, any embarrassment which may later come to you because of lack of opportunity for me to work effectively from my strategic, but at present relatively impotent position, is utterly unnecessary. Only a few very practicable changes in organization combined with an allocation of relatively small sums of the emergency funds to the Office of Education will make all the difference between what can be a growing confidence in your Administration and opposition to it among several million adults directly or indirectly very definitely interested in public education.²⁴

Studebaker created five proposals: 1) transfer the Emergency Educational Plan's (EEP) adult education and nursery school program to the Office of Education 2) give \$369,300 of emergency funds to the Office of Education for adult programs 3) approve a research project for white collar workers 4) provide money requested in the Office of Education's budget and 5) grant \$5 million for adult and youth forums. Studebaker ended his letter with a defeated tone: "If these proposals are not approved it will be difficult for me to see that the Office of Education is regarded as of much importance or that it has reason to hope for any proper development in the future."²⁵ FDR met with Studebaker about his requests and required additional information from him, which Studebaker submitted in a memorandum dated August 30, 1935. In the memorandum Studebaker expressed his enthusiasm for getting the chance to do something: "I am eager to do something worth while that will really help in the great cause for which we work. I want the chance to

²⁴ John Studebaker to FDR August 24, 1935, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

²⁵ Ibid.

prove that we can do it.”²⁶ The letter focused on two areas, the forums and a statement on the emergency needs of education. The forums provided a space for the community to come together and talk about current event topics. Studebaker estimated the cost of experimental forums would be \$1,170,000. He justified this amount of money by focusing on the how education could help the unemployment problem.

To enable the Office of Education to extend its service in meeting the needs of youth and adults resulting from the emergency and unemployment, I respectfully request that you authorize the Works Progress Administration to make available for the use of the Office of Education for the year ending June 30, 1936, the sum of \$190,360. The money will be expended in such a way as to emphasize the needs of the unemployed and will stimulate activity in the fields of general adult education, fine arts, extension of library service, and health education; for preparation and broadcasting of radio programs, and for incidental expenses.²⁷

By September, Studebaker was still trying to convince FDR to allow him to have his forum project. He pleaded with FDR: “You know how eager I am to help you to do this significant thing and a few others too. At present I am enslaved by the puerility of routine. Please emancipate me. Set me free to do something that will make my job count.”²⁸ In late September FDR sent a memorandum for the secretary of interior instructing him to tell Studebaker his papers and request were out of order and did not represent their agreement. He then went point by point over each of Studebaker’s programs and summarized the amount each should cost and his thoughts. FDR had approved of testing forums in ten locations, an emergency radio program, library

²⁶ John Studebaker to FDR, August 30, 1935, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

²⁷ John Studebaker to FDR, Emergency Needs of the Office of Education, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

²⁸ Studebaker to FDR, September 3, 1935, Folder Department of Education, Sept. 1935-1936, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

services, administrative assistants, a study on local school units, college research, demonstration of radio and motion pictures in schools, and a survey of vocational and educational opportunities for Negroes. In terms of Studebaker's request for administering the EEP programs, FDR stated:

There was no thought of transferring things that have been in actual operation under F.E.R.A. for the past two years, except in those instances where the objective is wholly educational.... There is no earthly use in transferring the borderline cases which have been in operation successfully for some time.²⁹

In the end, on September 23, 1935, FDR approved the Federal Forum Project using the WPA money. The program functioned from 1936-1941. The forums were setup like town-hall meetings where citizens shared their opinions and debated a current event topic. The goal was for citizens to hear diverse perspectives and to think critically about an issue. FDR liked the idea of forums because they encouraged and promoted democracy.³⁰

More problems came for Studebaker when a letter dated August 30, 1935, was shared with FDR and his administration. The letter was from Mr. Voelker, Superintendent of the Lansing, Michigan school system to Emil Hurja of the Democratic National Committee. Voelker discussed a conversation he had with Studebaker where Studebaker stated FDR was not concerned with education and catered to Catholics. In contrast to Boutwell's version of Studebaker's mannerisms and loyalty to FDR at the

²⁹ FDR to the Acting Secretary of the Interior, September 26, 1935, Folder Department of Education, Sept. 1935-1936, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

³⁰ FDR to Studebaker, November 5, 1937, File Studebaker, John W., Box PPF 2893-2911, FDRL.

NEA conference, Voelker stated the opposite. He referred to Studebaker's conference address on the federal relationship with states as harshly condemning.³¹

Then, in September 1935, Willard Givens, the Executive Secretary of the NEA, published a critical article of FDR and his handling of public schools. A hand-written note in the archives indicated that Hurja stated Williams asked Studebaker to stop the article but Studebaker was noted as saying, "he wouldn't stop it – he believed in it."³² Williams told Hopkins in a memorandum that he thought the information used in Givens' article came from Studebaker himself.³³ The article further intensified the tension between Studebaker and other New Deal administrators.

According to an oral history interview of Oscar R. Ewing, Administrator of the Federal Security Agency (FSA), Studebaker did not work well with FDR's administration, and the only exception to this was Mrs. Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt would intervene when FDR, based on his superior's recommendation, Harold Ickes, would try to fire Studebaker. Because of Studebaker's background in the public school system, they considered him a part of that system. This association was problematic for Studebaker since FDR, Frances Perkins, and Williams were not impressed with educators. Ickes urged FDR to fire Studebaker a few times, but Mrs. Roosevelt would support Studebaker and would persuade FDR to do likewise. Mrs. Roosevelt and Studebaker had a close relationship and would help him try to accomplish his goals by talking with FDR. He, in turn, would sometimes ask her to speak to Studebaker when

³¹ Paul F. Voelker to Emil Hurja, August 30, 1935, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

³² Emil Hurja handwritten note, Folder Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12 OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

³³ Smith, 39.

issues with the Office of Education would arise. Even with Mrs. Roosevelt by his side, Studebaker's attempts to gain control of some of the emergency funds were fruitless. He was only able to secure five projects with emergency money: forums, radio, and three research studies.³⁴

One of the reasons Studebaker sought emergency funds was because the Office of Education's budget was inadequate. The President's Advisory Committee on Education noted:

Notwithstanding its many worthy contributions, there have been very few periods when the Office of Education has provided national leadership of the quality needed for the best development of American education. It has existed as a minor bureau in an executive department whose major interests have been foreign to education. It has been chronically understaffed. Prior to 1930, it had great difficulty in attracting and retaining a competent staff because of the unfavorable relation of its salary levels to those of major universities and city school systems.... The Committee recommends that the Office of Education remain predominantly an agency for research and leadership, as distinguished from an administrative agency.³⁵

Not only were the Office of Education's budgets minimal but the number of employees was cut back. "The office had more money in 1932 under President Hoover (\$280,000) than during the New Deal through 1939. In 1935 the staff dwindled to eighty-three from a high of one hundred in 1933-34, and only rose slowly to ninety-two in 1939."³⁶

³⁴ James R. Fuchs, "Oral History Interview with Oscar R. Ewing," *Truman Library - Oscar R. Ewing Oral History Interview, May 1, 1969*, May 1, 1969, para. 235, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/ewing3.htm> (accessed December 26, 2011); H.M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press/Columbia University, 1999), 188 and 192; Pickett, 65; The Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, *New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance The Works Progress Administration*, prepared by Frederick H. Bair, October 1937, Box 12, Subject Files: Special Reports and Background Materials, President's Advisory Committee on Education 1936-1939, FDRL; FDR to Mrs. Roosevelt, December 21, 1938, Folder 1938 July-Dec, Box 3, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

³⁵ Report of the Advisory Committee on Education, February 23, 1938, Box 336, 75th Congress Committee Papers, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁶ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 108.

Studebaker personally suffered from budget cuts as evidenced by his low salary in comparison to other heads of offices. The situation escalated to the point that Studebaker told an interviewer that his salary would not permit him to live in Washington and that was why he resigned.³⁷

Studebaker's position as Commissioner of Education held little power, especially without an adequate budget. He made efforts to exert the power he did have by designing new programs, requesting money for projects, and recommending changes to his agency. Most of the time he was not able to achieve his goals but he was persistent, although blunt and intemperate. The Office of Education under FDR was minimized.

FDR and his Relationship with Educators

Immediately as FDR came into office he received letters and requests for meetings from educators. One such letter, which came before FDR was even inaugurated, was from a small group of educators at Teachers College in Columbia University including George Counts and William H. Kilpatrick, two highly regarded progressive educators. The letter included a nine-page document designed to help FDR formulate an economic plan for public schools. The letter also included 220 signatures from educators representing elementary grades through college. The author of the letter, Clyde R. Miller, an original member of this group of educators, thought FDR would find the document helpful since it encapsulated many of FDR's own ideas. The document began with descriptions of New York children, one-fourth of whom were malnourished and fed from a teachers' relief fund, and it continued on to describe graduates of high

³⁷ Harry Kursh, *The United States Office of Education: A Century of Service* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books,

school and colleges who could not find employment. “Though highly trained they wait vacantly in dangerous idleness, feeling that society has no place for them and seemingly does not want them.”³⁸ The conditions these educators had to witness compelled them to try to help schools. They referred to the lack of opportunity for young people to reach their full potential as a “conflict of ideals.” These comments were in addition to attacks on public schools via budget cuts, decreased staffs, increase enrollment of students, proposals of tuition fees for high schools, supplementary health services eliminated from elementary schools, and focus on merely the 3Rs.

These proposals are discriminations against the poor. As teachers and school officials, we willingly accept our fair share of reduced income, but we cannot consent to economies made at the expense of the children. That would be an irreparable damage, not to be considered even as a last resort.³⁹

The document then referred to the outrage their students must have had as they sat in their classes learning about democracy and the American ideal of equal opportunity when reality told them it was all hypocrisy. They felt in order to not be hypocrites, educators must work towards making these ideals possible. Their proposed solution was to redirect society to focus on helping the majority of people through interdependence. They suggested that a National Coordinating Council be formed to help devise policies to meet the needs of the public. A month later, FDR’s secretary wrote to Miller stating they were not able to write earlier since FDR had received so much mail after his inauguration.⁴⁰

Although it is probably true that an incoming president during an economic crisis would

1965), 19; Pickett, 57.

³⁸ Clyde Miller to Raymond Moley, February 9, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

³⁹ Ibid.

have an enormous amount of mail, FDR's response letter did not address any of the content that was so passionately written by these educators; in fact, there was no mention of anything about the document at all.

A request to meet with the president to secure federal loans to keep schools open was submitted by an alliance of eight educational organizations, including the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). An appointment for this request was attempted to be made but the details were not provided in the note attached to the letter. Another request was for FDR to write a statement of encouragement to California that public schools would not be harmed by the economy. Stephen T. Early, the Assistant Secretary to the president, replied to this request and stated that FDR was busy, and if he gave a statement to one group of people he must do so to all who requested such statements.⁴¹ Another request for a general statement by FDR to citizens in general was made by a superintendent from a county in Arkansas:

If you believe in our free system of public education, will you please at some appropriate time make a public statement to the effect that you do? In our part of the country we are facing the fact that there is an ebbing confidence in the public schools.... A word from you at this time regarding the American policy of public education and its contribution to economic and social welfare will restore the faith of teachers and patrons and make all of us more willing to carry on until a new day dawns for the common schools.⁴²

Howe, FDR's advisor, responded by stating, "The President has received your letter of March twenty-first, and has asked me to thank you for your kindness in presenting your

⁴⁰ Ibid.; M. H. McIntyre to Clyde R. Miller, March 11, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

⁴¹ William T. Bannerman to Louis Howe, March 17, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL; Stephen T. Early to James Halley, March 21, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

⁴² Miss Willie Lawson to FDR, March 21, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

views.”⁴³ Similarly to the other responses from various staff members of FDR, the response did not acknowledge the content of the letter and made no statements as to what would be done in regards to the problems discussed in the letters. In early April, FDR’s office received several letters and telegrams informing him of the situation in Chicago where teachers were working without pay. Some of those teachers had lost their homes and faced a desperate situation. A committee of unpaid teachers requested to meet with the president. There was no mention of a meeting in the records.⁴⁴ By July 1933, the situation in Chicago had further escalated but Ickes responded to letters from Chicago by stating he had talked with Commissioner Zook about the situation. “Both of us have a very sympathetic interest in the Chicago schools but neither of us can see that either the Office of Education or the Interior Department can do anything about it, since we have no supervisory or coercive powers.”⁴⁵ Ickes then asked Howe to meet with him since he was concerned the problem might make the administration look bad. FDR’s response to the large volume of communications regarding Chicago’s situation was to tell his secretary to acknowledge the problem and let people know they were allowing Ickes to respond.⁴⁶

Adding pressure to FDR to give a radio address in support of public schools, many people wrote to their congressman to ask that they discuss the matter with FDR. There were copies of the congressmen’s letters at the Roosevelt Library with responses of acknowledgement by FDR’s secretary. One letter from a parent in South Carolina concerned about not having enough funds to send his/her child to college received a

⁴³ Louis Howe to Miss Willie Lawson, March 31, 1933 Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

⁴⁴ See Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

⁴⁵ Harold Ickes to William Page, July 18, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

proper response by Howe, who had Zook draft a response. Howe told the parent the matter was currently being worked on by Zook and others in Washington. Another typical response to educational problems was to encourage people to ask state representatives to handle educational situations since the federal government did not control education in the states.⁴⁷ Overall, FDR's response to educators and citizens was notably neutral and uninterested.

When relief came to education it was placed under Hopkins in the FERA, and FDR tended to create new programs rather than assist existing ones. Executive Secretary of the NEA, Willard E. Givens, wrote an angry article in September of 1935 in which he criticized FDR's educational relief programs. The article was entitled, "New Deal a Raw Deal for Public Schools." Givens stated his reasons for disliking the new programs:

In October 1933, President Roosevelt, after paying tribute to the schools, said, "We need to make infinitely better the average education which the average child now receives." Instead of following this policy of improving the everyday educational offering of the average child, the New Dealers invented plain and fancy schooling, managed in a way to give the jitters to educators whose policy it is to shun waste. While a few youngsters were being taught harmonica playing, fancy lariat throwing, and boondoggling, some hundreds of thousands of less fortunate ones thruout [sic] the United States were being denied a decent health program or were doing without a full year's work in arithmetic, reading, and history. The millions expended in building a parallel system of education for relief purposes have done some good, but better results could have been achieved more economically by strengthening the already-established school systems....The National Education Association believes in federal aid to education without federal control.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Harold Ickes to Col Howe, July 19, 1933 Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL; FDR to Mac, July 28, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

⁴⁷ Tom Connally to Louis Howe, June 22, 1933 Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL; Louis Howe to Lena Crumby, October 4, 1933, Folder 1933 Jan-Sept, Box 1, OF107 Education, FDRL.

⁴⁸ "New Deal a Raw Deal for Public Schools" by Willard E. Givens, Folder, Department of Education, 1933-August 1935, Box 12, OF 6e-6g Department of the Interior, FDRL.

Moreover, Givens wrote that relief programs were administered by politically appointed people, but he stated that education should be impartial to politics. Givens personally sent FDR a copy of the article along with a letter stating that his intentions were to see that public education was carried out in accordance with democratic principles. Givens advised that the Office of Education should control the educational activities of the federal government and work with State Departments of Education, who would communicate and plan together with local districts. FDR asked Studebaker to draft a response of what he should say in regard to the letter and article. Unsure of Studebaker's draft, FDR forwarded it to Williams who advised FDR to not utilize it; instead, he recommended that FDR's secretary acknowledge the letter and tell Givens that Studebaker will be writing a response directly to him.⁴⁹ That advice was taken.

