

# The School Crisis ... 2 Alternative Ideas

## Episcopal Bishop's Ecumenical Plan

Providence—(RNS)—Gradual adoption of parochial schools into the public school system—by leasing the parochial schools "as opportunity offers," was proposed here by Episcopal Bishop John Seville Higgins of Rhode Island.

His proposal was contained in a statement calling for "some truly ecumenical way" to aid financially-troubled parochial schools and "to provide a means for the adequate religious instruction that most religious parents want for their children."

The thought behind his statement, he indicated, was that the Rhode Island religious communities appeared to be faced with "another unhappy and divisive struggle" should Citizens for Educational Freedom (CEF) seek state aid for parochial and private schools.

Bishop Higgins "ecumenical" approach to easing the burdens of the parochial schools contained four major points. Besides the school leasing proposal, they were:

• That cities and towns hire properly certified members of religious orders as teachers of secular non-denominational subjects and pay them or their religious orders wages equivalent to those paid to comparable public school teachers.

• That classes in denominational religious instruction would be held in the "adopted" schools, with teachers of these courses furnished by, and paid by, the various denominations, served.

• That mandatory objective courses in religion be taught in all public schools.

In his statement, Bishop Higgins said in part:

"A considerable number of thoughtful Roman Catholics are seriously questioning their parochial schools as they are at present constituted. The schools themselves are in grave difficulties, and so far, they have failed to appeal to even half of their parents and children.

"On the other hand, Protestants and Episcopalians are dissatisfied with their own Sunday Schools which rely usually on untrained teachers working in mostly inadequate buildings for a few minutes every Sunday. Our Jewish brethren use largely an 'after-hours' religious instruction program for their members."

In calling for the adoption of parochial schools into the public system, the bishop said, "This would necessarily be a long-term process and one that might never be totally achieved, but it could begin with those parochial schools

that are now in serious financial difficulties and continue over the years. Money obtained from the leasing would then be available for the help of such schools as the Diocese of Providence or other religious bodies operating the schools decide to retain for the present."

The bishop said the "adopted" schools, whatever their origins, would eventually have students from a cross-section of the community. Denominational religious instruction could be provided by the regular classrooms, either during or after school hours, and by procuring a staff of "well-qualified" teachers whose salaries would be paid by the denominations involved.

In that section of his statement dealing with the proposed mandatory courses, he said, "The present-day breakdown in morals and ethics is evident to all, and while its causes are manifold and complex, part of the trouble must be that our growing children have had inadequate religious instruction, particularly in our public schools."

He said the ultimate long-range objective would be to have objective religion courses offered on a voluntary basis in all schools and denominational courses offered on a voluntary basis to the extent of the demand.

## How Canada Helps Church Schools

By FLOYD ANDERSON (NC News Service)

Ottawa—In the United States, Catholic schools are having great financial difficulties; in many areas, strong efforts are being made to secure financial assistance from state governments to keep the schools open.

It is being pointed out that it is much cheaper—and fairer—to assist the Catholic (and other church-related schools) to remain open than it is to allow them to close because of lack of finances, with the pupils transferring to the public schools.

In Canada, the situation is entirely different in most of the provinces. Father Edmond J. Roche, director of the National Office of the Canadian Catholic Conference here, attributed this to two facts:

• In Canada there is no federal constitutional provision which prevents any government from giving money to any church-related institution, whether it is a school or a hospital or any type of welfare agency.

Secondly, he said, government in Canada on the federal level has taken a much bigger share of responsibility for the equalization of basic opportunities than it has in the United States.

As it is in the United States, however, he said, education is a local or state responsibility; by law the federal government has no jurisdiction whatever in the field of education. But because regional economic disparity is responsible for a great deal of inequality of opportunity in education, the federal government of Canada has tried—and has succeeded in several ways—in supporting education programs.

Father Roche pointed out that when Canada became a country first in 1867, the British North America Act guaranteed the perpetuation of whatever denominational rights then existed in the field of education, thus protecting the rights of Catholics and other church-related schools then in operation.

