Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal

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The emergency conditions created by the Depression provided the context for unprecedented experimentation by the federal government in the development of direct educational programs and the evolution of new ideas of federal responsibility for education. These programs, part of the New Deal's relief endeavor, were at once a radical departure from previous views about the legitimate role of the federal government in education and ultimately circumscribed by the manner in which they were conceived and administered. Although the specific educational programs of the New Deal ended when the relief agencies were disbanded, the Roosevelt educational experiments had important consequences in establishing new goals for an effective democratic education, equal opportunity for blacks and other disadvantaged groups, and federal responsibility for education, which anticipated more recent policies and perspectives.

Since the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, and especially since the 1960s, Americans have become accustomed to active federal participation in education. We often assume that the recent past emerged from a kind of tabula rasa, a long prehistory of federal quiescence in which educational matters rested exclusively and naturally in the domain of the states and local school districts, where the silence of the Constitution seemed to leave the matter. In fact, American history is dotted with instances of federal activity affecting education.[1] Usually, however, these were simple legislative acts, which, as in the case of the Morrill Act (1862) and the Smith-Hughes Act (1917), provided federal assistance for special educational projects such as the land grant universities or subsidies to encourage vocational education. Rarely did the federal government actively design a set of

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programs or policies that reached broadly and deeply into the realm of education.

The one important exception was the New Deal. The reform activities initiated by Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s to cope with the devastations of the Depression were unprecedented in many ways. Not the least of these was the educational dimension of federal intervention that was carved out of the jigsaw pattern of economic relief. This federal activity was not only fundamentally new but had significant implications for defining a new federal responsibility in educational matters, which anticipated our more recent experiences. In telling the story of the New Deal's educational activities, I will concentrate on three areas I believe are especially pertinent to our present-day concerns: (1) how the New Deal helped to redefine the legitimate and necessary responsibility of the federal government for education; (2) the effect of federal intervention on the education of blacks and other educationally deprived groups; and (3) the nature of federal administration and its consequences. The New Deal provided important precedents that fundamentally altered beliefs about the role of the federal government in the area of education and raised, without completely defining, a new ideal of education as an entitlement. As significantly, the New Deal made it clear that the education of blacks was integral to any new responsibility the federal government might assume. At the same time, the Roosevelt administration did not anchor these changes in a lasting way because of the manner in which its educational programs were administered and because its educational innovations were not the result of a defined set of policies and goals concerning education; the changes were practical and temporary expedients. In this sense, the New Deal anticipated the educational developments of the post-1960s period but had no direct links with it either in institutions or programs.

I

"In responsiveness to popular sovereignty, in adaptability to varying need and aspiration, and in richness of experimentation conducive to flexibility and to progress, our management of public schools is without

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a peer. Certainly no national system of public schools managed in a highly centralized spirit shows such substantial democratic qualities. . . .

"The American people are justified in using their federal tax system to give financial aid to education in the States, provided they do this in a manner that does not delegate to the Federal Government *any* control of the social purpose and specific processes of education" (USNACE 1931*a*, pp. 18, 30 [my emphasis]).[2]

To understand the nature and scope of New Deal innovations, it would be useful to begin with a brief examination of a classic document in American educational history, the 1931 report of the National Advisory Committee on Education. Appearing before Roosevelt took office, the report serves as a convenient frame against which to define the changes introduced by the New Deal. The report is often remembered for its innovative recommendation calling for federal financial assistance for education, but this is deceptive. In fact, the report highlights and confirms traditional restrictions on the role of the federal government, and the tensions in the report, illustrated by the two statements above, summed up the dilemma of the committee, which at once urged financial assistance and denied the federal government any active supervisory role. Although the committee, appointed by President Hoover in 1929, was composed of a varied group of educators, public officials, and leaders of citizens organizations and private industry, it was overwhelmingly dominated by professional educators. The makeup of the group represented, if not a cross section of public thought on education, certainly a good sample of those who were thinking most seriously about American education at the time. And the committee as well as its report most nearly approximated the dominant views of the educational community.

The committee took pains to discuss at length, and often with sentimental flourishes, the traditional roots of American localism in education and its fundamental contribution to democracy and citizenship. And even as it pointed to the precedents for federal aid to education, it carefully differentiated the earlier forms of federal aid, such as land grants, which supported local autonomy, from the later more intrusive forms, such as the Morrill and Smith-Hughes Acts, which the committee rejected as unwarranted attempts by the federal government to make policy. Noting the "conflict between our traditional policy of state and local autonomy and this growing trend toward federal centralization" (USNACE 1931*a*, pp. 12–13), the 1931 report repeatedly reasserted the primacy of local control and left no doubt about the dangers implicit in innovation.

The report was not trying to build up a historical notebook of cases to support increased federal participation. Rather, it hoped to confine

and severely delimit the proper realm of what it called federal "cooperation." This seemed especially necessary in the light of the committee's recommendations for direct federal financial aid. The committee reluctantly supported federal aid because of its recognition of the indisputable economic and social changes that had taken place as rapid industrialization transformed a formerly rural society and as a newly nationalized economy exposed and aggravated the glaring inequities in provisions for education by local communities. At a time when industrial opportunities were draining the population into a nationwide labor pool, the local school district continued to serve as the exclusive basis for educational funding. Many of the local (especially rural) districts had become unable to provide adequately for the basic education necessary for a newly nationalized citizenry just when that education was becoming a necessity for the national state and the national economy.

Accordingly, the committee's recommendations can be summarized as follows. First, control of education must remain exclusively with the states. Second, the federal government should assist the states through a general education fund, to be provided to the states with no strings attached and to be distributed according to need. Third, there should be no federal aid for special education projects, which by their nature result in federal direction and an exercise of controls. Along with this, the committee urged the elimination of all federal matching fund requirements in existing legislation (e.g., vocational education). Fourth, a major purpose of federal cooperation in education is the collection and dissemination of information. Therefore the federal government should actively pursue, encourage, and sponsor research activities. Fifth, the only legitimate federal requirement for administered aid is audits to ensure the proper expenditure of funds. And sixth, the federal government should establish a Department of Education with a cabinet-level secretary.

The first five points represent a fair summary of traditional values modified by the committee's reluctant acceptance of the need for federal aid. The last recommendation seems incongruous with the others. If, one may properly ask, the federal government was to dispense funds with no controls and was to restrict itself to simple audits and the encouragement of research, why introduce a demand for a bureaucratic structure? Or, as a minority report written by two Catholic clergymen aptly put it: "A Federal Department of Education will inevitably bring about centralization and federal control . . . of education. . . . A Federal Department, headed by a Secretary in the President's Cabinet, is of its nature an administrative institution and nothing that could be written into any act setting up such a Department could prevent it from taking on administrative and directional functions in

the course of time" (USNACE 1931*a*, p. 103). Why then, in the light of the rest of the report, make this recommendation? In some ways, the recommendation is only comprehensible in the context of the rest of the report, for only the last provision could ensure the delicate balance required by the others. Such a national center could provide the legitimacy and stature that an increasingly self-conscious profession demanded while assuring it the leverage, through access to the president and Congress, for the continuous flow of unrestricted funds. The report wanted it both ways—money and the recognition of education as a national concern, and no federal controls over education, which technically rested with the states and localities but was in fact increasingly, if not explicitly, lodged in a self-confident profession. Only a department that educators could confidently hope to control would protect the schools from independent federal action.

