

'Massive Closings' of Schools Forecast by Cardinal Dearden

Detroit — (RNS) — There will soon be "massive closings" of parochial schools in Detroit, said Archbishop John Cardinal Dearden in an address here.

"It will be necessary to close a number of our schools in the January semester, and others will close in June," the cardinal told 700 parish council and education leaders meeting at Rosary high school.

About 145,000 students are enrolled in archdiocesan schools.

"We will try to limit the number of closings in January to spare the child who is making the transition," the cardinal said.

While not giving definite figures on the fate of 328 Catholic schools, Archbishop Dearden made it clear that:

• The archdiocese cannot afford an extensive parochial school system without state aid.

• He will not tolerate schools that are open only to those able to pay tuition.

• He does not favor leasing archdiocesan schools to the public school system.

• He feels that the crisis in the schools may lead to a different form of community service, in a broader context, for the church.

The first schools to be affected, the cardinal reported, would be those operating on a "shared time" basis. State aid for the shared time program will cease on Dec. 18. Efforts will be made to keep those schools operating for the remainder of December.

Cardinal Dearden said that 105 schools are in "very serious trouble" financially. Others are operating in the black, he said.

Michigan voters refused to approve aid to parochial schools

in the recent elections. The Archdiocese of Detroit, which spends \$33 million annually on its schools, has been operating on a deficit budget for the past two years, the cardinal reported, "in expectation of state aid now lost."

Even with state aid, the cardinal said, some schools would

have to be closed. "The funding of schools is now limited through the parish funds and tuition. It lays upon us some concern of being able to finance the schools for any considerable length of time," he added.

The deficit for the operation of the schools last year was \$2

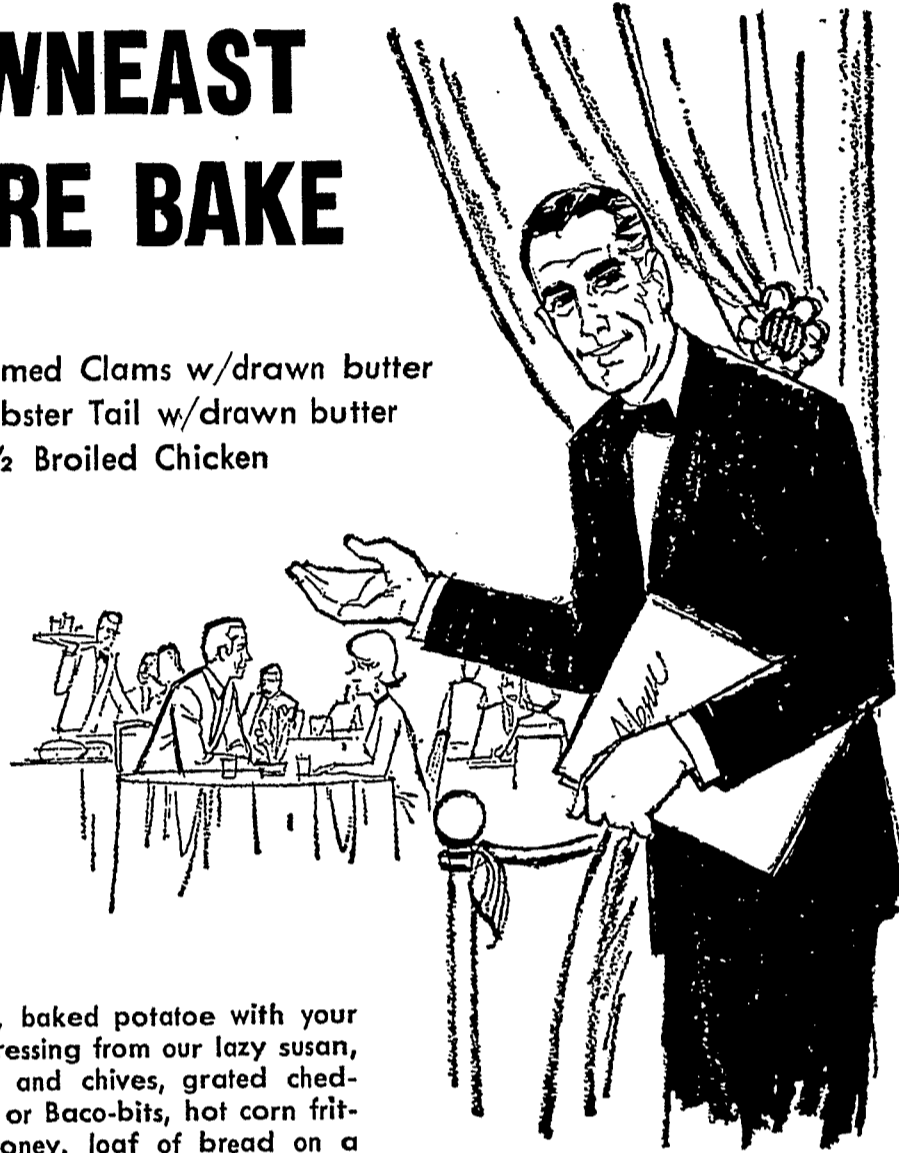
million throughout the archdiocese and \$1.7 million for inner-city schools alone, he said.

He does not favor retaining parochial schools if high tuition costs exclude the poor. "The Catholic school system's greatest glory is its ability to serve the total community," said Cardinal Dearden.

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