

# A National Look at Sex Education Debate

## Religious News Service

Sex education in public and parochial schools has mushroomed in the past decade with approval of Churches. Debate about the issue, however, is not over and attempts to strengthen and expand instruction on sex is increasingly slanted toward adults.

Part of the reason for stepped up efforts by Churches among the adults is aimed at involving parents in the sex education afforded youth from kindergarten through senior high school.

No one in religious or secular fields seems to doubt the centrality of the parents' role, but supporters of public or church programs are equally convinced that parents need supplementary aid. Out of this concern has come a Task Force on Sex Education established by the Family Life Division of the United States Catholic Conference.

Three Rochesterians have been named to the task force—Father Daniel Brent, assistant superintendent of schools, Dr. Gerard Guerinet, chairman of the diocesan committee on sex education, and Sister Agnes Kesseling, education coordinator for the diocese.

Another factor is realization that instruction designed to develop wholesome sex attitudes among youths must be buttressed by a healthy sex outlook among the older generation.

A third factor is the continuation of opposition to sex education, inside and outside of Churches. Those who back the programs are becoming vigilant to show they do not wish to accept a parental responsibility.

Though many public school systems and about a third of the Catholic dioceses in the nation include sex education in curricula, traditional foes are scarcely less vocal than five years ago. And there are signs of a new sort of criticism.

Historically, most sentiment against youth exposure to lectures, films and discussions on sex has come from conservative religious groups and right-wing organizations. For example, a Pentecostal evangelist was a leader in an abortive challenge to sex education courses in Iowa. The New Testament Association of Independent Baptists voiced disapproval in mid-May.

Agencies representing the major Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish groups in

the nation collectively won a record in 1968 in favor of "supplementary" aid in churches, synagogues and schools for youth sex education. The joint action of the Protestant and Orthodox National Council of Churches, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Synagogue Council of America also stressed the primacy of parents in the process.

In recent months, Father James T. McHugh, director of the Family Life Division of the U.S. Catholic Conference, has frequently stressed the importance of schools helping parents with instruction on sex education.

He has explained that the success of any sex or family life education depends on "the interest, abilities and professional competence of people at the local level who are willing to invest their time and talent in the development of their own program."

The Sex Information and Educational Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) is the most important secular organization advancing and indirectly influencing sex education. Foes of the undertaking often strike out against SIECUS, though it has no direct involvement in school

situations. Its impact is upon curriculum planners, educational agencies or local coalitions, including clergymen, who foster sex education.

SIECUS' goal is similar to that of many church sex education initiatives: the establishment of sexual identity as a "healthy entity" taking account of moral values as well as biological knowledge.

Though conservative groups and individuals are the more outspoken against sexually as a school subject, a new sphere of criticism will probably not go unanalyzed by Churches. Doubt about the legitimacy of exposing elementary aged children to sexual instruction—as SIECUS and some religious agencies advocate—is emerging from the liberal side.

A wrap-up on sex education in the New York Times on May 20 indicated considerable disenchantment among some child analysts and psychiatrists, parents groups and state legislators. Parents and lawmakers of course, are not necessarily liberal, but among the anti-sex education crusaders seem to be a fair number of psychological astute persons who fear negative results from such training given too early.

Method may be as much or more involved than content for those skeptical of sex education trends. Educational theory has long sought to gear subject matter and speed of acceleration to student comprehension.

Sex education, often based on general age group maturation expectations, may not yet have been thoroughly accommodated to psychological and intellectual differentiations. At least, this is an implication of critics deploring the giving of clinical information about reproduction to children before they are emotionally able to identify with its meaning.

A similar suggestion is made by those fearing that familiarity with sexual deviation, included in some sex education courses, may misdirect sexual development.

To some minds which do not question the validity of such education, the attitude and approach are all important in determining the benefits or disadvantages. The joint statement of the National Council, Synagogue Council and Catholic Conference made this point:

"It is important that sex education not be reduced to the mere communication of information, but that rich, human, personal and spiritual values illuminate it and that basic moral principles be recognized, not as sectarian religious doctrine, but as the moral heritage of Western civilization."