Not all of the people in the NEA liked the article or even supported it. Joseph Rosier, a past NEA president, thought the article created animosity between educators and FDR and his administration. He argued that the NEA could not exert influence if they did not have a good working relationship with the president. Williams corresponded with the current president of the NEA, Agnes Samuelson, and felt confident she did not like Givens' article. He was also aware of other major leaders in the NEA who were upset by the article as well.⁵⁰ Williams used this knowledge to isolate those individuals responsible for the article and to provide evidence that the article did not represent the majority of the NEA members.

⁴⁹ Willard E. Givens to FDR, September 14, 1935, Folder Givens-Letters to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Box 617, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU; Stephen T. Early to Willard E. Givens, November 2, 1935, Folder 1935 July-Dec, Box 2 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

By mid-1936, FDR was continuing to receive letters asking for public school assistance. A congressman from Texas shared a letter from a principal who argued that state control over education was not working, and that federal assistance was needed. The principal said that he would have to shorten the school year if his school did not receive federal assistance. FDR asked his secretary, Marvin H. McIntyre, to formulate a response. In essence, the response stated FDR was aware that situations existed but they were less frequent since the states were coming out of the economic Depression. The increased financial stability of states did not require money from the federal government to states for public schools. He ended the letter with an apology for the difficult situation, and he assured the principal that a solution would be found.⁵¹

In April 1936, Frederick L. Redefers, executive secretary of the Progressive Education Association (PEA), composed a letter:

The approaching campaign for the Presidency of the United States should be an educational experience for the American people. In the past, our political campaigns have not always resulted in a growth in real understanding by our citizens. Too often issues vital to public welfare have been camouflaged by rhetoric and mystifying generalities.

The educational profession has grown tired of vague statements in which comparatively meaningless phrases are used to cloak muddled thinking or to appeal to popular bias....

Members of the Progressive Education Association at their recent annual conference requested me to write to you urging you to speak clearly and frankly on the crucial problems confronting the United States.⁵²

⁵⁰ Joseph Rosier to Charl O. Williams, May 8, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt, Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Aubrey Williams to FDR, November 27, 1935, Folder 1935 July-Dec., Box 2, OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁵¹ FDR to Senator Morris Sheppard, March 30, 1936, Folder 1936 Jan-May, Box OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁵² Frederick L. Redefers to FDR, April 16, 1936, Folder 1936 Jan-May, Box OF 107 Education, FDRL.

Redefer then posed questions that he wanted FDR to answer. The first question wanted FDR to discuss his proposals of federal plans for young people who were unemployed. The next question asked how could elementary students who were hungry and in need of medical attention be helped. The third question asked FDR what would be done with public schools that were not paying teachers enough money or were not operating. The last question inquired as to FDR's willingness to defeat legislation that inhibited free speech and ensuring that words like "fascism" and "communism" would not be used to control discussions. A staff member responded to this letter on behalf of FDR. The letter insisted that Redefer's ideas would "receive careful and sympathetic consideration."⁵³

On April 30, 1936, a meeting was held at the White House between FDR and the legislative committee of the NEA to discuss issues between his administration and school teachers. FDR addressed the problem of schools closing due to insufficient funds but was interested in a program that would help only those schools that really needed money. He was against a law requiring federal funds to be distributed to states since, he argued, that went against the Constitution. He also worried that funds would be given to states that really did not need the assistance. Federal aid to education if provided at all should only be used to help equalize education throughout the country, according to FDR. This statement was FDR's compromise on federal aid to education. He would consider allowing federal aid to education but only if it went to the poorest districts that truly needed financial assistance.⁵⁴

⁵³ William D. Hassett to Mr. Redefer, April 17, 1936, Folder 1936 Jan-May, Box OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁵⁴ Joseph Rosier to Charl. O. Williams, May 4, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt, Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

During this meeting, FDR stated he had stretched the law by using federal funds to employ school teachers and assist high school and college students to continue their education. The NEA's arguments were similar to those made in the past. They wanted an executive order for all emergency relief education programs to be conducted by established agencies of education - the Office of Education and the states. FDR stated that relief funds could not be used for schools since it was not appropriated for such a purpose. The representatives from the NEA also suggested that a Department of Education be created. FDR told them it would not be possible, but they pressed on, stating if it was created in the context of a financial decision then "the problems of state rights, Federal control, and the religious question" would be circumvented.⁵⁵ FDR was not in favor of a Department of Education by itself but was open to the idea of a Department of Education and Welfare. The committee felt so confident that this would happen that the field secretary of the NEA, Charl Ormond Williams, asked each committee member to write down their description of the meeting. "Some day some people will want to know how a Department of Education was created and how the federal aid policy was finally established."⁵⁶ James H. Richmond, a college administrator from Kentucky, who also attended the meeting, further stated the meeting's significance:

⁵⁵ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 106; Sidney B. Hall to Charl O. Williams, May 6, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt, Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶ James H. Richmond to Charl O. Williams, May 7, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt, Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

“Our conference with President Roosevelt, last Thursday, was most significant and, in all probability, made educational history.”⁵⁷

A month later, FDR was corrected when he mentioned the term Department of Education and Welfare to a Senator. Father Johnson recited the conversation as:

“The President said that ‘soon we will establish another Department of the Government, to be called the Department of Education and Welfare.’ Senator Walsh said that he said at once, ‘Mr. President, you will have to take education out of that.’ The President answered, according to Senator Walsh: ‘Yes, for obvious reasons, we will have to use some other name.’”⁵⁸

FDR was reminded that concerns of federalized education were strong. A new department was created four years later, in 1939, that housed the Office of Education, but it was nothing similar to what FDR promised the educators. The department was called the Federal Security Administration.

Studebaker’s close ties with the NEA aligned him with policies that contrasted with the administration’s, leaving the Office of Education with little decision-making power. The NEA was a group that primarily represented educational administrators and teachers and focused on teachers’ jobs and financial support of schools. The NEA lobbied FDR, requesting that he support federal aid to education. Specifically, the NEA wanted federal funds to go directly to the states, without any federal stipulations. Since he was opposed to federal aid for education, FDR avoided the NEA and gave educators little attention. Educational programs within the New Deal were meant to be temporary, according to FDR, but the NEA envisioned the exact opposite. When FDR needed an

⁵⁷ Sidney B. Hall to Charl O. Williams, May 6, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt, Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁸ Memorandum, May 28, 1936, Box 132, NCWC, CUA.

educational consultant, he would not turn to educators in the public school system or to even Studebaker, but instead he would consult with professors at Ivy League Schools. He also relied on Mrs. Roosevelt, Williams, Perkins, and Hopkins for advice on education and youth.⁵⁹

Though there may be other illustrations, one example in the archives of an instance when an NEA leader advocated for non-educators to have control over schools. In a document titled, "The Price of Educational Reform," in the summer of 1936, William G. Carr, Director of Research and Secretary of the Educational Policies Commission (EPC) of the NEA, addressed problems associated with reforming public schools:

Pick up any professional magazine and you will readily find several articles prophesying the doom of the public schools unless reforms are instituted. These are not new phenomena. A superficial student of our educational history might well conclude that the schools have been skidding along the thin edge of utter ruin for at least a century and a half. . . . Again, there is a group which believes that the modern curriculum is so varied as to be confusing and so rich as to be indigestible. At the same time, another group finds the curriculum too narrow, too formal, too traditional. "Character education comes first," cries on group. "Back to the three R's," answers another. . . . lack of a strong centralized control over education which characterizes most other countries is another reason why educational reform comes slowly. . . . The teaching profession must be less conservative and more objective in its approach to educational problems. It must get rid of the idea that the schools belong to the teachers. It must reject the notion that teaching is a professional monopoly. It must recognize the part which the public and other institutions in society inevitably play in the work of education.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Fass, 55; Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 107.

⁶⁰ The Price of Educational Reform by William G. Carr, July 22, 1936, Folder Carr Papers, Box 1292, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU.

This document was atypical of the NEA's thinking, since protecting educational turf had long been associated with the organization.⁶¹

Educators did not pretend that the public school systems were problem-free, and they were willing to acknowledge some of their challenges. Even though education administrators were not in favor of New Deal educational programs, they could not argue the fact that there was evidence that their schools were not serving all youth. The NEA wrote a paper in January 1936 titled, "Problems Facing the Public Schools." It stated that the funding system for schools was insufficient, and that this was especially true during economic depressions. Money from federal, state, and local entities were necessary to ensure that all students received an equal education. The NEA argued that, in a democracy, it was essential that the citizens be given educational opportunities that are approximately equal. Therefore, the Federal Government should share in extending financial support to the public schools of the states. The existing financial structure caused great inequities affecting the quality of a child's education. They also discussed the importance of curriculum and potential curriculum changes; they highlighted the importance of a strong curriculum for all students, regardless of their post-secondary plans. Last, the paper blamed low wages for the poor quality of teachers. Vocational education was criticized even more severely than general education for its inability to train youth, particularly by Secretary Perkins. But budgets cuts to vocational education that started with Hoover's presidency were noted as reason for a decrease in enrollment.⁶²

⁶¹ Fass, 53.

⁶² O'Coin, 63, 79, 81, 95, and 127; Willard E. Givens to FDR, September 14, 1935, Folder Givens-Letters to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Box 617, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU; Problems Facing the Public School by Carr, January 8, 1936, Folder Carr Papers, Box 1292 Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU.

Despite acknowledging the need to change, the fact was, schools were still traditional. The President's Advisory Committee on Education researched public schools and reported that they had been aware that schools needed to revamp their curriculum to meet the needs of a larger portion of youth, specifically to do a better job incorporating an educational program that would provide all students with general knowledge. Schools also wanted to provide guidance programs to help students make plans after leaving school; however, their desires to do so were not supported by actual programs in the schools. The lack of appropriate programming continued despite knowing how many youth looked for work. The President's Advisory Committee on Education noted that the unemployed were not provided with either general knowledge or skills in vocational fields. Many youth were essentially illiterate. They blamed this lack of preparation on secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities. The awareness of the need to change did not result in the development of school programs. A lack of money was certainly a reason why schools did not continue or maintain reforms that began in the 1920s. New courses and programs were often the first items to be cut from the budget and labeled as fads and frills, resulting in an increase of traditional classes.⁶³

The President's Advisory Committee on Education's report extended its complaints about education to nursery school children and adults. The need for emergency education programs was necessary since they provided unique educational

⁶³ The Education and Adjustment of Youth, Folder The Education and Adjustment of Youth, Box 11 Subject Files, President's Advisory Committee on Education 1936-1939, FDRL; Notes on Summary of Finding of the Advisory Committee on Education, Folder Summary of Findings of the Staff – Advisory Committee on Education, Box 11 Subject Files, President's Advisory Committee on Education 1936-1939, FDRL; Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, under the direction of Doak S. Campbell, October 1937, Folder New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, Box 17, Staff Studies, Presidential Advisory Committee on Education, FDRL; Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 161–162.

opportunities that were not provided by regular educational institutions. For example, less than 10,000 children were enrolled in public and private nursery schools in 1935. Moreover, elementary schools did not service 10% of students aged 6-13 years old, secondary schools enrolled only 33% of students aged 14 to 17 years old, and colleges enrolled 10% of the students aged 18-21 years old. The reason for the low enrollments in secondary school and colleges was primarily due to economic factors, but the types of subjects that were taught have also been cited as a reason. Schools for adults were nearly nonexistent, particularly with programs designed to decrease illiteracy and target low-income farmers. Most state departments of education did not have an adult education division. The President's Advisory Committee on Education concluded that federal programs with educational components were not duplicating programs under the state departments of education, contrary to what the NEA claimed.⁶⁴

In a letter from Father Burke to a concerned citizen, Father Burke stated he did not think the educational policies of the NEA represented most educators but merely the inner-circle of the NEA's administration. He questioned the significance of the NEA's large membership, hinting that many teachers most likely joined because of pressure from their principals. When asked by a Catholic teacher if he recommended joining the NEA, Father Burke was indecisive since he could not decide if it would be better for teachers to make a statement by refusing to join, or if they should join in order to facilitate changes to the organization from the inside. His concern about the NEA was its anti-Catholic partners and promotion of legislature that was against Catholic interests,

⁶⁴ Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, under the direction of Doak S. Campbell, October 1937, Folder New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance, Box 17, Staff Studies, Presidential

particularly federal aid to education or a stronger federal presence in education. One other Catholic representative stated the NEA was too closely associated with the Office of Education and saw itself as the authority on educational affairs for the country.⁶⁵

After many failed attempts to get FDR to speak at an NEA event, FDR addressed the group on June 30, 1938:

No one wants the Federal Government to subsidize education any more than is absolutely necessary. It has been and will be the traditional policy of the United States to leave the actual management of schools and their curricula to state and local control. But we know that in many places local government unfortunately cannot adequately finance either the freedom or the facilities to learn. And there the Federal Government can properly supplement local resources.... There is probably a wider divergence today in the standard of education between the richest communities and the poorest communities than there was one hundred years ago; and it is, therefore, our immediate task to seek to close that gap — not in any way by decreasing the facilities of the richer communities but by extending aid to those less fortunate. We all know that if we do not close this gap it will continue to widen... All of this leads me to ask you not to demand that the Federal Government provide financial assistance to all communities. Our aid for many reasons, financial and otherwise, must be confined to lifting the level at the bottom rather than to giving assistance at the top.... In line with this policy, the Federal Government during the past five years has given relatively far more assistance to the poorer communities than to the rich. We have done it through direct relief and through work relief... We have placed many millions of dollars in the field of adult education through the Works Progress Administration, and here, again, most of the money has been expended in the poorer communities of the land.⁶⁶

FDR clearly articulated his position on key education topics. He was not against federal aid to education because of his understanding that some schools were financially suffering, creating a disproportional amount of spending on students throughout the

Advisory Committee on Education, FDRL.

⁶⁵ Father Burke to Murray, March 27, 1931, Folder NEA 1921-1939, Box 26 Education Department Records, USCCB, GWU; Superintendent of Archdiocesan Schools to Father Ready, March 24, 1939, Folder 7 Federal aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

country. FDR believed that federal educational aid was necessary to end inequality between schools, but he was unwilling to spend money on all schools because he did not believe that all schools needed such aid. New Deal programs were believed to be good examples of targeted federal aid. To better understand the complex relationship between the federal government and education, FDR created a committee to make recommend how the federal government could support schools.

President's Advisory Committee on Education

This committee, originally called the President's Committee on Vocational Education, was formed by FDR on September 19, 1936 under the chairmanship of Floyd W. Reeves. FDR created this committee after he signed the George-Deen Act (HR12120) on June 8, 1936 calling for more vocational training. He signed this bill with concerns over the bill's criticisms on vocational education. In order to fully understand these criticisms before the bill would become effective in July 1, 1937, he wanted the committee to study the relationship of federal aid to vocational programs. Compared to Hoover's President's Advisory Committee, which was comprised of 80% educators, FDR's group consisted of fewer educators and more liberal-minded individuals.⁶⁷

As his work on the committee continued, Reeves thought the topic of federal aid to education in general would be a better directive for the committee. Reeves' rationale for wanting to broaden the committee's focus was due to the fact that:

At the present time there is an unprecedented number of bills before the Congress proposing Federal aid to education. Great legislative pressure is

⁶⁶ "Franklin D. Roosevelt's Address before the National Education Association," June 30, 1938, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15668#axzz2hpQ9xURy> (accessed October 5, 2011).

