

# Bishop Explains Necessity of Parent Aid Bill

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families of nearly 900,000 school children in this State. All religious groups whose faith has prompted them to establish schools imparting religious and moral values share our concern. Without a word of alteration the observations and plea of the American Orthodox Jewish Rabbi Moshe Sherer are mine. I quote from a reprint of his article in *The Jewish Ledger* which recently appeared in our *Courier-Journal*:

"Is it fair, is it American to deprive parents of an alternative type of school for their children? The entire Orthodox Jewish Community which alone has built the huge nationwide network of Yeshivos (Jewish day schools) is united in advocating government support of the secular subjects taught in religious schools. It is a myth to charge that more than one school system in our country would result in 'inferior education'. I was a delegate to the White House Conference on Children, where the thousands of participating educators clamored for more diversity and competition in education to help achieve quality education. Without competition any enterprise will stagnate, vegetate and ultimately be corrupted. American

education is not a monolithic straitjacket, leaving the parent no freedom of choice as to the type of education his child should have. Such a monopoly would run against the grain of American democracy."

"It is no longer true that our nation's public schools are religiously neutral. Actually they are teaching a new religion of secular humanism and they often contaminate children's life-values with cynical concepts of permissiveness and self-indulgence."

Is there any hope for a better day for us in New York State who are concerned with education without discrimination? I believe there is. True, our Legislature is being faced with many demands for public money — city-relief, welfare, drug-control, highways. But no single request for State assistance is as vital to the future life of our communities as the need for strengthening our entire educational system — both public and private schools.

Unless our youth is well-educated — given the best teachers, the finest curriculum, the most adequate school equipment, the richest possible opportunities to learn facts and values — our whole state will suffer.

Increasing funds for education should be the primary concern of our legislature before the current session ends in an-

other month or so. We must speak out to tell our lawmakers and the Governor this truth.

I am strongly concerned with the financial needs of our public school system as well as our private, religious school system. As a citizen I want every child to have the best possible opportunity for the fullest education his parents desire.

As a Bishop and a Pastor of souls I am concerned that some 97,000 Catholic boys and girls who attend our public schools within the counties of our diocese should not be handicapped in their school year because the Legislature or any school districts failed to finance the public school system adequately.

But I am even more responsible for the educational welfare of pupils in the parochial elementary schools and the 10 high schools of our Catholic school system. Their future is in great danger today. These 42,000 pupils and their parents face a frightening financial crisis and this is where the political action comes in which I invite you to share.

Lack of public assistance will mean the death of many of our parochial schools.

The facts are very simple:— the private or nonpublic school system will be priced out of existence unless state aid helps such schools meet the financial crisis they are facing today. Costs for every part of the nonpublic school maintenance have escalated so fast that the parents and other parishioners who support them cannot continue to keep these schools open.

Our people have been reluctantly forced to close four elementary schools and three high schools in this diocese in the past two years for want of money. Many more parish schools will sadly close and send their pupils to the public schools within the next four or five years unless aid is given to the parents of nonpublic school students as quickly as possible. Our figures show that three out of four Catholic schools in Monroe County may have to close in the next five years unless public aid is found.

The average citizen's concern over this situation should be aroused for many reasons: First — the freedom of parents to choose the education which they believe is most suitable for their children will be totally lost if the private and religious school has to shut down. This freedom of choice to seek the special values desired for one's children will be taken away from many who now enjoy it if the private and religious school has to have so high a tuition that only the affluent can afford it.

The existence of a private and a church school system in the history of American education has been no enemy of the public school nor a threat to the public school system. Such a diversity of schools is part of American democracy because it has allowed freedom of choice to those who wanted special educational values they could not find in the public schools and because it offered healthy competition to the public school system. Our own President has publicly endorsed this diversity in education.

The second reason for every citizen's concern over the threatened closing of the large parochial school system for want of money to operate is this: If there is a flood of 800,000 nonpublic school pupils poured into the public school system in the next few years, the extra cost of absorbing them and educating them will be an additional one billion dollars each year for the taxpayers of the state.

Add to that the certain cost of 2 or 3 billion dollars of public tax money to build or rent classrooms for these pupils and

you will see how the taxpayer will be crushed if the state offers no aid to the parents to keep these 800,000 in the parochial schools.

But supposing the parochial schools do not all close at once, but only gradually? The New York State education department estimates that the average community spends about \$1,100 to \$1,400 to educate each pupil in the public school system. Now if you multiply this figure by the several hundred thousand parochial school children who may have to vacate their schools each year from now on, you will appreciate what the state will save if it helps parents beginning this year to keep the parochial schools operating.

The Parent-Aid Bill to which we hope the State Legislature will give a favorable vote this spring is a plan to help parents meet a part of the cost of sending their children to a nonpublic school. It is named after two men who introduced it in Albany — the late beloved Senator Edward Speno and Assemblyman Lerner.

The Bill has been carefully drawn to pay parents a portion of the cost of the secular part of their child's education. It deliberately excludes use of any state money for that portion of the education which is religious.

It computes the grant to the parents according to the income of the family. Families with small net income could receive up to \$150 for each child in the parochial elementary grades and up to \$250 for each child in a private high school. As the family income rises the aid from the state would be less.

It is important to reemphasize that the Parent-Aid Bill which we are anxious to see passed pays only part of the tuition cost in the nonpublic school. It does not pay for that portion of the tuition which is for religious studies, and it pays a set proportion of the remainder of the tuition.

