

(This docket was not used,
but it would be well
to have it on file. Only
one commissioner was
approved by the Committee)

2005
EB-SSRC
Commission of Inquiry
SOCIAL SCIENCE
RESEARCH COUNCIL -
COMMISSIONS OF
INQUIRY ON
PUBLIC PROBLEMS

The special Trustee committee, consisting of Walter W. Stewart, Chairman, Raymond B. Fosdick, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., recommends an appropriation of \$172,500 to the Social Science Research Council to cover the costs of three commissions of inquiry to deal with the following urgent public questions: (1) the place of a controlled national economy in an international system, (2) population redistribution, and (3) public service personnel.

1. During the past year the Council has given serious consideration to a variety of possible ways of offering its assistance in the present troubled economic and political situation. The conclusion has been reached that the clarification of public opinion on certain questions of broad social policy is of pressing importance. Social programs and procedures cannot be intelligently devised until objectives are agreed upon, and focusing public attention on what is known and thought upon certain social problems seems an effective and intelligent method of guiding the choice of objectives.

The Report of the Committee on Recent Social Trends contained a definite suggestion that the Social Science Research Council "take the initiative in setting up machinery for the consideration of ad hoc problems, and for more and continuous generalized consideration of broader aspects of social integration and planning. It would further be possible for this Council to organize sponsoring groups in which there might be brought together the technical fact-finding, the interpretation of data in a broader sense, and the practical judgment of those holding authority in government, industry, and society." After weighing this proposal carefully and discussing the practical steps which the setting up of commissions of inquiry would involve, the Council voted to request funds from the Foundation for the establishment of three commissions.

2. The plan for organizing the commissions is modelled in general upon that of the British Royal Commissions, which have a record of notably influencing British public policy. Each commission will consist of three to five social scientists of outstanding reputation with the possible addition of a publicist or a man of affairs. A secretary,

competent in the field of inquiry, will assume the concrete task of administering the undertaking. The commission members will accept a full-time assignment to be concluded within a period of six months to a year. Their task will be to canvass influential opinion on the issue under investigation, to assemble all available dependable information, to sharpen and redefine the issue as far as possible, to expose its more significant implications, and finally to publish a report bringing all these matters effectively to the attention of governmental authorities and the public. Public hearings in important centers will be an essential activity of each commission. The aim will be not only to provide straightforward presentation of fact and interpretation from all possible sources, but also, to do so in such a manner that serious national attention will be secured.

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3. The Council is proposing to establish three commissions of inquiry at the present time. Although the Council hopes to carry out the plans as presented and has on hand adequate lists of personnel from which members and staff for these particular commissions may be chosen, it is possible that the needed personnel may not be available and another public question may have to be substituted for one of those now outlined: (See Exhibit for detailed plans)
 - a. American International Policy: This commission will study the trend of thought in the United States within the recent past, and will appraise the current theories of internationalism and nationalism with the idea of reaching some guide to a practicable policy for the present and immediate future. The implications of the problem will be explored from a number of points of view.
 - b. Redistribution of Population: At a time when the Federal Government is undertaking on a considerable scale to redistribute the population as a matter of deliberate policy, this commission will have a fertile field for study. There are already offered various proposals for effecting population redistribution. These represent widely-varying objectives which the commission may wish to analyze and evaluate. Broad questions of policy and fact, as, for instance, the extent to which modified environment can effect desired social change, will arise in the course of considering programs of redistribution or of future direction of population.

- c. Public Service Personnel: The problem of selection of personnel for the public service in the United States, which has been growing in importance for some time, is now acute. The commission will study the methods to be used in bringing about a reorganization and improvement of civil service, national, state, and local. The relationship of the public service to various forms of private enterprise and the bearing of such relationship on personnel policy must be clarified. The public attitude towards government service and its effect upon the recruitment of personnel are to be estimated as well as the concrete data upon prevailing wages, working conditions, security, etc.

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Each commission will, according to the Council's estimate, require a budget of approximately \$57,500.

4. The proposal of the Council to sponsor these three commissions of inquiry offers the Foundation an opportunity to discover whether or not this is a fruitful type of activity under Council auspices and, at the same time, holds out a reasonable hope of aiding in the solution of pressing social problems. The procedure of the commission is new in American public life but, in the opinion of the officers has sufficiently large potential values to suggest experiment and demonstration in its use without delay.

The following action is suggested:

RESOLVED that the sum of One hundred seventy-two thousand five
RF hundred dollars (\$172,500), or as much thereof as may be necessary, be, and it is hereby, appropriated to the SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL for the support of COMMISSIONS ON INQUIRY ON PUBLIC PROBLEMS, payments to be made in accordance with annual budgets presented in advance, and any balance remaining unexpended as of December 31, 1934, to revert to the Foundation.