⁶⁷ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 102; O'Coin, 57.

being placed behind the Harrison-Black-Fletcher Bill. A situation of administrative complexity exists due to the number of Federal agencies dealing with education. There is a recognized need for a reorganization of the entire field of secondary education, including both the vocational and the non-vocational fields. Vocational education at the secondary school level cannot well be considered in isolation from non-vocational education. Furthermore, it is difficult to arrive at sound conclusions as to the need for Federal support for an expanded program of vocational education without considering at the same time all aspects of Federal relations to education.⁶⁸

He shared his thoughts with Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins who then forwarded the suggestion to FDR in early April 1937. Perkins suggested to FDR that the expansion of the committee's objective would help interrupt consideration of the Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill and avert the George-Deen Act from being fully funded. FDR agreed with Reeves and Perkins' recommendations. Frank Graham, Luther Gulick, Charles H. Judd, and former Commissioner of Education George Zook were added to the committee, now referred to as the President's Advisory Committee on Education. In late May, a press release was sent out stating that FDR had asked the committee to consider the larger question of the federal government's connection with state and local education.⁶⁹

FDR told Reeves that, in the committee's research, he wanted to make sure that the committee considered the effects of asking the federal government to pay for the education that was currently being paid for from state and local funds. Once the federal government started to pay this cost, it might find itself stuck with an increasing bill and a

⁶⁸ Richard O. Niehoff, *Floyd W. Reeves: Innovative Educator and Distinguished Practitioner of the Art of Public Administration* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 75.

⁶⁹ O'Coin, 243; Draft of press release, May 27, 1937, Folder 1937 Jan-June, Box 2 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

greater dependence from the states on federal funds.⁷⁰ This possible predicament troubled and worried FDR.

Reeves did consult with FDR during the research process to assess what FDR thought about certain issues. In one memorandum, Reeves wanted to know where FDR thought the NYA and the CCC should be placed within the field of education. On this issue, FDR did not influence Reeves' thinking and instead referred him to confer with Williams and Fechner. Reeves and his committee did meet with many of FDR's administrators; Studebaker and the Office of Education was the only agency singled out for being uncooperative.⁷¹

In February of 1938 the report of the President's Advisory Committee on Education was released. The report noted that from a historical perspective the federal government had become more involved in education and could assume that it would continue to do so in the future. Despite FDR's warning, it recommended that the federal government provide financial assistance to states and local school districts to make sure educational opportunities were present and that funds were distributed equally.⁷² Their conclusions showed concern about the fact that the public was fearful that financial aid from the federal government would necessarily mean federal control of education; however, the committee suggested that the federal government should not make financial contributions without ensuring they were spent appropriately. Oversight, rather than control, was promoted throughout the report. Federal funds should be spent primarily on

⁷⁰ Niehoff, 76.

⁷¹ Mr. McIntyre to Reeves, January 18, 1938, Folder 1938 Jan-June, Box 3 OF 107 Education, FDRL; Ibid., 258.

⁷² Report of the Advisory Committee on Education, February 23, 1938, Box 336, 75th Congress Committee Papers, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C.

areas that would decrease inequalities between and within states, especially between rural and urban schools and white and black schools. The report stated that curriculum and methods of teaching should not be influenced by the federal government. Resonating many of the concerns of the NEA, the report suggested that “Federal grants should be used to build up and strengthen existing educational agencies and institutions insofar as they are able to serve important needs, and not to establish competing agencies and institutions.”⁷³

In terms of curricular changes, the President’s Advisory Committee on Education advocated for schools to incorporate vocational education within their school systems. The committee acknowledged that educators were still adjusting to this change since in years past vocational education was part of an employee’s training as he entered employment within a corporation or industry. The report suggested that skills required in a variety of fields, as well as introductory courses in common fields, should be the focus of a school’s curriculum. The committee recommended that the employers had the responsibility to further train their employees for a specific occupation and build upon the foundation of skills and knowledge the school had instilled within students.⁷⁴

The President’s Advisory Committee on Education also differentiated between relief programs that would remain with the WPA and those which should be transferred to the Office of Education. They suggested that WPA administer programs related to relief and vocational placement. Those individuals who were unemployed after attending regular education and training programs should be provided assistance by the WPA. The report also mentioned that individuals in charge of the WPA classes who were not

⁷³ Ibid.

certified should be trained until deemed as qualified instructors. They recommended that the following programs be considered separate from relief in the WPA and consequently transferred to the Office of Education: naturalization and illiteracy, workers' education, vocational education, adult education (civics, contemporary affairs, and forums), nursery schools, parent education, recreation and fine arts. By providing the states with research and examples of how to improve these programs, it was believed that the Office of Education could help these programs become fully developed. The report suggested that states and local educational agencies should ultimately have control over these programs and make all final decisions.⁷⁵

The report also tackled the issue of federal aid for tuition-free or parochial schools. The report suggested allowing states to create their own definition of what constituted a public school. It also encouraged states to distribute funds to nonpublic schools for reading materials and services such as transportation and medical care. This recommendation was purely a suggestion and the committee left the final decision to the states.⁷⁶

According to Niehoff, this report was no doubt controversial and FDR was aware of this fact. Rather than immerse himself in political fighting, he passed the report on to Congress without any comments or endorsements. When questioned about his neutral

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The Advisory Committee on Education Staff Study No. 4, *New and Emergency Federal Programs of Major Educational Importance* The Works Progress Administration, prepared by Frederick H. Bair, October 1937, Box 12, Subject Files: Special Reports and Background Materials, President's Advisory Committee on Education 1936-1939, FDRL.

⁷⁶ Report of the Advisory Committee on Education, February 23, 1938, Box 336, 75th Congress Committee Papers, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C.

stance on the report, Mrs. Roosevelt stated that only legislation that is deemed critical would warrant FDR's attention.⁷⁷

The response to the report from educational organizations and major newspapers was favorable. The PEA and the AFT held meetings in order to garner support for legislation based on the report's recommendations. They wanted to keep pressure on Congress to enact such legislation. Even the NEA approved of the report, despite its insistence that federal funds be monitored and regulated.⁷⁸

After the committee's research was complete Reeves served:

as Chairman of the "Commission on Educational Reconstruction" as an active member of the American Foundation of Teachers (AFT). The principal purpose of this activity was to mobilize national educational organizations to support the basic recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Education. The recommendations of the Committee got into a log-jam of federal legislation which was stymied by the preoccupation of President Roosevelt with more urgent matters related to the war and to his loss of leadership of the Congress....⁷⁹

By 1940, Reeves confronted FDR's inattention to educational issues during a conference speech of the Washington Youth Council. Reeves noted that FDR, who purported to believe in helping schools which were financially in need, did not act on the President's Advisory Committee on Education's recommendations which advocated for the very same ideas. FDR's lack of support for the report's recommendations was surprising since Reeves shared many of the same values as FDR. Reeves had close relationships with many of FDR's closest advisors, namely Mrs. Roosevelt, Williams, and Hopkins. They

⁷⁷ Niehoff, 78.

⁷⁸ Ibid.; Jerome Davis to Federick L. Redefer, April 19, 1938, Folder 7 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

⁷⁹ Niehoff, 15.

encouraged Reeves' placement as administrator of national educational projects.⁸⁰

Despite these connections and similarities, FDR did not push for legislative action based on the committee's recommendations. The next chapter will provide more details on legislation for federal aid to education.

Analysis of FDR and Educational Advocates and Researchers

Based on the information found in the archives regarding the President's Advisory Committee on Education, FDR's approval of Reeve's suggestion to allow the President's Advisory Committee on Education to study the larger question of federal aid to education was conflicting considering FDR was not in favor of general federal aid. If FDR wanted to avoid opening the door to general federal aid going towards schools, he should have disapproved of Reeves' suggestion for expanding the President's Advisory Committee on Education. He expanded the committee to take attention away from two popular education bills and was probably surprised at the committee's recommendations for federal aid for education, especially because FDR warned Reeves about its great consequences for the federal budget. Once the report came out FDR most likely used the committee's report to test the idea of targeted federal aid in Congress. Testing political issues before reacting was a common tactic employed by FDR. Since the idea did not come from FDR, but rather from the report, he was safer from being blamed for trying to stimulate legislation for federal aid to education. Had the Congress thought the recommendations in the report were sound then they could have passed such legislation without FDR's influence. A fuller discussion of federal aid to education can be found in

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6, 94, 104, and 105.

the following chapter. Unfortunately, he used this committee to divert Congress away from federal aid to education only to find that the report excited education advocates by giving them well researched data to support their federal aid proposals.

FDR designed the President's Advisory Committee on Education with people whom he trusted, primarily non-educators. The recommendations in the report given to Congress represented some of FDR's own ideas but at no political cost to him. The committee's report matched FDR's desire to target federal aid to only the weakest schools, but FDR did not respond with any approval to those recommendations. The report was too politically liberal at the time, and FDR did not want to associate himself with its ideas by urging Congress to enact the committee's recommendations. More importantly, FDR's fiscally conservative concerns were thwarted by the report's conclusion that federal money should be used to help public schools. FDR specifically told Reeves that he was concerned about starting such federal aid because it would potentially grow exponentially. FDR's experience as governor of New York taught him how large an education budget can become. FDR did not think educators were interested in improving the economic situation or even helping youth; rather, he believed that they were primarily interested in protecting their profession and increasing the amount of control they had over educational matters.⁸¹

Throughout the years, the NEA's political platform essentially stayed the same; it continued to argue for federal aid to states for schools without restrictions. But the lack of political strength of the NEA, a major proponent of federal aid to education bills, left

⁸¹ Ibid., 69; Kliebard, 188.

the bills weak and politically impotent.⁸² NEA relied on data and research to convince congressmen and political leaders to support their cause. Harry Zeitlin in his dissertation on education and the federal programs critiques NEA in the following statement:

Continued failure in utilizing this technique should have led, it would seem, to more forceful lobbying and political activities. The political naivete of educators during this period is nowhere so clearly disclosed as in their constant expressions of confidence regarding the ever “imminent” passage of a Federal aid program whose actual changes of passage were probably never bright.⁸³

NEA argued for state and local control over educational decisions. FDR and his administrators saw educators as rigid. New Dealers did not want to comply with demands of dispersing federal money directly to the states without monitoring how the money would be spent, because they believed that that would be supporting the status quo in school systems. To ensure federal money was being spent on educational innovations and used to equalize educational opportunities for all students, they would not allow federal funds to be spent without being monitored and regulated. Clashing ideologies between FDR and his administration with the NEA, Studebaker, and educators limited the role that the latter three had in the policymaking process. The educational components of relief plans were neither created, negotiated, monitored, nor administered by the Office of Education or educators in any significant way. During FDR’s 12 years in office, educators’ inflexibility resulted in FDR ignoring most of their ideas, suggestions, and recommendations.⁸⁴

⁸² Smith, 13.

⁸³ Harry Zeitlin, “Federal Relations in American Education, 1933-1943: A Study of New Deal Efforts and Innovations” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1958), 279.

⁸⁴ Smith, 7 and 119; Kliebard, 192; Fass, 48, 52, 53 and 62.

Schools moved too slowly for FDR and New Dealers. Vocational educators continued to adhere to training programs that took a long time for students to complete, whereas New Deal training programs were quick because of fewer standards and less thorough training. The large number of youth who dropped out of general education programs was evidence that schools were not responsive to the changing needs of youth. One author stated that FDR believed that federal programs would be necessary to quickly help the youth who were being underserved by public schools.⁸⁵

Schools may have moved slowly because they did not have the financial freedom to try new programs, especially during an economic depression. New Dealers like Williams, who thought educators would not teach about the injustices of society, were naive in understanding how desperate teachers were to keep their jobs. Concerned about their employment during the Great Depression, teachers were not likely to be engaged in politics. Teachers believed that they would be more likely to keep their jobs if they did not speak out.⁸⁶ Instead of teachers initiating changes in the curriculum, the state departments of education and local administrators could have pushed for changes and created different expectations of teachers. This push did not occur and teachers continued doing as they were expected, which consisted of teaching a traditional college preparatory curriculum.

Outside of the teaching field, reviewing the correspondence from educational organizations, principals, and superintendents, almost all of them asked for federal assistance, particularly financial assistance. FDR's cold and disinterested responses,

⁸⁵ Kliebard, 189 and 195.

when he did respond, might have reflected his policy of not supporting schools with federal funds. Instead of upsetting educators by stating his policies he acknowledged their concerns without commenting on the content of their communication. FDR's silence or ignoring people he disagreed with was one of his common characteristics.⁸⁷

FDR's educational policies, based on his interactions of educators and his own Office of Education, indicated he firmly believed that education was the responsibility of states and local agencies. His financial support of education as governor of New York represented this position, and it points to the fact that FDR did believe in supporting education. In speeches as governor and as president, he made it clear that he was troubled by the differences in money spent on students between school districts. The NEA and Studebaker's insistence that he use federal funds, even those designated for relief, and place them in the hands of state and local educators was against FDR's policy of state control over education. Moreover, because he and his administrators were doubtful of educators' willingness to change rapidly and meet the needs of the public, he ignored their consistent request of federal money without federal control.

Many of FDR's New Dealers had backgrounds in social work. These people often were at odds with educators. New Dealers wanted to address the unemployment needs of people from lower social classes, whereas educators emphasized equal treatment of students. When Studebaker wanted to administer programs that focused on people who were on relief, FDR chose relief administrators over educational administrators from

⁸⁶ David Hicks and Stephanie Van Hover, "A Magnificent Adventure': Negotiating and Structuring Curricular Change in Virginia," in *Education and the Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, ed. E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 281.

⁸⁷ Katie Louchheim and Jonathan Dembo, *The Making of the New Deal: The Insiders Speak* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 201.

the Office of Education for a few reasons: 1) allowing the Office of Education to handle relief programs would concern people, Catholics for example, that FDR would be moving towards federal control of education, 2) The New Deal programs were primarily designed to help those who were unemployed and would therefore be better handled by relief administrators who were trained in social work. The educational components in the New Deal programs were related to job training, which fell under the Department of Labor, and 3) FDR wanted to help students in schools that were suffering the most and did not trust that state educators would equalize schools if federal money was given to state departments of education. New Dealers were irritated that educators were unwilling to change traditional teaching practices and try new ideas.⁸⁸ No matter how hard Studebaker tried and even begged FDR to allow him to use relief funds, FDR was cautious and provided Studebaker few opportunities to administer relief programs.

Besides relief funds, FDR cut the Office of Education's normal operating budget, thus showing he had little value for Studebaker or his work. FDR was known to encourage people to resign by usurping their decision-making power and transferring it to a new agency. Loyalty was key for FDR and Studebaker promoted his own agenda over what FDR wanted. Moreover, as previously stated, there was evidence that Studebaker supported FDR's critics, including NEA's article on the New Deal and Mr. Voelker's letter sharing Studebaker's condemning comments at a conference.

Despite funds being cut, Studebaker did not quit despite FDR's indirect devaluation of his job and the Office of Education. Harry N. Rosenfield, principal attorney and assistant to FSA, described Studebaker as, "trying to break the bounds of the

⁸⁸ Badger, 61 and 160; Reiman, 12 and 13; Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 109; and Kliebard, 189.

ordinary classroom concept of teaching, but at the same time, had come out of the school system so that he was part of the fundamental thinking.”⁸⁹ He said Studebaker’s greatest accomplishment was making the Office of Education a more important agency.⁹⁰

However, Studebaker’s fight for the Office of Education to have a larger role in FDR’s New Deal programs led him to latch onto the NEA, further alienating himself from FDR and his administration.

In short, educators during the 1930s were heavily involved in the policymaking process with various degrees of success. NEA, other educational organizations, and state and local educational administrators had little impact on changing FDR’s educational policies. They were politically weak and inflexible. Zook had the most influence as shown by helping to start CCC’s educational program and work-study jobs for college students. His involvement in research on the President’s Advisory Committee on Education continued pushing for quality education. Reeves also accomplished an impressive study of education in the U.S. that was used to advocate for federal aid to education.

⁸⁹ Fuchs, “Oral History Interview with Harry N. Rosenfield.”

⁹⁰ Jacob, 30; Fuchs, “Oral History Interview with Harry N. Rosenfield.”

