

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 17, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

As you consider possible candidates for Commissioner of Education, you may want to think about appointing a 'civilian' instead of a professional educator. A young, able, creative lawyer, economist or businessman of the caliber of a Dick Nathan or Lew Butler might serve your interests far better than another tired and captive educationist. And it may be time to establish a new principle of 'civilian control' of the professional educators.

As you know, the Commissioner of Education has traditionally been the education community's spokesman in Washington as well as the President's chief educator. This dual role may now be incompatible with our wish to reform the education system; one who sees himself as speaking for the educators cannot do a vigorous job of reforming them. Moreover, for the first time in history, the education community seems to have organized its own autonomous--and highly effective--Washington lobby group, another reason why the Commissioner should be your man instead of their's.

I come to this suggestion in part because I cannot think of a single truly distinguished educator who could pass muster. There are, to be sure, a few university presidents who could do the job, but the great need at the Office of Education is for someone who wants to make elementary and secondary schools succeed, and yet who brings the proper degree of skepticism to the educational cliches of the past.

Were you to appoint a 'civilian', you would assuredly not please the professional educators, who are accustomed to having one of their own as Commissioner. And yet, since there is no one you could appoint who would truly please them--they having long since persuaded themselves that anything you do in the field of education must be wrong--there may be nothing lost in provoking them further. Indeed, it might just shake them up and persuade them that you were serious about reform.

Another consideration is the morale within the Office of Education itself which, as you know, is very poor. Although at first the career educators over there might resent a "civilian" boss, if he were good enough he could win them over and begin to produce the amount of high quality work that we should expect from 3000 employees.

An alternative approach would be to split the Commissioner of Education's job from that of the Assistant Secretary for Education, possibly giving the former to an educator and the latter to a 'civilian'. My own sense of the matter is that this might build in unnecessary conflict and that the two jobs should, if possible, continue to be vested in a single man.

Incidentally, many of these same considerations would also apply to the top health job at H.E.W. You might want to consider a 'civilian' there, too, at such time as a vacancy arises.

I would, of course, be happy to take this up with Elliot Richardson if you think it appropriate.



Daniel P. Moynihan

