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The conflict between House and Senate over busing is surely dominating the conference committee that is now reviewing the Higher Education bill. That controversy may unhappily submerge some of the crucial issues that the legislation was originally intended to address. Although merely an authorization for new federal programs that might never be funded, the bill would set major policies bound to affect the future of all higher education in this country. This is the vital frontier of every modern society; and there can be no doubt that it will be reshaped by federal policies. The university system may remain a mosaic of private, local, and state-supported institutions. However they are manifestly unable to meet their responsibilities without substantial funding from the federal budget. The question is how to sustain the quality and diversity of role of these institutions against the pressures for uniformity and centralized control that most people foresee in large federal programs.

Many conflicting demands are placed on the schools and on the system design of new legislation. The great private universities cannot be sacrificed; but they must be made more accessible to students who cannot afford the ever-rising cost of tuition. Poor states need subsidies; but the states that now

support university systems of high quality (like California and the mid West) must not simply shift their tax burdens. Institutions should not be ridden with bureaucratic regulations from afar; but they must be ultimately responsible to the taxpayers and also to the students themselves. The educational product must be "manufactured" with responsible efficiency; but the very expression is at odds with the scholarship that we expect in a learned faculty. Some will decry what they believe to be professors' preference for the laboratory over the classroom but will demand admission precisely to the schools that are the most productive in research.

Even if the authorizations were matched by full funding -- which is hardly to be believed for the near future -- both the Senate and the House bill would barely begin to take on the costs of higher education as a federal responsibility. Reimbursement to the institutions would be limited to about \$200 per student, according to a sliding scale that offers somewhat more for smaller schools. Student aid would be limited to about \$1500 for most needy students, much less or none for those whose parents' income is judged too high to justify a subsidy. These levels of funding, if they were achieved, are important; but the real significance of the bills is in the precedent they set for the future style of federal support.

At first sight the two bills look rather similar. The Senate version, sponsored by Senator ^{Claiborne} Pell would establish a presumably broader range of student aid benefits called "Basic Educational Opportunity Grants" (BEOGs) keyed to family income. The institutions could get cost-of-education benefits in proportion to the number of BEOGs awarded to their students. On the House side, Congresswomen ^{Edith} Green's bill, would award EOG's mainly by allotment to the states; however, the institutions would receive a flat subsidy based on their total student enrollment subject to a complicated formula that pays more for the first few hundred students, for the upper classes, and for participation in other federally supported education programs.

Common to both bills is the implied role given to students generally, or to BEOG-qualifying students in particular, to allocate federal support to the schools they choose by enrolling therein. In principle this can be thought of as a corrective to the market influence now enjoyed by the more affluent consumers who pay high tuition fees for educational product and by alumni and other philanthropic supporters of the private institutions. Both formulas might reduce the pressure on legislatures to sustain support for the state schools. It is argued that the Pell bill is less likely to do this by keying the support in somewhat less predictable fashion to BEOG-grantees.

Neither bill allows for any quality factor, nor any recognition that the cost of education should vary among schools with different aspirations and quality of output. This may not be the time to expect Congress to put first priority on an elitist principle. Some educators are, however concerned whether these steps taken today may foreclose a wider range of patterns of support at some future time when the most urgent problems of egalitarian access to some standard of higher education have been solved.

From this perspective, some advantages may be seen in the Pell bill. Its benefits are more sharply targeted on the high-priority lower-income students. At least philosophically, this would be consistent with the future broadening of the program to embrace other goals like quality education. The more mechanical formula approaches of the Green bill, on the other hand, might tend to lock in a clientele organized strictly by nose-counting. At the same time, it encourages more immediate administrative controls on the institutions and perpetual haggling over the formulas.

The most pertinent differences between the bills are in the field of graduate education. The Pell bill would establish a newly unified program of federal fellowships, with benefits to schools that compare with the actual cost of graduate education. These programs are the heart of advanced studies, not only for the doctoral-degree candidates, but for the more studious undergraduates

at the major universities. Indirectly, this ~~provision~~ would restore some balance in recognizing a quality factor in the overall program.

This provision does not appear to be highly controversial, as between the two houses. However, it does run counter to the implied policies of the Office of Management and Budget which have gone a long way toward choking off support of graduate fellowships through the research agencies. Unless Congress also believes that the country has a basic surfeit of educated brainpower, rather than a shortage of useful occupations, it should take care not to compromise a provision that is essential for the maintenance of the highest educational opportunity.