CHAPTER 4

FDR, CONGRESS, AND FEDERAL AID TO EDUCATION

According to the 10th Amendment of the Constitution, the federal government is not responsible for public education; rather, states are expected to control and administer education. Consequently, the concept of federal financial assistance for public schools had few precedents and invoked controversy over federal control and states' rights. Up until the 1930s, the federal government's involvement in education was limited to reserving or donating land to support public schools. In 1787 the Northwest Ordinance reserved 1 of every 36 pieces of land for public schools. Similarly, the Morrill Act of 1862 donated land to the states for them to use the proceeds to build public agricultural and mechanical arts colleges. One of the purposes of the Freedman's Bureau, which was created in 1865 by the federal government, was to promote the education of former slaves. Two years later the first government agency, named the Department of Education, was created to research and disseminate information related to education. Another two years later, this non-cabinet level department was demoted to an office level agency under the Department of the Interior, called the Office of Education. Then, in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act used federal funds to assist states in providing vocational and technical training. These federal programs promoted education in the states to help develop new territories and have an educated citizenry. Never before did the federal government give money to elementary and secondary schools. The idea of federal financial assistance to schools, even without stipulations of federal requirements, translated to some people as federal control.

The term “federal aid to education” is very broad and includes aid to the Office of Education, libraries, elementary and secondary schools, higher education, vocational programs, adult education, and more. In this study, I focus on federal aid to schools but have chosen to use the phrase “federal aid to education” because the literature used this phrase as do legislative bills. Even when the phrase actually does refer to different types of education, aid to elementary and secondary schools is the most controversial and usually receives the most attention.

This chapter will discuss major education bills that appeared in Congress in chronological order. Breaking the chapter by sessions of Congress is helpful since bills are usually acted upon in the session they are introduced. Major legislative achievements and failures are highlighted in each session of Congress.

73rd Congress

Despite the fear of federal control, educational organizations continued to push for federal aid to education. They and congressional representatives did not stand by as public schools suffered during the Great Depression. Representatives, particularly in the South, felt the pressure on state budgets that struggled to finance public schools. They needed the proposed funds in federal aid to education bills. During the 73rd Congressional session (March 9, 1933-June 18, 1934), Congress introduced more than ninety bills relating to education but only nine bills passed. Of those nine bills, four were related to the education of Native-Americans, two were related to the education of “handicapped” people, three were related to changes to specific colleges or universities, and one was related to vocational education. In addition, seven of the ninety bills were

identical to one of the nine bills that passed. More interestingly, considering the context of the economic crisis, none of the fifteen bills to assist schools operating through grants was passed, not even by one chamber of Congress. There were eleven bills that called for Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) loans for districts to refinance debt that did not pass in either chamber of Congress. According to an National Education Association (NEA) document, the members of the House Committee on Education agreed with each other that public schools were in need of financial assistance and that federal aid should be allocated. These bills, regardless of their approval, were never voted on by that committee.¹

On February 2, 1934, Harry Hopkins announced that funds from his relief administration would be used to help pay the salaries of rural school teachers whose school districts were struggling financially. The rural teacher fund was created at the same time that congressmen had requested the creation of very similar programs, except that their programs would be administered through established educational agencies rather than through the relief administrator himself. Senator Walter F. George (D-GA) made a statement in the Senate that questioned Hopkins' motives:

I do not know why the Administrator of Emergency Relief Works is not willing to accept a bill which has been thought out with some care and administer it thru established authority existing in every State and why he wishes to elect to hold the entire administration of the \$950,000,000 in his own hands.... I think Mr. Hopkins has done a magnificent service. I am rather criticizing that legislative cowardice which is unwilling to say to a friendly administration that here is a legislative body that also may express its will and may make legislative provision for the expenditure of public money.²

¹ Howard A. Dawson, Ivan A. Booker, and Belmont Farley, "Public Education and the New Deal," September 4, 1935, Folder 7 Givens – Public Education and the New Deal, Box 620, Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU, Washington, D.C.

² Ibid.

The sentiment in an NEA document was that Hopkins wanted to kill education bills that were gaining popularity in Congress by administratively creating similar programs housed in different agencies, thereby making the education bills superfluous.³

On February 26, 1934, a hearing of the Committee of Education in the House of Representatives was held for 11 different education bills that all related to federal aid to education. James H. Richmond, a college administrator from Kentucky and chairman of the National Committee for Federal Emergency Aid for Education,⁴ testified of the challenges schools were facing because of the economic depression. The committee's chairman, John J. Douglass (D-MA), responded by questioning why the federal government should become involved in education since it was the responsibility of states. The chairman thought that the states should do everything financially possible, including reorganize their taxing system, before requesting help from the federal government. Douglass believed that the real intent of the legislation was to make the federal government permanently committed to paying for education in the states even though the bills were emphasizing temporary emergency measures. Richmond stated the chairman's ideas of permanent federal aid were incorrect and countered the chairman's idea by pointing out that the federal government was currently assisting states in areas that have traditionally been the responsibility of states. He then promoted the bills' idea that money should be given to the Commissioner of Education who would then distribute funds to the states without any controls. Richmond described the committee's six point plan as follows: 1) distribute \$50,000,000 to schools for the remainder of the 1933-1934

³ Ibid.

school year to keep them functioning as normally as possible, 2) provide twice the amount to the neediest school districts the following year, 3) give a larger amount of money for the 1934-35 school year for all schools to increase their efficiency, 4) restructure school debt through refinancing and loans to help maintain schools, 5) utilize the Civilian Works Administration (CWA) funds to build new schools, and 6) provide financial assistance to college students in need. Richmond then acknowledged that Hopkins' Emergency Educational Program (EEP) program had addressed two of these six points.⁵

Hopkins spoke next to explain how his relief program had helped schools and to articulate his opinion on the education bills. Based on his reading of two of the bills, Hopkins stated he was opposed to the bills because money from the relief program was appropriated to help the unemployed and if money was needed by the schools then it should be appropriated for schools rather than taken out of the relief fund.⁶ Moreover, Hopkins did not agree that his department should participate in educational affairs:

Now, if there is to be an appropriation for education in any form it seems to me it should be a direct appropriation on the merits of the case, and not by means of taking a part of the money which has already been appropriated for a totally different purpose. We need all of the funds which have been appropriated to us by the Congress for the purpose for which they were given, and if any of our funds are taken for this purpose it will simply mean that needy, unemployed people are not cared for to whatever extent this fund is tapped. The whole question of whether the Federal Government should give aid to schools is something which is entirely outside of my province, it is not my field, and it is not what I am here to do, and I certainly would not wish to express any judgment as to

⁴ This committee was created after Commissioner of Education, George Zook brought 32 educational organizations together to discuss the emergency in education.

⁵ House of Representatives Committee on Education's Federal Emergency Aid to Education draft hearing on multiple education bills, February 26, 1934, Folder HR8289, Box 64 73rd Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C.: 10-21; *Ibid.*, 43-49; *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-23.

whether the Federal Government should give financial aid to school systems or not.”⁷

Richmond agreed with Hopkins that the relief administration should not be involved in education and funds to support education should be allocated separately from relief.⁸

According to Father Butler of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), these bills that attempted to use relief funds were unlikely to pass. “Without the support of the Federal Director of Emergency Relief they cannot be enacted and the Administration has opposed all efforts in Congress to restrict the authority of the president over these relief funds.”⁹

Father Butler and Father George Johnson of the NCWC met with Chairman Douglass (who was Catholic) to discuss federal aid for education. Douglass told them that members of the House Committee on Education, including himself, formed a group that drafted HR9544, whose original content came from Commissioner George Zook. Unlike previous bills, this bill provided that federal funds be appropriated for education and given to the states based on need without federal control. The House Committee on Education, according to Douglass, believed that a critical situation existed within public schools and that federal aid was necessary. After their draft was made they would meet with FDR and hear his recommendations. Father Johnson wanted parochial schools to be included in this bill but Douglass did not make any promises and stated he would defer to the group drafting the bill and FDR. A few days later Douglass suggested that Johnson

⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

⁸ Ibid., 103.

⁹ Mr. Montavon to Father Burke, Father Ready, Social Action, Education, Regan, Caravati, and News Service, February 14, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA, 2.

meet privately with the House Committee on Education to provide a perspective on federal aid and parochial schools.¹⁰

Catholics were aware of the growing demands for federal aid to education and assumed such legislation would become a reality. Since it would not be easy to stop federal aid to education, they had to make sure they positioned themselves to benefit from it. A decision on how the NCWC should respond to the bill was discussed, and they decided that it would not be beneficial to be vocal against the bill. They did, however, want to be given assurances that parochial schools would not be excluded. Archbishop Murray told Father Ready:

Concerning the proposed legislation for educational relief I am convinced that it would be poor strategy for any of us to plead for economy and restriction of aid Hence, if the wording of the bill can be broadened so as not to exclude [sic] private schools, I shall voice no objection even though no private school will get a cent in view of the present trend which is annihilating everything private.¹¹

As the position of the U.S. Catholic Church began to shift its approach to federal aid to education, not all of their public and private statements were consistent.¹²

William F. Montavon of the NCWC was given information about the outcome of FDR's upcoming meeting with the House Committee on Education. FDR was expected

¹⁰ Mr. Montavon to Father Burke, February 6, 1932, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA; Father Butler to Father Ready, March 21, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA; Archbishop Murray to Father Ready, March 28, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA; Boyle to Father Ready, March 28, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA; Father Butler to Father Johnson and Father Ready, March 28, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

¹¹ Archbishop Murray to Father Ready, March 28, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

¹² Ibid; Smith, 54.

to tell them he did not want any federal appropriation for education, however, they could use new relief funds to aid education. The pressure on the committee from constituents to obtain aid to education was strong.¹³ More information came from the NCWC General Secretary's report of his meeting with FDR regarding HR9544. The summary of the discussion is stated at length to highlight FDR's resistance to using federal funds for schools.

I told the President that the Bishops were unanimously and emphatically opposed to such a proposed appropriation. Asked FDR to not mention publicly about this meeting but privately wanted him to know how they felt. They would not come out publicly against the federal grant because their opinion might be misconstrued to be in opposition to public schools. ... this would be the opening wedge and would soon change from an emergency to a permanent measure; that the amount of seventy-five millions would be increased to five hundred millions... FDR responded saying Burke should know he is opposed to all and every kind of centralization of education and all Federal financial aid to education. "I learned my lesson from my experience in New York State. I was lead into approving the resolutions of a committee because it was, at that time, Al Smith's committee, in 1924, whereby the State appropriation of eight millions was given to the municipal and rural schools of New York and a great outcry had been raised in favor of the Little Red Schoolhouse. I saw the folly of this first step afterwards, for when I was Governor I found that this had grown to an appropriation of ninety millions a year, and that this ninety millions was forty-five percent of the entire yearly budget of the State of New York. I found also that in four years' time the ninety millions would have increased to one hundred and twenty-five millions. The best I could do as the Governor was to prevent this increase. Now, in the same way, if I allowed any appropriation at all from Federal funds for education by the State, I do not know where it would end. I am not in a position to allow any such funds to be used, and I am determined, as I told Director Hopkins the other day, that there would be no Federal funds available for educational purposes except those of the Relief Administration.... Mr. Hopkins spent seventeen millions for educational relief during the past year... and I instructed Mr. Hopkins that is was to be

¹³ Mr. Montavon to Father Burke, April 18, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

kept to that, or approximately that, during the coming year. And this is the only sum I will allow.”¹⁴

Despite what the House Committee on Education was told by FDR, it wanted to have a federal aid to education bill pass. The bill requested \$75 million from any funds available given to the states by Hopkins with the assistance of the Commissioner of Education without federal controls. Although the committee agreed that an emergency in education existed, members felt the emergency was due to a number of factors outside the purview and control of educators and individual schools, including the Depression, poor fiscal management of states, outdated state tax laws, ill prepared for the monetary needs of schools, and failure to consolidate small rural schools. Money was needed now because it would take some time before states could address these financial issues, and the committee warned that if these issues were not attended to, then states would find it harder to ask Congress for relief.¹⁵

The NCWC was not happy with Section 6, which read, “Nothing in this Act shall be constructed to prevent the distribution of funds, upon application, to privately-owned, free-tuition schools in need” and debated with each other if they should support the bill. They wanted this section to be clearer but Douglass stated it had already been heavily discussed and finalizing that section was a major achievement. In the committee’s report that recommended HR9544 be approved it included a paragraph encouraging private and free-tuition schools be eligible for aid.¹⁶

¹⁴ Father Burke on meeting with FDR, April 30, 1934, Folder 1 Roosevelt, Franklin D. 1933-41, Box 153 NCWC, CUA.

¹⁵ Burke to Hanna, May 7, 1934, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

¹⁶ House of Representatives Report No. 1562 73rd Congress 2nd Session May 10, 1934.

The popularity of HR9544 in both houses of Congress was growing, and the educational community felt confident that it would pass if put to a vote. But the second session of the 73rd Congress ended with HR9544 never coming to a vote because Hopkins stated during a House Appropriations Committee meeting he would provide \$48 million of relief funds to help schools in need if FDR requested it. Mr. Braswell Deen (D-GA) of the House Committee on Education explained how the bill died:

Mr. Douglas [sic], and other members of the committee who were here at the time recall when he pressed the matter of the bill and the committee reported it to the House, a \$75,000,000 appropriation, that in the discussion it was brought out by the Chairman, Mr. Buchanan, and the House was assured, the members of the committee were assured, Mr. Douglas [sic] was assured that it would not be necessary to press our bill or to go to the Rules Committee to get a rule, but simply let the matter stand as it was and it would be taken care of in the Appropriation Bill. The discussion, which I read recently in the record, shows that it was well understood by the chairman of the committee and members of the House understood it; therefore we did not press the bill reported by the Committee on Education.¹⁷

Joshua B. Lee (D-OK), a member of the Committee on Education, added that next time they have a bill they must not accept statements as insurances of action or fact.¹⁸

Excerpts from a hearing on May 16, 1934, at the House Appropriations committee regarding this issue showed that Hopkins had reserved \$48 million for schools. This amount was a forecast of expenditures and not an allocation. Below is a lengthy transcript of an Appropriations Committee meeting where Hopkins stated how he planned to use the \$48 million for education, presented in full to provide evidence of Hopkins evasiveness on committing funds for schools.

¹⁷ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 26, 1935, Folder HR4745, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 227.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

Mr. Hopkins – I would want and I would expect to get Executive approval for granting relief to rural schools. Beyond that I am certainly not in a position to make any informal assurances to this committee.

Mr. Oliver – Since you are authorized to extend relief to rural schools under appropriations which are made available to you during the present year, have you any reason to believe that, if there should be some need for help, you would not be directed to extend like help in the future?

Mr. Hopkins – None whatever; I am quite confident that would be the case.

Mr. Chairman – If you found, however, in rural communities the need of real relief among teachers, or real distress among teachers, there would be no reason why you would not extend relief to them as you would to any other class of people.

Mr. Hopkins – No, sir. The problem is that the bill the Committee on Education has presented is not confined to rural schools, and the question is will that bill be withdrawn. I am not in a position to talk about that, because it is not my job.

Mr. Collins – The school teachers in my State receive an average of \$27 per month for 8 months work. The high school teachers' salary is about \$31 per month. Now, they do not get money when they receive that, but they get certificates. This year the average school term in my State, unless we do get some Federal funds, will not last more than 4 months, if that long.

Mr. Bolton – Are you speaking of rural schools or all schools?

Mr. Collins – I am speaking of all schools.

Mr. Collins – ...in Wayne County in my State, they realized that their budget for school purposes would be only a small amount; so they called the school teachers together and the truck drivers together, and said: "Now, under this budget the school teachers will get approximately \$19 per month. Are you willing and satisfied to take that, and let the school term be the same as it was last year?" The teachers agreed to that, with the result that Wayne County, in my State, but not in my district, did not receive a single penny of money through Mr. Hopkins' office.