The only other minority report reminds us of issues that the majority simply ignored as beyond the scope of federal concern. This report, issued by three presidents of Negro institutions of higher education, presented the most fundamental challenge to the report as a whole. While the presidents proclaimed their general agreement with the report, they asked the federal government to assume the "moral obligation which binds a central government to exercise special solicitude for disadvantaged minorities." Presidents John W. Davis, Mordecai W. Johnson, and R. R. Moton declared that historical experience of the limitations of state action and the deplorable state of education for blacks made intervention on their behalf through supplemental grants for black education a necessity and an obligation. These grants, they added, should be administered just as the general fund was administered, "in full accord with the principles of State autonomy." Davis, Johnson, and Moton demanded only "some definite increase in the per capita amounts and in the percentages of State support made available for Negro education" (USNACE 1931*a*, pp. 108 and 110). They based their demands on the requirements of fairness and equity alone and did not propose any restructuring of traditional federal-state relationships in education.

This plea, carefully worded to uphold and respect local autonomy and not to insult the southern states, had no resonance whatsoever in the majority report. The majority raised the issue of black education only to dismiss it as one of the "perplexing problems" whose solution "might appear to be hastened by the Federal Government." Instead, the majority noted steady improvement in Negro education and the "impressive advance made by colored people," which the committee believed would continue to result from private charity. "It seems clear that the actual limitations which still operate to handicap Negroes are

primarily due to *imperfections* in the political, economic, physical and social conditions often surrounding them" (USNACE 1931*a*, p. 25 [my emphasis]). In many ways, the committee's statement was worse than silence since it applauded a progress that was a slap in the face to black Americans. But, just as significantly, the statement also suggested that the role of education was limited, that education was only one of many social forces, and that equal opportunity in education could not substitute for or produce social equality. By 1938, a new advisory committee, appointed by Roosevelt and deeply affected by New Deal experience, would adopt a more imperial view of education and with it a different perspective on the role of education in society and on the government's obligations toward all the nation's children.

II

As the National Advisory Committee was deliberating and preparing to issue its findings, the American economy had collapsed. The Depression, the coming of Roosevelt, and the incipient destruction of the financial foundation of thousands of school systems across the nation would profoundly affect educational experience in the 1930s. But these changes did not immediately revise traditional beliefs about the role and responsibility of the federal government in educational matters. Nor were the implications of the innovations introduced by the New Deal immediately apparent. Indeed, what is striking about the initial development of federal educational activities in the thirties is how the federal government managed to assume a good part of the burden and responsibility for education without seeming to alter traditional relationships between the federal government and the schools. In this, the New Deal's actions concerning education were like its effects on other segments of the economy and society; neither Roosevelt nor his administration questioned the legitimacy or normal functioning of basic American institutions.

The New Deal accomplished this legerdemain by erecting parallel structures to traditional educational institutions, structures that were federally administered and highly centralized but did not technically interfere with or challenge traditional local and state control. New Deal structures were often vitally concerned with education, had an implicit educational philosophy and purpose, and were critical to the maintenance of educational stability, but they were organized and legitimated under the rubric of relief. That they could do this effectively suggests how important education had become as a unit of the economy. It also suggests how crucially committed the New Deal was to federal

intervention as a temporary expedient, not to be confused with basic revision of traditional institutions. The New Deal never overtly questioned the local basis of educational policy or the autonomy of the states in decisions about schooling. Roosevelt never even suggested or offered federal assistance to the schools on a regular and continuing basis; he was on record as opposing such aid. Thus, the New Deal did not set out to establish a federal responsibility for education. The results of New Deal activity, however, must be clearly distinguished from their intent. For, in devising and administering relief efforts, the New Deal focused attention as never before on the federal government as an active participant in all phases of social life, including education. Furthermore, by responding to the human miseries generated by the Depression, the New Deal uncovered basic inequities, inefficiencies, and "paradoxes" that had been dormant or taboo subjects. In the end, the Roosevelt administration injected the federal government into the educational arena in such a way that it not only exposed educational failures but defined their redress as a federal responsibility.

By the time Franklin Roosevelt took office, the schools, like other segments of the economy, had taken a severe beating. After expanding enormously in the twenties in capital plant, services, program offerings, and population (especially in secondary schools), American schools were financially wounded and also under siege from those who sought to impose economies in this so-called social luxury.[3] Some schools, mostly in rural areas, were forced to close entirely; almost all school districts reduced their budgets, often by as much as one-third, cutting deeply into teacher staffing and salaries (Stetson 1933, p. 87; "Education, the Foundation of Enduring Recovery" 1934, p. 46). The National Educational Association, as we shall see, responded with an urgent plea for immediate federal aid and with a long-term program of federal supports for education. Roosevelt and the relief administrators most immediately involved, Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes, also responded. But, aside from a one-time money grant amounting to something under $20 million in 1934–35 to keep some schools from imminent collapse (Reeves 1937, p. 28; Zook 1934, p. 40), they responded by assisting not the schools as organizations but school people and plants. They did so through a mixed bag of work relief programs, public works construction and repair projects, work-study schemes, and supplementary social work enterprises. The educational import of these relief activities would subsequently become clear and was described and evaluated by Roosevelt's own advisory committee reports issued at the end of the decade. But their immediate orientation and administration fell within the much broader scope of general federal relief activities, organized by and subordinated to FDR's alphabet-soup

agencies—the Public Works Administration (PWA), Works Progress Administration (WPA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), and National Youth Administration (NYA). These separately run agencies, relying heavily on discretionary administrative policies whose purpose was to provide maximum individual relief, were coordinated with a variety of federal departments but almost never responsible to the Office of Education.