A prime example of how this works in practice might be the Catholic schools in the province of Ontario. In 1867, the Catholic Church was involved in schools that went to the end of Grade 8, and in some cases was operating schools that went a year or two further. In law these were all grouped under the heading of elementary schools. It is realized, of course, that a hundred years ago the level of education was much lower than it is today.

As a result of the situation of the Catholic schools in 1867, the Ontario government today supports Catholic public schools in Ontario to the end of Grade 8 with practically the same amount of financial support that is given to the other public schools.

But for Grades 9 and 10, which are now the first two years of high school, government support is at the level of the elementary rate—because those years were regarded as elementary years in 1867. The Ontario government has never seen fit to give provincial fi-

financial support to the other Catholic high school years.

One of the big efforts at present is to get provincial assistance at the high school rates for the five years of the Ontario high school program—that is, Grades 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

The situation varies from province to province, depending on what the conditions were at the time the province entered confederation. In Alberta, there is complete parity of government support for Catholic schools and the other schools from kindergarten to the end of high school; the same is true in Saskatchewan, although parity at the high school level there dates back only to 1964.

In Quebec practically all the schools are denominational; now the focus is largely on the provision of what are to be called neutral schools—that is, those which are neither Catholic nor Protestant.

In Newfoundland, all schools are denominational; there is a consolidation of effort in elementary and high schools at present, but with the understanding that what ever feasible, denominational schools will continue.

In Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick provinces, except in the city of Halifax, there are no Catholic schools. The reason is that none were in operation—except in Halifax—at the time of entering confederation. But in these three provinces, Father Roche said, a tradition of understanding has developed in which Catholic children are, wherever feasible, grouped into schools.

In these three provinces Sisters teach in them at full government salary and are hired by school boards in the same way as other teachers.

## Signs of Hope Seen in Crisis

Cincinnati—(NC)—American Catholicism has problems, but many of them are actually signs of hope, a priest-sociologist said here.

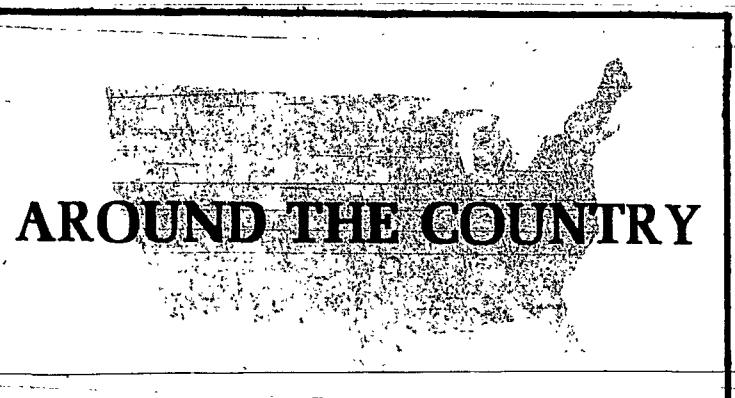
Father Andrew M. Greeley, program director of the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, spoke here at the meeting of the Glenmary Guild on "The Future of American Catholicism."

Calling the present crisis "perhaps the greatest in the past 450 years," Father Greeley said, "we can lose our nerve, withdraw, lament or quit, but none of these would be the American Catholic way. With respect for past traditions, however, and with courage and hope in the present and future, he said, today's American Catholics can direct the Church into a new, glorious era.

"No exodus is indicated, even among the young," he asserted. "No apostasy appears on any indicator. The people may be restless, less respectful, more critical; but they are not about to leave. At worst, here will be a slow erosion."

The priest called attention to the "many positive signs" including the enthusiasm of American Catholics, and the "immense amount of creative vitality everywhere in America."

"Positive signs far outweigh the negative ones in American Catholicism. It is not going into a stage of dissolution. It may be on the verge of a new golden age."



