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This speech discusses the Federal role in initiating educational change and its relationship to the functions and activities of local school boards and districts. It is noted that, despite the enormous increase in Federal expenditures, the control over education is still vested in state and local bodies, and this local control may result in both good and bad schools. However, Federal educational legislation has prohibited any Federal control over local districts. Moreover, state education departments have the power to approve Federally-funded local plans. But new Federal programs, while placing greater responsibility on local schools boards than ever before, also offer greater possibilities for educational excellence. (NH)

NEW LIFE FOR THE DODO *

An Address by Harold Howe II
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It has always been considered both graceful and politic for Federal officials to include in their formal addresses a quotation from the President. Not being one to rock the boat -- especially a boat I am riding in, and especially at salary review time -- I would like to open my remarks with a quote from a president.

The one I have in mind is Mr. Ora Niffenegger, who is president of the school board in Des Moines, Iowa. In a speech to two local school groups last month, Mr. Niffenegger said that the growth of Federal programs for education threatens to make school boards "as extinct as the dodo."

But the newspaper summary of Mr. Niffenegger's talk indicated that he was not so much criticizing Federal programs as he was the quality of local educational leadership. He was quoted as saying:

> "It is not so much the community's lack of money that has brought the Federal Government into our educational set-up as it is the lack of foresight on the part of our community, including the school board and the school administrators, in failing to sense the educational needs of our community."

As U.S. Commissioner of Education, I found it almost painfully pleasant to read of a school board president who was criticizing himself, not me. And if Mr. Niffenegger is present today, I want him to

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know that we have a staff working overtime to find every fund application from Des Moines, approve it immediately, and insist that the city accept twice as much money as it asked for.

Beyond that, I would like to thank Mr. Niffenegger for giving me a way to open my talk. For though I do not agree with his viewpoint, I am sure that it represents a conviction shared by many of you here. As such, it suggests a basic question for opening dialogue among us. Do Federal initiatives in education threaten to put local school boards out of business?

It will surprise none of you to hear that my answer is no. I believe, on the other hand, that Federal programs properly used can inject new life into school boards. Far from wringing the neck of a languishing dodo, they can put new sass and feathers on the old bird and give us a very lively fowl indeed.

By way of backing up what may seem to many a most dubious contention, I would like to analyze first the size and character of the Federal investment in education.

This year, Americans will spend about $42 billion on their public and private schools, colleges, and universities. Of this sum, the Federal Government will contribute about $5.7 billion in direct aid to our schools and colleges, or about 14 percent of our national investment in education.

If we consider only public elementary and secondary schools, we find that the total expenditure this year will be about $25 billion. Of this amount, the local governments will contribute 53 percent, the

State governments about 39 percent, and the Federal, less than 8 percent.

By either measurement Washington emerges as a very junior partner in our educational enterprise, and local school districts as the senior and controlling partner.

However, I realize that this argument from dollars is not an adequate response to the critics of Federal programs. For it is not so much the size of the Federal contribution to education as its rapid growth that alarms them.

In 1956, the Office of Education had a budget of $166 million. This year, we have about $3.3 billion, a 20-fold increase in one decade. Thus even though the Federal share of school expenditures remains proportionately small in relation to funds contributed by local and State governments, its rate of growth far outstrips those of support from other sources. The question might therefore logically be raised, if Washington's investment has increased so rapidly, will it not continue to do so until the Federal contribution dominates school budgets?

As a former practicing educator who expects one day to return to a life of virtue, I would share that fear, were it not for one factor: Congress and the Administration have carefully prescribed procedures for Federal programs to ensure that the control of education continues to rest in State and local bodies.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is probably the best example of these procedures. The intent of Congress is spelled

out in Section 604, titled "Federal control of education prohibited." That section reads as follows:

> "Nothing contained in this Act shall be construed to authorize any department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or other printed or published instructional materials by any educational institution or school system."

This is the law of the land, and any Federal official who tampers with its provisions does so at his peril. Even so, one can bend a law without breaking it, and to prevent this possibility, Congress carefully specified how aid provided under the ESEA should be channeled to local school districts. Let us look at those specifications.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act has five Titles. Of these, Title I -- aid to schools in low-income areas -- is the largest with about $765 million of the Act's $959 million total. The Office of Education divides Title I funds among the States according to their current expenditures for each student and the number of school-age children from low-income families. The Act requires each local school district to devise a plan showing how it intends to spend the money it has applied for.

But note that it is the State education agency, not the Office of Education, which approves the local plan. The State education

agencies have full responsibility for carrying out the purposes of the Act through their approval of local plans.