Thus, to speak of the New Deal's educational activities is both to describe a massive program of school construction and repair, teacher employment, courses in literacy and naturalization, vocational rehabilitation, nursery schools, correspondence courses, educational radio programs, and subventions to high school and college students and to describe no educational policy at all. In most cases (the NYA was in part an exception to this) education was a by-product of work relief, and the educational content and purpose were defined in the course of the agencies' activities by the need to fine appropriate employment for teachers, carpenters, masons, students, nurses, and unskilled laborers. Because of the way these programs administered, it is difficult, probably impossible, to estimate even how much money was expended by the New Deal on educationally relevant programs. The WPA spent over $213 million on school construction and repair and loaned an additional $85 million for this purpose. The most clearly school-based program, the NYA, spent $53 million on scholarship-like student work programs in the two years between 1935 and 1937 and lesser amounts in subsequent periods (Reeves 1937, p. 28; Rawick 1957, p. 214).[4] But how is it possible to determine what portion of the CCC budget was directed to education or which of the many WPA programs were educational?

Since many of its educational endeavors were unfocused, the New Deal often discovered its educational commitments in the process of program administration. When the CCC, the most popular of the New Deal work projects, got under way, its aim was to provide out-of-work youth from relief families with immediate employment in conservation work. The expectation was that CCC recruits would pick up what they needed to learn in the process. This would give them something useful to do while a portion of their salaries was sent home to aid their needy families. It soon became clear that explicit instruction, not only in the technical aspects of conservation but often in basic literacy, was urgently needed. Additionally, as the CCC sought ways to occupy and stimulate camp enrollees in their nonworking hours, they turned to education in subjects such as Latin, mathematics, and history, as well as in vocational skills and literacy.[5] At first, these activities were entirely voluntary, but the moral pressure on enrollees to occupy their time usefully made the educational supplements almost as basic

to CCC activities as the work regime. By 1938–39, more than 90 percent of the corps were enrolled in some instruction, averaging four hours per week. Two-thirds of these enrollees were in job-related classes, but one-third were in strictly academic classes (Zeitlin 1958, p. 92; American Council on Education 1941, p. 18). An educational adviser had early been attached to each CCC camp, and it is clear that the camps, by utilizing various local educational resources, helped to educate thousands of young men, providing many with basic literacy and remedial instruction and some with welcome advanced education. When Congress extended the life of the CCC in 1937, it formalized its educational activities by providing each camp with a school building and increasing specifically educational appropriations. By 1941, credit for educational work completed in CCC camps was provided by 47 states and the District of Columbia (Zeitlin 1958, p. 95). The CCC had certainly become the center of a federally administered educational enterprise, but the camps were run by the War Department, with personnel and responsibilities shared with the Departments of Agriculture and Interior and, to only a limited degree, the Office of Education (American Council on Education 1941, p. 20; USACE 1938, pp. 115–32).

The ambiguities that marked the administration of the CCC and its policies pervaded New Deal educational activities. The National Youth Administration, superficially more focused in its goals, was even more administratively fragmented. Established in 1935 as an autonomous division of the WPA, the NYA had a clear objective: to permit students in secondary schools and colleges to continue their education by providing them with part-time, often on-campus, jobs as clerks, janitors, and research assistants, or in construction projects, playgrounds, and nursery schools. The NYA also provided work relief with a prevocational goal to unemployed out-of-school youths of school age. During 1936–37, at the height of its activities, the NYA provided almost half a million students with this kind of assistance (see Johnson and Harvey 1938, p. 7; Reeves 1937, p. 28). Some of this work had already been done under the auspices of the FERA on an ad hoc basis (Zeitlin 1958, pp. 191–93). Organizationally autonomous, though nominally under the WPA, the NYA, according to the 1938 Advisory Committee Staff Report, "has in principle worked in close cooperation with local, State, and other Federal governmental agencies and numerous nongovernmental agencies" (Johnson and Harvey 1938, p. 12). As we shall see, this close cooperation was strongly disputed by some educators, who felt that they had, in fact, been ignored in both the organization and administration of the NYA. More significantly, the Office of Education had no major role in its organization or operations.[6]

In reality, the coordination of the NYA was often a nightmare chart of responsibilities, with cooperation among student aid officers, work project administrators, State Departments of Education, and school officials necessary to establish school quotas, to determine who qualified scholastically and financially, and to define which jobs were necessary or desirable.[7] Students receiving aid sometimes changed from month to month, depending on any number of factors—their continued need, their academic status, the determination of most appropriate work, whether quotas had been filled, and so forth. At each step, a host of variables (with responsibilities in different federal, state, and school agencies) had to be coordinated. Nevertheless, the NYA worked—from the perspective of the student who was able to stay in school; of the public, with whom it was popular; and in terms of New Deal policies, whose principal objective was to keep youth off the labor market. Similarly, despite the resentment of educators, the NYA in no way affected the content of education, which was the main basis of the stated fears of the educational establishment. Educators, such as Lotus Coffman, president of the University of Minnesota, proposed that innovations like this provided but "an easy step . . . to a situation where the materials of instruction were suggested and then required from Washington" (Coffman 1936, p. 417). In fact, educators as well as the NEA and the Office of Education disliked and were suspicious of the NYA, more because they were irked over having been ignored by Roosevelt in instituting and administering the program and because it was "divorced from the existing educational agencies" than because they were seriously worried about centrally imposed curricula (Coffman 1936, p. 417).[8] By 1938, the Office of Education was actively seeking to undermine the NYA, and in 1941 the Educational Policies Committee of the NEA called for the abolition of the NYA and the CCC (Rawick 1957, p. 266). Thus, the NYA both succeeded and failed. It succeeded in instituting a truly radical new program of student assistance and in initiating a wholly new sense of federal responsibility for education. It failed not because it was difficult to administer but because it did not muster the support of that educational establishment without whose support the NYA's innovations could only be short-lived and temporary.

In addition to the CCC and NYA, the only exclusively youth-oriented programs, the New Deal also provided a variety of other educational programs, many run by the WPA. These included worker education, nursery schools, vocational retraining, and parent education (see Campbell, Bair, and Harvey 1939). In all these programs, the federal government saw its role as simply providing funds. It chose personnel on the basis of relief needs but left program content to various professional groups and state departments of education. "Under the Works

Progress Administration the emergency education program is conducted on a State basis. This practice derives from the principle of operation underlying all Works Progress Administration policies, which assumes that the determination of the nature and content of the program is essentially a State and local government responsibility" (Campbell et al. 1939, pp. 20–21). In short, according to the advisory committee staff study that issued this statement, the federal government had no intention of determining educational content. Indeed, it had no policy concerning education.

This was no doubt what Roosevelt wished to believe and probably was initially also true, because the educational programs were mere spin-offs of relief activities. A glance at the WPA projects makes clear that the programs were careful to provide educational offerings that did not conspicuously compete with traditional school programs or compensated for cuts made necessary by the emergency. In fact, however, this was a less than candid assessment of the impact and consequences, if not the intent, of New Deal educational endeavors. First, the New Deal programs, ad hoc and administratively derivative rather than policy oriented as they often were, were making statements about American education and direction. The programs were all work-coordinated; that is, education in the CCC camps, student supports, and various supplemental programs sponsored by the WPA were heavily vocational. In the process of administering relief, the New Deal discovered not only massive illiteracy but also a population with outdated and inadequate skills. The relief projects became actively involved in underwriting a practical vocationalism and helped to define this as a deeply educational issue and responsibility. In so doing, they helped to emphasize the value of education in job terms and as essential to economic opportunity in America. Roosevelt's advisory committee would confirm this relationship between education and economic opportunity, in sharp contrast to the 1931 report, which had proclaimed the more traditional association between education and citizenship.

