

By REV. ROBERT KANKA

Never underestimate the power of a letter to the editor!

Citizens for Educational Freedom (CEF) which is battling for a fair share for every pupil in American education, got its start from one woman's letter to the editor just seven years ago.

I picked up the story while covering the national convention of the CEF group at Buffalo last week. Someone pointed out St. Louis, Mo. couple, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Duggan, and said:

"This all got started in their living room."

The Duggans told me the story in between sessions of the two day meeting. It seems that they, along with some friends, reacted strongly to a news report of a speech given in May, 1959 by Bishop Lawrence Shehan of Bridgeport, Conn. (He's now Cardinal Shehan, and archbishop of Baltimore.) He'd warned in his speech that Catholic schools were in danger of being "phased out" of existence.

At Mrs. Duggan's suggestion, a woman wrote a strong letter to the St. Louis Review, diocesan newspaper, in effect saying "what are we going to do about this?"

An insurance executive, Vincent Corley, answered the letter, suggested a meeting of those who wanted to do something about it. It was held in the living room of Martin and May Duggan. Duggan is associate managing editor of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

"The first meeting was discouraging," Mrs. Duggan recalled. "There were only a handful of us, and it seemed like such a huge task."

A second meeting however, brought more results. Judge Anthony Daly, a retired jurist, joined the little group, suggested starting an organization which would fight to preserve parents' rights in the choice of education for their children.

In mid June of 1959, the group chose a name, Citizens for Educational Freedom, announced that it was in existence and issued a call for support. Mail began pouring in from all over the country, and a citizens' movement was born.

Today, CEF counts 130,000 members in 1,000 chapters throughout the land.

"We had a downtown mailing address," Martin Duggan smiled, "but for a year, our real office was May's kitchen, where all the mailing was done!"

CEF now has a national office in Washington, D.C., plans to open a branch in New York City this fall. While it can now claim a fulltime director, Jeremiah Buckley, it is basically a volunteer group, with its key leaders contributing a tremendous amount of time and talent to the cause.

CEF can also claim a major role in recent legislation which has provided bus rides for all students in Ohio, Minnesota and Pennsylvania, textbook loans in New York state, college tuition grants in Wisconsin and of course, last year's federal education act which was geared to help pupils, regardless of the school attended.

Non-Sectarian Support

From the start, the CEF leaders made it clear that the organization would be a non-sectarian one. While numerically, Catholic schools were by far the largest segment of the nation's independent schools, they were far from alone. There are church-related schools run by the Lutheran, Christian Reformed, Episcopal, Seventh Day Adventist and other groups, as well as many Jewish synagogue schools. Nor were they unmindful of the plight of other independent, private schools.

The broad base of CEF support was well demonstrated at last week's convention in Buffalo.

Keynote speaker was an articulate Lutheran minister from South Bend, Ind., Pastor Norbert E. Kabellz. Another major speaker was Rabbi Morris Sheer, executive vice-president of a national Orthodox Jewish group, Agudath Israel.

Main speaker at the Friday evening banquet was a noted Michigan jurist and civil rights exponent, Judge John J. Feikens, who belongs to the Christian Reformed church.

Judge Feikens didn't see any serious obstacle to government assistance to parochial school pupils on the federal level, but

Federal Funds Said Welcome

Ann Arbor — (RNS) — Federal involvement in American education is "only . . . beginning," a Lutheran college president said here as he advised educators to welcome and actively assist in defining and clarifying the government's proper role.

Dr. Martin Koehnke of Concordia Teachers College at River Forest, Ill., told some 600 delegates to sessions of the Lutheran Education Association and National Lutheran Parent Teacher League that the "present surge of activity by the federal government is striking only because of its limited and inadequate involvement in the past."



"IT ALL STARTED WHEN . . ." At recent convention of Citizens for Educational Freedom, Father Robert Kanka of the Courier-Journal hears how the group started in 1959 in the living room of Martin Duggan, center, and his wife May, right, of St. Louis, Mo. (Photo by V. Ostapowych.)

predicted that "the great battles of the next decade will be on the state level."

Both Sides Aired

There was much anticipation on the part of delegates to the scheduled debate on "May Public Funds Assist Children in Non-Public Schools." Two CEF exponents took the affirmative. While the negative was upheld by a lawyer from the American Jewish Congress, Joseph Robinson, and a school board president from Lewiston, N.Y. John C. Broughton.

It was a lively, intelligent discussion of the issue, which centered not so much on the legality of public support of church-related schools, but on the desirability of such support.

Without trying to judge the merits of the two presentations, I did feel that the negative side was repeating old arguments ("would weaken the public schools," etc.) which seemed less forceful than they once were. The CEF team, Rev. Edwin Palmer, a minister of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. and William Ryan, a member of Michigan's House of Representatives, seemed to have a much fresher case and one which was strong in logic and common sense.

