

Head Start Doctor Is Dismissed After Testifying

By EDWARD C. BURKS
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WASHINGTON, March 25—The director of the medical consultation service for the pre-school Head Start program was asked to resign his \$26,000-a-year job today after he told a House committee yesterday that public schools wrecked the program's achievements.

Dr. Robert S. Mendelsohn, a 43-year-old pediatrician from Evanston, Ill., immediately complied with the resignation request.

In testifying at an acrimonious hearing conducted yesterday by the House Education and Labor Committee, he had been severely critical of the follow-through with Head Start children and also commented on a highly political issue.

He told the committee that all of the benefits and achievements of the preschool program were lost to the Head Start child as soon as he entered the "deadening atmosphere" of regular school. Specifically, he deplored the loss of special guidance supplied in Head Start classes.

Dr. Mendelsohn is not a Government official although his salary comes from a Federal grant. He had been employed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has a \$500,000

Aide at Pediatrics Academy Asked Resignation Over Criticism of Schools

contract from the Office of Economic Opportunity, to provide medical consultation services for Head Start across the country. As such, he was the chief of 660 physicians who supplied part-time services to the program for poor children.

Called by Academy Head

Dr. Mendelsohn, reached by telephone in Evanston today, gave this version of the affair: "At 10 o'clock this morning I was called by Dr. Hugh C. Thompson, the academy's president, who told me that 'after yesterday' the value of my services to the academy had come to an end."

An hour later Dr. Robert Frazier, executive director of the academy, asked for Dr. Mendelsohn's resignation, which was given in writing this afternoon.

According to Dr. Frazier, there has been a long-standing conflict over administration and policy with Dr. Mendelsohn, but he also spoke of Dr. Mendelsohn's "brickbat" attack on schools yesterday.

While Dr. Mendelsohn will remain with the 9,000-member academy until June 30, he was immediately relieved of his position as chief medical consultant.

"I told it like I saw it," he said today. "That's the only way I know how to do it."

In fact, Dr. Mendelsohn had told the House committee, the chairman of which is Representative Carl D. Perkins, Kentucky Democrat, that education and health were closely intertwined. He said: "Education is too important to be left to the educators, just as health care is too important to be left to the doctors."

Head Start's Future

He conceded today that the academy was probably also irked by the forthright stand he took on the future administration of Head Start, already a highly controversial political issue. Dr. Mendelsohn, much to the delight of Mr. Perkins, said the program should remain in the Office of Economic Opportunity.

The Nixon Administration has proposed shifting the program to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, where it might become part of a new office of child development.

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