Task Force Report:

Hope for Schools Future

The ETF — although not constituted to explore the parochial CCD programs — stated that "greater resources in personnel and finances will need to be invested in religious education for public schoolers."

Father Brent explained the group's conviction that the continuation of the Catholic school "system" comes second to the religious education program.

"Religious education per se will need more resources in years ahead. As these expand they may draw somewhat from the present resources enjoyed by the parish school. It's regrettable that the schools will suffer, but we believe that adequate finances and effort must increasingly go to the whole religious education program."

Five major programs on economics were presented suggesting how the diocese and parishes might finance the elementary schools and reverse the "cost squeeze."

Increasing income by intensively "selling" parents and parishioners on their school's unique values, finding new contributors among parish-school alumni, soliciting endowments and persisting in campaigns to obtain parent-tuition aid from New York State were among the suggestions.

Costs could be reduced in many instances, the report said, by cooperative buying services shared among a group of parishes and by consolidating both convents and school buildings where proximity of parishes and enrollments made the measures feasible.

The Bishop would have some control of diocesan disbursement of funds to schools in financial difficulty if the parishes

would accept a "salary pool" proposal and would also contribute by assessment to an "emergency fund" to be kept ready for rescue of troubled parishes, the report said.

To fight the teacher-drain of Sisters leaving the classrooms and to attract qualified lay teachers, the ETF recommended that the Catholic school system be made "highly attractive as an apostolate and a profession."

Salary scales must be improved and the philosophy of Catholic education should be reformed, it said.

Discussing the Sisters' status the ETF suggested "sabbatical leaves for Sisters who have been teaching a long time to provide intellectual stimulation sometimes lacking after many years in the elementary grades."

It also urged establishment of a "personnel board for teaching Sisters with the possibility of applying for positions in any Catholic school rather than only those staffed by their own congregation."

The possibility of using more lay people in teaching for limited periods, like VISTA workers or Peace Corps volunteers, or in providing auxiliary services in the classrooms was proposed.

Lay teacher appreciation programs were urged for parishes. To publicize the lay teachers' qualifications in the parochial school and to encourage more contact between parents and the lay teachers would help parents understand the contribution of the lay teachers to the schools, it was said.

To turn back declining enrollment the ETF called for an intense recruitment of primary graders, information programs

to help the whole parish know its school's virtues and improvement of spirit within the school and between teachers and parents.

Opening new kindergartens, getting pre-schoolers' parents interested in the parish school and encouraging school visitations were cited for helping raise school enrollments. General public relations suggestions urged more pulpit promotion of parochial education and newsletters to parents.

Members of the Task Force were: Sisters Ruth Agnes Kesselring, SSJ., M. Stephania Waldeck, SSND., Ann Miller, RSM.; D. John Herbert of Auburn, William J. Mc Donald of Geneva, Dr. Thomas R. Curran of Elmira, Robert J. Fier and C. Norman Driscoll of Rochester, Msgr. William M. Roche of Ithaca, Fathers James Marvin of Wayland, Joseph Gersitz, SJ., of Rochester and George C. Vogt of Henrietta.

Department of Education staffers besides Father Brent on the Task Force were Fathers Albert Shamon, Gerald Connor, Leon Hart, CSB., and Daniel Holland.

Besides plenary sessions in Geneva, sections of the Task Force dialogued with parish priests, religious and lay school board members in open meetings held in Auburn, Corning, Dansville and Rochester. Elmira parishes expressed their concern by electing a Coordinating Committee which produced a full regional plan for the ETF to study.

The Task Force, Father Brent

stated, had considered four options in analyzing facts and opinions in their 3 months search. They have been asked to offer the Bishop criteria for deciding whether the diocese should:

● Maintain a maxi-system of schools, keeping a major proportion of the children of the diocese in their parish schools.

● Settle for a mini-system, holding onto a selected half of the present parochial system by consolidation, financial adjustments and reassignment of Sisters.

● Close the whole school system within the year.

● Permit survival of the wealthier schools, letting others gradually give up when their finances forced them to close.

"We may not be able to reach this choice of providing for the maxi-number," Father Brent said. "But the people have asked us to tell them what can be done. This report gives parishioners their own choice to save their schools.

"It relieves the Bishop of setting a list for closing and leaves it up to the parishes that these action programs, used by individual parishes and regional groupings will reverse the forces which threaten the schools now."

Dispute Penna. Abortion Law

Pittsburgh — (RNS) — Two Allegheny County Judges have ruled Pennsylvania's 1939 law prohibiting abortion to be unconstitutional.

Three women, who admitted to having had abortions challenged the law when hospital records on abortions were subpoenaed by District Attorney

Robert Duggan. He was attempting to prove that the hospital's physicians had conspired to commit illegal abortions.

Judges Loren L. Lewis and Anne X. Alpern called the law unconstitutional because "it prohibited illegal abortions and implies there can be legal abortions without specifying them."

In 1970 Center County Judge R. Paul Campbell also declared the law invalid, calling it an invasion of the right of individual and marital privacy. So far the county rulings have applied only to the counties in which they were made, but state officials have appealed the decisions.

A bill to liberalize the abortion law was killed by the last session of the state legislature.