This rule similarly holds for Title II, which provides funds for school library resources, textbooks, and other instructional materials. Here again, the States decide how large a portion of each State's allocation will go to each local school district.

The major differences in the administration of the first two Titles and that of Title III is that Federal allocations go directly to the local school districts. Even in this case, however, the Office of Education acts on local applications only after they have been submitted to the State departments of education for review and recommendation.

Title IV is the only exception to the rule that ESEA projects must be approved by State departments of education. This arrangement stems from necessity: colleges and universities are expected to play a major role in developing the regional research laboratories financed under Title IV, and these in general are not subject to the State departments of education.

But even in the case of the regional laboratories, Federal support will not mean Federal control. Title IV amounts to an invitation to scholars and practitioners to band together in a common effort to solve some educational problems. The Office of Education does not tell these regional groups which problems to investigate, nor does it tell them where to look for the answers. It does give them the financial backing to carry out those investigations.

My contention that Federal financing need not in any sense hamper freedom in education is borne out by the experience of our universities. Beginning with World War II, American universities have served as an important auxiliary to government laboratories and government activities in fields ranging from defense to air pollution control. Government-financed research increased rapidly after World War II until today, Federal and State contracts are an important component of university budgets in every State.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for example, derives fully three-quarters of its revenues from the Federal government. The University of California receives more than half of its operating budget from Federal contracts and grants. And these institutions are only two of dozens that might be cited.

Yet no one would argue that these universities are not free, proud, and vigorous institutions. They were chosen for government contracts precisely because they were eminent, excellent universities. . . and they continue to be. Moreover, they continue to be jealous of their rightful prerogatives, yet none of them contends seriously that Federal financing limits its independence.

If Federal aid can contribute to the greatness of American higher education without limiting its freedom and diversity, why can it not foster excellence, freedom, and diversity in our schools?

Finally, we come to Title V, and here is the most obvious repudiation of the argument that the Federal Government intends to control

local education through its control of the purse strings. For Title V provides $17 million this fiscal year to strengthen State departments of education . . . to help them add staff, to finance experimental projects or establish special services for their schools. These funds are in addition to Federal aid provided under Title X of the National Defense Education Act to help State departments improve their information-gathering services.

I think you will have to agree that both of these programs of aid to State departments of education would represent an odd way of taking educational control away from the States and localities, if that were the aim of the Federal government.

What <u>is</u> the aim of the Federal government in education?

Broadly speaking, our goal in education is the same as in any other area of our national life: to safeguard the well-being of Americans and improve the quality of their lives in any manner appropriate to the rights and responsibilities of the Federal government. In defining these rights and responsibilities, we are guided, of course, by the Constitution.

That document clearly leaves education in the hands of the individual States. Most States, in turn, have allowed independence of action to local school districts. Our practice over the years has strengthened the principle that education is a matter for local control, and the Federal government has no intention of altering that arrangement.

But while we are discussing the control of education, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider what the localities and States have done with their control. For the fact is that localism in education gives communities the right to have both bad and good schools, and the right has been liberally exercised in both directions.

One hundred years ago, the disparities in the quality of education between States and between various communities within a State did not seriously affect the quality of our national life. Many Americans were born, lived, and died within a 50-mile radius of their home communities. Their schools reflected their communities, and with varying degrees of excellence prepared their students for an adult life in the place of their birth.

But American life has changed dramatically since those pleasant but parochial days. One of every five Americans moves every year. We criss-cross the country as readily as our grandparents would have crossed the county. And this mobility, together with a new importance accorded education, presents the States and localities with a heavy trust.

In brief, we can no longer afford to have bad schools. Not even one. For the child who receives a poor education in one State will quite possibly spend his adult life as the ward of another State. The so-called economies achieved by one State through penny-pinching in education are more than compensated for by another State's relief payments, unemployment compensation, and crime rate.

Further, every poorly educated individual represents an expense of another sort. We have lost his abilities. We have no way of knowing what contributions he might have made to our common life if his possibilities had been refined through education.

This is the other face of local control: the recognition that the right of localities to control schools gives them the heavy and almost sacred obligation of protecting every individual's chance to become all that he might be. And in many American communities, school boards and school administrators have failed to discharge this obligation.

The most conspicuous example is in the area of civil rights. It is 12 years since the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities were of their nature unequal. We know, from educational research and from everyday observation, that segregated schools enforce a sense of inferiority that hampers the individual achievements of millions of American children and adults. And yet, both in the North and in the South, segregated schools still perpetuate human failure and human despair.