Second, the experience of education as a by-product of relief helped to legitimate a broader, more welfare-oriented view of education, which included a variety of school-centered services, such as health, vocational guidance, and preschool and adult education, and would culminate in a policy that eventually placed education in a broadly defined Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Third, the Roosevelt programs avoided, even circled around, the Office of Education (Zeitlin 1958, pp. 304–5). Thus, at a time when federal involvement in education was thickening and might have invested the office with vastly more power, a greatly expanded staff, and a proportionately increased vested interest in continuing federal action,

FDR chose not to do so. This negative action was probably crucial to the subsequent dismemberment of the educational programs, which remained fragments of a temporary set of relief expedients. In not wishing to deal with, compromise with, or contend with the educational establishment, Roosevelt at once made certain that his programs would be tentative and preordained that educators would evolve their own set of principles or demands about federal aid. The NEA, as we shall see, did just that.

Fourth, the educational programs of the New Deal were aimed at the poor. As the advisory committee staff report on the WPA explained, "Here, perhaps lies its greatest contribution and its strength. An educational offering of major significance has been made available to the poor and the needy. . . . That there was and is a demand for the services rendered is manifest in the persistence and growth of enrollments. The people can learn; the people want to learn; the people intend to learn. What the regular educational agencies have failed to provide the people have found—in a relief program" (Campbell et al. 1939, p. 157). The point was clear: education for all was a possibility and an imperative. Only the inattention of traditional educational institutions had failed to awaken or feed the legitimate educational needs of all the people. The New Deal programs were at once an implicit criticism of established educational offerings and a demonstration that the federal government could do what established agencies had failed to do.

The criticism implied by an educational agenda for the poor meant more than an extension of education to those previously ignored. The New Deal programs encouraged an awareness of how poverty often underlay inequalities in educational attainment. Before the 1930s, equal educational opportunity was more often a catch phrase for providing people with only as much education as they could use than it was a platform for eliminating inequalities in access to education. But New Deal programs and especially the NYA subsidies provided a profound challenge to this perspective. As Harry Hopkins made clear in an informal address to NYA state administrators in 1935 (Zeitlin 1958, p. 349):

> Well, I think we have started something. It seems to me that what we are starting is this: that anyone who has capacities should be in college and should get a higher education, and that he is going to get it irrespective of his economic status. That is the crux of the thing, to decide once and for all that this business of getting an education and going to law school and medical school and dental school and going to college is not to be confined to the

> people who have an economic status at home that permits them to do it. . . .
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> All this about anyone being able to go to school who wants to go to school is sheer nonsense and always has been, in my opinion. I grant you there are a few exceptional students who can do it, but the great majority of people cannot; and anyone who knows anything about this game at all knows that in the good old days of '28 and '29 tens of thousands of young people were leaving school to go to work for no other reason than that they were poor. They were quite capable of going to college, far more so than some of us in this room.[9]

What Hopkins had done was to change fundamentally the meaning of equal educational opportunity and to propose that the federal government "should meet the problem of equal educational opportunity head on. . . . We propose to give anybody in the United States a chance to go to college if he wants to" (Zeitlin 1958, p. 349). Whether the source of this radical understanding was the eye-opening experience of a long economic depression during which from one-quarter to one-third of a normally hard-working population was unemployed, or whether the Depression and the Roosevelt administration provided a haven for the expression of radical ideas that could not have been voiced in such high places before, the New Deal provided a context in which a new view emerged of the role the federal government could and should play in making education available for all. The New Deal programs exposed not only educational deficiencies but also the social conditions that explained them. In this context, the federal government became responsible for education as part of its newfound obligation to eliminate gross inequalities and social deprivations of all kinds. Once again, education became part of a much larger national picture, too large in fact to remain exclusively in the jurisdiction of the states or in the care of those professionals whose concerns were largely pedagogical.

Finally, the New Deal's educational programs both exposed and were attentive to the educational needs of black Americans in a wholly unprecedented way. Much of this attention was the result simply of the discovery of black poverty—a poverty long borne but deeply exacerbated by the Depression. It is fairly clear from the most recent study of the New Deal's relationship to blacks that Roosevelt initially had no plans or policies to deal with the special needs of black Americans, in education or anything else (Sitkoff 1978, pp. 34–57). Nevertheless, by the mid-thirties, Roosevelt, often through the intercession of his wife Eleanor, and in response to the aggressive actions of individuals such as Mary McLeod Bethune, president of the National Council of

Negro Women, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, and the activist head of the NYA, Aubrey Williams, began to take note of and make provision for the needs of blacks. Where blacks had received far less than their fair share of relief in the early phases of the New Deal, they began to be employed in larger numbers in construction projects and other relief programs by mid-decade. More significantly for our purposes, black schools and colleges received significant federal appropriations, some of them specifically earmarked for Negro colleges in the South (Sitkoff 1978, p. 68). The response of blacks to New Deal offerings was enthusiastic. Turning eagerly to the many opportunities for instruction offered through the WPA, blacks benefited especially from the skilled manpower programs and literacy classes. Their response revealed the extent of black educational deprivation and provided blacks with instruction that had simply not been available to them before.

The experience of blacks with the NYA and CCC is especially instructive since it reveals something of the manner in which New Deal programs operated and the possibilities of federally sponsored programs. At the NYA, executive director Aubrey Williams, attacked as "a nigger lover," saw "progress in the Negro's educational and economic status as one of his top priorities" (Sitkoff 1978, p. 73). The NYA regulations specifically forbade discrimination in student selection and paid black students exactly what was paid to whites for their jobs. The agency included in the student aid program almost all of the 120 Negro colleges. The NYA also had a special fund to aid "eligible [black] graduate students who cannot be cared for within the quota for graduate aid of a particular institution, after it has made a just allocation for Negro graduates from its regular quota" (Johnson and Harvey 1938, pp. 27–28). This fund, set aside for use by blacks only, was specifically aimed at overcoming the lack of opportunities for professional education for blacks.[10]

