The Blaine Amendment ... a Red Herring?

Albany - "Aid to the parent, now, is our prime concern," the executive segretary of the Catholic School Superintendents for New York State said this week.

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J. Alan Davitt commented on a story which An appeared in the Analysis New York Times (12-31-70) and in the (1-6-71) in Courier-Journal which a change was cited in

ers of non-public school aid in the state.

The report indicated that the main emphasis for parochiaid proponents this year will be on legislative action in the form of 'a tuition aid bill and that constitutional action in the form of an attempt to repeal the Blaine amendment will play a secondary and almost negligible role.

"The Blaine amendment has become an inflammatory and unproductive issue," Davitt said.

"We are interested in real help," now, which will be constitution al with or without Blaine."

The Blaine amendment has, long been cited by foes of nonpublic school aid as a constitutional bar. However legislative and judicial action have all but cut the ground out from undertheir arguments, according to Davitt.

"It is apparent to parents, supporters, and educators in our schools that what is needed is help . . . not a long, drawnout squabble over a constitu-tional provision that has become a red herring.

"What's happened," Davitt said, "is an alignment, judicially, between the First Amendment and the Blaine Amendment. So that now, as interpreted, Blaines is no more restrictive than the federal First. This is particu-larly noticeable in the Allen case in which the Supreme. Court approved the use of public school paid-for textbooks by the non-public school stu-

Father Groppi

Chicago —(RNS)— A federal

court here has upheld the right

of the Wisconsin legislature to

impose a six-month jail sen-

tence on Father James E. Grop-

Father Groppi will not go to

jail, however. The law under

which he was sentenced for con-

tempt. on charges growing out

of a welfare demonstration at

the state capital, says that such

a sentence may not last beyond

the life of the legislative session which imposed it. The ses-

Goes Free

pi of Milwaukee.

Another indication of the minor role Blaine p fact that the 1970 Legislature's Mandated Services Law is being challenged on the basis of the federal Flyst Amendment and not Blaine.

The Mandated Services Law provides reimbursement to non-public schools for examination and attendance expenses on the basis of a per-pupil count. First payments under the 1970 law will be made to the schools in February.

Another instance Davitt cited is the pending decision in the Supremé Court in the Pennsyl-vania Aid case. A bill which provides for purchase of secu-lar services by Pennsylvania in lar services by Pennsylvania in the non-public schools is being challenged in the Supreme Court. The court is expected to rule on the case this Spring.

"This (Pennsylvania, Case) decision," Davitt said, "is expected to set guidelines which will cover many areas of aid to the non-public school student. No matter what we do in New York this decision of the Supreme Court will determine what can be done.

What I am saying is that whether or not Blaine is repealed this year, or any year, the problem of aid to the nonpublic school remains. Our efforts, then, are on aid to the parent in the form of tuition grants."

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Cameroon Bishop Sentenced to Death

(RNS) Roman Catholic Bishop Albert Ndong. mo of Nkongsmaba, Cameroon, was sentenced to death by a military tribunal here oncharges of plotting to assassi-nate President Ahmadou Ahidjo and other leading members of the government of this tiny West African nation.

Two other men were also given the death penalty. Fifty-eight alleged plotters were given prison terms ranging-from life to five years. Fifteen others were acquitted.

A Yaounde Radio broadcast stressed that there is no appeal under Cameroon law, but the president had the power to grant clemency.

If President Ahidjo does not commute the death sentences, Bishop Ndongmo, Gabriel Ta-beu, and Celestin Takala will be shot at a public execution.

In an earlier court-martial that ended Dec 30, Bishop Ndongmo was sentenced to life

imprisonment on charges of plotting to overthrow the gov-

In the second trial, the prosecutor said Bishop Ndongmo and Gabriel Tabeu, a self-styled prophet and friend of the bishop, led a quasi-religious organi-zation. The Holy Cross for the liberation of Cameroon," that planned the killing of President Ahidjo.

The prelate denied that he participated in, any planned coup d'etat aimed at violently overthrowing the government. He also denied that he had plotted to kill the Cameroon president.

In a September 1970 edition that was banned in Cameroon, the French weekly, L'Express, asserted that the Ahidjo gov-ernment had done everything possible to discredit Bishop Ndongmo. His influence on the young was "immense." and his social-concern activities "no doubt embarrassed certain economic relics of colonization," the journal said.

Study Questions Affluence Of Urban Catholic Families

priest-educator suggested here school children are not as, "middle class" as society is led to believe, and that they may have reached the "limits of ability" to support their parochial school

Citing a hitherto unpublished study of some 230,000 New York Catholic school families, Msgr. George A. Kelly said there were "corroborating data" to indicate that urban Catholics, while not the "poorest of the poor," comprise the major bloc of the "nearly poor" in America's cities.

Jamaica. N.Y. - (RNS) - A when dioceses like New York, Brooklyn or Buffalo move to place new money burdens on the parents of Catholic school children they may be placing those burdens on those least able to carry them."

> Msgr. Kelly said that closely related to the school question are others concerning welfare and work.

Explaining that a \$5,000 annual income for a welfare family of five — with additional federal, state and local benefits -can be supportivel he noted that a Catholic father with the same number of dependents will have to earn much more to achieve the same level, especially since he pays taxes and pays for services like Catholic education.



BISHOP NDONGMO

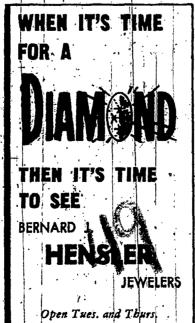


Msgr. Kelly, a former New York archdiocesan school ad-ministrator who holds the John A. Flynn Chair in Contempo-rary Catholic Problems at St. John's University, said that should the data prove substan-tially correct "then serious ques-tions or raised for society it. tions are raised for society itself and its governmental and philanthropic aims."

Drawing from the 1968 Cath-olic school families study com-piled by Louis R. Gary at the request of the New York archrequest of the New York arch-diocese and the Brooklyn dio-cese, he noted its tentative con-clusions that Catholic school parents have one child more to educate, that not one out of five breadwinners is a profes-sional man, that the income level is "well-below" national norms, and that one of ten fam-illes subsists "below the pov-erty level. erty level.

Indicating that the New York picture might fairly represent other urban areas in the United States, Msgr. Kelly observed:

"When the Catholic parents says: I cannot afford more," he may be speaking more of the truth than up to this moment anyone realizes. Consequently Courier-Journal



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