



CONFER ON SCHOOLS—Father Daniel Brent, director of the General Education Division of the Diocesan Department of Education, confers with Sister Mary Cyril Smelt, SSJ., school education coordinator.

Cautious Optimism Voiced by Head Of School System

Despite mounting realization of difficulties, Father Daniel Brent, diocesan superintendent of schools, last week expressed a calm note of optimism about continuance of the diocesan school system.

He based his conclusion principally on the preponderate desire of Catholics to maintain the system and on "an increase in public recognition" of the contribution of Catholic schools to the communities.

"We are taking a harder look at the situation," Father Brent declared, "and we realize that some of the proposed solutions will not be universally popular."

"But we are finding that the people are becoming more willing to consider new organizational approaches, particularly proposals for possible consolidations and for reorientation of faculties."

Highlighting signs of progress, he mentioned:

- Passage last spring by the State Legislature of the new Mandated Services Aid Program—a "modest step" approving state aid payments to non-public schools for "mandated services" required from all schools in the state, such as keeping records, conducting examinations and other services.

- Recent formation of the diocesan Education Task Force, which during the coming year will visit various areas of the diocese, study regional situations, and report recommendations on a five-year projection basis.

- Recent establishment of a committee to study specifically the problems of "inner-city" schools.

- Continuing establishment of parish school boards, and plans for formation of regional boards and a diocesan school board.

- Work of the diocesan curriculum committee, which is updating curricula techniques and planning many "in-service programs" for teachers.

While lamenting the closing last June of three Catholic high schools in the diocese — Mt. Carmel in Auburn, King's Prep in Rochester and St. Anthony of Padua in Watkins Glen—Father Brent noted that only two parochial schools were closed during the last year, St. John the Evangelist's in Clyde and St. Aloysius in Auburn.

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