

N.Y. Bishops Back Nixon Welfare Plan

The Family Assistance Plan which would reform the United States Welfare system received a boost this week as the Catholic Bishops of New York State endorsed the program and urged Congress to pass it.

Addressing themselves to the Senate in particular (since the bill is now before the Senate Finance Committee), the state's Catholic bishops call the plan a "major step forward in reform" and urged the senators to "vote favorably for the passage of the program as the House has already done."

The bishops thus join the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and national interfaith welfare and religious organizations in lending their support for what has been called the Nixon Welfare Plan.

Specifically it establishes a minimum subsistence floor for a family of four and makes it a national policy to grant incentives to those on welfare so they can keep what they earn (when they do return to the working force) and thus lift themselves back into the mainstream of working society.

The bishops however, cited "reservations regarding some few provisions" of the bill. Most important among the reservations, it is believed, is the requirement that once a child is of school age his mother must seek work . . . this provision is universally frowned on by most social service groups and has drawn fire from national representatives of Catholic welfare and religious groups when testifying on the bill.

The bishops say while it is not the best of all possible plans, it is "a major step forward in the reform of our welfare system" and as such they urge "support and passage" for the plan.

In citing their approval, the bishops named four aspects most deserving of special notice. They praised in particular the provisions which:

1. separate financial assistance from social services;
2. establish federal responsibility and standards for family assistance;
3. commit the nation to the concept of guaranteeing to its citizens an irreducible minimum of subsistence.
4. include the "working poor" among those eligible for help when needed.

Basically the Family Assistance Program establishes for the first time in history a minimum income level below which no one should be forced to live.

The first standard is \$1,600 for a family of four.

Other provisions include employment registration and retraining. It is in this area where the bishops have most serious reservations since it requires a mother receiving assistance to register for employment as soon as her youngest child is over six (unless her husband or head of the household is already working).

Under the Family Assistance Plan the worker may keep receiving a portion of welfare aid until his income reaches \$3,290. (Under the old plan his assistance would have ended as soon as he was earning \$1,600 for his family of four).

HONOR FOR ASTRONAUT

Doylestown, Pa. — (NC) — Astronaut John L. Swigert Jr., command pilot of the dramatic Apollo 13 moon shot in April which was aborted when an explosion crippled the space craft, was guest of honor at Knights of Columbus Day on Oct. 6 at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa here.

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Page 9-A