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White House Task Force on Education

INTERVIEW WITH CLARENCE E. DEAKINS, ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, DIVISION
OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID, BHE

Mr. Deakins said that when he first joined the Office he spent six months as Regional Representative for the Bureau of Higher Education in Chicago and then came to Washington. He was initially employed to be a general representative of higher education with respect to the seven NDEA programs. He then moved to the Division of Student Financial Aid where he is primarily limited to the work study and student loan programs. He has no direct responsibility any longer for the other programs of the Bureau of Higher Education. He also indicated that Regional Representatives have been very useful in handling negotiations in connection with work-study programs because of their knowledge of colleges and universities. He now has one man in each region who is an experienced college administrator and this has led a very effective program. He also stated that panels are used to review college work-study proposals in the field and that this has been very successful.

In connection with applications for student loan programs, the Regional Representatives evaluate them and send in their recommendations. This year they were brought in to participate and to be available for consultation on approvals of these applications. He feels that this is a program which will eventually be decentralized so that the decisions can be made initially in the field under appropriate guidance with review only on those cases that are not clear-cut at the Washington level. Mr. Deakins also stated that they are in the process of adding fifteen men to the field staff to work on this program, one in Boston, none in Denver, but two in all other regions. Five of these have been selected at GS-13 and the Office is now interviewing younger men at the 11-12 level. Recruitment is also going on for college business officer types for the facilities program. There is discussion in the Bureau establishing a unified field service. He also feels that the scholarship program, if approved by the Congress, will be decentralized to the field.

Mr. Deakins stated that his view of the field structure would result in eliminating the Commissioner's Representatives and that instead there should be two field organizations reporting separately to Washington; one serving elementary and secondary education and dealing primarily with state agencies, and the second serving higher education. He was highly critical of the Commissioner's Representative and said that the basic

weakness was the idea that they could serve as "eyes and ears" without program responsibility. They really, in his view, have nothing to do and he said that he has been able to get higher qualified men for program work at GS-14 than many of the Commissioner's Representatives at GS-15.

He also felt that the field staff currently contemplated in higher education will be insufficient to meet the forthcoming workload. In particular, he felt that the workstudy program will require much more time if it is to include review of off-campus sites where students are working and, he believes, this is essential.

Mr. Deakins also expressed the view that more authority can be given to field representatives of the Bureau so that they can make decisions in dealing with the colleges, and that they should not be overruled unless they act contrary to national policy. He said that we must assume that some mistakes will be made, but that there should be greater delegation across the board and that the program people in Washington should determine more specifically what information they want to get from field program people.

Mr. Deakins stated that his biggest problem over-all has been getting people appointed. He said that he has lost good men whom he recruited because of the time it took to get them through the process.

Mr. Deakins said that having college and university assistance in BEAP is a serious problem because his people are in no position to answer questions about this program when they visit the colleges. This is particularly embarrassing since the programs used to be together. He said another problem that existed in the past was that of responsiveness of audit reports which used to appear a year after the audit was conducted. He is, therefore, concerned that the new centralized audit program will be sufficiently responsive.

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