

STATEMENT OF ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO
ON REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT
AND RELATED ISSUED BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
September 27, 1977.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: I would like to thank you on behalf of the members of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, for this opportunity to present their views on the shape and structure of federal aid to education. As you know, the AFT has supported the concept embodied in the ESEA since its conception in 1965 when a membership referendum authorized AFT support for what was then a new concept. I am here today to reiterate that support and to make some suggestions as to how the ESEA programs can be improved in order to maximize the positive effects and common goals which is the concern of all involved with this program. Federal dollars still do not contribute more than about 8% of the total costs of education, this percentage must rise and use of the dollars must also be made more efficient.

As everyone here is well aware, the debate on the 1974 Education Amendments was dominated by that most basic of issues; who would get how much and under what conditions? While the final ESEA Title I formula has obviously worked to the disadvantage of cities, we believe that this issue should be closed and that this year this Committee and its' counterpart on the Senate side should concentrate on educational issues that must be dealt with. This is not to say that finances and related fiscal issues are not a major problem in education today, but simply that we believe it would do little good to re-open the fight over the Title I, Part A formula. To go through such a divisive and counter-productive fight would lead us nowhere.

We believe that the Title I debate should address educational questions. Much attention has been given to the decline in test scores among American students. While Title I has never been exclusively a basic skills, compensatory educational program, there is merit to the idea of using Title I to increase concentrations on basic skills. However, because there are so many demands on Title I funds, we do not believe that Title I, Part A would benefit from a basic skills requirement beyond the 75% of Part A funds currently used for that purpose.

Instead, we suggest a new program similar to the now defunct Part C of Title I. This program should put the funds into school districts with the highest concentrations on disadvantaged children and it should be earmarked exclusively for basic skills instruction. There are many good reasons to do this now; it would provide additional fiscal support to those districts with the very highest concentrations of Title I children and it would demonstrate to the American people that the Congress is addressing what most parents and educators alike feel is one of our greatest educational problems, namely, the decline in basic skills.

What we are calling for here is more of a concept than a program carved in stone. It is certainly possible that other ideas in this area might address this problem but, clearly, Title I is the place and the appropriate method for mounting a federal initiative on literacy, similar to the one made on Science, Math and Languages through NDEA. The need is even greater -- the attention of the American people has been attracted and the prospects for success are only dampened by a lack of resources.

We in the AFT feel that the Title I concept has, by-and-large, been a success. While there are features of the law that should be modified to reduce unnecessary strings, it would be most unwise to simply send Title I

funds to local education agencies without guidelines for their use. There is a continuing need for the federal government to require uses of these funds that will best serve disadvantaged children. Requirements which do not contribute to efficiency or sound education practice should be eliminated.

Other proposals have been made to change the nature of the Title I population from economically disadvantaged children to children who are "educationally disadvantaged." While we have always advocated that every child who is educationally disadvantaged should have additional resources devoted to his/her educational problems -- what is being offered would radically change the purpose of the ESEA I program.

Title I has never purported to provide aid to all children with educational problems, it was designed to provide financial assistance to school districts with the largest number of disadvantaged children. Part A is and has always been financial assistance for those districts with the greatest needs. Educational disadvantage does not speak to an LEA's ability to fund services out of its' own revenue. A discussion about expanding Title I services to all children would be appropriate when a real commitment is made to provide additional funds rather than taking funds away from existing districts.

Under current levels of funding a great many economically disadvantaged children are not being served under Title I, and to shift the priority use of funds away from economically disadvantaged children to meet those with an educational disadvantage even though their LEA may or may not be economically impaired is to shift funds away from children, who, in effect, have the double handicap of being both educationally disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. It is simply not a good policy when using scarce dollars to shift away from concentrating efforts into a scatter-gun approach.