Mr. Hopkins – That is right.

Mr. Taber – I wonder to what extent those units which are not able to carry on their schools are indulging in large road and other programs that cost a lot of money.

Mr. Collins – The best way to tell you about that, when you ask that question, would be to take you down there and show you the misery that exists.

The Chairman – In allocating this \$890,000,000, you have tentatively put down \$50,000,000 for public education.

Mr. Hopkins – Yes.

The Chairman – If \$890,000,000 is appropriated and it is determined that you should help education, that money will be available for the purpose.

Mr. Hopkins – Yes.

The Chairman – It is up to the President to make that determination.

Mr. Hopkins – I should think so.

The Chairman – And where school teachers are in need of real relief, they will get it.

Mr. Hopkins – Yes sir.

Mr. Collins – When that happens the schools will be closed.

Mr. Hopkins – The problem we are facing and the problem before Congress is whether the Government wishes to finance schools in districts that are “busted” to the tune of anywhere from \$75,000,000 up. I consider that I am simply an agent in this matter, and I do not think I should make a decision of that sort. That is not my business...¹⁹

By October 1934 the NEA had collected enough information to warrant sufficient concern about the status of public schools to meet with White House officials. Based on the meeting, a press release stated that FDR told Harold Ickes and Hopkins to create a plan that would help schools stay open for the next 90 days. The hope was that by January Congress and state legislatures would meet and figure out how to help the schools.²⁰

By the end of 1934, Sidney B. Hall, Superintendent of Public Instruction in Virginia, Zook, and John Studebaker were meeting to strategize how the NEA could pass a federal aid to education bill in Congress. In a letter Hall wrote to Willard Givens on December 3, 1934, he described how Zook, Studebaker, and he perceived the political climate on federal aid and suggested how the NEA should proceed:

We are of the opinion that the cards are stacked against us from an administrative point of view, and that therefore we will hardly be able to get Federal aid at this time. Nevertheless, we recognize that the Federal government is giving aid to the various states in considerable quantities already. We are wondering if pressing forward on different sectors of the front, making successes of these efforts, and ultimately unifying the sum

¹⁹ Excerpts from the Hearings Conducted Before the Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, May 16, 1934, Folder HR4745, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233.

²⁰ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 26, 1935, Folder HR4745, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 210 and 211.

total of all of the successes made, will not give us the Federal aid which we now desire so much. In other words, is it not better to make small gains as we go forward each year, making the Federal government realize gradually that Federal aid is a reality, rather than attempting to floor the government completely with our efforts for Federal aid as a whole at the present time? I am convinced in my thinking that small and gradual gains will ultimately lead to the final goal, and that this can be done with less difficulty than by attempting to do it all at once.²¹

Their conclusion was that since the administration did not want federal aid it would be nearly impossible to obtain that goal. Instead, they should try to have as much money from the federal government as possible in the areas that were currently giving to education. Federal aid in piecemeal was more feasible than a federal education bill.

During the 73rd Congress the concern for public schools was present, as indicated by the large number of education bills. Hopkins, was able to keep all of his relief funds under his control by providing minimum amounts of aid to schools, thereby making bills redundant. His evasive comments during meetings indicated he did not approve of federal aid to schools. Educators started off the next session of Congress with data to show how many schools were suffering.

74th Congress

The beginning of the 74th Congress (January 1935-June 1936) included a school closure report by the NEA. Of the 11 states that replied to the NEA's survey, 1,584 schools were closed at the end of March 1935. Sixteen states reported to the surveyors that if teachers were paid in cash, 10,152 schools would be closed. In March 1935 the House Committee on Education held a hearing for HR5923, introduced by Lee, and

²¹ Sidney B. Hall to W.E. Givens, December 3, 1934, Folder Givens-Personal Correspondence on Selection of Secretary of NEA 1934, Box 619 Governance-Office of Executive Secretary, NEA Records, GWU.

HR4745, introduced by Deen. During this hearing Hopkins stated during the 1933-34 school year, all rural schools were kept open. He said it was not right to put teachers on relief rolls but that was what he had to do in order to keep schools open. He reiterated what he stated in the past, that his office should not be handling educational affairs but rather focusing on those who were unemployed. He said Congress was given the opportunity to pass a federal aid to education bill but did not, so his office used its authority to help schools stay open by financially supporting rural school teachers and bus drivers. He did not think handling the school problem in this manner was the best decision but he did all he could to help schools. He agreed with Lee's bill that the funds for schools should be appropriated by Congress from a source it chooses and administered from the Office of Education. He refused to state his opinion on federal aid to education and instead stated that he thought it was best left to the executive branch and Congress. He made it clear he was not an authority on education. In terms of financing schools, he thought the states could do more to help schools than they currently were doing. When questioned about whether all rural schools were open, Hopkins stated they were at present all open, except a unique case or two. This statement was discussed further and other congressmen were sure rural schools were closed in their districts. He then commented on his statement that \$48 million would be used for schools by stating the money was available unless he determined that the state could help itself.²²

Studebaker spoke next and shared concerns that states had with staff from the relief agencies. He wanted to make sure the committee was aware of who or what managed federal aid, and he agreed with Hopkins that the Office of Education should

²² Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 21, 1935, Folder HR5923, Box

handle funds dealing with education. He also agreed that some states were not doing all they could to support schools, including his own state of Iowa.²³

Dr. Howard Dawson, from the Office of Education who worked on the financial surveys of schools, wanted the committee to know that “the States that are in the greatest distress are the States which for years and years have been accustomed to give a larger amount of State support to education than the other States in this Union.”²⁴ He also was not happy that this school year the relief administration was purposely not working in cooperation with the state superintendents of public instruction in determining financial eligibility for relief funds. He submitted paperwork showing that \$16,924,659.01 was allocated from relief funds for schools during the school year 1933-34, but only \$14,500,000 were spent because some schools closed early due to funds not being received, some districts were found to be ineligible. Also, not all rural teachers were able to obtain relief funds because their salaries were not their only source of income.²⁵

During the hearing when Zook was speaking Lee asserted that public agencies in every sector but education had been assisted with direct federal aid. Zook added that the road in front of his old elementary school had been repaved with federal money three times but the school continued to be dilapidated. “Now, of course, roads were formerly just as much a local responsibility as the schools ever were.”²⁶

84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 1-21.

²³ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 22, 1935, Folder HR5923, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 25-51.

²⁴ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 22, 1935, Folder HR5923, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 59.

²⁵ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 22, 1935, Folder HR5923, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 65-67.

²⁶ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 26, 1935, Folder HR4745, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 80.

Father Johnson spoke next and stated that the Catholic Church was against permanent federal aid because that led to federal control of education. He further stated that local control prevents fascism and was consequently a principle of American liberty, but he believed that if children were not being educated because of a financial crisis than something should be done. He questioned if the goal of the bill is to aid the children of the U.S. then why does it stop at public schools? The committee, he argued, must keep in mind that there are 2.5 million children in Catholic schools. He then reclassified Catholic schools as the truest public schools because the goal was to instill citizenship within their students. He cited the fact that anyone could attend a Catholic school regardless of their religion. Parents of Catholic school children had to pay double their share for their child's education. They paid taxes required to support public schools, and they also had to pay Catholic school tuition. He continued on to say that now under this bill, parents of Catholic school students would have to pay a federal tax that would also be used to support public schools. Father Johnson suggested the bill be broadened to allow states, if they so choose, include parochial schools that do not make a profit or charge tuition. The issue of separation of church and state was raised but Father Johnson did not think emergency funds to Catholic schools would apply.²⁷

After the hearing, FDR was contacted by Senator Joseph T. Robinson (D-AR), who was the Senate Majority Leader, to let him know the president of the Arizona State Board of Education, along with educational organizational representatives, liked Studebaker's idea that federal aid to education should be administered from the Office of Education to the states. FDR's response informed Robinson that relief funds were for

²⁷ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 26, 1935, Folder HR4745, Box

relief and if some of the funds were to be used for education the Commissioner of Education would be consulted. He then commented that he wanted to stay away from promoting permanent federal aid to education.²⁸

Representative Jed Johnson (D-OK) spoke next and was upset that Hopkins told the committee that monetary issues were not the cause of any rural school closures. Johnson corrected Hopkins, but Hopkins insisted Johnson was the one in error. The state superintendent of Oklahoma contacted Johnson and confirmed that 127 schools with 8,600 students were closed. In addition, 450 schools were only able to stay open for one to three months. Oklahoma applied for \$1.6 million in federal relief but was only promised \$200,000. He then pointed out that although money had been promised, it had not yet been given to the state.²⁹

By late April, the House Committee on Education met to discuss these two bills when Lee announced that Mr. Hopkins gave federal relief funds to his state of Oklahoma. The committee concluded that other states could also do the same and therefore these two bills were unnecessary. The chairman stated the bills would no longer be discussed.³⁰

The end of the 74th Congress resulted in the passing of HR12120, the George-Deen Act, which was signed by FDR on June 8, 1936. FDR was not pleased with the bill since it gave \$10,000,000 more than he initially allocated. According to FDR, there were not enough certified vocational educational teachers to warrant an expanded vocational program, it maintained inequality by requiring states to match funds, resulting in poorer

84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 83-100.

²⁸ FDR to Joseph Robinson, April 2, 1935, Folder X-references 1933-1937, Box 1 OF 598-607, FDRL.

²⁹ Draft House of Representative Committee on Education Hearing, March 26, 1935, Folder HR4745, Box 84 74th Congress Papers Accompanying Specific Bills and Resolutions, RG 233, 201-205.

states receiving the least amount of funds, and vocational educational organizations had pressured Congress to pass the bill.

I have, with much reluctance, affixed my signature to H.R. 6958, the Appropriation Bill for the Department of the Interior for the fiscal year 1938. The principal item of difficulty was the appropriation of nearly fourteen and a half million dollars for the further development of vocational education – ten million dollars more than the estimate of the Bureau of the Budget which I presented to Congress. I recognize that a sound program of vocational education is greatly needed in the United States, but an appropriation at this time of the full amount authorized under the Act of June 8, 1936, known as the George-Deen act, is not the way to meet this need.... I will, therefore, carry out what is obviously the intention of the Congress-that as much of the total sum shall be expended during the current fiscal year as can properly and usefully be spent-no more and no less.³¹

Although FDR thought education, and particularly vocational education, was a critical component to the success of the country, he thought the amount associated with this bill was too high and should be the financial burden of states, not the federal government. The passage of this bill highlighted the difference between FDR and Congress. The former vocational education bill, the George-Ellzey Act, was a disappointment to FDR because it failed to help unemployed youth and adults, as directed by FDR, and because the funds provided to the states went unused. FDR and his administration were not pleased that more money went into existing programs rather than generating new ones. This act did result in an increase in enrollment of students attending high schools but did not make significant strides in helping the unemployed. Vocational schools failed to address issues of unemployment even when given funding. Such actions reinforced what

³⁰ Mr. Montavon to Father Burke, Father Ready, Social Action, Education, NCWC, News Service, April 24, 1935, Folder 6 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

the Committee on Economic Security, a committee formed by FDR in 1934 to strategize how to help the unemployed, concluded: vocational schools will fail to train the unemployed. J.C. Wright in the Office of Education communicated FDR's expectations to state administrators, but they worked within traditional requirements set up under the Smith-Hughes Act, making it difficult for short training courses to develop. The laws would have to be changed before rapid job training courses could occur and that did not happen until the George-Deen Act. Whether FDR was aware of these regulatory restrictions or not is unclear. Money went unspent, particularly the first year, because the passing of the George-Ellzey Act came after many states legislatures had approved the next year's budget. The federal aid and the necessary matching funds were not accounted for in those budgets.³² These experiences that FDR had with this bill influenced his reaction to the George-Deen Act and its large budgetary requirements.

While considering the George-Deen Act, advocates of general education and the Advisory Committee cautioned that vocational education should not be expanded until the Committee's report came out.³³ While arguing that the federal government had supported vocational education, contrary to FDR's statements that the New Deal programs were only incidentally related to education, FDR wrote:

It should be pointed out that Federal funds spent for the promotion of vocational education under the Smith-Hughes and related statutes are by no means the only Federal appropriations to provide vocational training for the youth of the Nation. During the past four years the problem has been dealt with in many ways. The Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, and the National Youth Administration are among the newer agencies which have been concerned with problems of

³¹ "Regarding Appropriation for Vocational Education," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 20, no. 2 (October 1937): 75–76.

³² O'Coin, 23, 108, 109, 171–182, and 211.

³³ "Regarding Appropriation for Vocational Education," 75–76.

vocational training. The Congress of the United States has already appropriated substantial amounts to these agencies for activities designed to train for useful employment.³⁴

The passing of HR12120 was not easy because the House Committee on Education attempted to kill the bill by keeping it from a vote on the House floor. The bill started as a Senate bill (the George Bill, S2883), which passed on April 28, 1936 without a dissenting vote. The bill approved \$1 million every year to prepare teachers for vocational education. As explained by Studebaker to Marvin McIntyre, the bill continued, the federal aid to vocation education according to the George-Ellzey Act that ended on June 30, 1937. This act was created to continue the George-Reed Act from 1929 that added funds to the original federal aid to vocational act, the Smith- Hughes Act of 1917. Studebaker expounded that S2883 allowed for states to match fifty cents for every federal dollar until June 30, 1942, and then states would slowly be required to match more of their allotted funds. The money was administered by the Office of Education which coordinated a vocational program with the states. Studebaker ended his memorandum to McIntyre by encouraging FDR to support the bill.³⁵

Studebaker repeated much of the same information in a letter to Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, while adding how the bill would help general and adult education:

The Bills would also make available additional funds to enable the program of vocational education more adequately to serve the increasing needs of youth still in school who will thus be held in attendance longer through such practical courses, the out-of-school youth who will in many instances return if opportunity is afforded them to take vocational training,

³⁴ Ibid., 76.

³⁵ Report on National Vocational Legislation by L.H. Dennis, April 28, 1936, Folder Legislation George-Deen Bill 1935-36, Box 1 Records of the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education, RG 12, NACP; John W. Studebaker to M.H. McIntyre, April 24, 1936, Folder Legislation George-Deen Bill 1935-36, Box 1 Records of the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education, RG 12, NACP.

and adult who need training and retraining to enable them to reenter employment or to continue in employment in the face of the rapidly changing conditions in industry, on the farms, and in the home.³⁶

Prior to the bill passing in the Senate, Ickes was asked by a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, who reviewed the bill, to share his opinion on the bill. Oddly, Ickes used two pages to describe nine points of why the bill should be passed and then stated:

While I am in sympathy with the purposes of your bill, this report was submitted to the Bureau of the Budget, and I am advised by the Assistant Director that the proposed legislation would not be in accord with the financial program of the President. Therefore, I recommend that it not be enacted.³⁷

Despite Ickes' advice on the bill, the bill was reported out favorably in the Senate committee and was consequently passed. The bill went to the House Committee on Education but was not acted upon. The vocational education organization, the American Vocational Association (AVA), pushed a bill that was similar to S2883 on to the House floor (HR12120), a bill that was already approved of by the House Committee on Education. While on the floor, HR12120 was amended to be identical to S2883, and it was passed. The Senate then voted in favor of HR12120, and FDR signed the bill into law. The result was a dramatic increase in enrollment for vocational education courses. Schools that never had vocational education previously had programs for the first time. A blended program of work and training were introduced, and new opportunities were available for youth. Despite these additions, more programs were still needed. Public and

³⁶ John W. Studebaker to Frances Perkins, April 24, 1936, Folder Legislation George-Deen Bill 1935-36, Box 1 Records of the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education, RG 12, NACP.

vocational schools were still unsure of their role and responsibility for out-of-school youth, but it was agreed that more training for unemployed populations was needed. One requirement for participation in vocational training was that youth had to be employed in order to receive job training; this requirement was heavily criticized by Aubrey Williams of the National Youth Administration (NYA). It was debated by Williams, vocational educators, and researchers if public schools or an outside agency would be better able to train out-of-school youth.³⁸

Similar to the previous session of Congress, when an education bill started to gain in popularity, Hopkins killed the bill by using relief funds to help schools. One major bill did pass during the 74th Congress but it renewed the federal government's commitment to vocational education. Public schools were still unable to secure federal aid. The defeat of education bills caused the chairman of the House Committee on Education in the next session to suggest they move forward with bills that FDR approves.

