

## Preface

I suspect that the Government of the United States is both the forest and the trees, and that we are the forest. And I begin to believe that nobody, including the dullest scholars of the theoretical unrealities, the doctrinaires and the disenchanteds, can write about it except as an autobiographical enterprise.

—Jonathan Daniels

Many are the books written by men and women who have left the service of the national government. Presidents and diplomats have penned their memoirs; congressmen and senators have accounted for their work in the formulation of legislation; and cabinet officers and their aides have analyzed their roles in the shaping of public policy. Yet of the vast outpouring of such writings, few are the work of career-appointment civil servants. This book is one.

It results from my five-year experience as chief planning officer for the library programs administered by the Office of Education in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Two options were open to me in writing this book. I could have presented a personal record of my experience and in so doing conveyed not only the many instructive and rewarding aspects of the post but also its undeniable frustrations and disappointments. Such a course might have proved useful, and often easier, since I am inclined to agree with Jonathan Daniels that the best approach to writing about the government is to experience it.

It is difficult for a reader, however, to derive generalized concepts from an account rendered primarily in personal terms. For that reason I have cast these pages as a study in public administration, seeking to place certain actions of the government affecting the library legislation within a framework of political philosophies that affected and continue to affect federal support of public education in general. Two of these that have been singled out for special attention are the equalization of educational opportunity and fiscal federalism.

I am at pains to explain this since one or two of the kindly critics who have read these chapters before publication have wondered why

the administration of this or any other president could not simply establish policies for library support distinct from those affecting public schools or institutions of higher learning. I wish there were a simple way to respond to their inquiries, but I have found none.

Historically the library interest in this country has been linked to the concerns of public education. Had the United States formed the kind of cultural ministry characteristic of many European countries, this need not have been the case. Lacking such a ministry, the United States has over the years gathered together in its national house of education a number of programs affecting not only the education but also the cultural life of its citizens, whether or not of school age. Hence, the library programs, like those for public broadcasting or adult education, are periodically analyzed in terms of their responsiveness to the general educational philosophies of the administration then in power.

Part of the burden of this book was to identify the nature of these philosophies and then examine the relevance of the library legislation to them. Indeed, the principal theme of the book is the relationship of the library legislation to the total picture of federal support for education, at least as perceived by officers of the executive branch. The identification of their perceptions is a factor which is almost totally missing in most of the contemporary writings about federal library legislation. To use Daniels's analogy, I have tried to provide the reader some view of the whole forest, and not leave him stranded, staring at the base of the tree.

It is my hope that the book will not be viewed as constituting my personal views about the need for a further federal role in support of libraries, but rather as a reflection of a perceptive observer of the Washington bureaucratic scene. Had I believed honestly in my continued usefulness as a participant in that bureaucracy, I would neither have resigned my post, nor would this book ever have been written.

Grants from the Institute for Urban Studies of the University of Houston and from the Council on Library Resources permitted me almost a year's respite from other duties to do a major part of the re-

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search and the writing. I am indebted to both for their generous support. I am also grateful for the comments that readers of the typescript have sent me, as well as for the encouragement lent me by a number of professional colleagues.

To the dedicatee, who has not only heard it all on a week-by-week basis but has also waded through the typescript on more than one occasion, I owe, as always, more than I can repay.

Redmond Kathleen Molz