Parental right to determine whether children shall take part in courses on sexuality and the commonly held view of the centrality of the parents' role in sex education, is significant in church attempts to involve parents themselves.

"Most parents favor sound sex education in the schools," according to Father McHugh of the Catholic Family Life Unit, "but many are as yet unable to place their full confidence in some of the programs."

The Task Force set up by Father McHugh's division will develop materials for parents as well as evaluate existing programs. Speaking to the National Catholic Education Association in April, the priest stressed that parochial school sex education is not seen as replacement of the parents' duty.

"When parents make a reasonable attempt in teaching sexuality, he said, 'the efforts of teachers and others can be supportive.'"

Father McHugh maintains that in the classroom situation the teacher must steer a middle course between moral rigidity

and total permissiveness in leading the child to some personal understanding of sexual urges and in helping him establish self-control.

Attention to sexuality in education with or without parental consent is not without advocates. Speaking against curtailing legislation in Minnesota, Dr. James Wall, an obstetrician, said that he had found so much "ignorance and fears" among his patients that he had been convinced of the necessity of sex education in schools.

## Social Worker Leaving Post

Miss Marion C. Leaty, a social worker here for 35 years, is retiring from government service but intends to continue working with social service agencies and non-profit housing organizations.

Since 1956, Miss Leaty has been casework supervisor in the family service division of the County Social Service Department. Earlier, starting in 1934, she was a caseworker in the old City Welfare Department.

## Bona Alumni Set Mass, Breakfast

Bishop James E. Kearney will celebrate Mass on Fathers' Day, June 15, for St. Bonaventure alumni and their children.

The Mass, at 8 a.m. in St. Mary's will be followed by breakfast at the Knights of Columbus club, 513 Monroe. Father Crispin McGuire, OFM, vicepresident for student affairs at the university, will be the speaker. Joe Butkowsky, 621-2624, is chairman.

## CPA President

Atlanta (RNS) — Joseph A. Celin, managing editor of the Catholic Universe Bulletin, Cleveland archdiocesan news weekly, was elected the 29th president of the Catholic Press Association during the organization's 1969 convention here.



Sister Mary Edwina, RSM, addressed the women of St. Mary's, Corning, at their recent Rosary-Altar Society breakfast. The speaker, of Notre Dame High School, Elmira, formerly assistant principal of Cardinal Mooney, Rochester, is shown with Father Thomas F. Brennan, pastor and society moderator. Standing are, from the left, Mrs. Adrian Driscoll, president; Mrs. Raymond E. Older, chairman, and Mrs. Joseph E. Falk, co-chairman.

## Church Named in Fremd Will

Helen G. Fremd, who died on Sawyer Street, Feb. 2, left most of her estimated \$19,000 estate to St. Francis of Assisi Church, Whitney Street, according to the will admitted to probate by Surrogate Michael L. Rogers.

Miss Fremd was an Eastman Kodak Co. employee. She lived

on the University of Rochester Alumni Fund is given \$500, and the Volunteers of America receive the household and personal effects. A brother, Charles Fremd of White Plains, inherits \$1,000. The balance of the estate goes to the church.

## Church Council To Hear Demand For \$144 Million

London — (RNS) — Black Power demands for something like \$144 million for various racial causes are to be put before the policy-making Central Committee of the World Council of Churches when it meets at Canterbury, Southeast England, in August.

This emerged at the last session of a WCC-sponsored Consultation on Racism. A decision to this effect was then taken after a surprise interruption of the Consultation proceedings on the previous evening by four Black Power demonstrators.

Led by George Black, an American, they identified themselves as an "ad hoc" group which included two members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the U.S., a Nigerian and an observer.

They presented a Declaration of Revolution which charged white Christians with enslaving and killing hundreds of millions of black people, and demanded reparations "as an immediate attempt to alter existing relations of power."

The group, allowed to make two speeches lasting 20 minutes, said they would return the next day for the Consultation's reply. That reply was read out in open session by Dr. Eugene Blake, general secretary of the WCC.