Another aspect of the Title I program that we hope the Committee will deal with are the non-supplanting requirements. We support the idea that federal funds should be in addition to resources generated by state or local governments who are most responsible for funding education. Non-supplanting, however, should mean that Title I children get more services in fact rather than in principle. For example, personnel hired with Title I funds have restrictions on the duties they can perform that in effect add to the duties of other personnel in the school system. By prohibiting Title I personnel from performing routine duties that are the responsibility of all school staff, the practical effect is to increase the requirements in time that regular school employees have to spend on these duties and the result for the student is no net increase in the amount of attention that can be expected in a regular school day. While this may look very good on paper, the practical effect is no net gain in services for the child and a divisive element injected into the school program. More and more school employees are covered by collective bargaining agreements and while it may be difficult for some to accept this as a practical matter, programs that fly in the face of negotiated collective bargaining agreements tend to add educational problems in a school. We suggest that the Committee seriously consider putting provisions into federal education law that acknowledges the reality of collective bargaining agreements and require that programs not be used to try to get around contracts. While we do not feel the Congress should refuse to carry out its responsibilities by neglecting its authority to set policy in this program, we do believe that in most cases there is no conflict between teacher collective bargaining agreements and the requirements of an organized and efficient educational program.

It is useful at this time to point-out that education among all public services has lived with the non-supplanting requirements that local governments and other recipients of federal funds have never been required to observe. It seems clear to us that local educational agencies have been successful in seeing to it that federal money is used in the manner desired by the Congress.

Current studies notwithstanding; there isn't a single federal program that can point to the small amount of misuse of federal funds that Title I and education aid in general can. On a percentage basis less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of all Title I funds have been called into question.

The final issue that we would like to address is the 10% set aside for handicapped students. We support continuation of the 10% set aside because of the costs of special education programs and the role of the states in them. There can be no doubt that this is a very high priority expenditure and should continue to be funded. The enactment of P.L. 94-142 and the subsequent funding of its state grant programs has not removed the need for a federal set aside in the Title I program. The costs of education for the handicapped children continue to rise and the amounts found in 94-142 are inadequate to deal with the increased costs generated by various federal and state programs. The 10% set aside should act as a supplement to the aid found in 94-142.

ESEA VII. The AFT has long taken the position that federal and state bi-lingual efforts should be transitionary in nature and designed to help non-English speaking children achieve enough skills in the English language so that they can participate in the regular school program. Recent studies seem to indicate that much of what is currently offered as bi-lingual education goes in a different direction. Up to 3/4 of the children in such programs are there because of a surname or ethnic background rather than any difficulty in speaking or reading the English language.

We feel that this problem must be addressed in any extension of the bi-lingual program, to be neutral is not enough because of the pressures that develop on the community-level. To keep ethnic surnamed children in bi-lingual education whether or not they need the services is a serious mistake and a waste of scarce of dollars. Some groups see this program as an opportunity to have the federal government fund a non-English school system, others as a method of establishing a no-cultural school system. We would suggest the following approach. A time limit -- possibly two years -- should be established for the termination of services to any child in the program unless an individual evaluation is undertaken and the child is found to have need for instruction in English. We know of no other way to assure the existence of a transitional program. As long as there is no time limit there will be pressure upon the parents of such children to keep them in the program simply because the more children enrolled in the program, the easier it is to maintain the staff and facilities.

The AFT has experienced difficulty in numerous cities because of this fact. The bi-lingual program is seen as an opportunity for patronage and a vehicle for circumventing collective bargaining agreements. In cases where children have a need for education in a language other than English, they should receive it. But if action is not taken here to see to it that the bi-lingual program retains its transitional nature, the result will be an education designed to maintain the native language rather than facilitate skills in English. This would be unfortunate for the society, and crippling for the affected children. We do not see the day coming when it will be possible to secure a decent job and living in the U.S. without being able to speak, read and write English. It is native to think otherwise.

There is a second major problem faced by teachers in the provision of bi-lingual services and that is the lack of adequate training and in-service

educational opportunities. The federal bi-lingual program should devote a greater share of its funds to in-service training of teachers. The current reality in city schools is such that retrenchment of employment opportunities is the norm. It is simply unfair to current practicing teachers to not afford them the opportunity to update their skills when new skills will be a necessity for retaining employment. The bi-lingual program should help in this area.

ESEA IV-B and C. These programs should be realigned to put the people programs such as guidance and counseling in with other people programs and media and equipment programs in the same consolidation. It should not be necessary to make a choice between having to use funds for personnel or equipment. Both need a program that will address needs and they should not have to compete with each other.