75th Congress

A few days before the 75th Congressional session started, FDR on February 5, 1937 shocked the country by announcing his Supreme Court packing bill. Because the Supreme Court deemed many key parts of FDR's New Deal program as unconstitutional it is thought that he wanted to add six more judges of his choice to the Supreme Court,

³⁷ John W. Studebaker to Chairman, Federal Board for Vocational Education, April 23, 1936, Folder Legislation George-Deen Bill 1935-36, Box 1 Records of the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education, RG 12, NACP.

³⁸ Report on Pending Federal Vocational Legislation by L.H. Dennis, May 27, 1936, Folder Legislation George-Deen Bill 1935-36, Box 1 Records of the Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education, RG 12, NACP; O'Coin, 299-311.

who presumably would vote in his favor. Fear of federal control and viewing FDR as a dictator increased with this bill adding concerns to federal aid to education.³⁹

On February 18, 1937, at the start of the 75th Congress, the House Committee on Education met under Chairman Palmisano (D-MD). He said:

The Chairman does not feel that he wants to carry the burden of refusing hearings to various members of the House who have introduced bills. The Chairman, personally, is inclined to withhold hearings or refuse hearings on new matters brought before this Committee unless there happens to be some indication from the Administration that they desire hearings on a particular bill, but I do not want that responsibility to rest solely upon myself.⁴⁰

Representative George A. Dondero (R-MI) agreed with the Chairman and vehemently stated the committee should not favorably report bills that would not be taken seriously by the administration or on the House floor. An example of such an action was when the Appropriations Committee reduced the vocational bill to \$4 million. Mr. Mason, the former president of the NEA of Illinois, added that hearings were a way of educating the public and providing the opportunity for action. He further stated that hearings may not lead to a law or policy but they gave the committee an opportunity to hear the issues and decide what was best for education. Mr. Deen made his position clear by stating he would not go along with FDR when he was wrong. Mr. Thomas Brooks Fletcher (D-OH) also reminded the committee that bills rarely remained the same as they progress through Congress, and that that was just a fact they should be aware of without using that as a reason to not have hearings. The discussion resulted in reading the list of bills the

³⁹ History.com "Roosevelt Announces 'Court-Packing' Plan," February 5, 1937, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/roosevelt-announces-court-packing-plan> (accessed June 3, 2013); Smith, 7 and 50.

committee had and choosing which ones they wanted to have a hearing on. After that, they determined, based on the administration's opinion, how to act on the bill.⁴¹ The first bill they wanted to hold hearings on was Fletcher's HR2288, which was later substituted for HR5962.

The Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill (HR5962) was sponsored by two members of the Senate, Pat Harrison (D-MS) and Hugo Black (D-AL), and its third sponsor was Brooks Fletcher from the House of Representatives. The bill wanted to use \$100 million of federal funds to help schools. The funds would be given to the states based on the population of school children, and the funds would then be distributed to the districts by the state. Major educational organizations, namely the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), supported the bill. During the hearings W.E.B. Du Bois shared his concerns that some districts, particularly in the South, would not distribute state funds equally between white populations and black populations. Because of the poor quality of schools for blacks, Du Bois stated, "What we have in Georgia today for Negroes is not compulsory education, it is compulsory ignorance."⁴² He asked that the Commissioner of Education determine district spending. Fletcher argued that any such requirements in the bill would lean dangerously close to federal control. Mary Foley Grossman of the AFT spoke next and chastised the government for spending \$120

⁴⁰ Transcript of Committee on Education House of Representatives, February 18, 1937, Folder HR75A F9.1+9.2, Box 336 Committee Papers, Committee on Education, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C., 1.

⁴¹ O'Coin, 245; Transcript of Committee on Education House of Representatives, February 18, 1937, Folder HR75A F9.1+9.2, Box 336 Committee Papers, Committee on Education, RG 233, The Center for Legislative Archives, Washington, D.C., 1-16.

⁴² Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), Statement of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Professor of Sociology, Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA, 287.

million on two battleships, yet finding it hard to spend \$100 million on 30 million children. She advocated for the bill since it would help to promote democracy:

The term democracy is bandied about quite freely. It is mouthed by some to cloak outrageously undemocratic beliefs. By others it is used sincerely but with little deep appreciation of its real meaning. Gentlemen, we mean it. We mean rule of the people and to rule, a people must be enlightened. It can only be enlightened through a system of free public schools of good quality.... I am well aware that widespread education is a menace to the power of the few. This is one of the reasons why I believe in widespread education.... I know that one of the functions of education is that of teaching a trade, but I also know that the fundamental function of education is teaching to live.⁴³

Another AFT representative said he was for the bill but was upset that it would distribute funds based on school population since not all of the states needed the money. He would have liked to see distribution be based on need to alleviate educational inequalities among states. And, like Du Bois, he was upset that the law did not specifically state the money should be divided equally amongst the races. Charles H. Houston of the NAACP had suggestions for improving the bill, but he made it clear that his organization supported the bill as it was currently written.⁴⁴

William G. Carr, Research Director of the NEA, also supported the bill at the hearings. He emphasized the fact that those who received a poor education tend to be the same people who need relief funds: "The Federal Government in pouring out millions for relief is, in many cases, attempting to ameliorate conditions which can only be prevented or cured by an educational program."⁴⁵ Another NEA member, Howard A. Dawson,

⁴³ Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), Statement of Mrs. Mary Foley Grossman, Representing the American Federation of Teachers, 296.

⁴⁴ Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), 185 and 297-306.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 343.

Director of Rural Services, focused on the role of the federal government in education in light of the increasing movement of people from state to state:

Public education is of vital interest to the Federal Government as well as to the States and their communities. A citizen of one of the sovereign States is none the less a citizen of the Nation.... In 1930 more than one out of each five persons in the United States was living in another States [sic] than that in which he was born.... Some of the States that now have the best supported systems of public education have the highest percentages of citizens born in other States.... Thus it happens that the entire Nation must be concerned with the kind of educational opportunities offered in each State of the Nation.⁴⁶

Dawson continued saying if education is not paid for now then it will be paid for later on in crime, poor health, and destitution. Addressing the argument that states would be able to pay for education if they would only modernize their taxing system and prepare for educational expenses, Dawson clearly said this was untrue.⁴⁷ He insisted that there was too little money available amongst the public in some states to collect and meet budgetary needs.

Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Ready, General Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), stated that he was against the bill because it did not help schools improve as it was written. The money went directly to state legislatures, and the legislatures would then determine how schools would be reformed without any federal check. Giving financial support without any accompanying policy changes would not guarantee educational reform, and the bill did not even define how schools should improve or inquire into what the biggest challenges were facing public schools.

Additionally, the bill distributed the funds equally among the school districts rather than

⁴⁶ Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), Statement of Dr. Howard A. Dawson, Director of Rural Service, National Education Association, 17.

responding appropriately to those districts that demonstrated the most need. He asked for clear definitions of what constituted public education so that he could be sure that the bill was not discriminating against parochial schools, which he believed provided a public service for the public good.⁴⁸ Father George Johnson, Secretary General of the National Catholic Educational Association, restated many of Ready's thoughts but added that:

it is difficult to see how anything of consequence would emerge to enhance the general welfare of the Nation unless one is naive enough to believe that our educational ills can be cured by the mere spending of more money. Lack of wealth, Mr. Chairman, is only one of the many reasons for the ineffectiveness of our schools. Sometimes school systems fail to function effectively because there is a manifest lack of effort or an absence of enlightened leadership. Local as well as State administration is frequently stupid. Few States even today have made a beginning of any intelligent effort to equalize educational opportunities within their own borders. Now, that a school system, whether it be State or local, at present mismanaged or making no effort to help itself, failing to take cognizance of the challenge which social change is making, will be transformed by the magic of a Federal grant, is a ridiculous assumption.⁴⁹

Father Johnson was then asked whether he would be against the bill if parochial schools would be included in the bill. He responded that he would still be opposed to the bill if that were the case.⁵⁰

When James H. Richmond, president of State Teachers College in Kentucky was testifying in support of the bill Deen asked him if he was concerned of amendments that could be attached to the bill in the future if it became law. Deen was worried that an

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18-50.

⁴⁸ Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), Statement of Very Reverend Msgr. Michael J. Ready, General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D.C., 87-91.

⁴⁹ Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), Statement of Rev. Father George Johnson, Secretary General, National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, D.C., 421.

amendment could be added to stipulate funds would not be given to states that maintain a segregated school system. Deen asked this question of Richmond because his state of Kentucky, like Deen's state of Georgia, had separate schools for blacks and whites. Deen cautioned that such an amendment could easily pass since only 17 states had segregated schools, which was a total of only 135 House members.⁵¹

The hearings for this bill in the House went on for many days. In the Senate, the bill was reported favorably out of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor.⁵²

According to Swain, Senator Harrison did not push the bill to come to the floor because he had heard that FDR and the Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson (D-AR) were against the bill.

Harrison had no sooner brought the measure up for discussion than William Borah cogently asked if its passage would necessitate new taxes. When Robinson concurred with the Idahoan that "we cannot go on extending federal activities into new fields [and] increasing expenditures without making some provisions for meeting them," congressional observers were shocked that Harrison's Arkansas friend was prepared to oppose the bill. "It was as if Damon had struck Pythias," columnist Paul Mallon wrote, adding that some spectators nearly "fell out of the gallery" when Robinson spoke up. Actually Harrison knew exactly what bothered his friend, for Roosevelt had just ordered a resurvey of all departmental expenditures. In spite of the fact that Harrison had never yet left the administration fold on budgetary matters, he was ready to do so on education. Moreover, he was privy to information from White House aides that FDR would veto the bill because it failed to give him a hand in the distribution of the funds.

Behind the scenes the White House worked to prevent the Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill from coming to a vote. When agriculturalist Clarence Poe strongly urged his senator, Josiah Bailey, to support the bill,

⁵⁰ Ibid., 424.

⁵¹ Federal Aid to the States for the Support of Public Schools: Hearings on H.R. 5962 before the Committee on Education House of Representatives, 75th Congress, 1st Session (1937), 59.

⁵² Mitchell, 126.

Bailey replied that the bill would pass if brought to a vote. The only force to prevent that, Bailey wrote, was “the influence of the President.”⁵³

FDR’s influence on preventing the bill to come to the Senate floor through Robinson is clearly shown by Swain’s delineation of the dynamics surrounding the bill. Although FDR did not make his thoughts known to the public, Swain shows that he was trying to kill the bill. Besides Robinson and FDR’s opposition to his bill, Harrison also thought it would be wise to wait for the President’s Advisory Committee on Education’s report to come out before promoting it.⁵⁴ That time never came because the bill was killed in the House Committee on Education. On April 19, 1937, Braswell Deen (D-GA), sponsor of the George-Deen bill, informed McIntyre that:

The Educational Bill was coming up in secret conference in the Committee a week from tomorrow; that he was opposed to it in general and wanted to have the President’s reaction on it because he thinks he can kill it in Committee, if desired – in fact he is all for killing it.... I am under terrific pressure from all over the state and all over the country. I have not committed myself. If it comes to the floor of the House, it is going to be hard to defeat it. In the Committee there are three or four fellows who have been going along with me and I believe that at our next meeting, which is tomorrow a week, I can defeat the Bill and I think it ought to be defeated.⁵⁵

On April 27, 1937, Deen shared his victory with McIntyre and let him know the Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill was voted unfavorably, 12 to 5.⁵⁶ This incident shows that vocational and general educators competed for limited education funds as Deen assisted in killing the Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill.

⁵³ Martha Swain, *Pat Harrison: The New Deal Years* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 213.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 213–215.

⁵⁵ Telephone Office to McIntyre, April 19, 1937, Folder 1937 Jan-June, Box 2 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁵⁶ Telephone Office to McIntyre, April 27, 1937, Folder 1937 Jan-June, Box 2 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

After the President's Advisory Committee on Education's report came out, the House Committee on Education began working on a bill that would reflect its recommendations. Two members of the committee told the NCWC that they were against placing such a bill onto the House floor and felt many others were of like mind. The NCWC thought it was unlikely that the leaders of the House of Representatives would promote the bill to the floor for a vote, considering it was an election year.⁵⁷ Their conclusion was correct; a vote on a bill for federal aid to schools in either the Senate or the House did not occur.

According to a report on federal aid to education that was given to the NCWC Advisory Board by Father Johnson, during a meeting in September 1938 between Floyd Reeves and FDR, the president shared his concern that, "the Federal Government do something to aid the backward States in maintaining a minimum educational program."⁵⁸ Since he was opposed to general federal aid and the President's Advisory Committee on Education's report called for it based on financial need, Reeves asked FDR if any compromise could be made. FDR told him he would accept the plan laid out in the report. However, the very next day Katherine Lenroot of the Department of Labor was in a meeting with FDR who stated he would in no way support general federal aid to education. Despite FDR's conflicting views on a potential bill involving federal aid to education, Reeves proceeded based on his conversation with FDR and worked with others to present a bill based on the committee's report.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Memorandum, April 20, 1938, Folder 7 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA.

⁵⁸ Report of Dr. Johnson to Advisory Board, October 1938, Folder 7 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA, 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

FDR's influence in Congress was noted in the 74th session. The education bill in the Senate was unable to come to the floor and did not even get passed in the House. Senator Harrison was willing to wait for the President's Advisory Committee on Education report to garner more support for his newer bill, which would be based on its recommendations.

76th Congress

During the 76th Congress (January 3, 1939- January 3, 1941), FDR shifted his attention to preparing for World War II. Senator Harrison, along with the Senate Chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor, Elbert D. Thomas (D-UT), created a revised federal aid to education bill, S1305. This bill was based on the President's Advisory Committee on Education's recommendations and targeted inequity between and within states. The Senate Committee reported the bill favorably because it:

accepts the proposition that the Federal Government no less than the State has a fundamental interest in the education of our citizens;... The committee further believes that the ideals and principles of American democracy call for equality of opportunity. The committee finds on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that, without a reasonable amount of Federal assistance to the States for the support of public education, there is not the faintest hope that any fair degree of equality of opportunity will or can exist in these United States.... Education reduces crime, raises the standard of culture, is associated with better health and increased longevity, and increases the wealth and income of the Nation. The mobility of our population and the higher birth rates among poor States and rural areas compel the interest of each of the States, and hence of the Federal Government, in the character of educational opportunity offered everywhere in the Nation.... Education can be made a force to equalize the condition of men. It is no less true that it may be a force to create class, race, and sectional distinctions. The evidence indicates clearly that the schools of the United States, which have hitherto been regarded as the bulwark of democracy, may in fact become an instrument for creating those very inequalities they were designed to prevent. If, for a long period of years, each succeeding generation is drawn in disproportionately large

numbers from these areas in which economic conditions are poorest, if the population reserves of the Nation continue to be recruited from economically underprivileged groups, and if the inability of the depressed economic areas and groups to provide proper education for their children is not corrected by aid from areas and groups more prosperous, the effect on American civilization and on representative political institutions may be disastrous.⁶⁰

The bill had unanimous backing from major education organizations, including the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the AFT, the American Library Association, the NEA, the National Council of Chief State School Officers, and the Progressive Education Association (PEA). In preparation for Floyd Reeves' testimony for the S1305 hearings, he asked Daniel W. Bell, Acting Director of Budget, if this bill was aligned with FDR's program. Reeves entered Bell's response into the Congressional Record; "I have taken this matter up with the president and you are advised that the proposed legislation would not be in accord with his program."⁶¹ The Senators argued with Reeves that a statement from the Budget Director was not an indicator of FDR's thoughts on the bill and merely represented financial concerns. Due to a lack of communication with FDR, Reeves was unable to confirm their assumptions.⁶² But a memorandum from Bell to FDR had a handwritten note by FDR, "Not in accord with program."⁶³ The decision was definitely FDR's.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ U.S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, Federal Assistance to the State for the Support of Public Education, April 3, 1939, to accompany S. 1305, S. Rpt. 244, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., Folder Interior Department Office of Education (source material), Box 21 General Records, President's Interdepartmental Committee to Coordinate Health and Welfare Activities, FDRL, 2-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶² Federal Aid to Education Act of 1939: Hearings on S. 1305 before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor Senate, 76th Congress, 1st Session (1939), 22 and 31.