He told Black, who had returned to the Consultation chamber, "Many of your detailed proposals and others like them have been before us during the week. We as-

## WANTED: A MOM OR DAD

You are needed . . . to act as a Mom or Dad to an orphan in the Holy Land, Ethiopia, or India. The cost is very little. The satisfaction is great. More than half of the 1,400,000 refugees in the Holy Land are boys and girls. A great many are orphans. Some barely exist by begging for milk, food, clothing. Others are in the Holy Father's care — supported by the generous friends of Near East Missions . . . You can 'adopt' one of these children and guarantee him (or her) three meals a day, a warm bed, love and companionship and preparation to earn his own living. An orphan's support costs only \$10 a month . . . \$120 a year. Send us the first month's support and we will send your 'adopted' child's photo. You can write to him or her. The Sister who cares for your child will write to you, if the child cannot write yet. A close bond of love will develop. Please send the coupon with your offering today.

Form for adopting an orphan, including fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip, and a section for 'GIVE CHILD A HOME'.

## Deaths

### Mrs. Connell

Mrs. Mary C. Kavanagh Connell, 79, died May 20, 1969, at St. Ann's Home, where she had lived for six years.

The funeral Mass was offered May 23 in the chapel by her son, Father Patrick C. Connell, of Atlanta, Ga.

Mrs. Connell, a native of Carson City, Mich., had lived in Holy Rosary parish more than 60 years. She was the widow of Leo R. Connell.

Her son is chaplain at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Free Cancer Home in Atlanta. Other survivors are nieces and nephews.

### Father Aubry

Father Hugo Aubry, the oldest member of the Society of the Divine Word died June 1, 1969, at St. Ann's Home. He was 97.

Father Aubry founded the mission order's seminary at Conesus and lived there in semi-retirement for 10 years until illness overtook him in April. A funeral Mass was offered in the seminary chapel Tuesday. Burial was at the order's U.S. headquarters in Techny, Ill.

### Father Aubry

Father Aubry was a native of Germany. He was appointed provincial superior of his order in 1934. This put him in charge of all Divine Word missionaries in the country. It was during this time that he founded St. Michael's in Conesus.

In 1940 he became superior of the seminary, and later was director of the Oneida vineyard and winery operated by the seminary.

As recently as four years ago, Father Aubry was directing the League of St. Michael, a spiritual organization he founded.

A wake service was held Monday evening and the funeral Mass was celebrated Tuesday. Father Aubry was buried in the Divine Word Seminary in Techny, Ill.

### J. R. Curran

The funeral of James R. Curran was held May 24 at St. Augustine's Church.

Mr. Curran of 553 Arnett Road, died May 20, 1969. He was a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

### J. W. Steger

A requiem Mass for John W. Steger of 219 Avery Street was offered May 28 by his son, Father John Steger, in St. Jude the Apostle Church. Father Steger, pastor, concelebrated with six other priests, and Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey preached the homily.

Mr. Steger died May 24, 1969. A veteran of World War I, he was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was a Fourth Degree member of the Knights of Columbus.

Survivors include his widow, Sybilla Drexel Steger; sons Robert, Eugene and George; a daughter, Mrs. James A. Hessek of Easton, Pa.; 12 grandchildren; a brother, George; two sisters, Mrs. Marie Dattie and Mrs. Marguerite Spahn, and several nieces and nephews.

Advertisement for Paul W. Harris Funeral Home, 954 Clifford Ave., featuring services and contact information.

Advertisement for Hedges Memorial Chapel, Inc., 770 East Main at Alexander, Dial 454-7070, featuring a testimonial and funeral services.

Advertisement for Near East Missions, offering adoption services for orphans, with contact information for Terence Cardinal Cooke.

## WANTED ADS

Various classified advertisements including 'WANTED', 'BUSINESS SERVICES', 'HOUSE FOR SALE', and 'MERCHANDISE'.

Advertisement for Connecticut Mutual Life, 140 Garden Street, Hartford, featuring a 'HIGH SCHOOL SCENE-IORS' headline.

Advertisement for 'Wanted Ad Feature' for subscribers to the Courier-Journal, offering a \$1.00 ad space.

Advertisement for 'Rome Heresy' by Father Robert C. Danielou, discussing theological issues and the role of the Vatican.