The Bill in effect says to parents: "If you want this kind of nonpublic education for your child you must pay 65 percent of the tuition for the secular subjects. The state will pay 35 percent of that part of the tuition to help you keep your child in these schools if you want this freedom."

This Parent-Aid Bill meets the test for constitutionality set down by the U.S. Supreme Court in a series of decisions which declared, in principle, that public money may finan-

cially support secular objectives which can be achieved through qualified religious or nonpublic agencies.

This bill directly aids parents who can no longer bear the cost of the education they have chosen for their children. It protects their freedom to raise their children in the nonpublic school but it does not pay the whole cost of that education, merely the secular side of the curriculum expenses.

My request to you tonight is an easy one. If you share my concern for the continuance of a religious school system you can help keep the nonpublic school alive. We ask you to write to your area legislator to urge that the Speno-Lerner Bill be moved from committee discussion into public debate in the Senate and the Assembly. Ask your legislator to vote favorably for this Bill.

If you do not know where to write, I suggest that you ask your pastor to give you the names of our state Senators and Assemblymen.

I suggest that all of you smother your legislators with mail to let them know that we are concerned people and that if they represent us this is the representation we expect of them.

Above all I beg you tonight not to succumb to the temptation to apathy. Don't ask yourself, 'what difference will my letter make'. Let me tell you that our State Catholic committee assured the Bishops of New York State just a week ago that mail already received by our legislators from concerned parents has made a noticeable impact and so have the massive appearances of our students on the Capitol steps.

I have been pleased this past week to encourage the apostolic zeal of many of our Catholic high school students who have volunteered to plead the cause of Catholic education from the pulpits of our churches. Their enthusiasm and message have my full endorsement and pastors have been so notified. Their generosity confirms my faith in youth. But, young (or old) — let us all act now to save our schools — never forgetting the validity of the challenge: "Better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness."

*Joseph L. Hogan*  
Bishop of Rochester

## New Board to Push For Parish Councils

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The Priests' Council discussed the desired diocesan council at several meetings in the Fall of 1970 and heard analyses of the value of such a body.

The new council, which took office in January also, covered the issue thoroughly and on March 2 strongly urged the Bishop to undertake formation of a future pastoral body by regionalizing the diocese, establishing an educational program on the function of the future council and mandating parish councils.

They asked him to appoint a full-time coordinator and in time name a steering committee to work out the formation, shape and scope of the council-to-be.

Bishop Hogan's first response was the appointing of Bishop McCafferty and Msgr. Mulcahy.

### Msgr. Ball

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Msgr. Ball was born in Rochester and educated at St. Monica's School, St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries. Ordained June 11, 1921, he was assigned to teach at Rochester Catholic High School, later Aquinas Institute, where he remained for seven years. After his tour of duty as DeSales principal, he was appointed pastor of St. Theresa's in Stanley, and St. Mary's, Rushville. In 1940, he moved to the pastorate of St. Patrick's, Dansville.

Bishop Kearney named him a dean in 1954, and two years later Pope Pius XII made him a domestic prelate.

Msgr. Ball's brother is pastor emeritus of St. Rose, Lima.

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Courier-Journal



BISHOP McCAFFERTY

A survey presented to the Bishop and the Priests' Council last Fall indicated that there are 67 functioning councils in the diocese, 37 other parishes have plans, and 88 have no plans. Close to half of the parish groups are policy-making, more than half are advisory to the pastor.

The Albany diocese is the only diocese in the state which has a functioning pastoral council.

### The Stations

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- to the women.
- Condolenter—to feel pain with another.
- IX. Jesus falls a third time.
- Constanter—consistently.
- X. Jesus is stripped of His garments.
- Totaliter—totally.
- XI. Jesus is nailed on the cross.
- Acriter—bitterly.
- XII. Jesus dies on the cross.
- Peramenter—very lovingly.
- XIII. Jesus is taken down from the cross.
- Desolenter—forsaken.
- XIV. Jesus is laid in the Tomb.
- Expectanter—hopefully.

These words are to minds and hearts, what yeast is to dough—given a little time and they will make them rise.

Wednesday, March 31, 1971

## Parent Aid Poll Reveals Lawmakers' Strong Support

Albany — In an impressive display of support for parent aid legislation, more than a third of the state senators and nearly a third of the assemblymen have gone on record in the statewide Catholic newspaper poll on the Speno-Lerner bill.

Statewide, 21 senators of the first 27 to reply and 48 of the 64 assemblymen who have answered have registered wholehearted support for parent aid. Several others have indicated approval of the concept of assisting pupils in non-public schools, but have not endorsed the Speno-Lerner bill.

(Eight of the area legislators polled by the *Courier-Journal* have said they would vote for the bill. Two said they were opposed to it. Others either did not answer or offered no firm commitment.)

"It's a remarkable display of support," said J. Alan Davitt, executive secretary for the State Catholic School Superintendents. "Considering all the problems the Legislature is

having, it's positively amazing to have so many legislators come out for a bill even before it is out of committee," he added.

"It proves without a shadow of a doubt that there is strong support for the concept of parent aid in both houses. It clearly indicates that the bill should come out of committee and be voted on the floor," Davitt said.

Favorable comments received by various newspapers included these:

"I support and will continue to support the Parent-Aid Bill," said Assemblyman Thomas W. Brown.

"I have committed my full support to the parent aid legislation," said Assemblyman Frank A. Carroll, because "the ratio gap between minimal subsidizing at the present time and maximum mandated sky-high expenditures for the future is too great for me not to act to support this proposed legislation."