

Chicago Schools Asked to Admit Part-time Pupils

Chicago — (RNS) — Roman Catholic education officials here have approached Chicago's school board in the hope that some solution may be found to the financial crisis facing parochial schools.

Public school officials have been asked to approve a plan whereby students in Catholic schools will be enrolled in the city schools on a part-time basis for a fixed period of time.

In addition, the Archdiocesan School Board has planned a series of regional meetings in order to gather grassroots attitudes on the parochial schools. A decision on what action the archdiocese will take in regard to its schools is expected by July 1.

Under the plan presented to city school officials, the Catholic pupils would not leave their parochial school classrooms.

The 139,000 children currently enrolled in parochial schools in the city would be enrolled by their parents as half-time public school students from September through December or as full-time students during September and October.

According to Father H. Robert Clark, archdiocesan superintendent of schools who made suggestion in a letter to public school officials, the pupils would remain in their own schools and the Chicago Board of Education would hire the parochial school teachers and pay rent for parochial school facilities.

Father Clark maintained that the cost to the public school board would be negligible because the city's schools would be given additional state aid to match the increase in enrollment. The priest estimated that Catholic school teachers would receive \$4.8 million in public funds if their pupils were enrolled on a part-time basis.

School Superintendent James F. Redmond, who agreed to establish a committee to study the proposal, conceded that many legal and administrative details would have to be worked out before the plan could go into effect.

John Cardinal Cody will confer soon with pastors of the 422 archdiocesan parishes. A survey now being taken on a diocesan-wide basis will be discussed at that session. Some of the questions to be presented, at the pastors' meeting and at the subsequent regional meetings:

- Whether the majority of parishioners would support "a demonstration of strength" in which all Catholic elementary schools would not reopen in September.

- Would parents be willing to enroll their children part-time as public school pupils in order to receive at least some kind of indirect aid from public schools?

- Whether there is any way that a parish can provide funds to help other parishes pay their school bills.

Sisters' Conference

Vatican City—(RNS)—In an ecumenical "first," Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant sisters and nuns will hold a joint meeting in Geneva, Switzerland in August.

Delegates will consider the nature and scope of dedicated religious lives in the contemporary world. The conference will be the first of its kind "in the whole history of the ecumenical movement," according to Vatican Radio.

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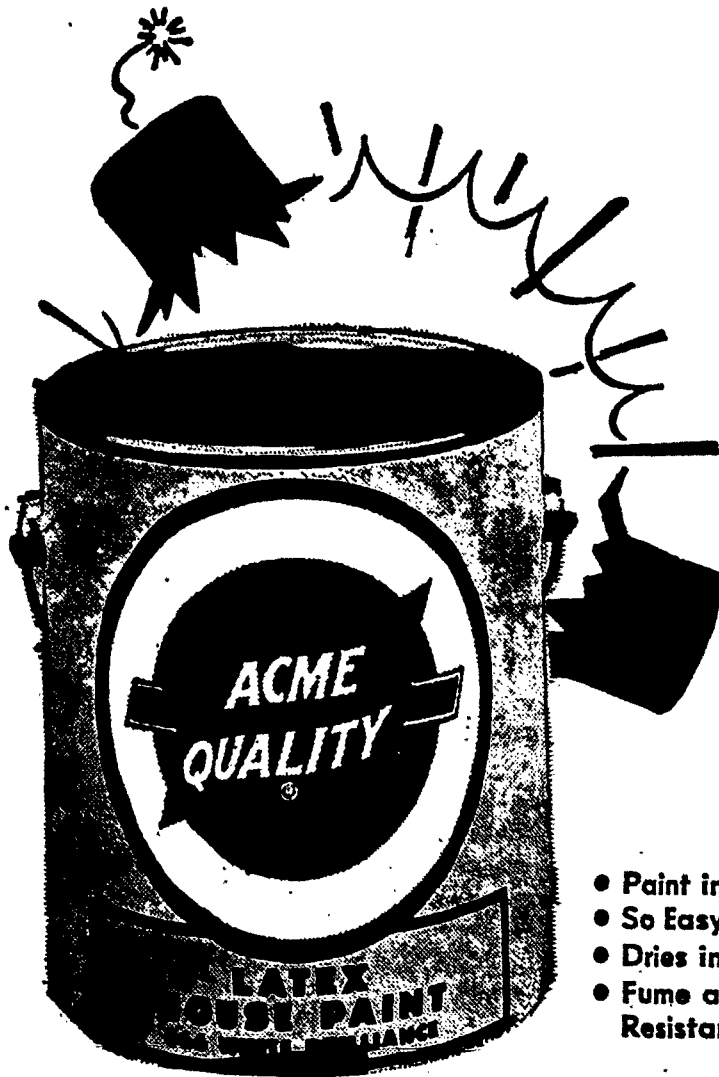
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