

PRESIDENT SIGNS SCHOOL AID BILL; SCORES CONGRESS

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Terms Rejection of Stricter
Limit on Busing a 'Retreat
From Responsibility'

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By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.

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WASHINGTON, June 23—

President Nixon signed today a bill making major innovations in Federal aid to higher education but sharply criticized Congress for not having provided strict and uniform limits on school busing.

In a statement issued shortly after he signed the measure, Mr. Nixon described the bill's antibusing provisions as far less effective than his proposals. His aides left little doubt he intended to carry the issue into the fall campaign.

"Confronted with one of the burning social issues of the past decade and an unequivocal call for action from the vast majority of the American people, the 92d Congress has apparently determined that the better part of valor is to dump the matter into the lap of the 93d," Mr. Nixon said.

'Congressional Retreat'

"Not in the course of this Administration has there been a more manifest Congressional retreat from an urgent call for responsibility."

John D. Ehrlichman, the President's senior adviser on domestic affairs, said later at a news conference that Mr. Nixon still hoped Congress would act on the Administration's antibusing proposals. He said that if Congress did not do so, the President would "go to the people" during the campaign to attempt to rally support for a constitutional amendment.

The President devoted more than half of his message to the busing issue, though the antibusing provisions constitute a fraction of the complex education bill.

Principals of U.S. Aid

Regarded in some quarters as a landmark piece of legislation, the bill would establish three principles of Federal aid that could have a major impact on colleges and universities:

¶For the first time, the bill would provide nearly every institution of higher learning with Federal money that the schools could use as they wished.

¶The legislation would establish, as a matter of national policy, that every college student who could not afford the cost of his education would get some financial help from the Federal Government.

The bill would take Federal assistance away from any graduate school or public undergraduate college that discriminated against women in its admissions policies.

In addition, the measure contains Mr. Nixon's proposal to provide \$2-billion over the next two years to help communities that are in the process of desegregating their grade schools and high schools, his plan to create a National Institute of Education to conduct and coordinate basic and applied educational research, and his pro-

Continued on Page 15, Column 5

PRESIDENT SIGNS SCHOOL AID BILL

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

posal to establish a new National Student Loan Association. The association would purchase existing student loans from banks, thus providing the banks with fresh capital to make new loans.

The cost of the bill is estimated at more than \$20-billion, although the funds must still be provided for in separate appropriations. A major cost item is the new Federal scholarship programs, which would provide Basic Educational Opportunity Grants to needy students.

\$1,400 a Student

The maximum grant would be \$1,400 a student, although each student would be geared to a sliding scale based on the size of the student's family and income. The total grant could not exceed one-half of the cost of attending college, but the measure also authorizes other grant and loan programs to help the student make up all or part of the difference.

However, the busing issue dominated the President's statement, much as it had the debate in the House and Senate.

Mr. Nixon said Congress had provided neither clarification, guidance, nor relief on the busing issue.

"Congress has not given us the answer we requested," he said. "It has given us rhetoric. It has not provided a solution to the problem of court-ordered busing; it has provided a clever political evasion. The moratorium it offers is temporary; the relief it provides is illusory."

In its final form, the bill delays the implementation of court orders requiring busing "for the purpose of achieving a balance among students with respect to race" until all appeals have been exhausted, or until Jan. 1, 1974.

Mr. Nixon's original proposal

would have imposed a "moratorium," or flat prohibition, on any further court-ordered busing plans until the middle of 1973. Mr. Nixon's moratorium would also have applied to all busing decisions, rather than busing orders—in the language of the bill—aimed at "achieving a balance among students with a respect to race."

Mr. Nixon's aides believe this is an important distinction; they feel a judge could order busing but deny any intent to achieve precise racial balance.

The measure "applies only to certain kinds of orders," Mr. Nixon said in his statement.

"An adroit order-drafter may be able to prevent any effective application of this law," he added.

Representative Carl D. Perkins, chairman of the House-Senate conference committee that shaped the final bill, disagreed strongly on this point.

"The busing provisions will bring uniformity of legal procedures on this issue for the first time," the Kentucky Democrat said.

"He [Mr. Nixon] just wants to keep the busing issue alive. He played politics with it as far as he could and he's still trying to keep it up."

Mr. Nixon also took exception to Congress's failure to draw uniform national guidelines for school busing to guide the courts in their decisions after the moratorium on new busing expired in 1973.

Mr. Nixon had proposed a series of guidelines as part of his original plan. They would have limited the degree of court-ordered busing for grade school children and allowed districts that are now required to bus children "far in excess of reasonable standards" to seek relief.