WASHINGrON
By ROSCOE DRUMMOND
Powell Amendment Vs. the Schools
WASHINGTON.
It is an ironic and regrettable fact that if Congress fails to pass the vitally needed Federal-aid-to-school-construction bill, it will be its friends who defeat it.
The facts which create this situation—a situation which can still be averted—are these:
A clear majority in both parties supports this legislation which, in the end, would provide from $1,250,000,000 to $1,600,000,000 to help states make up the perilous shortage in classrooms.
The White House Conference on Education supported such action by more than two to one. The White House conference committee report was unequivocal in backing it.
The Gallup Polls show that national opinion favors it by three to one.
All the votes needed to pass the bill, if it can be acted upon by itself, are clearly visible in both the House and Senate.
Neither party wishes to go before the voters this fall as being to blame for putting our public school system further in jeopardy.
Drummond
Why, then, is the school-construction bill in peril? Why is there serious danger that it may end up as an innocent casualty, its death brought about by those who believe in it?
The reason is that there are honest and sincere members of the House and Senate who are intent upon attaching to the bill an amendment—in reality a rider—proposed by Rep. Adam C. Powell, D., N. Y., which would apply the sanction of withholding Federal assistance from any school which is not, or is not going to be, the instant it is completed, desegregated.
These advocates of the Powell amendment are genuine supporters of the Federal-aid bill, but in pressing the amendment they will be joined in an alliance by all-out opponents of any aid to school construction who will be using the Powell amendment as the best means of defeating the bill.
The nation has a deficit of at least 360,000 classrooms today and the deficit is growing. To fail to build the schools will not increase de-segregation.

President Eisenhower and by Adlai Stevenson, both of whom want to see the Supreme Court decision carried forward with all prudent speed.
In the judgment of those closest to the facts, the very building of better schools will advance the cause of integration; certainly it will not stand in the way. The Federal government can't withhold funds it hasn't appropriated and there will be no appropriations if the Powell amendment is passed.

Furthermore, an act of Congress is no longer necessary to affirm the law of the land. The Supreme Court has already done that. The Powell amendment would, it seems to me, be a wholly inappropriate effort by Congress to interfere with the jurisdiction of the courts to which the implementing of the Supreme Court ruling has been remanded.
A number of the Democratic and Republican liberals who instinctively favor the Powell amendment are, I believe, persuadable—persuadable by a public opinion which shows that it wants Federal aid to school construction the only way it can be enacted—without the Powell amendment. The alternative is no aid, fewer schools, no Powell amendment—you can't attach a rider to a dead horse—nothing.

© 1956, N. Y. Herald Tribune Inc.