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For One Thin Nickel

In spite of the rising cost of living, students at the Loyola University campus in Westchester, Calif., can receive spiritual advice for the price of one thin nickel. In the manner of Lucy in "Peanuts" comic strip, Father Tom Higgins, an assistant chaplain at the university, has set up a booth to dispense advice. According to Father Higgins, who says he also gives trading stamps, business is booming. (RNS)

Blaine War Off?

Parochiaid Backers May Shift Tactics

Proponents of state aid to religious schools have virtually abandoned their long campaign for repeal of the Blaine Amendment, according to the New York Times.

Instead, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Jewish leaders and legislative proponents will press for a plan to provide state aid of up to $250 a child for parochial school tuition at the elementary and secondary level, the story, bylined by Frank Lynn, stated.

(A spokesman for the Rochester Diocese confirmed that the story covers the situation generally and that the diocese has been in steady contact with the State Catholic Committee on the matter.)

According to the Times report:

The enactment of such a program, whose cost is estimated at $50 million a year, would represent a major breakthrough, since it would be pegged to tuition rather than to payments earmarked for textbooks, transportation, health and administration.

The proponents of parochial school aid believe that the direct-aid plan, which was introduced at the last session of the Legislature but died in committee, would be constitutional, "with or without Blaine."

However, they are fearful that a controversy over the repeal of the Blaine amendment would jeopardize any legislation providing additional aid to parochial schools. A constitutional amendment for repeal was passed by the Legislature last year and was scheduled for final legislative passage at the session starting next week.

Declaring that advocates of parochial school aid would not press for final passage of the repealer, a high source in the Catholic Church said that "the issue of viable assistance to parents is more important than the theoretical issue of Blaine." The source added that "Blaine is a lawyer's issue."

The Catholic position was supported by Rabbi Morris Sherer, executive president of Agudah Israel of America, a national Orthodox Jewish organization that, along with Catholic bishops in the state, has spearheaded the campaign for state aid to parochial schools.

"I don't believe that it would benefit the nonpublic school-children to spark a controversy over the repeal of Blaine," Rabbi Sherer said.

An influential Republican legislator who has played a major role in the parochial school aid campaign, but who asked not to be identified, said there was a "serious question" about whether the repeal of the Blaine Amendment would be approved by the state's voters even after the required passage at two sessions of the Legislature.

"The parochial schools can get as much help as they need under the present constitution," the legislator said.

He and other proponents of parochial school aid said that tuition grants would be constitutional because they represent aid to parents rather than to schools even though the money would eventually go to religious schools.

The major sponsors of tuition grant bills are two Republicans, State Sen. Edward J. Speno of East Meadow, L.I., and Assemblyman Alfred D. Lerner of Richmond Hill, Queens.

Bishop Sheen

Housing Foundation

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A Tale of Madrid

Madrid — (RNS) — Generalissimo Francisco Franco commuted the death sentences imposed on six Basque nationalists by a court-martial in Burgos.

A statement by the Ministry of Information said the 78-year-old chief of state had reduced their death sentences to 30 years each.

General Franco's decision, in the face of worldwide clemency appeals, followed a cabinet meeting. The session was called to act on the ratification of the court-martial sentences by Lt. Gen. Tomas Garcia Rebuli, commander of the Burgos Military Region.

The six men were found guilty of complicity in the killing of a political police chief, Meliton Manzanas, in August 1968. Three of the six received death sentences each on the grounds that they had committed separate crimes of murder and "armed subversion."

Technically, commutation of the death sentences in the case of these three men means that each has a 60-year prison term. However, by Spanish law no one may serve more than 30 years in prison.

Nine other defendants — including two Roman Catholic priests — who drew long prison

(Continued on Page 2)

A Tale of Two Cities Moscow

Moscow—(RNS)—The Soviet Union's high court commuted the death sentences of two Jews convicted in the Leningrad hijacking conspiracy and awarded them relatively light 15-year prison terms.

At the same time, labor camp sentences of three other defendants were reduced while the sentences of confinement for six others were upheld.

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