

File

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White House Task Force on Education

PROGRAM PLANNING BRANCH, OFFICE OF FEDERAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES
(Interview with Mary Robinson by Herbert Jasper.)

1. Functions

Miss Robinson is the entire program planning staff at present. During the four years she has been here, there was a staff of three for a time - including a Director and one other senior person. In a word, the program has never gotten off the ground.

2. Problems Encountered

- a. Miss Robinson feels that the program planning effort has suffered from several difficulties. First, it was associated with legislation where it could not receive adequate attention. Second, it was never recognized by the Commissioner or turned to in any significant way as an important staff office. Third, the staff were frequently pressed into exigent problems and not left free to concentrate on long-term projects. Finally, the staff never really developed any expertise in the use of sophisticated planning methods.
- b. Miss Robinson observes that staff level communication has come to a ~~virtual~~ ^{virtual} halt since she came to work here. In the first couple of years, oral communication across division lines was common, but written communications had to go through channels. Since the 1962 reorganization, even oral communication across bureau lines has been greatly inhibited. This problem must be solved whether or not a reorganization is undertaken.

The basic structure of OE has built-in difficulties; for example, BEAP's necessary concentration on large formula-grants precludes their use of good judgment in the areas where they have discretion. BIE is not and cannot logically be made into a ~~problem~~ ^{proper} bureau. Its functions should be split up and a staff office established for international problems. BERD and BEAP necessarily duplicate each other at present with regard to teaching methods, curriculum content, and facilities. If college assistance were moved to BIE, a third bureau would then be involved in duplicating processes.

Miss Robinson observes that the Office of Federal-State Relations might play a useful role but that the program planning function is not adequately related to that role. Specifically, a part of the planning for strengthening state departments is to give them a program planning capacity. While the development of such capacity should be closely related to program planning in OE, no steps looking toward such relating have been taken.

3. New Legislation

No comments.

4. Recommended Changes

- a. Naturally, the deficiencies mentioned above need to be corrected if program planning is to prosper. She believes that separating the function from legislation was desirable and that it is logically related to program evaluation and inter-agency coordination. In fact, program evaluation and program planning are parts of the same process. With regard to staffing, she believes that a staff of approximately eight seniors and a few juniors could be effectively used. The juniors would move on after a few years to bureaus and divisions where they might become the nucleus for planning staffs at those levels.
- b. Miss Robinson has conceived of a three-part bureau structure for the Office. The first would be a bureau concerned exclusively with discretionary grants. According to her rough calculations, it would administer approximately \$350 million. The second bureau would handle formula grants, and the third would perform in-house research and services. Statistics and other functions would be organized as staff offices.

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