## New Mexico Outlaws Executions

Santa Fe, N.M.—(RNS)—New Mexico will become the 14th state to abolish capital punishment when Gov. David F. Cargo signs the bill outlawing it.

The governor, a Roman Catholic, was jubilant as he told newsmen: "This is a religious matter with me. I believe 'Thou shalt not kill' and I will sign the bill when it reaches my desk."

The bill was backed by the New Mexico Council of Churches.

## 'Dechristianization' Seen

Cincinnati—(RNS)—A change in religious orientation in American rural areas is forcing the Glenmary Home Missioners to change their approach, according to the superior general of the Cincinnati-based community.

The Very Rev. Robert C. Berson said that formerly the Glenmarys would "find a solidly Protestant population in the small towns" of Appalachia and the South. But now, he added, "increasing numbers of the people are reported to have no church affiliation at all."

The result, instead of open hostility to the Catholic missioners, is that in "many communities, Protestant leaders, particularly of the more liberal groups, welcome the Catholic missionary."

To meet growing "de-Christianization" in rural areas, he said, the Glenmarys hope to build a new catechetical center in the South and specialize in a ministry "to the rural poor." Glenmarys are at work in 37 Southern and Appalachian areas.

## South Electing More Negroes

Atlanta—(RNS)—Three hundred and eighty-eight Negroes are currently holding elective public offices in the South, according to the Southern Regional Council, a non-profit, interracial agency.

The council noted that the figure reflects significant gains in 1968 elections. There were only 72 Negro elected officials in the 11-state area in 1965 when the Voting Rights Acts went into effect.

Thirty Negroes are serving in Southern state legislatures and 152 in city governments, 10 as mayors.

Negro county officials include 35 on governing boards, four in administration and 15 on election commissions. Eighty-one Negroes hold elective offices in law enforcements.

Alabama has the most elected Negro officials, with 67. Louisiana has 53; Mississippi, 51; Arkansas, 50. Fewest are in North Carolina, 18.



Special Permission

Msgr. Joseph Schmidt of Harrisburg, Pa., was given permission to say Mass while seated. He is using a "walker" while recuperating from a hip operation. The priest, executive secretary of the Harrisburg Diocesan Mission Board, celebrates the Mass in his home. (RNS)

## Diocese Campaigns Against Bias

Pittsburgh—(NC)—A Pittsburgh diocesan commission official has advised all Catholic organizations against patronizing facilities of clubs which discriminate in membership policies "against Negroes or any other minority."

In addition, the commission advised, Catholic organizations should give preferential consideration to clubs and businesses which have positive programs of equal employment opportunity.

Although the statement is directed to Catholic organizations, it also calls upon Catholics as individuals to "take a part in the struggle against these forms of discrimination."

The diocesan Human Relations Commission's policy recommendation was adopted by unanimous vote in mid-February and mailed to all priests of the diocese this week.

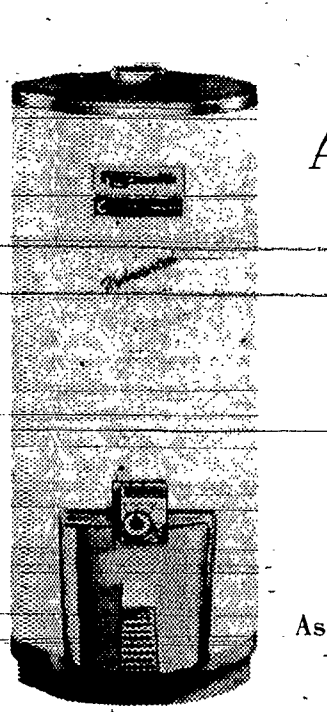
## POPE SENDS HELP

Vatican City—(RNS)—Pope Paul has sent his condolences and funds to the victims of two Latin American disasters.

The pontiff sent a cable to the Apostolic Nuncio expressing his sorrow over the plane crash at Maracaibo, Venezuela, the worst in civil aviation, and money for its victims.

A similar cable and a large sum of money was sent to church authorities in flood devastated sections of Brazil.

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