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Curran, Edward: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1985): News Article 02

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The differences between the House version and that adopted by the Republican-controlled Senate several weeks ago were

Office, the House resolution would require
Congress to make changes in the Guaranteed Student Loan program that would

Bell Fires Controversial NIE Chief for Urging Agency's Abolition

WASHINGTON

Edward A. Curran, the controversial director of the National Institute of Education, has been forced to resign after holding the office for less than nine months.

Administration sources said his resignation had been requested by Education Secretary Terrel H. Bell because Mr. Curran had written to the White House recommending the abolition of his agency, the education-research arm of the Department of Education.

Mr. Curran could not be reached for comment, but other Administration sources, who asked not to be named, said Secretary Bell had fought to preserve the research agency and considered Mr. Curran's action "insubordination."

Before the release of the President's fiscal 1983 budget request in February, the sources said, Secretary Bell fended off proposals by other Administration officials to eliminate the N.I.E.

And in defending the Administration's proposal to dismantle the Department of Education and replace it with a smaller education foundation, Secretary Bell has argued that supporting research should be a key function of the new agency.

Before being sworn in as director of the education institute, Mr. Curran was associate director of the White House personnel office. He also worked on Ronald Rea-

Since taking on the job as director of the N.I.E. last October, Mr. Curran has been surrounded by controversy. His efforts to add new people to the panels that review N.I.E. grant applications were regarded by some educators and staff members of the agency as an attempt to politicize the peer-review process. Mr. Curran's aides have denied charges that the new reviewers were chosen on the basis of their conservative political credentials.

He also drew fire with plans to revise the agency's research agenda to emphasize excellence in education and what he called "freedom issues," such as tuition tax credits and education vouchers. Some educators charged that the new research priorities reflected a conservative political agenda rather than the concerns of educators in the field.

"The agenda he outlined suggested a set of biases that were very far over on the right," said William G. Monahan, dean of the college of human resources and education at West Virginia University. Mr. Monahan noted, for example, that an early draft of an N.I.E. research plan had suggested studies of the effects on children's learning when their mothers hold full-time jobs.

Mr. Curran also was criticized for pushing a plan to terminate, one year early, the...
The impact of Title IX on athletics—substantial progress, but no lack of problems remaining—reflects its effects in other areas, say women’s leaders who have monitored the application of the law.

Overd Discrimination Gone

"When I look back at the situation prior to Title IX and compare it to today, it’s clear that some areas have changed a lot and some hardly at all," said Bernice R. Sandler, director of the Project on the Status and Education of Women at the Association of American Colleges. The project, established in 1971, has published extensive analyses of Title IX, its impact, and the government’s enforcement of the law.

The most overt discrimination is gone now," Ms. Sandler said. "Women can join the faculty clubs at all institutions, the nepotism policies have been abandoned, institutions recruit more women, and there is now someone or some office on campus that will respond to issues of sex discrimination against women, even if these offices or individuals sometimes don’t have much power or aren’t as effective as they might be.

"I also think there are many differences in attitude. People realize there has been discrimination. When Mrs. Greeley held her hearings, there were no witnesses from higher-education institutions, only up to 10 per cent.

"Women faculty members still don’t move ahead in the same speed as men, and there are salary discrepancies at every institution, at every level, in every discipline"—disparities that remain even when one allows for such variables as years of experience and the type and quality of doctoral training.

A recent survey by the National Center for Education Statistics found that female faculty members earned an average of $4,835 less per year than male faculty members.

"The more prestigious the position on campus, the harder it is for women to advance," Ms. Sandler said. For example, it was easier to change undergraduate admissions than it has been to get women appointed college presidents. One of the beauties of Title IX, though, has been that most changes due to the law did not come about because of the investigators on campus, since less than 1 per cent of all institutions ever have seen an investigator.

"A lot of things happened because women raised questions about some practice and it was quickly changed—-for example, the old practice at some colleges of dragging most service in men’s dorms but not in women’s, even though women paid the same fees for room and board.

"Once the law was on the books, women could say that something was unfair, but they could also say that it was illegal too."

But, Ms. Sandler noted, "the hardest things for Title IX to deal with are doing it or not.

This can include calling on male students more often in class, cutting women off when they’re making a comment, giving female students less guidance or criticism, and favoring men in choosing student assistants.

Overtly demeaning or patronizing comments by faculty members are still reported by many female students, and female students and faculty members are calling increasing attention to incidents of sexual harassment. Some studies have reported that up to 20 per cent of female students feel they have been subjected to harassment or sexual innuendo.

Title IX has been interpreted by the Office for Civil Rights as barring sexual harassment, and the agency has determined that harassment has occurred at a number of institutions.

Worries About the Future

Even with the sweeping changes of the past decade, supporters of Title IX are concerned about its future.

A recent ruling by the Supreme Court, holding that Title IX applies to employees of educational institutions as well as to students, clears up a major problem ever since it was enacted by Congress in 1972.

"The most important thing is that the Supreme Court has held that Title IX applies to both students and faculty. This is a major victory for women.”

Some institutions are challenging the law’s application to bias complaints. One court that has ruled in favor of Title IX is that federal dollars. And women’s groups are considering legal action to protect women’s rights.

Women and Girls in Education countered that Title IX imposes no reporting or record-keeping requirements, although a college would have to produce existing personnel and salary records, for example, if the Office for Civil Rights investigated a job-bias complaint.

Women’s groups also are concerned because Vice-President Bush’s Task Force on Education and National Security, chaired by James Baker, vice-chairman of the coalition, sexual harassment and continuing inequities in athletic budgets and faculty salaries all demonstrate "a compelling need for a strong federal policy to assure that the momentum begun by Title IX continues through the next decade and beyond.

NIE Chief Fired

Continued from Preceding Page

Robert W. Sweet, Jr., former deputy director of the institute, has been named acting director.

Mr. Curran is the second top official in the Department of Education to be asked to resign in the last three months. In April, William C. Cohan, Jr., was forced from his post as Under Secretary of Education, reportedly because of pressure from conservative groups who regarded him as too liberal.

Earlier two other top officials—the former Deputy Under Secretary for management and the Assistant Secretary for elementary and secondary education—left the department for other jobs. —Janet Hoot

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