

Parochial Aid a Necessity, Nixon Aide Warns

Chicago —(NC)— The chairman of President Nixon's "Panel on Federal Aid to Nonpublic Schools" said here that if some form of government aid is not given to private and parochial schools, these institutions would eventually diminish to but a few, offering good education, "but only for the wealthy."

Dr. Clarence C. Walton, first lay president of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., was questioned on a variety of topics during a news conference, but mainly on future aid possibilities to nonpublic schools.

Asked about the administration's attitudes toward nonpublic schools, he said, "It's perfectly clear to me that this administration has pointed out to the American public that the entire education effort is important, and that the collapse of any segment of it must be avoided."

Walton said he sees this attitude "as a commitment" to doing something to help nonpublic schools. He added, however, that problems are certain to arise when it comes to transferring that commitment "into dollars and cents" for consideration by Congress.

He added that other important issues, "such as the rising welfare costs," are bound to provide tough competition for any federal nonpublic school aid proposals.

Walton also discussed the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court review of a legal challenge to nonpublic school aid legislation in Pennsylvania. That state has approved funds to purchase the secular components of education being taught in nonpublic schools.

Other sources pointed out that the court will likely end up reviewing a consolidation of the Pennsylvania case, as well as substantially similar cases of nonpublic school aid legislation on the books in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Walton ventured that the court's decision may not necessarily constitute the final word on the legality of giving aid to nonpublic schools. "It will all depend on how strict a construction they (the justices) make on their ruling." He indicated that legal challenges might also be forthcoming on other aspects of giving nonpublic school aid.

In discussing the recent ap-

proval given by the Michigan state Supreme Court to allow a voter referendum in the Nov. 3 general election on the nonpublic school aid issue, Walton pointed out that if voters speak out against giving aid, their decision may not be final.

He said a negative vote could be reversed if it is found that the voters' decision deprives other citizens of rights to which they are legally entitled.

Parochial School Enrollment Drops in Buffalo

Buffalo — (RNS) — Catholic schools in this diocese have suffered another sharp drop in enrollments, according to school officials.

The biggest decline came in elementary schools where registration of 57,051 pupils represented a loss of 4,812 or 8.4 per cent.

At the high school level, the total registration stood at 16,950 a drop of 656 students from 1969. This figure included private and diocesan-operated schools and one parish-maintained high school.

The registration loss in Catholic schools in the eighty-county Western New York diocese thus continues a trend which began in the late 1960s. Msgr. Leo Hammerl, school superintendent, attributed the elementary school registration loss to the fact that a significant number of schools are charging tuition for the first time.

Sixty-three elementary schools are now requiring tuition, ranging from \$40 to \$100 per pupil. Tuitions were necessary, Msgr. Hammerl explained, because of the increasing costs of lay teacher salaries and operational expenses.

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Vatican Seeks Answer to Vocation Decline

Rome — (RNS) — A Vatican "summit meeting" on the crisis of religious vocations in the Catholic Church—one involving experts in education and Church leaders—is slated for the immediate future, sources here revealed.

A spokesman for the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education told Religious News Service that the conference, which will also include members of the Roman Curia and delegates from all the national episcopal conferences, was inspired directly by Pope Paul.

The Pope, he said, has shown increasing anxiety over the diminishing number of vocations to the religious life. The pontiff is said to be planning, in collaboration with the world's bishops and educational leaders, a new Church strategy to counter current trends.

A series of summit conferences will be scheduled over the next few years to seek answers to the vocations' problem, it was learned.

The first conference will attempt to analyze and study various proposals made available through national investigations carried out over the past year by most episcopal conferences.

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Connecticut Parochial Aid Ruled Unconstitutional

Hartford, Conn. — (RNS) — A three judge federal court ruled here that state aid to nonpublic schools is unconstitutional, and issued an immediate injunction affecting some \$6 million in Connecticut funds earmarked for parochial aid.

Under the law (Public Act 791) passed by the 1969 Connecticut General Assembly, \$6 million was appropriated for a two-year period to provide grants for reimbursement to nonpublic schools of salaries for teachers of secular subjects and for textbooks covering approved secular subjects.

Of the 263 nonpublic schools applying for aid in Connecticut, 217 were operated by religious bodies. Catholic schools comprised about 210 of the total.

The judges ruled that the law established an "inevitable conflict with the First Amendment bars" and "unconstitu-

tionally advanced religion."

They said the law had the primary effect of "turning over formal and financial sponsorship plus a great deal of administrative control of all secular parts of parochial schools to the state."

At the same time, the judges ruled, it permits the religious aspects of these institutions to remain unchanged.

Msgr. James C. Connelly, school superintendent for the Archdiocese of Hartford, has said many Connecticut parochial schools will be forced to close, fully or partially, unless some form of financial aid is forthcoming. He said he accepted with regret the decision of the court.

State Atty. Gen. Robert Killian and an attorney for the archdiocese indicated that the decision would be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Proposal C...Threat To Mich. Private Schools

Lansing, Mich. — (NC) — The Michigan Catholic Conference's board of directors predicted nearly all 550 Catholic schools in the state would close next June if "Proposal C" is approved by Michigan voters in the Nov. 3 election.

"Proposal C" provides for a constitutional amendment which would prohibit any form of public aid to students attending nonpublic schools.

The MCC board includes Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit and the bishops of the state's four other dioceses. The board said if "Proposal C" is approved "it would be impossible for all but a handful" of Catholic schools to continue operations beyond next June.

The Michigan State Board of Education at a meeting in Pontiac voted 5-2 in urging the state voters to defeat "Proposal C." Thomas J. Brennan of Dearborn, board vice president, said approval of "Proposal C" would be the "eulogy" of nonpublic schools and a "disaster for public schools."

A wide number of candidates

for public office, including Republican Gov. William G. Milliken and his Democratic opponent for the office, State Sen. Sander N. Levin, have said they opposed "Proposal C."

At its last session, the legislature approved a measure calling for state aid to nonpublic school children. It was signed by Gov. Milliken and upheld as constitutional by the Michigan Supreme Court.

The same day the high court approved the measure, it also upheld the validity of a ballot referendum on "Proposal C" for the Nov. 3 elections.

HISTORIC CHURCH SOLD

Chicago — (RNS) — Old St. Mary's Catholic church, a Chicago landmark for more than a century, died a slow death — to the continual drone of an auctioneer's "going, going . . . gone!" It was sold to an oil company. The last Mass in the historic church on South Wabash Avenue was offered in late September, and on Oct. 1 the furnishings from pews to altars to candlesticks, were sold at auction.

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