

Dr. Allen Says Partisan Restraints Interfered With His Duties

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 11

Dr. James E. Allen Jr., who was forced to resign yesterday as the Government's chief education official, declared today that the partisan constraints placed on him by the Nixon Administration had made it impossible for him to administer the Federal education bureaucracy properly.

In a wide-ranging news conference in which he spoke calmly and in a tone of resolution rather than bitterness, Dr. Allen also charged the Administration with a lack of commitment to the complete desegregation of schools and a failure to treat students as adults.

He said that Robert H. Finch, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, gave him no reasons yesterday for demanding his resignation as Commissioner of Education and Assistant Secretary of H.E.W.

"All he said was that he had been directed to seek my resignation," Dr. Allen declared.

Asked who he thought had "directed" Mr. Finch, who is soon to join the White House staff, Dr. Allen replied: "I was appointed by the President and served at the President's pleasure."

He said that his feeling was that he had been dismissed because "my position in some matters, such as desegregation

and the statement I made on the impact of the Cambodia decision on the education system were not in line with the thinking at the White House."

Ronald L. Ziegler, the President's press secretary, said that Mr. Finch had recommended that Dr. Allen be asked to leave, and that the President concurred.

Mr. Ziegler said that Mr. Nixon had been "generally disappointed" with the education commissioner and concerned with the "administration and effectiveness" of the Office of Education "in the past 18 months."

Dr. Allen's statement last month questioning the Cambodia operation was not "directly" a factor in the President's decision to dismiss him, Mr. Ziegler said.

He said that Mr. Nixon was particularly "disappointed" in the progress of the "right to read" program, which was Dr. Allen's principal innovation in national education policy after he joined the Nixon Administration in May, 1969.

At Dr. Allen's initiative, the Administration proclaimed last fall a national goal that by the end of the 1970's all children would be reading properly.

Dr. Allen noted today that nine months after the President had still not appointed the National Council on Reading,

which was to develop new reading programs.

But Dr. Allen's chief complaint was that he had never been able to fill positions on his staff, as time and again the men he suggested as deputies and assistants were rejected by the Administration because of political considerations.

Dr. Allen never had a deputy commissioner, the person who traditionally handles the day-to-day management of the education office, and four high-level positions in the office are now vacant.

He chafed at the suggestions by the White House and aides in the department that he was a poor administrator.

"I administer an agency in New York State that was larger than the Office of Education, and I did pretty well," he said, referring to his 13 years as State commissioner in Albany. At that time he gained a reputation as the most knowledgeable man in the country on relationship between government and education.

When he complained to Secretary Finch about his staff problems, Dr. Allen said, Mr. Finch told him: "This is a fact of life in Washington."

But Dr. Allen did not blame Mr. Finch for his difficulties. "I had good support from the Secretary," he said. "He has been friendly, and he has en-

dorsed my pleas for more money."

If the Office of Education is to exercise a role of leadership in the education community, Dr. Allen said, "some steps must be taken to remove it from partisan politics."

A registered Republican and professional educator, Dr. Allen served under both Democratic and Republican Governors of New York. He laughed when he said that he was a Republican and noted that newspapers had for years been identifying him incorrectly as a Democrat.

He said that his other major disagreement with Administration policy was over desegregation. "I do not believe," he said, "that there was the commitment that I had for moving toward total desegregation of schools." He continued: "I think this is the most crucial issue of this century. It makes no difference if we win wars if we can't solve the problem of racial discrimination."

"I see this as an education issue. I think the Administration sees it as a legal issue."

Dr. Allen said that he was pleased with the Administration's decision to spend \$1.5-billion for desegregating schools.

Also, he denied reports that he had advised spending the money on improving the programs in segregated schools. But noting President Nixon's

decision not to move against schools segregated because of housing patterns unless he was required by the courts to do so, Dr. Allen said:

"The Administration's concern is with meeting the minimum requirements of the Civil Rights Act. My commitment is that desegregation is a basic education necessity, and that the Administration should take more steps to accomplish it."

He also charged that education was given too little priority within the Government. He said that he had written a letter to President Nixon last month arguing for more money for education in the new budget and saying: "I cannot continue for a third fiscal year to support what I consider to be an insufficient commitment to education in 'no plans' for an imminent job. Asked whether he had been offered the job of Chancellor of Education in New York City, he replied: 'I have not been offered the job, and I cannot imagine being interested.'"

Several education organizations here issued statements today condemning Dr. Allen's dismissal and the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee praised his "service to American education and the young people of the nation."