

Sentiment of Majority: Keep Our Schools Open

Grave concern at talk of the possible closing of parochial schools was expressed by a majority of speakers last week at two area meetings in the diocese.

They were the sixth and seventh meetings conducted throughout the diocese during the last two weeks by the newly-named diocesan Educational Task Force. Held in Dansville and Geneva, they involved parishes in and surrounding those communities. More than 400 parish representatives — priests, Sisters and laity — were at the sessions.

More than 90 per cent of those who spoke felt that the Catholic school system not only should but could be maintained, and most expressed great determination to do so. A minority seemed resigned to the fact that lack of finance and religious vocations will bring closings — or that the schools should be phased out and parishwide programs of religious education of children and adults should be substituted.

Many speakers pleaded for other than "hasty decisions," demanded more time and study on the subject, and contended that it has been only recently that they have been given information on the difficulties and alternatives in the situation.

Opinions and sentiment at the Dansville and Geneva meetings paralleled those at other sessions held by the Task Force—three in Rochester and one in Corning and Auburn.

Representatives of practically every parish at the Dansville and Geneva meetings maintained that their parochial schools were currently in "good shape," and that their parishioners would meet any challenge to keep them functioning not only "for the future of the Church but also for our community."

Three speakers termed the parochial school system "the



"SOS — SAVE OUR SCHOOL" was the theme of some 40 pupils of St. Mary's School in Dansville as they marched outside the school with placards Tuesday night, Nov. 17, prior to meeting there of diocesan Educational Task Force studying the future of parochial education.

last bastion of moral and religious training in a day when permissiveness and rebellion against authority is becoming a way of life."

All seven meetings saw only a relatively small minority who advocated closing the parochial schools because they serve less than half the Catholic children of a parish, and that monies for Catholic education be spent for a broadened Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CDD) religious education program for all children and adults. Most speakers claimed the CDD program would be ineffective and would not attract sufficient financial support.

Task Force members, headed by Father Daniel Brent, diocesan superintendent of general education, and his associate, Father Leon Hart, CSB., and including 20 priests, nuns and laity from throughout the diocese, noted that their role is not to make decisions but to present some general guidelines and recommendations to Bishop Hogan.

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