At the CCC camps, blacks who had been initially shortchanged in their 10 percent quota were by mid-decade enrolled up to that proportion (Zeitlin 1958, p. 107). At the same time, the CCC program, useful as it was for individuals, had less to recommend it as an advance for black equality since blacks were sequestered in segregated camps where educational advisers, but not other supervisory personnel, were black (American Council of Education 1941, p. 18). Black CCC units constantly provoked local opposition and, according to one student of the camps, "in response to any slight pressure CCC camps for Negro enrollees were cancelled or moved" (Rawick 1957, p. 148). This paradox, an apparently aggressive program to provide blacks with their due and a program that continued traditional social policies, was thoroughly

in line with the New Deal's record in general. The explanation has as much to do with the fragmented way the New Deal programs were organized and run as with Democratic party politics with its strong southern base, to which it is usually attributed. Since each agency had broad discretionary power, individuals with strong commitments, such as Williams at the NYA, could make special provisions for blacks without forcing a general administrative policy position that would have antagonized the southern bloc crucial to Roosevelt's congressional coalition. Because the agencies provided a wide berth for discretion, positive leadership as well as stand-pat policies were possible. The experience of blacks with the New Deal was therefore often complex and paradoxical. The CCC, run by a War Department accustomed to segregated units, found it difficult to give blacks even their due; the NYA run by Williams and Ickes sought to do more.

But the paradox is more far-reaching, for New Deal policies, despite the benefits rendered blacks, can be summed up in the term "separate and equal." This sounds incongruous to our post-1954 ears, but it had meaning in the context of the manifestly deprived condition in which black schools were kept in segregated states by state appropriations—a condition shockingly revealed by New Deal investigations (see Wilkerson 1939). The retention of segregated schools in the context of a developing ideology of equality meant that New Deal activities were both ultimately limited and fundamentally distinguishable from the issues that define equal opportunity today. The New Deal experience, especially at the NYA with its special fund for additional graduate instruction and its clear antidiscriminatory policies, suggests that, in the case of the education of blacks, experimentation by the federal government, and indeed administrative discretion, could and did open up new possibilities for blacks, providing many with literacy, others with skills, building classrooms, and permitting thousands to remain at school. As significantly, the New Deal experience demonstrated the potential efficacy of federal intervention. As Aubrey Williams noted in a statement to the Chicago Urgan League in 1936, "It is only by having a *national* administration . . . that is has been possible to break down and overcome . . . attitudes and provide a program in which all men are treated as equals . . . their need and not their birth nor their color the only criterion for their treatment" (Zeitlin 1958, p. 205, n. 36 [my emphasis]). The New Deal thus provided a significant precedent for federal intervention in efforts aimed at producing racial equality.

At the same time, the Roosevelt administration had established neither a policy of equality nor goals for black education that could institutionalize the advances achieved and ensure the continued responsibility of the federal government for black educational advancement. In this

sense, the experience of blacks in the New Deal highlights the shortcomings as well as the successes of the New Deal in the field of education generally. Clearly the federal government could intercede effectively and beneficially on behalf of a "disadvantaged minority." But it did so in the way charity is dispensed—through the good graces and caprice of the benefactor. Like charity, too, the actions made the need for help apparent and raised the issues to social consciousness. The New Deal had discovered and become sensitive to inequities in the process of responding to immediate human needs, and this was its great strength. But this piecemeal, pragmatic approach to social problems was also severely limiting. By acting as it did, with no accompanying statement of the legal rights of the recipient or the moral obligation of the benefactor, the New Deal could not establish a new *pattern* of government intervention on behalf of blacks that could bind its successor.

III

The manner in which the New Deal went about its educational business—through a package of relief expedients, without educationally specific goals, with each program separately run and all of them largely independent of the Office of Education—meant that the New Deal was not burdened by the views of the traditional educational establishment or confined by a central administrative agency that defined policies across the board. This gave New Dealers freedom to experiment and allowed for the kind of innovation we have observed at the NYA. But this independence had its costs. Roosevelt was not able to enlist the assistance of the educational establishment in his efforts nor develop their stake in the enlarged vision that was gradually emerging from New Deal experiences. Roosevelt, of course, was not particularly concerned about long-term consequences nor with offending the professional educators. He directed his eye to the present social landscape and his ear to the political resonances of his actions. Moreover, he really had no intention of altering the status quo in educational matters. But once again, Roosevelt's intentions must be distinguished historically from the consequences of New Deal actions. The conceptual and ideological innovations that emerged from New Deal programs would ultimately require the commitments of the educational establishment if they were to have a lasting effect. Instead of cooperating, the New Deal and the educational establishment, at least insofar as the latter was represented by the National Education Association, went their separate ways. Throughout the twenties and thirties, the NEA had hoped the federal government would provide the profession with

more authority through a new Department of Education. At the very least, they expected educational programs of the New Deal would be directed by and channeled through the Office of Education, where the NEA's views and assistance would be sought. As we have seen, Roosevelt acted differently, usually ignoring and bypassing the office in the administration of his programs. Roosevelt continually acted apart from both the profession and its closest government bureau (Zeitlin 1958, pp. 288–314). As a result, professional educators found themselves slighted at just the time when education was becoming a federal concern.[11]

The degree to which the administration increasingly diverged from the profession's more traditional views about the legitimate role of the federal government in education can be appreciated by looking at the attitudes of the NEA, the most articulate, well organized, and powerful of the professional educational organizations. An understanding of the NEA's views as these evolved during the thirties also helps to define the limits of New Deal activities, since by neglecting to develop professional commitments to its innovations, the administration restricted the scope of those innovations and made their coordination with traditional views unlikely.

Beginning in 1932, the NEA began a series of efforts in the form of special emergency investigatory committees, educational coalitions, and legislative lobbying groups to alert teachers, the Congress, and the public to the dangers that threatened American education.[12] Initially, the NEA hoped that Roosevelt would welcome its participation in efforts to meet the emergency and sought to find ways to "bring the nation's schools . . . within the beneficient sphere of the New Deal" (Rule 1934, p. 47). Roosevelt, however, ignored the organization and its overtures. In that context the NEA developed its own comprehensive program for long-term federal aid to education as well as demands for immediate relief. The overwhelming consensus of NEA policies was that the time had arrived for some kind of federal assistance to education, but that it should be assistance in line with traditional federal-state relations. Thus, Willard Givens, secretary of the association, introduced the organization's recommendations bluntly: "Federal participation in the support of education is inevitable. . . . The Federal Government has an inescapable interest in the maintenance of public education, and it must bear with the states the financial burden of supporting school facilities thruout [sic] the nation" ("Federal Support for Education" 1937, p. 156). The organization's actions were based on two considerations, one practical and the other strategic—the financial distress in local school districts had now become dramatically clear, and the educational establishment had to act quickly, on its own,

before, as many feared, they were presented with a fait accompli. This conclusion was partly based on exaggerated fears about the increasing power of the federal government in all spheres, partly a justifiable recognition that the Roosevelt administration was in fact developing educational programs that increasingly threatened traditional federal-state relations.

