

U.S. Education Staff Vacancies Laid t

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WASHINGTON, May 28—By the end of June, four of the six top staff positions in the United States Office of Education will be vacant. This development is viewed within the office partly as a symptom of widespread frustration over these matters:

¶The Nixon Administration's apparent reluctance to expand beyond their initial, limited scope the Federal education programs enacted during the Johnson Administration—programs that were conceived and nurtured within the Office of Education.

¶A reduced role for the office in shaping new Federal education policies.

¶A feeling among some staff members that they are not being listened to even within their own agency.

The latest announced departures were those of James J. Gallagher, deputy assistant commissioner for planning, research and evaluation; Grant Venn, associate commissioner for adult, vocational and technical education, and B. Alden Lillywhite, associate commissioner for elementary and secondary education.

No. 2 Job Vacant

The No. 2 spot in the office, that of deputy to the commissioner, Dr. James E. Allen Jr., has been vacant for some time.

Dr. Allen originally wanted to appoint to the position Peter P. Muirhead, a Democrat who had helped devise the Great Society education programs of the Johnson Administration, but the commissioner was rebuffed by the White House. Mr. Muirhead now heads the Bureau of Higher Education.

Mr. Lillywhite is retiring as of June 26. He said in an interview today that he had no complaints.

Mr. Venn, who is resigning as of June 30, said he was doing so because he no longer felt he had any "input" into decisions.

"You don't expect to win, always," he said, "but you do expect to be in the game."

Mr. Gallagher is saving his comments for a statement when he leaves June 13. But it is widely known that he is frustrated by what he perceives to be his inability to influence the office's direction.

Moynihan, counselor to the President, and his staff.

"It's his [Mr. Moynihan's] boys who moved in on us, no question about it," said a pre-Nixon staff member who asked not to be identified.

Some of those interviewed believe that Dr. Allen's public opposition to the Administration on some issues — for example, the military move into Cambodia — has reduced the influence of the office. They think this will be true at least as long as Mr. Allen is commissioner.

President Nixon is known to be angry at Dr. Allen's statement on Cambodia, and many in the office are convinced that the commissioner's days are numbered.

Dr. Allen said today in an interview that no anger had been conveyed from the White House to him, that he remained able to see the President and that he did not contemplate resigning.

He maintained that many of the features of the President's basic messages on higher education had originated with him or his office and that with one or two exceptions, all his recommendations had been accepted.

The commissioner indicated that the necessity of his having to function without a deputy had perhaps had an effect on the internal administration of his office and that other pre-occupations had kept him from trying to fill vacancies.