Further consolidation. We believe that more can be done in the area of consolidation. For example, there are many federal teacher training programs including teacher corps and funds for training under the Bi-Lingual Program, 94-142, Title I, vocational and other specialized forms of education. We believe that it would be useful to consolidate existing training authorities into a new initiative on teacher training. It would be possible to coordinate with and utilize teacher centers as well as augmenting and supporting more traditional campus-based teacher education programs. A major initiative in teacher training could be generated by this federal activity and could work in concert with the basic skills initiative. We also believe that the time is right for a major federal initiative in research. As with teacher training, research authority is scattered throughout many federal programs. While we have no doubts that much of the research that goes on is useful and worthy of support, the effort is so piece-meal and fragmented that federal efforts

in educational research at this time have had relatively little impact.

Research authorities, such as those in the Bureau of the Handicapped, Vocational Education and Education of the Disadvantaged and other places should be consolidated into a concentrated research effort controlled by the National Institute of Education. Until this is done, both NIE and other federal research efforts will be less effective than they should and could be.

Impact Aid. Without question, the most controversial program facing us is Public Law 874. Traditionally attacked by Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, it seems that only that sector of our society that really likes impact aid are those folks who have to work with it. Impact aid is a necessary, justified and effective method for distributing education funds. It requires a minimum of administration and is a model of what a general aid program could be. First the money can be used by local education agencies for those needs which are more pressing. Impact aid can and has been used to help a school district reduce class size, buy needed materials, hire needed teachers, pay salaries and to do many other things that no other federal program is available for. Further, since the Education Amendments of 1974, the law has been substantially reformed by the addition of public housing children. While residing in public housing is not a perfect indication of who needs additional federal support it is as good as anything else we have seen. The AFT does support some changes in the impact aid program. Public housing children should be funded at 100% of entitlement rather than the current 25%. There should be a re-inclusion of postal facilities and workers as eligible for impact aid assistance and strings that are currently placed on the use of public housing funds should be removed. We would support the enactment of a \$10,000 threshold so that

the districts receiving less than that figure would not be eligible for assistance. It also is possible that other formulas may be more efficient than the current one and we would be happy to support improvements that are not designed to cutback on impact aid funding.

Impact aid has become a limited form of general aid to education and should be continued in that direction.

Emergency School Aid. As members of the Committee are well aware, federal desegregation efforts continue to be a major source of contention in the education community. Part of the reason for this is that the emergency school aid program is based on an outmoded concept. Rewarding school districts after the fact of desegregation might have been a viable policy when the schools were not as hard pressed financially as they currently are, but with pressures for more specialized programs, declining enrollment, inflationary pressures and the ever-increasing costs of meeting federal mandates, the Emergency School Aid Act should be completely overhauled. It should become a facilitator for desegregation rather than a reward. It should be used to help school districts undergoing voluntary or court-ordered desegregation to maintain the quality of their programs.

It could be used to hire additional specialized staff to improve education opportunities throughout the district so that some parents will not reject desegregation because they feel their children will be bused to inferior schools. While the sentiment of the Congress will not allow the use of funds for transportation, ESAA should and could be used for everything else and truly become an aid to desegregation. We would be pleased to discuss this in a more detailed proposal at a later date.

General Aid. The AFT has long advocated general aid as the best thing the federal government could do to improve educational opportunity for all

children. We again reiterate that position. However, under current budgetary pressures, general aid must not result from a consolidation of folding-in of existing federal assistance programs such as Title I or 94-142. General aid should be over and above existing efforts not as a substitute for them.

Discretionary Programs: It is time to reverse the trends that were precipitated by the past Administration in regards to providing some funds for administrative discretion. We do not believe that the special projects act in its current form contributes to educational progress. The existing program is fragmented and subject to extremes of grantsmanship. It should be changed into a vehicle for the Office of Education to encourage educational development in many areas, including some currently found under the act. If this consolidation occurs, a more efficient and effective federal research effort could be run with existing resources.

We thank the Committee for the amount of time you have put into these hearings and into the study of these issues. The 95th Congress can go down as the Congress that launched an educational initiative that made a real difference in the lives and educational opportunities of millions of our citizens. We hope that will be the case. I would be pleased to answer any questions that Committee might have.

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