In 1934, the NEA's Educational Policies Commission was organized in light of "present trends to establish new educational agencies to serve large numbers of youth and then to remove them from the *custody* of the organized agencies of public education and new practices in such fields as preschool and adult education, and even deep into secondary and college levels" (Sexson 1936, p. 465 [my emphasis]). We should note the word "custody" used here. As the 1930s progressed, the NEA repeatedly made clear that it, together with the traditional local and state educational boards, had a proprietary interest in the nation's children and that the federal government threatened that interest. Thus, Lotus Coffman noted in a statement that undoubtedly touched many sore wounds, "Every school superintendent knows that during the last three years there have been at times as many as three, and sometimes more, federal officers seeking jurisdiction over some of the youth of his community. Each educator knows, too, that there have been established in each state a federal officer in charge of adult education and another in charge of the education of unemployed youth; and that these officers were appointed in many instances without the knowledge or consent of the state superintendents, and that they may operate entirely independently of them" (Coffman 1936, p. 417). Note how easily Coffman moved from claiming jurisdiction over the youth of *his* community to claiming jurisdiction by the states over adults and unemployed persons who were manifestly not within the domain of state superintendents.

Indeed, the NEA was so eager to protect its turf that its views and policies tended to rigidify in response to New Deal activities. Throughout the thirties, the NEA sought federal aid and repeatedly reaffirmed traditional educational values. Thus, while John Sexson of the Educational Policies Commission noted, "Much discussion has gone on thruout [sic] America during the period of the emergency as to whether the federal government has by grants and subsidies sufficiently stimulated education," he went on to declare, "Public schools should grow up as local units; they should be administered by local boards of education, elected by a vote of the people. This, however, should not be interpreted to mean that the Federal Government should not render financial assistance to the states in carrying on services or institutions of government which are under the control and management of the

states" (Sexson 1936*b*, p. 55). Paul R. Mort, who spent much of his time during the 1930s devising mathematical formulas for federal aid to the states,[13] reflected the NEA's determined posture most succinctly: "Our social and economic welfare demands a more adequate educational program than the poor states can provide. . . . There would seem to be no question but that all people, rich and poor, are vitally concerned with the establishment of a minimum of educational opportunity at least sufficiently high to safeguard ourselves against danger. . . . This result cannot be attained without federal aid" ("Symposium on Federal Support" 1936, pp. 401–2).

In its programs, the NEA proposed that both interim aid and more long-term comprehensive federal assistance to education be distributed to the states directly according to a predetermined formula (so as to leave no room for administrative discretion);[14] "the manner in which the funds received shall be used for the maintenance of a program of public education is left wholly to the state legislatures" ("Federal Support of Education" 1935, p. 158). In the various versions of their legislative programs the NEA agreed to a limited set of conditions upon which federal funds would be contingent: that each state set a minimum term of 160 days; that the states spend at least the amount per school-age population that they had spent at some earlier time (variously 1936 and 1933); and that the states in distributing aid take "into consideration the total population and each population group for which schools are specifically maintained" ("Federal Support of Education" 1935, p. 158). This last proviso was meant to assure equal distribution to black schools in segregated states. In fact, the first contingency would have little affect on the quality of education received by deprived groups unless the states also raised their minimum days requirements in compulsory school attendance laws; the second was playing with Depression shrunken budgets; and the third could in no way prevent the siphoning off of state and local appropriations from black schools, which would be substituted for, not supplemented by, federal funds. The NEA permitted the federal government just enough control to save face, but not enough to affect education. This version of the NEA legislative program was the most federally muscular of all the versions prepared by the NEA.

In its programs the NEA consistently upheld local autonomy and general school fund appropriations. It opposed special appropriations, which were viewed as a form of federal control over the content and direction of education. It decried federal interference in all essential matters. Indeed, NEA's agenda profoundly resembled the proposals of the 1931 advisory committee. The NEA stood pat with its hand out.

The NEA's position on local control was at once traditional and defensive. For the NEA, the Depression and New Deal confirmed the wisdom of conservative policies. In this sense, Roosevelt was justified in acting apart from the organization since it seemed wholly unable to support federal experimentation, but he also helped to strengthen the organization's intransigent posture. In acting separately from the recognized organs of the profession and not including them actively in the formation or administration of his policies, Roosevelt not only alienated a group that remained constantly suspicious of federal encroachment on sacred turf but one whose active assistance would have been necessary to any continuing federal program and in the formulation of effective long-term policies. Roosevelt appears to have been interested in preventing just such a development. He never proposed that education become a continuing part of federal activity nor did he envision a larger, more aggressive role for the Office of Education, and certainly no place for a Department of Education in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt ignored the NEA, not from neglect but with conscious intent. And, for political reasons and because of his personal beliefs, he opposed continuous federal aid for education, which the NEA had adopted as part of its platform for educational revitalization. As a result, the profession had no reason to see the federal government as anything other than an antagonist. While the New Deal had injected the federal government into the educational arena, and while some individuals such as Hopkins and Williams had begun to envision a new federal leadership in education, the New Deal had not developed either a long-term program for directed federal aid nor enlisted the aid of education professionals and rank-and-file educators with a commitment to and stake in the innovations implied in the new federal participation.

IV

The Depression provided the NEA and the New Dealers with radically different lessons. For the educational establishment, the Depression emphasized the basic need for federal assistance to shore up an antiquated and inadequate financial structure that underlay what they believed to be a sound locally rooted educational enterprise. The New Deal programs had responded to human miseries and needs, primarily for bread, but eventually for literacy, skills, and other forms of learning. The relief efforts uncovered vast inequities not only in local abilities to fund education but in Americans' ability to afford to be educated and in their access to the education they needed. This was quite clear

in the case of blacks, but it was also obvious from the experience of students aided by the NYA, laborers in WPA projects, and nursery school children.

The Depression thus generated two quite distinct and irreconcilable sets of perceptions. On the one hand, it sharpened the views already contained in the 1931 National Advisory Committee report and reaffirmed by the NEA, which called for federal aid with no active, independent federal participation in education. On the other hand, it produced a keen understanding of inequities which only federal activism could remedy, and which, for some New Dealers, such as Williams and Hopkins, resulted in a new vision of an aggressive federal leadership in a new educational democracy.

