

Romney Suggestion: Church Schools Drop 'Secular Education'

ROMNEY SUGGESTION
Detroit — (RNS) — Gov. George Romney, soon to become a member of President-elect Nixon's cabinet, has urged church-related schools in Michigan to concentrate on religious instruction and send their pupils to public schools for their "secular education."

The startling proposal made by the man named by Mr. Nixon to be his Secretary of Housing and Urban Affairs came in a farewell television address to Michigan's citizens.

It drew immediate criticism from legislative leaders and from those who have led a campaign to obtain state aid for non-public schools.

"I suggest that we seriously consider whether it would not be more desirable to leave secular education to the state," Gov. Romney said, "with the churches — all the churches — concentrating their efforts on expanding weekly religious and moral instructions on a more formal and systematic basis for all the children of their faith."

"If we can't do both (maintain public and non-public schools), the churches should concentrate on moral and spiritual education."

"I don't want the parochial schools closed," he added. "I do want them re-evaluated. The state has an obligation to pay for the education of all its children."

As a possible solution after such a re-evaluation, he said the parochial schools "should look to having class in the afternoon like the Jewish Hebrew schools."

Although Gov. Romney specifically said he did not desire the closing of the parochial schools, many critics of his proposal reasoned that it would lead to the end of the church-related school system.

If the parochial schools were shut down, public school enrollment would jump by 335,000 to 2,400,000 based on 1968-69 figures, with the largest impact felt in Grand Rapids and Bay City, where one out of every three school children attends non-public school.

Rep. William Ryan, in rapidly Gov. Romney's proposal, said that if the 335,000 parochial school pupils were to go into the public schools it would cost \$209 million in tax funds, based on a cost of \$685 involved in educating a child annually in the state.

The Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools used similar figures, estimating the cost at about \$97 million in state taxes and about \$108 million in local taxes.

Romney Plan Draws Fire

Detroit — (RNS) — Gov. George Romney's advice to the churches that they get out of "secular education" has been denounced by state legislators and churchmen here.

Dr. Edwin L. Novak, president of the State Board of Education, described the governor's remarks as "a disservice to Michigan education."

"The governor wants a total state monopoly," State House Speaker William Ryan said. "He who has been advocating private initiative, would eliminate that in the field of secular education."

Francis J. Comes, executive director of the Michigan Catholic Conference, said, "The economic implications of the governor's proposal, if taken seriously, are staggering." He estimated that it would cost over \$200 million a year in operating costs along with an additional \$1 billion to build the facilities which would be needed to care for all students if private schools closed.

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GEORGE ROMNEY

'Warren Court' Upheld 'As Not Anti-Religious'

Ann Arbor — (RNS) — The Michigan Law Review on the "Warren Court" which barred prayer and Bible reading from public schools has not been an "anti-religion" tribunal, a University of Michigan law professor said here.

Prof. Paul G. Kauper said the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren "has been sensitive and hospitable to claims made in the name of religious liberty."

A "fair" reading of the Court's opinions "should dispel the notion that it has been hostile to religion," he said. His comments were contained

in a special issue of the Michigan Law Review on the work of the "Warren Court."

Prof. Kauper pointed out that the Court has been called upon to interpret two clauses in the language of the First Amendment. The first clause deals with the "establishment of religion" the second with "prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

"These cases," said Prof. Kauper, "definitely established the secular character of the public schools as a constitutional requirement; they also suggested questions about the validity of all religious observances in public life."

"Equally important, however, was that the Court made clear that the objective study of religion and of the Bible in its literary and historical aspects is properly a part of public education."

In its decisions, he concluded, the "Warren Court" showed "an awareness of and sensitivity to the demands both for equality of treatment in a religiously pluralistic society and for special protection of minority groups against the claims and assumption of the majority."

INSTALLATION SET

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