What Is The Question?

The debate clarified considerably.

ably, for me at least, what CEF's approach to the whole problem is.

They are talking about the necessity for good education for all American youngsters, wherever they go to school. They are saying that parents have a constitutional right to send their children to any school which meets the state educational standards. They are also saying that the growing injection of government funds into the school picture, from taxes collected universally, but distributed selectively, threatens to wipe out that basic parental right.

No one is trying to dodge the problem of church-state relations, but the focus, CEF feels, should be on the "question of educational excellence. Somehow they argue, a way can and must be found to give at least some share of the educational tax dollar to those students who are not in public schools — one in every seven youngsters on the primary and secondary school level.

The final main speaker at Saturday's luncheon, Congressman Hugh L. Carey (D-N.Y.) repeated what had often been said during the convention:

That the "G. I. Bill of Rights," set up after World War II, and now a part of federal policy, offered the most feasible way of handling this support. It gave

direct assistance to the individual student, who could apply it to the school of his choice — secular, religious or whatever, as long as it was an accredited institution.

This approach, in some form, puts the stress where CEF feels it should be, on helping the individual American student.

CEF leaders don't doubt that they have a hard struggle ahead to develop an American consensus on this subject, but they feel that great progress has been made already, and that eventually, freedom of educational choice will be assured.

Maybe when a historian writes about the 20th century survival of independent schools in America, he'll be able to say: "It all started with a letter to the editor!"

Vienna — (NC) — A Catholic priest has published his proposals for a radically revised Mass liturgy to be celebrated in private homes. Writing in Der Seelsorger (Pastoral Care) magazine, liturgical expert Father Joseph Mayer called for a very simple family rite to replace poorly attended weekday Masses.

The Church must find the courage, Father Mayer insisted, to adapt the Eucharistic liturgy to special circumstances. In this case, it would mean a simplified and informal celebration.

Father Mayer outlined a service celebrated on the dining table, with Communion under both species, and a discussion following the homily. The Communion bread would not be a host, but the bread used at meals.

Immediately following the Mass, all would gather to chat with the priest and each other. Then a meal would ease the transition from the Mass to everyday life.

Father Mayer mentioned that this home celebration of the Eucharist would restore a sense of community not present in a large church, and emphasize the dignity of the family and the home.

U.S. Jesuit Missioners Called Communists

Progreso, Honduras — (NC) — At a public meeting held to discuss conflicting claims over ownership of land, a member of the powerful Bogran family accused two U.S. Jesuit priests, Father Thomas Quieri of Milwaukee and Father James Carney of St. Louis, of being communists.

The two Jesuit priests are working in the Honduran mission assigned to the Missouri province Jesuits. Father Quieri is pastor of the Progreso parish and Father Carney is his assistant.

Both have represented the (farm workers) campesinos of the parish during a conflict that has arisen among them and the Bogran family. The Bograns hold extensive areas of land, acquired earlier this century when one of the Bograns was president of the republic.

Campeanos moved onto uncultivated land legally held by the Bograns during the administration of the Liberal party under Dr. Villeda Morales. The 1963 revolution of the army brought the National party back into power. The Bograns are members of the National party.

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THE HOLY FATHER'S MISSION AID TO THE ORIENTAL CHURCH

Here's a sampling of mail from hungry southern India. It says, in gist, that God will be at home there if people have a place to pray. . . . From Ellikatoor, writes Father Joseph: "My 39 families, all of them converts, hear Mass now in a cramped, crumbling shed. They'll build a new church free-of-charge, but they're too poor to buy the materials (\$2,200). Will someone help them? . . . \$2,450 is enough for a church in Keethillam, where Mass is offered in a private hut. . . . And in Karimba, writes Msgr. Matthew Nedungatt, hundreds of families will join the Church once there's a place for Mass. The cost: \$3,800. . . . How many churchless villages are there in southern India? Here in New York we have requests for 27 of them, all approved by the Holy Father. . . . Build a low-cost church in your loved ones' memory, named for your favorite saint? Write to us right now. You'll know in your lifetime you've done something permanent for God. . . . Send at least as much as you can (\$10; \$7.50; \$25; \$10; \$5; \$2) for a church in a churchless village. Give the poor a place to worship God.

SMALL GIFTS ADD UP To feed the starving in Kothamangalam, south India, Bishop Matthew Pothanamuzhi received \$2,502.73 from the Holy Father last month. The money came from our readers.

ARE YOU MARRIED? You don't have to be single to belong to a group called MISS (Mary Immaculate's Sponsors of Seminarians) in Buffalo, N. Y. You don't even have to live in Buffalo. . . . Ask Patricia and Nan Halligan (1070 Parkside, Buffalo, N. Y., 14214) how you can participate by mail in training future priests, building mission chapels, etc. They'll answer your letter promptly, give you a MISSION of your own.

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