Just as the 1931 National Advisory Committee report provides a convenient statement of pre-New Deal views, its successor, published just seven years later, allows us an unusually effective perspective on the possibilities and limits of federal participation opened up by the New Deal. Although the new committee's report was never adopted by either Roosevelt or his immediate successors, it is significant to us because it articulated a new vision of federal responsibility for education and a new ideology of equal educational opportunity that incorporated the New Deal's ad hoc experiences. The 1938 report provides a striking contrast to that of the 1931 National Advisory Committee. The composition of the 1938 committee was very different from Hoover's. Significantly, educators were now in the minority, their places taken by a kind of Rooseveltian coalition among labor, government, agriculture, and industry (Reeves 1937, p. 29). This personnel profile anticipated the new, more comprehensive conception of education as a necessary part of a functioning society that the report would adopt. The committee report and its 21 staff studies were based on an exhaustive set of investigations of various aspects of American education, as well as investigations geared to defining the legal precedents for federal aid and possible financial aid formulas. These were conducted by a staff of 99 researchers and advisers. A number of the staff reports summarized the educational results and implications of several New Deal relief agencies, thus at once evaluating and legitimating these new educational endeavors.

From the outset, the committee report adopted a broad perspective on education, noting that the schools had become the most important educational agency in modern city-centered society, eclipsing community, church, and family. According to the report, children needed and the schools had to provide new social and welfare services that would assume the burden of socialization once carried by a closely integrated network of family and community agencies. Educators had

said this often enough before, but the report must be compared not with the usual rhetoric of educators but with the modesty and local community orientation of the 1931 report, which described schools as part of, not a substitute for, the richly democratic life of small communities. Where the earlier report emphasized how the schools were an extension and product of that local democracy, the new report proposed that the schools provide a means for bringing it about. The report noted that many of these new social services had been provided through various agencies of the New Deal and concluded that the time had arrived for a continuing commitment to "improved educational services for all children. The American people are committed to the principle that all of the children of this country, regardless of economic status, race, or place of residence, are entitled to an equitable opportunity to obtain a suitable education. . . . The principle has never been fully realized in practice. There is now no reason why it cannot be, and it is time that it should be." The benefits of localism as the primary context of democratic schooling had given way to a new imperative for national goals for the education of all of America's children, and we can already hear the early strains of "entitlement" arguments with which the 1960s and 1970s have made us familiar. Finally, the report noted, "The Committee is convinced that the Federal Government must continue and expand its efforts, to improve and enlarge the social services, including education, and that it must exercise a large measure of constructive national leadership, because in no other agency can representative national leadership be vested" (USACE 1938, pp. 4–5).Thus the federal government had the obligation to provide for and protect the legitimate rights of its citizens in various areas, including education. The document is in fact dotted with forceful statements of this kind: "If the educational programs of local communities and states could and would accomplish all of the purposes that are vital to the nation as a whole, the Federal government would not need to participate in education. Past Federal participation in education has been necessitated by the fact that local programs never have been adequate to accomplish all vital national purposes"; "Education can be made a force to equalize the conditions of men. It is no less true that it may be a force to create class, race, and sectional distinctions" (USACE 1938, pp. 38, 33). The report thus not only raises the principle of entitlement; it describes education as a force that can and should be used as an instrument to encourage social equality.

And yet, in the context of the trumpeting of enlarged principles and objectives, the report shows the strains of the mixed New Deal experience whose innovations were at once radical and limited. Those limitations were the result of the New Deal's failure to develop a long-

term program for federal action, a concrete set of objectives, or a challenge to the traditional local basis of school control and administration. Roosevelt hoped his programs would serve their purpose and evaporate. In fact, however, they generated new ideals and possibilities. At the same time, they produced neither effective policies of a strictly educational kind, nor a new professional educational leadership, nor machinery for turning the principles implicitly emerging from New Deal experience into policy. The tension is reflected in the report, which ineffectively knits together new ideals with old procedures: enlarged federal responsibilities with an almost exclusive dependence on local school administration and state distribution formulas. Those limitations make the report a less than completely convincing document of the possibilities of federal leadership in education. In the end, the report short-circuits its radical new vision by concluding not that the schools had been inadequate but that their financial structures were inefficient: "The major reason for the great inequalities in educational opportunity is the manner in which financial support is provided for the public schools. . . . If every locality were equally provided with taxable resources in education, there would be little need for Federal participation in the financial support of education" (USACE 1938, pp. 19, 39). The spirit, they implied, was willing, but the purse was weak.

In fact, this conclusion flew in the face of some of the evidence, especially that provided by Doxey Wilkerson in a detailed study of the state of black education in segregated school systems. The inequalities in facilities, the disparities in funding and teachers' salaries, the blatant discrimination against blacks and black schools in segregated states could not be defined as good faith inefficiently underwritten. And the New Deal programs had, as we have seen, uncovered the special need of blacks in ways that could not be ignored if the federal government was to exercise real leadership. The response of the committee, however, was not to call for special aid for black education or for new federally administered programs; it was to make each of the elements of the federal funding program (divided by goals such as teacher education, adult education, vocational education, apprenticeship training, etc.) contingent on "an equitable distribution of the Federal grants between white and negro schools" (USACE 1938, p. 49). This proviso was repeated throughout the recommendations made by the committee, which, by prohibiting a reduction in state and local funding when federal funds were received, further protected Negro schools. The recommendations of the committee were much more far-reaching and much more specific than those of the 1931 report, defining a host of target areas for appropriations in addition to the general fund and making each of them contingent on equitable allocations to black

schools, and on other provisos to which I will return. It is in the context of this much expanded view of federal obligation that the statements about equal opportunity for blacks must be placed. Blacks were to get their fair share of each of the allocated funds, but the report did not call for equal education for blacks (which was obvious from its acceptance of segregated schools), and not even for equal though separate facilities. The demand was restricted to equal distribution of federal funds and a maintenance of contemporary levels of state and local appropriations. In other words, the federal government was not to correct the fundamental inequalities, but it would assist in improving education for blacks, commensurate with the improvement offered to education in general.

The New Deal's mixed legacy for blacks is nowhere clearer than in this report, which was so much a product of New Deal experience. The Roosevelt administration raised the issue of inequality to national consciousness and made it central to any federal aid to education, but it never fundamentally challenged the traditional institutional matrix within which this inequality functioned. The New Deal had not questioned segregated school, as it had not challenged segregated CCC units. Certainly, this was based, in part, on political considerations, since Roosevelt had always to act with a careful eye to the support of southern Democrats. But it also resulted from the pragmatic manner in which New Deal perspectives had evolved and the fact that the New Deal experience had generated principles without policies, goals without long-term implementing procedures. Its goals for education as part of an enlarged commitment to social welfare were large, but its procedures were ultimately limited to small measures such as an "equitable allocation" of federal funds.

This was, in fact, the limitation of the report throughout, and it illustrates both the strength and weakness of New Deal educational activities. The New Deal projected the federal government into a new educational orbit, but its measures, tied to economic relief, were meant to be temporary, so that after the Depression the nation could return to "normal" operations. In the long run, the only permanent machinery available for education were the existing state and local agencies. The New Deal had created no permanent federal agencies with a continuing educational outlook and policies that were intended to outlive the emergency. Moreover, as we have seen, the New Deal had done nothing to assuage the profession's fears about the dangers of federally sponsored education programs. Little wonder that the advisory committee fell back on local administration. The one exception to this was the committee's recommendation that the CCC and NYA be retained and newly coordinated in a National Youth Services Administration, to be

run as a separate agency under the auspices of "a department including public health, education and welfare, if such a department should be established" (USACE 1938, pp. 209–10). Here the New Deal agencies provided a direct precedent for a new program and an alternative means of administration.