⁶³ Daniel Bell to FDR, February 23, 1939, Folder 1939, Box 3 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; Zeitlin, 80.

The main difference between this bill and previous education bills under Senator Harrison is that the money apportioned to states would be based on need. Reeves assuredly reported that money would only go to where it was needed and in proportion to the financial stress of a state. A formula based on the number of students (an index of educational load) and the state's financial ability (index of financial ability) would be used to calculate a state's financial need. Rural children would be calculated as 1.4 children since their education was more costly. The Commissioner of Education would approve all state plans that would be required to show that more money was going to the poorest districts, otherwise he was expected to reject it. As a follow-up, an audit would be completed to assess where the money was actually spent within the state.⁶⁵

The Senators asked Reeves if state representatives had shown any concern about the bill's structure and financial plan. Reeves responded that no state representatives had voiced any concerns about the bill.⁶⁶ Wilbur Helm of the Church League of America spoke at the hearing concerned that the bill would become an intrusion on local rights by the federal government. The Chairman responded, "Don't you think it would be very, very queer for a man like Senator Harrison, who came from Mississippi, a man like Justice Black, who came from Alabama, to sponsor a bill that would interfere with State rights?"⁶⁷ Charles H. Houston, who represented the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the hearing on HR5962, was quite pleased with the bill but made some suggestions. In the end, the bill was reported favorably out of the Senate Committee but never brought up on the floor. Thomas submitted another

⁶⁵ Federal Aid to Education Act of 1939: Hearings on S. 1305 before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor Senate, 76th Congress, 1st Session (1939), 52-54, 62, and 67.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

Harrison-Thomas bill the following year but it was not reported favorably out of the committee. Harrison was terminally ill by then and passed away the following year.⁶⁸

The House Committee on Education, under chairman William H. Larrabee (D-IN), created a similar bill to S1305, called the Larrabee Bill HR3517, but it was never reported out of the committee. By early 1940, Larrabee was informing people that hearings would not be held on HR3517 at the request of FDR. Mrs. Roosevelt informed FDR what Larrabee was saying and suggested that hearings be held on the bill.⁶⁹ FDR responded, "... I think frankly that in view of the political situation – not the need – it is best to defer any education grant at this session."⁷⁰

Legislation based on the President's Advisory Committee on Education's report was never passed in the late 1930s. The question of federal aid to education continued until the end of FDR's presidency. Educators who were in favor of federal aid continued to hope that FDR would support it. The formation of the Roosevelt Group indicated such continued demands of FDR for federal aid. This group of prominent educators included John Dewey, Albert Einstein, Abraham Flexner, and William H. Kilpatrick, who collectively argued that FDR would be more willing to help the cause for federal aid to education than a Republican. They added further, "President Roosevelt and the platform of the Democratic party are definitely committed to Federal aid for public education."⁷¹ They were wrong; FDR was committed to keeping federal funds from supporting public schools.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 241.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 178; Swain, 216.

⁶⁹ M.C. Thompson to Mr. Currie, February 2, 1940, Folder 1940, Box 3 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

⁷⁰ FDR to Lauchlin Currie, February 13, 1940, Folder 1940, Box 3 OF 107 Education, FDRL.

As 1941 approached, Congress poured money into the Office of Education for training defense production workers, starting at \$15 million and reaching \$116 million by 1941. This money was to be distributed to the states by the Office of Education which Congress identified as the coordinator for vocational training related to defense. FDR was in favor of federal aid for defense work as long as it went to the NYA. Both the Office of Education and the NYA received funds for defense training until the NYA was terminated in 1943.⁷²

Analysis of FDR, Congress, and Federal Aid to Education

Upon studying the federal aid to education legislation, a pattern to circumvent such bills can be detected. Bills would be presented to the committees of Congress and they would either not be voted on in committee or on the House or Senate floors. If a bill was gaining in popularity, Hopkins would use a minimum amount of relief funds that would placate the committees so they would abandon their education bills. No archival documents were found where FDR directly disapproved of specific bills, told chairmen of committees to not vote on bills, or directed the majority leaders to ensure that bills do not come to the floor, however, the fact that the chairman of the House Committee on Education did not want to hold hearings unless FDR indicated he was interested in the bill shows FDR's influence was strong. Zeitlin suggested that if FDR wanted to pass a federal aid to education bill in 1934 he certainly had enough political support in Congress

⁷¹ Educators Form Roosevelt Group, October 19, 1944, New York Times Article, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt 1944 Campaign, Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷² O'Coin, 330–334.

to do so.⁷³ I think that due to FDR's unwillingness to get involved in the debate on federal aid to education, he worked outside of public view to kill these bills. Swain's account of FDR's hidden work on killing Harrison's bill supports this claim. Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot came to a similar conclusion: "Federal aid to education bills got nowhere on the Hill, in large part because of the opposition of Roosevelt. The president's men in Congress managed quietly to bottle the bills up in committee."⁷⁴ During the legislative process, FDR had ample opportunity to privately influence a bill while in committee, on the floor, or within the Rules or Appropriations Committees. Within this study, educational bills were killed or minimized in each of these steps.

Although no archival data was found to support the possible collaboration between FDR and Hopkins to suppress federal aid to education legislation, it is logical to assume that Hopkins acted on behalf of FDR's desires, if not under his specific direction, because of their intimate relationship. Hopkins was one of FDR's closest advisers. They both shared the same sentiment towards using relief money for education. From the beginning of federal aid to education legislation during FDR's presidency, Hopkins stated that relief money was appropriated to assist with employment and any other uses of those funds was not authorized. Similarly, FDR noted that the money used for emergency education programs were relief funds and could only be used for relief purposes.⁷⁵ In addition, FDR told members of the NCWC that he instructed Hopkins to spend \$17

⁷³ Zeitlin, 256 and 257.

⁷⁴ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 102.

⁷⁵ June Hopkins, "The Road Not Taken: Harry Hopkins and New Deal Work Relief," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (June 1999): 306; Joseph Rosier to Charl Ormond Williams, May 4, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

million of relief funds to help schools, and that is exactly what Hopkins did. It seems to me that such consistent statements indicated that the two of them strategized together.

What does the literature say about why federal aid to education legislation failed to become law? Smith, in *Limits of Reform: Politics and Federal Aid to Education 1937-1950*, attributed failed federal aid to education legislation to 1) fear of federal control 2) concern over the federal budget 3) and New Deal leaders who wanted see public schools reformed instead of financially supported. Of those who did want to have federal aid to education, according to Smith, argued over the details and implementation of such a bill because of religion and race. Appell, who wrote a dissertation entitled “Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Education,” concluded that FDR was unable to overcome the opposition of federal aid of the Catholics. Zeitlin, in his dissertation “Federal Relations in American Education, 1933-1943: A Study of New Deal Efforts and Innovations,” stated by 1939 few opposed federal aid to education at congressional hearings, except Catholics who were against the idea unless they could also receive funds. Other factors included: newspaper editors were not in favor of federal aid to education because they were wary of bills that gave more power to the federal government, concern over federal debt, unforeseen consequences of such a major change in educational policy, wealthier states not wanting to take on extra financial burdens, Democratic Party fractioning, concern over allocated funds without overseeing them, mixed public opinion, and states’ rights.⁷⁶ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot summarized that federal aid to education bills did not pass “in large part because of the opposition of Roosevelt” and “race, religion, and fears about

⁷⁶ Smith, 7, 8, and 83; Morris Lionel Appell, “Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Education” (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1947), 192; Zeitlin, 274–287.

radical centralized government-the three Rs-undermined whatever slim support existed on the Hill for federal aid.”⁷⁷

Many authors including Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot and Smith, used the issue of race as a reason that federal aid to education bills failed.⁷⁸ I, as well as Zeitlin, do not think race prevented these bills from passing Congress. “Negro leaders were, by and large, willing to accept much less in regard to equal rights provisions in the 1930’s and this situation was not an obstacle to the passage of Federal aid.”⁷⁹ According to the hearings for HR5962 and S1305, the NAACP was in favor of these bills.

Congressman Deen (D-GA) was so concerned HR5962 would pass on the House floor that he had to kill the bill in committee. His comments at the hearing regarding the possibility of amendments to limit funds to states with mixed race schools were used by Smith as one of his reasons for citing that race divided supporters of federal aid to education.⁸⁰ If Deen did believe that such an amendment could be ratified in the future then his own bill, the George-Deen Act that provided federal aid for vocational education, could also have such an amendment added in the future. Because Deen’s concerns are not consistent I think more research is needed to determine if supporters of vocational education and general education worked together or competed for federal funds. Was Deen concerned about the racial implications of HR5962 or maximizing funds for his George-Deen Act?

I think Deen might have tried to arouse racial concerns to kill HR5962 so that more funds could be available for vocational education. FDR wanted to avoid allocating

⁷⁷ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 102 and 103.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 103; Smith, 83.

⁷⁹ Zeitlin, 276.

as much money as possible to either the George-Deen Act or the Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill (HR5962), hence his reason for expanding the objectives of the President's Advisory Committee on Education. Both Deen and George (D-GA) were referred to by O'Coin as FDR's allies in defeating HR5962. Senate majority leader, Joseph Robinson (D-AR) was helped by George in making sure HR5962 did not reach the floor. Robinson, who represented a segregated state, was thought by Swain to be opposed to the bill because of FDR's financial concerns, not segregation.⁸¹ Overall, if the issue of race was preventing these bills from becoming law, then members of the community where segregated schools primarily resided would be opposed to education bills. But some Southern congressmen like Harrison (D-MS) and Black (D-AL) supported such bills; in fact, they were the sponsors of these bills.

Most of the speakers during the hearings were in favor of these bills, with the exception of the NCWC. FDR was certainly interested in pleasing the NCWC, but he already had the support of the majority of Catholics. This religious group has historically voted for the Democratic Party. Their working class and immigrant status closely aligned their concerns with New Deal programs.⁸² Father Johnson warned the NCWC Advisory Board that, "Our own people are not really aware of our reasons for the opposition to Federal Aid...."⁸³ Based on this information, I think the likelihood of Catholics voting against FDR seemed low.

⁸⁰ Smith, 60.

⁸¹ O'Coin, 242; Swain, 213.

⁸² Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, "Catholic Clergymen, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the New Deal," *The Catholic Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (January 1993): 65–82.

⁸³ Report of Dr. Johnson to Advisory Board, October 1938, Folder 7 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA, 4.

The Catholic position between 1934-1939 had switched from objection to federal aid for education to supporting the idea as long as their schools could receive such aid. Father Johnson was in an uncomfortable position because not everyone in his organization had fully accepted federal aid to education, but because of his work on the President's Advisory Committee on Education, Father Johnson was in support of the Harrison-Black-Fletcher bill of 1939 and understood why some amount of government control was necessary.⁸⁴

The Catholic position of opposing federal aid to education, according to Father Johnson, placed them in a quagmire. According to Father Johnson, politicians who did not want to move forward on federal aid to education used the Catholic position as an excuse to delay legislation, while the proponents blamed the Catholics for not supporting public schools. Because of this situation, Father Johnson encouraged the NCWC to build a strong case in support of the Catholic position. In an analysis on religion and federal aid to education from the 1700s to 1945, William Mitchell cited eight reasons why such legislation did not pass. Only one of the reasons given were related to parochial schools, indicating that religion was not a primary reason that the federal aid to education legislation did not pass. I think it is possible that Father Johnson was correct in his belief that politicians used Catholics' concerns over federal aid to education as an excuse to delay moving a bill rather than admit they were not in favor of the idea themselves, particularly FDR. Zeitlin also questioned if there was sufficient evidence to maintain the

⁸⁴ Mitchell, 125; Ambrose A. Clegg, Jr., "Church Groups and Federal Aid to Education, 1933-1939," *History* 4, no. 3 (September 1964): 143 and 144.

idea that Catholics were a major reason FDR did not want to have federal aid to education, he stated FDR's dislike of public schools was a better explanation.⁸⁵

FDR's experiences as governor showed him that education funds easily require larger portions of a state's budget. This experience caused FDR to become concerned about federal aid for education similarly enveloping a large portion of the federal budget. He was consistent in his belief in and support of local control of education budgets.⁸⁶

When the topic of federal aid to public schools was mentioned, FDR voiced concern about the constitutionality of such a policy. He made it clear that he only would consider federal aid if it went to those schools that could not operate without additional funds. FDR must have known that it would be difficult to pass a bill based solely on financial need. As Senator Black (D-AL) mentioned, an equalization bill is difficult to pass because richer states would not receive many allocated funds and would therefore not vote in favor of such a bill.⁸⁷ I did not find any evidence in the archives that FDR's restriction to federal aid for education to only the poorest schools was a tactic for agreeing to something he knew would never come to fruition; however, that does not mean it was not FDR's strategy. Smith had a similar conclusion, "By firmly defining the limits of acceptability, Roosevelt effectively blocked any legislation whatsoever, since no measure giving aid only to poor states could attract the support of the wealthy states who

⁸⁵ Report of Dr. Johnson to Advisory Board, October 1938, Folder 7 Federal Aid to Education, Box 11 USCCB General Secretary, National Catholic Welfare Organization, CUA, 1-5; Mitchell, 143; The other reasons given were effect on segregated schools, distribution funding formulas, constitutionality, enforcing states to comply, topic was highly controversial, opinion of political leaders, avoiding federal control, all of which has been discussed within this paper.; Zeitlin, 285.

⁸⁶ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 103 and 104.

⁸⁷ James H. Richmond to Charl Ormond Williams, May 7, 1936, Folder Franklin D. Roosevelt Group Conference of Committee of Educators with President (April 30, 1936), Box 4 Papers of Charl O. Williams, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Smith, 48.

would have had to foot the bill.”⁸⁸ Calculated or not, FDR was able to appear to the general public as if he was cooperating with educators and that he supported public schools by compromising on his stance against federal aid to education.