That is why the Civil Rights Act of 1964, passed by the elected representatives of the American people, invokes the power of the Federal government to advance desegregation in the schools. Local and State education agencies share the failure of our Nation to attain genuine equality of opportunity in every aspect of American life.

This Federal initiative can indeed be interpreted as a measure of control over the schools. But its far more cogent and important

characteristic is that it serves the cause of individual freedom. The fact is that a superficial interpretation of the concept of "local control" can harm individual lives by perpetuating deficiencies in our educational system.

The intent of Federal education measures is not to control the schools, but to help local and State agencies insure that every school in the United States reaches a minimum of quality. How far each community goes beyond this minimum is a matter of local option, a matter for local school boards and State and local administrators to determine.

Thus the Federal Government badly needs strong State departments and effective local school boards and administrators to make its own programs effective. For no matter how wise we in Washington might consider ourselves to be, we know that we cannot pinpoint educational problems in specific areas with anything like the accuracy that you in the localities can.

We know, to be sure, that cultural deprivation is a problem throughout the country . . . that children who come from homes in which there is no family tradition of learning, do not do as well in school as children from homes in which education is valued. We know that these children usually live in the inner city and the rural slum areas.

But these are generalities. We do not know which specific schools in a district these children attend, nor have we any idea of how to divide funds equitably among schools in sparsely populated rural areas and those in the close-packed city ghettos. Hence we must depend on local educators and local citizens to make sure that the funds voted by Congress benefit the children they were voted for.

Moreover, even though ESEA funds are for certain specified purposes rather than general-purpose funds which can be used by local educators as they see fit, the various Titles of the Act allow local school districts a great amount of leeway in designing projects.

Here, for example, are some projects approved for ESEA funds just last week: a pilot project in Alameda County, California, to teach blind children to travel alone by means of a kind of dead reckoning navigation system; an information storage and transmission system in College Station, Texas, that will service classrooms in 23 counties; a "summer school in the woods" in Akron, Ohio, that will take 560 elementary school children out into the city's 3,800 acres of parks for instruction in the natural sciences; a program in Lyons, Illinois, that will send communications specialists into the homes of deaf infants to help mothers communicate with their children at the earliest possible age; a summer program that will bring teacher aides from France, Spain and Germany to give concentrated foreign language instruction to children in Springfield, Massachusetts; and a project in Macon County, Alabama, that will use a Japanese technique to teach four-year-olds to play musical instruments.

I think one would have to dig rather deeply to find any evidence of Federal control in this array of new ideas, every one of them the product of local education groups. Their diversity certainly contradicts any suggestion that Federal funds must lead to a uniformity of practice in American schools, and testifies to the ingenuity and imagination of local educators and administrators when they have the wherewithal to experiment.

In fact -- and this is my thesis -- I believe that Federal programs offer local school board members more opportunities for genuine educational leadership than their hometown voters do. For in my own experience, I have found that the average citizen who has no direct contact with the schools prefers the tried and true to the experimental, the risky, or the imaginative. I have found that they prefer to invest funds in the tangible . . . the new addition to the school building, or the air conditioning system, or new uniforms for the band or for the football team.

But education is not basically a matter of buildings, or air conditioning or uniforms. It is a matter of what goes on inside an individual, and the changes that the Federal programs are designed to bring about happen inside people. The physical environment in which education is conducted is important, of course; but I think you would agree that it is easier to put over a bond issue for building projects than it is to win public support for a less obvious, less glamorous, but much more fundamental program such as remedial instruction in reading. And because of your familiarity with the problems of schools in your localities, you often know that the children of the voters need improved counseling services much more than they need a new gymnasium.

This, then, is the burden of my statement: that Federal programs place a much heavier responsibility on local school boards than they have ever borne, rather than taking any of it away. Further, they offer school boards new possibilities for shaping an excellence in local

education that does not depend on local financing, but only on local need and local imagination.

I hope you will take advantage of these possibilities, even though you might have designed them differently. Certainly we have had some problems in working out the new partnership between local school districts and the State and Federal Governments. We will continue to have them in the future, and by soliciting your cooperation in the wise use of Federal programs, I do not mean to ward off justified criticism.

For we need local school boards, and we need their criticism almost as much as we need their help. We need to devise better formulas for the intelligent application of Federal resources now, and we shall need them even more tomorrow . . . when, I am sure, Federal programs for education will be expanded to include general aid as well as categorical.

But while this criticism continues, let us put those programs to work for our schools.

The story of survival is the story of creatures who adapted to changes in their environment, not of those who merely objected to change. The dodo had no control over his lack of ability to survive. School boards do.

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