Thus the report tried to bridge the old and the new, and to effect the larger educational purposes to which it committed the federal government it provided the government with considerable muscle. The federal government could withhold money if certain conditions for funds were not met. These terms included not only the already noted "equitable distribution" clauses for black institutions but also the provision that certain kinds of aid—school books, transportation, and scholarships—be made available to children in private (including parochial) as well as public schools. This, too, was a noteworthy departure, based on the principle that the federal government issued these funds to individuals, not to schools, a view heavily influenced by New Deal experience. Another recommendation permitted the federal government to withhold funds for school buildings if rural districts did not proceed with consolidation projects; and yet another required that the state establish special departments through which funds would be channeled and which would be responsible for overseeing proper expenditure and reporting. The committee thus took seriously its belief that the federal government had an obligation to assist in the education of all its citizens and that it also had a responsibility to see that the funds were actually used for that purpose.

In the end, despite its limitations, the report of the advisory committee provides a striking contrast to its predecessor. For the 1938 committee, education had become a national responsibility not only because many local school districts were poor but because the education they provided was weak, limited, and unequal. The federal government's role was therefore to provide financial assistance not simply to remedy the districts' poverty as the 1931 committee had proposed but to rectify this situation. In contrast to the recommendations of the 1931 committee, which rejected special education grants, the 1938 committee sought to use money for very specific purposes: to improve vocational training, to improve teacher training, to make textbooks free and available to all, to provide transportation, to permit college students to continue their education despite family poverty, to consolidate and enrich rural schools, and to strengthen black schools. Although Roosevelt had hoped to return the nation to a situation that existed in education in pre-Depression days, the committee he appointed incorporated the experience of his emergency administration to propose a profound alteration in the federal government's relation to education. For the

committee, the Depression had brought the federal government face to face with the underlying defects of American schools and made it clear that the federal government could do something about these.

V

While the Depression changed the relationship of the federal government to education, it did so in ironic and problematic ways. The New Deal had operated without a sense of the future. Its discoveries about education and the goals it pursued came in the course of experience. At no time did Roosevelt seek to anchor his educational programs in long-term commitments or in a central bureaucracy with clear aims and enforcement procedures. Roosevelt never intended to challenge the traditional principle of local control. He never even supported federal aid to education. The National Education Association never revised its views about the role of the federal government in education and continued to seek general assistance without federal supervision. The way the New Deal operated, by providing temporary alternative channels of educational opportunity, without the active assistance of the educational establishment and without developing a vested central educational bureaucracy, meant that it could not institutionalize its revised perceptions of federal obligations or produce a vested professional interest in innovative approaches.

The New Deal thus had a profound effect on principles, but it left no immediate instrumental legacy. Its very real strengths—experimentalism, freedom from rigid central directives, the ability to innovate by allowing agencies wide discretion, as at the NYA, and the ability to create programs as it went along to suit the needs of its clients, as at the CCC—were also its greatest weakness. The New Deal could be innovative because it was unencumbered by a bureaucracy that would have enforced regularity, would have required the approval of the southern congressional bloc, and most likely would have been dominated by a generally conservative profession. As a result, however, the New Deal was unable to leave to the future any continuing educational programs, personnel, or agencies. The experiments in education were effectively over when, one by one between 1939 and 1942, the Depression agencies—WPA, CCC, NYA—were reduced and disbanded. The war, the accompanying renewal of prosperity, an increasingly recalcitrant Congress, and the strengthening opposition of the NEA and the Office of Education to educational programs operating outside of "normal" channels together turned the New Deal programs into temporary experiments of an emerging welfare state. Although the New Deal

programs were thus no more than an educational flash in the pan, the experience nevertheless changed the meaning and nature of all future discussions about the federal government and education. The New Deal had changed perceptions of the nature of educational deprivation and the role of education for national prosperity and the welfare of the people. By redefining equal educational opportunity, the New Deal recast the nature of federal responsibility in terms of the right Americans possessed in education. And finally, the New Deal itself would serve as a precedent and reservoir of ideas in the 1960s and beyond.

Notes

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1. For a general introduction to pre-New Deal federal legislation see Zeitlin (1958, chap. 1); also Covert (1938). Zeitlin is the best general introduction to New Deal education activities.

2. Part 2 of the committee report (USNACE 1931*a*) provides a detailed summary of the state of education.

3. See, e.g., the statement by George Drayton Strayer (1933, pp. 581–89). See also Rippa (1962, pp. 76–82).

4. For a summary of expenditures on various programs and projects directed by the WPA, see Campbell et al. (1939, pp. 29–31, 44). For a summary of the NYA's expenditures, see Johnson and Harvey (1938, pp. 28, 44).

5. See, e.g., Marsh (1934, p. 222).

6. According to George Rawick, the Office of Education was actively hostile to the NYA; by 1938 it was campaigning to destroy the agency. In 1940, the Office of Education was given some role in its vocational education program, and very soon thereafter, the office absorbed large portions of its defense industry training program. By then the NYA had been effectively destroyed as a New Deal agency (Rawick 1957, pp. 252–61).

7. For a chart of responsibilities in administration, see Johnson and Harvey (1938, p. 10).

8. See also Zeitlin (1958, pp. 295–98) for a discussion of NEA's resentment of Roosevelt's handling of the NYA.

9. Hopkins's statement is reprinted in Zeitlin (1958, pp. 348–52).

10. For the state of professional education for blacks in segregated systems, see Wilkerson (1939, pp. 65–69).

11. The NEA tried repeatedly to awaken the president's interest and to suggest their distress at his inattention to their concerns (see Zeitlin 1958, pp. 289–304). In 1938 the NEA presented Eleanor Roosevelt, the president's

wife, with a life membership key to the association (see *NEA Proceedings* 1938, p. 122).

12. According to a report by John K. Norton (1934, p. 36), "An investigation just completed for the Joint Commission on the Emergency in Education reveals that no less than four hundred educational committees and commissions have recently prepared reports or are now conducting investigations, which are pertinent in planning educational recovery and reconstruction." Norton also reported that there was now available a "Directory of National Deliberative Committees on Education." Of course, not all of these were NEA organized or directed, but the number tells us something about the alarm within the educational community.

13. See, e.g., his staff report (Mort et al., 1939).

14. For the NEA's six-point program for emergency relief, see Rule (1934, pp. 43–47).

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