

Catholic School Crisis Seen Peril To Public System

Detroit —(NC)—The Detroit archdiocesan superintendent of schools denied charges by some critics that Catholic schools are out "to raid the treasury," and asserted that public school children have much to lose if church-supported schools go under.

Father John B. Zwiers issued a statement saying that among the reasons why public schools must press for more tax money is that they must educate more than 12,000 students lost from Catholic schools here during the past year.

"That makes over 30,000 since the 1964-65 school year who have left our tax-free schools," he said. "Like all schools, public and private, ours are caught in a financial bind. Many Catholic parents just cannot meet necessary tuition increases and also pay increased taxes for support of public schools."

"Unless we find some day to tide our schools over the emergency, Michigan taxpayers are going to be charged still stiffer school taxes, or else see their children disadvantaged as the quality of public education is diluted by the addition of former Catholic school students," he stated.

"It might appear to some that we are deliberately phasing out our Catholic schools," Father Zwiers stated. "This is absolutely untrue. We never close a school except as a last, desperate resort. We believe our educational system holds precious values not only for Catholics but for all of Michigan too."

"Catholic parents know the comforts brought by moral training, and gladly pay to get it for their children, as long as they are able to," Father Zwiers stated.

"The Detroit public school system is noted for tight budgets," he said, "but even it pays \$425 to educate each pupil in grade school, \$580 for each junior high school student and over \$800 for each high school student. Many suburbs spend considerably more."

Even if the money were available for teaching, he

noted, there would be no place for 173,009 pupils (the Catholic school population) to go since existing public schools tend to be crowded after having absorbed only 30,000 pupils who formerly attended Catholic schools.

"Another seeming solution which will not work is shared time. This is fine in limited areas, where conditions are just right. But there aren't enough extra facilities to share if that is thought of as a general solution. The need is too great, and public schools are generally already taxed to capacity."

"The eventual answer seems fairly obvious," Father Zwiers asserted. "The diminishing private schools will have to go on doing the best they can until Michigan finally becomes aware that it has a good thing going for it in systems that in the past did not get a dollar of taxpayers' money for educating hundreds of thousands of youngsters."

"In good time the state will see its way free to help private schools a bit—hopefully before the quality of all education is permanently undermined," Father Zwiers said.

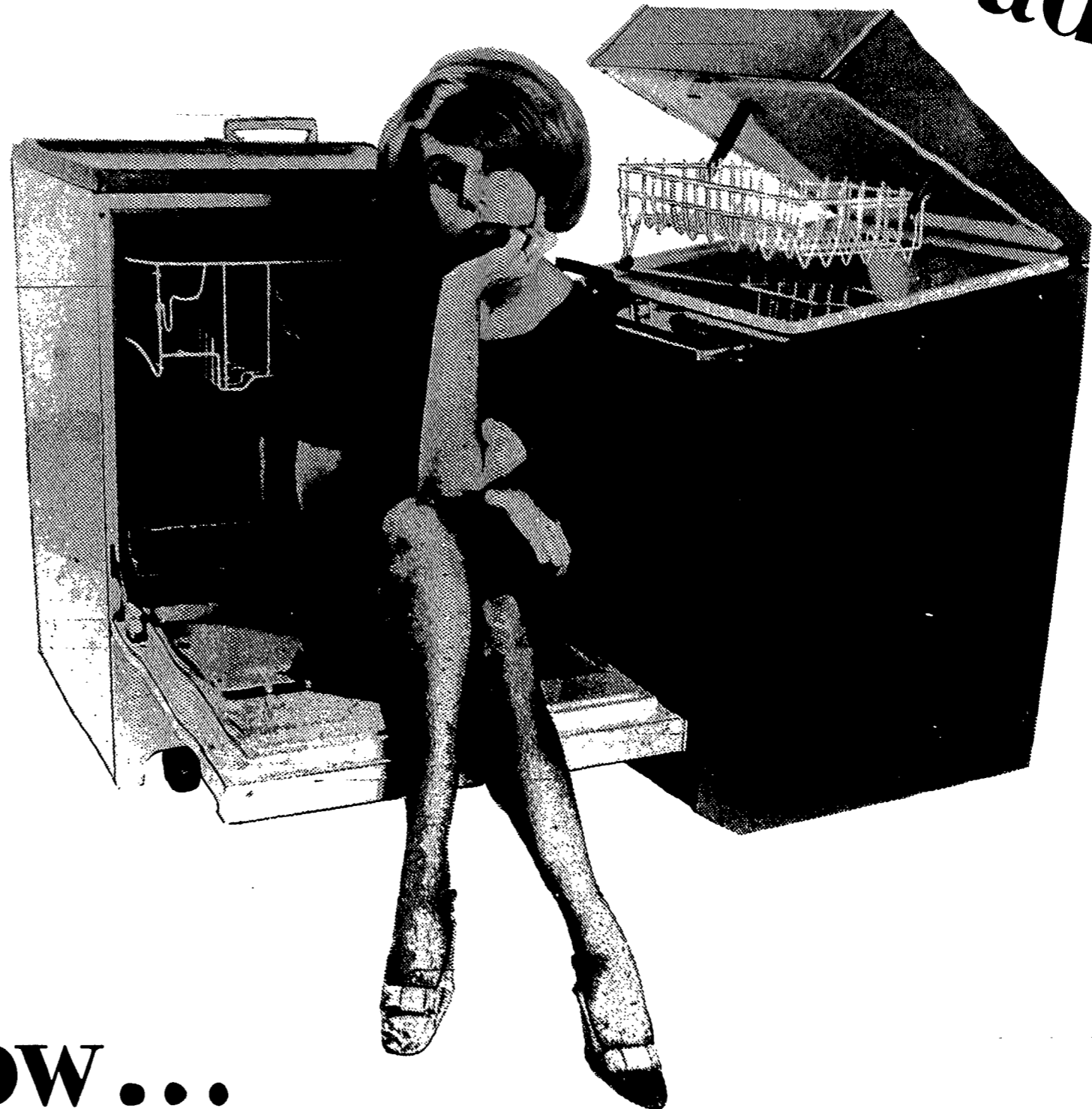
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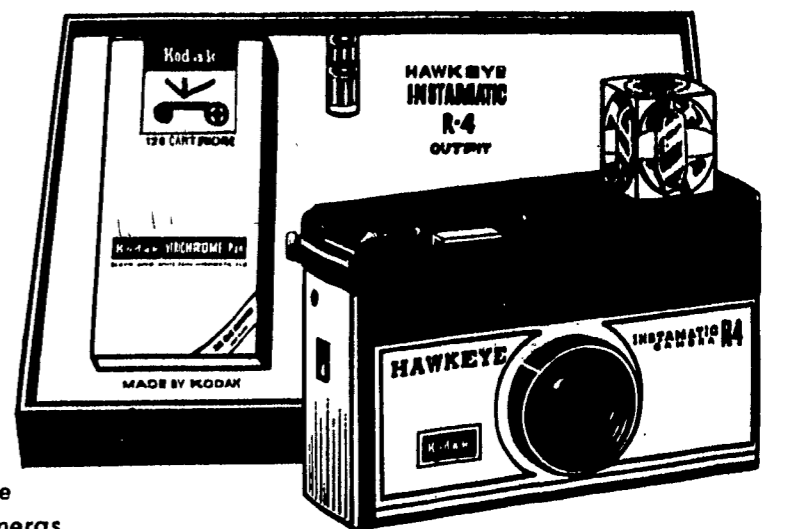
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