There were many instances in the archives when congressmen believed that given the chance to vote on a federal aid to education bill, Congress would have supported it. But FDR did not want federal aid to education even when it partially met his requirement of aiding needy schools. He did not support non-targeted federal aid because he did not want to support what he considered a broken public school system. Even though the 1939 education bill was a general aid bill, a significant amount of the money would have gone to those states that needed it the most. Considering the poor state of schools, FDR, out of concern for students, should have been willing to make that compromise, but he did not. Public schools, according to FDR and New Dealers, needed to be reformed. The educational components of the New Deal were used to fulfill FDR’s desire for federal aid to those who were in need. Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot summarizes FDR’s tactics:

FDR’s conservative impulse to leave institutions intact was tempered by his humanitarian desire to help the needy. One pragmatic way to preserve the structure of public education while assisting those on the bottom of society was to create alternative educational agencies to help the “underprivileged,” and this is precisely what the New Dealers did through the NYA, the WPA, the CCC, and other new ventures. From Roosevelt’s point of view, that approach had a number of advantages. It targeted funds and services directly to people who needed jobs and who could benefit from the new educational services. It cost far less than general federal aid, much of which would have gone to school systems that did not need the money, and agencies designed to meet supposedly temporary problems of relief could be cut back more easily than federal aid regarded as a continuing entitlement.... In short, such ad hoc organizations gave the president more control over budgets and programs and recipients while he and his party reaped more political advantages than they would through costly general aid. In fact, Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins, Aubrey Williams,

⁸⁸ Ibid., 77.

and Harold Ickes did funnel money into the public schools, although they did so through the mechanism of relief and public works rather than through direct support under the control of public educators.... However roundabout his strategies, Roosevelt's purposes were fairly clear. He wanted to use education to help people at the bottom of the social system. While he gave some assistance to regular schools for regular programs – as in paying rural teachers or building new schools-he and his staff were primarily interested in expanding and reforming that system to make it more responsive to what were called, in the language of the time, the “underprivileged,” hoping that in time the innovations would be incorporated into the regular system.⁸⁹

Supporting federal aid for education was controversial, and FDR did not think it was politically wise to support such measures. That choice would have risked upsetting voters and congressmen if he decided to provide non-targeted federal education aid. FDR was confronted with the suffering of public schools, but his fiscal conservatism, the constitutional implications, concerns of upsetting voters and congressmen, and doubts about the competencies of educators steered him away from implementing federal aid for education. Zeitlin similarly concludes “Roosevelt’s opposition [to federal aid to education] must be judged a major cause of the failure to achieve a broad program of direct Federal aid to general education during the New Deal period.”⁹⁰ The end result of FDR’s educational policy decisions and leadership resulted in the weakening and closure of many public schools throughout the United States.

⁸⁹ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot, 104–106.

⁹⁰ Zeitlin, 287.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary the literature review and archival research in this study has lead to many important conclusions. New Deal youth and educational programs were created to help people find jobs. Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) and New Dealers were frustrated with the lack of vocational and hands-on training that schools were offering. The number of out-of-school youth and untrained adults reinforced the idea that schools were not meeting the needs of a large segment of society. New Deal programs that had an educational component were primarily focused on relief rather than education. The success of these educational programs indirectly exposed the failure of public schools by their ability to teach out-of-school youth how to read and write. FDR supported using federal money for education in Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) programs to teach about the value of nature that had the unintended consequence of supporting federal aid to education. CCC, National Youth Administration (NYA), and Emergency Educational Program (EEP) supported education particularly vocational training. He also supported temporary emergency federal aid for education but under his administration's control through New Deal programs.

The archives showed whenever educators wanted to increase the importance of CCC's educational program, FDR made sure it did not interfere with its work program. Even when Congress wanted to promote CCC's educational program, FDR was silent and boasted about all other aspects of CCC's achievements. The budgets for educational advisers and their programs were below the necessary amounts causing the program to

suffer. Political discussions and reading material that was critical of society were shunned with FDR's backing. John W. Studebaker and CCC's educational director tried to strengthen the program but Robert Fechner, with FDR's support, maintained CCC's original plan of being a work program.

Teachers in all three New Deal programs, with the exception of EEP's rural school program, were uncertified educators. Documentation from the archives shows that FDR deliberately avoided educators and he did not have confidence in them to participate in the creation or administration of educational programs. He distrusted educators, did not view them as professionals with specialized knowledge, and thought public schools failed youth. The root cause of FDR's dislike for educators has not been identified in the archival documents used in this study. Some historians have speculated that his elite private school background and lack of enthusiasm for academics have contributed to his negative feelings towards educators. The literature does mention that FDR did not dedicate himself to his education and thought what was taught in his universities was impractical.¹

The archival records showed that FDR selected the agency leaders for CCC, NYA, and EEP programs. Educators, even those in his own administration were left out of its administration. FDR's poor relationship with educators was peculiar. Studebaker and FDR did not get along. Loyalty to FDR was very important and Studebaker did not support the president and disagreed with his educational policies. To try to force Studebaker to resign FDR paid him little, gave him little control over New Deal programs, decreased the Office of Education's budget, and had fewer Office of Education

¹ Coker, 7-9; McElvaine, 99 and 100.

employees. Educational organization who witnessed the treatment of the Office of Education and educational programs in the New Deal were upset. They made numerous attempts to meet and discuss their concerns with FDR but he almost always rebuffed them. Correspondence to FDR was responded to without sympathy or interest in its contents. National Education Association's (NEA) main objective was to have educators control educational programs and have federal funds allocated to state departments of education without any restrictions on the use of these funds. Representative from educational organizations were politically weak and ignored by FDR.

FDR's educational policies can be extracted from his treatment of educational issues. It is clear that FDR did not value educators based on the choices he made about the people he relied on for information and opinions regarding educational problems and policies. Studebaker, Clarence Marsh, Howard Oxley, and educational organizations for the most part were superficially acknowledged and often even ignored by FDR. NEA, a vocal educational organization, proclaimed it was the expert on educational issues and assumed this stance would cause FDR to rely on it but the claim had the opposite effect. FDR relied on non-educators, with the exception of those in higher education, such as members of his administration. He consciously chose people from a social work background to begin the first two steps in forming educational policies. He knew that they would approach the issue from a relief and unemployment position rather than from the perspective of educational institutions requiring financial assistance from the federal government. Throughout FDR's presidential term, NEA did not change their focus of assisting public schools with federal aid.

Like the NEA, George Zook, while serving as FDR's first Commissioner of Education, wanted federal aid to education but Zook was able to find a way to support education within FDR's relief programs. As a result, he was able to start the CCC's educational program, obtain student-aid for needy students, and was part of establishing the EEP. Zook relinquished much of the control educators had in the CCC's educational program because he had to work with Robert Fechner and the Army. Clarence Marsh and Howard Oxley had a hard time working on developing the CCC's educational program because of their lack of decision-making power, and most of their suggestions and recommendations were denied. FDR's CCC program was conservative and focused on conservation. Educational plans that detracted from its image and goals, despite their good intentions, were minimized.

In terms of the third step in the policymaking process of forming an action plan, Stuebaker was the epitome of rejection - his hard work on creating a youth program was rebuffed. Stuebaker continued designing programs and coming up with ideas but FDR rarely liked any of them. Stuebaker was seen by New Dealers as a representative of the public school system and, like most educators, was not on good terms with FDR or many of his staff. His unrestrained method of communication with FDR and his staff members was inappropriate and gave no reason for them to change their negative opinions about educators. FDR's dislike for public school teachers and administrators came from his feeling that they failed the nation's low-income youth. The number of students who dropped out or did not have basic skills reflected poorly on the public school system's ability to accommodate diverse students. During the 1930s, the curriculum, which was primarily college preparatory, continued despite the need for more practical courses and

hands-on experiences in the classroom. Instead of trying to change their curriculum and methods of instruction, many educators and administrators became territorial and did not want the federal government trying to influence their schools. But at the same time, they wanted the federal government to give them funds to continue their ineffective ways of teaching. Although the lack of funds made it hard to update schools, when money was provided through the George-Deen funds, schools made great improvements in offering new programs but still struggled to provide the training the unemployed youth required.²

As governor of New York through his presidency, FDR believed in local control of education. He valued education as indicated by the large amounts of money he put towards it, even though he did not have a good relationship with educators and disapproved of public school's curriculum. FDR viewed education broadly and was valuable to assist in employment, job skills, and cultivating good citizens.

Catholic representatives were in communication with FDR, who listened to their concerns and valued their opinion. FDR was even willing to create a Department of Education and Welfare when they reminded him of the dangers that would imply for local rights. During the 1930s, their views switched from being against federal aid to education to wanting to have the right to obtain federal funds for their parochial schools. Their good working relationship with FDR provided them with NYA work-study funds, communication with the president, a position on the President's Advisory Committee on Education, and NYA's board.

One of the research questions I address is, Did FDR's administrative decisions support public schools? There are two positive actions that FDR implemented that

² O'Coin, 302.

helped support schools: 1) the rural education program of EEP that paid for teacher salaries and 2) providing student-aid for high school students on relief in order to allow them to stay in school. What public schools wanted the most, however, was federal aid, which they did not receive. When the number of schools that closed and shortened their school term are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that public schools were not sufficiently supported by FDR.

Congress was able to make the necessary compromises on controversial issues with a number of federal aid to education bills. The Harrison bills HR5962 and S1305 were created by Southern Democrats and were supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). According to Congressman Deen, who was against these bills, they had become popular in Congress and had a fair chance of being passed. But the bills were either not reported out of committee or not put to a vote on the floor.

Another of the research questions I posed is, what was FDR's policy towards federal aid to education? This research supports claims made in the literature that FDR was not in favor of federal aid to education. As has been delineated, FDR did not want to support public schools that he believed were failing students. Also, he believed that educators were not willing to change in order to meet students' unique needs, and he did not want to financially support their lack of responsiveness. Finally, he was concerned that the federal budget would increase exponentially if school systems became accustomed to receiving regular federal aid. FDR was even reluctant to sign the George-Deen Act because the budget for vocational education, which FDR believed should be a state responsibility, was already growing beyond what he allocated. These beliefs, along

with his experience as governor of New York, reinforced his fears of starting a new federal program to aid public schools.

Most of the literature states that the reasons why federal aid to education legislation for public schools failed was because of issues with: race, religion, federal deficit, and federal control. In this study, I questioned if race and religion were the main reasons why federal aid to education bills for public schools were not made into law. I think FDR's role in stopping these bills was larger than previously thought by most historians. The archival documents in the chapter on Congress indicated that Hopkins and FDR were working in the background to stymie federal aid to education bills.

In step four of the policymaking process, when considering what plans FDR wanted to implement or which bills should become law, FDR wanted his agency leaders to control programs. He created many New Deal programs by executive order. In doing so, FDR and his administration ensured control over the various New Deal programs and their budgets. This administrative decision gave FDR the flexibility he desired. It also allowed him to use federal funds to provide education to the poorest segment of society, something public schools failed to do. Despite his rejection of federal aid to education, Fass described how his New Deal programs unintentionally and indirectly promoted the federal government's role in education:

The New Deal provided important precedents that fundamentally altered beliefs about the role of the federal government in the area of education and raised, without completely defining, a new ideal of education as an entitlement.... The New Deal did not set out to establish a federal responsibility for education.... In the end, the Roosevelt administration injected the federal government into the educational arena in such a way that it not only exposed educational failures but defined their redress as a federal responsibility.³

³ Fass, 41 and 42.

Unlike most authors who have suggested that race, religion, and states' rights were the main reasons for the failure of a federal aid to education bill to pass, I argue that FDR's influence was the main reason these bills failed. Both FDR and Harry Hopkins did what they could to block or kill these bills by not encouraging hearings, using relief funds to make the bills unnecessary, or ensuring that the bills did not come to a vote. Swain and Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot agree that FDR was working out of the public's eyes to obstruct these bills. Although they highlight FDR's obstructionist role, neither of them place the responsibility for failed federal aid bills primarily on FDR. It is surprising and somewhat baffling that the lives of Americans changed so dramatically in the 1930s in terms of their relationship to and dependence on the federal government, and yet the federal government did not enact any major and direct federal educational changes. A relatively large number of social programs were created at the federal level during FDR's presidency, and yet public schools besides vocational programs, construction, and repairs were nearly untouched. Based on the extensive archival materials utilized for this research, it seems likely that FDR had more of a role in preventing federal aid to education than has been previously thought. In O'Coin's dissertation, he highlights Schott's ideas on this issue:

There is an irony in Roosevelt's failure of leadership in the area of federal aid to education given his record as a strong and effective leader in other areas. Schott attributed this to FDR's negative attitude toward the ability of public education to do the job it was supposed to do, and to his opposition to general federal aid to education.⁴

FDR's displeasure with educators resulted in educational programs being administered by non-educators, and the EEP, the NYA, and the CCC are all examples of

this pattern. Studebaker and the staff in the Office of Education were placed on committees and in positions that had little power or control over educational programs. This lack of influence over programs was true of the CCC's educational advisory committee, the NYA's executive committee, and Dr. Lewis R. Alderman and Mr. Cyril F. Klinefelter's placement under Hopkin's EEP program. Within step five of the policymaking process, FDR's selected leaders matched his vision and goals of his programs.

Did FDR's government program emphasize or encourage the education of youth? The New Deal educational programs were quite varied from: supporting rural teachers in public schools, college correspondence courses, training for jobs, learning about conservation, home economics, student-aid, public forums, remedial courses, literacy, citizenship, adult education, workers' rights programs, nursery schools, parent education, and more. Fass described the role education played in the New Deal: "New Deal structures were often vitally concerned with education, had an implicit educational philosophy and purpose, and were critical to the maintenance of educational stability, but they were organized and legitimated under the rubric of relief."⁵ All of these programs showed that FDR cared for youth and wanted to support their education. Based on the types of programs emphasized in the New Deal, the purpose of education to FDR was to become a productive citizen.⁶ Skills needed for employment and job training were the focus of relief programs.

⁴ O'Coin, 24.

⁵ Fass, 41.

⁶ Appell, 51.

The last policymaking process step, evaluation, allows for critiques to influence programs and laws. As the Depression was becoming less severe, the needs of youth changed. These changes caused Robert Fechner and Aubrey Williams to transform their program objectives from ones focused on vocational and civic training to objectives centered around defense training. Supporting the war efforts extended the value of their programs and added to their popularity with the public and Congress. By reevaluating CCC's program, Congress was able to establish the importance of its educational program and require ten hours of training per enrollee. Years later the NEA, which wanted control of the NYA and the CCC youth programs, was able to make an argument to terminate them. After years of questioning the federal government's role in youth training, they were able to convince Congress that the defense training duplicated the effort of the Office of Education. Prior to defense training, the Office of Education suffered under FDR as he slashed its budget and decreased its staff. FDR's evaluation of this office showed he did not value its work as indicated by his treatment.

This study was significant for many reasons. Unlike the literature, this study was able to divorce FDR's educational policies from New Deal programs and their administrators. Moreover, a better understanding of the historical relationship between the federal government and public schools is added to the literature. This study was unique because I analyzed FDR's educational policies based on multiple areas of his involvement - New Deal programs, relationships with educators, and Congress. Large amounts of archival documentation were used in this study and the conclusions made here will help reveal historical perceptions regarding FDR's educational policies.

By identifying FDR's educational policies, a clearer picture emerged on why public schools had little support from the federal government in the 1930s, why teachers were ignored by FDR, and why federal aid to education legislation for public schools failed.

The last question I want to address in this research is, how could educators be better prepared to participate in the policymaking process and consequently be better equipped to support schools? Some but not all of today's educators are already heavily involved in the policymaking process through marketing, communicating, and educating government officials and the public about problems in schools and their solutions. Assessing the political risks that are involved with various educational proposals and understanding what chances government officials are willing to take have helped them become better at advocating for schools. Currently educators are involved with Congress by lobbying and making suggestions about education bills to help steer conversation towards the interests of educators. They must maintain a high level of involvement in order to constructively address their concerns and keep educational issues a priority for the public and for the politicians who represent the public. The efforts of educators must be ongoing and future research can continue educational advocacy by designing new ways of supporting schools.

Some authors like Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May believe that relevant general trends can be found by studying history that can inform what we should do today.⁷ Information from the past can be applied to the present. Maris Vinovskis adds that learning what has happened in the past inspires policymakers to promote change and

⁷ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Making*, (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 133.

helps to stimulate fresh ideas.⁸ I agree with these authors and also enjoy history for its own sake. Since educators today are already engaged in so many policymaking activities, I recommend a future study on using the information in this dissertation to answer how the past informs the present.

⁸ Maris A. Vinovski, *History and Educational Policymaking*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 254.

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