Governor's Committee Probes Texas Education

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In a number of ways, higher education in Texas does not measure up well to national standards. Although Texas ranks sixth in the nation in population, third in total school enrollment, and fourth in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded, it is only twelfth in the number of PhD degrees awarded.

In terms of quality of education, thirty-six states spend a greater percentage of their state budget on higher education than Texas does, and thirty-four states have a higher per capita income.

Faced with the problem of increasing urbanization and industrialization, Texas Governor John Connally established a Committee on Education Beyond the High School to seek out ways for Texas to improve the standards of its state-supported higher education. The committee was composed of 25 members, including junior and senior college presidents, university presidents and chancellors, and 19 individuals from various professions and industries.

Committee Report

In August, 1964, the Committee released the report of their one and one-half years' study. Using the report made by the Committee, Governor Connally proposed his plan on December 17, 1964, in his two-year budget announcement of $3.6 billion. He asked for $1.7 billion for education and a new co-ordinating board with greater policy-making authority than the present Commission on Higher Education.

Included in his proposals was a re-organization of state-supported colleges and universities into three "super systems" which would control the twenty-three state-supported schools.

New Systems

The systems were tentatively identified as the University of Texas System, with U.T. and the University of Houston as major components; the Texas State University System, which would be dominated by Texas A&M and Texas Tech; and the State Senior College System, including nine of the state's small and medium-sized schools. The governor's proposals are now being considered by the state legislature.

In spite of criticism that the governor's Committee was dominated by business and industry, that it lacked any professors among its members, and that it was "administration" oriented, the governor's proposals have been endorsed by the Texas Conference of the American Association of University Professors.

Identity Loss

The most dramatic resistance to Governor Connally's proposals has been shown by schools which would be involved in the reorganization into three "super-systems." Fear of loss of identity led to a protest rally at Arlington State, attended by 2500 students, alumni, and residents of Arlington.

Fear was also aroused at Texas Tech by the governor's plan. An editorial in the January 29 edition of the 'Daily Toreador' stated: "Gov. Connally's surprise proposal for a three-part 'super system' of higher education will deal a death blow to any chance of developing here a multi-purpose state university, if the legislature passes it." The grouping of Tech with schools "noted mainly for their technological educational offerings" was blamed mainly on the failure to delete the "Tech" from the school's name.

U of H Objections

Six hundred students, faculty and Lubbock townspeople attended a "public forum" that same day. Speakers from the faculty and students were heard generally condemning the grouping of Tech with the A&M group.

At the University of Houston, opposition was also raised to the proposed incorporation of U of H into an expanded University of Texas system. On February 1, Dr. Philip G. Hoffman, President of U of H stated in a press conference: "While we are proud to be part of the state system... the fact remains that 76 per cent of our student body comes from Harris County. We do not believe that the benefits of area leadership would accrue in equal measure if U of H, the second largest institution in Texas, were one of 13 units governed by a board whose chief interests would necessarily center around Austin."