

Catholic School Executives Urge Aid Plan

St. Petersburg Beach, Fla. — (RNS) — More than 200 Catholic school executives meeting here urged President Nixon to formulate some kind of federal income tax credit plan for parents of non-public school children as the only means of preserving "educational options" now provided by non-public schools.

They also asked the President to arrange a meeting of administration aides with Catholic school leaders to confer on possible steps in the direction of tax-credit legislation.

Approved in a resolution passed during the final day of the annual Fall meeting of the U.S. Catholic school superintendents, the telegram to Nixon was signed by Father Bernard

A. Cummins of San Francisco, president of the superintendents' association.

"It is our considered opinion," the telegram said, "that such a tax program is compatible with existing guidelines generated by the various court decisions and by the modern social and political climate of this nation."

Calling for the launching of "proper legislative activities" at the earliest opportunity, the administrators suggested as a first step in the process an immediate meeting between appropriate administration officials and a delegation of Catholic educational leaders.

Those specifically named to represent Catholic school inter-

ests are: Auxiliary Bishop William McManus of Chicago, who heads the Education Committee of the U.S. Catholic Confer-

ence; Father C. Albert Koob, O. Praem., executive director of the National Catholic Educational Association; Dr. Edward

R. D'Alessio, director of the USCC's Division of Elementary and Secondary Education; and Father Cummins.

Educator Downplays Aid As Factor in School Issue

St. Petersburg Beach, Fla. — (RNS) — The solution to Catholic school fiscal problems "is not in state and federal aid" and if some form of government help is provided it will not "make that big dent in the financial problems we face," a group of Catholic school administrators were told here.

Father Michael O'Neill, superintendent of schools for the Spokane Wash., Catholic diocese, told 250 participants in the annual Fall meeting of U.S. Catholic school superintendents, that "Catholic schools in the foreseeable future are going to have to be supported by the Catholic community."

Ruling out placing the burden for parochial school financing on only those persons who use the schools and pay tuition, Father O'Neill said he was confident that "we can work out a viable relationship where it will be clear to parish leaders and clear to diocesan leaders . . . that Catholic schools are serving them . . . and thus deserve generous subsidy levels."

He added that if the Catholic educational system has a problem, "it is a problem of suc-

cess," Father O'Neill cited instances where Catholic parishes have closed the school and it has resulted in a "vacuum" which made it all too clear "that not much else of any interest was going on" in the parish.

Father O'Neill declared that the current turmoil in the Church should not be viewed as criticism of the Catholic schools or Catholic school personnel but "as a very strong criticism of people who are supposed to be doing other things in the Church and who just haven't done a great deal that is worth talking about."

"And I mean, most emphatically and specifically, people working in the parish ministry," he asserted. "I don't think that bishops and religious provincials can be excused for failing to see oftentimes that not enough has been done with adults in the Catholic Church. Teaching goes on at many levels and I would argue that one cannot even have an effective Catholic grade school unless one does an awful lot of teaching with the parents' adult religious education."

The Catholic administrators told Nixon that they have been "greatly encouraged" by his interest in non-public school education, which they said was "in very real danger of passing from the American scene."

In August, a federal tax-credit plan aimed at assisting parents of non-public school children was described as the "most promising option" open to President Nixon if he decides to urge congressional action to keep non-public schools open.

The analysis came from Bishop McManus, speaking as a member of the President's four-man Panel on Non-Public Education. He said the panel was considering this sort of federal-aid proposal.

The panel, established in April 1970, is expected to give its final report in March. Since the June 23 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court striking down direct state aid to non-public schools, the panel has been concentrating on programs aimed at assisting students rather than the schools themselves.

In Minnesota, a tax-credit program is already under way, though it is being challenged in the courts. Parents of non-public school children are allowed to deduct education expenses from the state income tax.

The Bishop's Letter

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people who assist our youth to find God. It is more than "teaching religion." It is an apostolate of helping students grapple with the Gospel message in its contemporary contexts, and in the fullness of its implications. It is supporting them in their quest for values.

My prayer for teachers is that this day of community recognition will give them new courage and sense of purpose in their vocation. May theirs be the satisfaction that has rewarded teachers for as long as they have labored — that of seeing the light of truth and goodness shine more brightly in someone else because their lives have crossed each other's paths.

Your devoted Shepherd and Teacher

Joseph L. Hogan

Bishop of the Diocese of Rochester

Married Men Ordination Still Seen as Possibility

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Pope must give the required permission; the number must be limited strictly in relation to local needs; their family life must be exemplary. They must be well-liked and acceptable to the people; they must be submitted to a period of trial in apostolic work before ordination; their ministry should be limited to only certain priestly functions; they must be of mature age.

Bishop Alexander Carter of Sault St. Marie, Canada, thought that those opposing married priests were saying that most of the priests' jobs could be given over to the laity, such as distribution of communion, baptism, preaching and teaching. He felt that this was eroding the priesthood of its meaning and claimed that those opposing the ordaining of married men were making an "absolute" out of celibacy.

Cardinal Bernard Alfrink of Utrecht, Holland, presented the argument that the duty of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to present the Eucharist to the Christian people.

Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens of Malines-Brussels, Belgium, laid the obligation on the bish-

ops. The bishops have the duty to supply priests to the communities that need them, the people have a right to the Eucharist, and Christ demands that He be present among men by the Eucharist. If this means ordaining married men, then that is what must take place.

Cardinal William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland, gave the best set of arguments for the counter-position. He summed up the situation by saying so far there were two schools of thought. One held that there should be no change in the law while the other held that in places where there is a scarcity of priests married men of mature years might be ordained. He was for the first position as he had two difficulties with the second.

Once introduced, it would be impossible to confine the ordination of married men within the limits suggested. One could not allow it for one European country and exclude it from the rest of Europe. You could not even allow it outside of Europe and exclude it from Europe. The same was true of the other conditions, for example—the age limitations.

His second difficulty was that the reason principally used was the shortage of priests. He felt that the experiences of the Oriental Rites did not show that the introduction of married clergy would cause an increase in vocations. In fact, it would have a catastrophic effect on vocations in many countries. In fact, the only reason for introducing the idea was to allow optional celibacy which none of the Synod Fathers wanted.

Reaction

By FATHER DANIEL BRENT
Superintendent of Schools

I endorse the concept of adult education. Father Collins is working hard to develop diocesan programs and to assist parishes with adult programs. However, this is not an especially encouraging enterprise. Father O'Neill admitted in a recent book that "There is no reason to suppose that even under optimal conditions any more than 5 percent of adults who bear the name Catholic would take part, on a regular basis, in such adult religious education efforts." (New Schools in a New Church, Michael O'Neill, St. John's University Press, 1971).

Father O'Neill also proposes that Catholics will have to support their schools alone without any governmental assistance. I do not share Father O'Neill's pessimism regarding public aid. I am confident that governments can find constitutional ways of assisting parents to exercise some freedom of choice in education. At the same time, there is no question that Catholics will need to make sacrifices to retain their schools. Governmental help will never relieve the Catholic community of carrying much of the financial burden. I was encouraged to see in the recent Newsweek poll that about half of the Catholics indicated a willingness to increase their contributions if necessary to save Catholic schools.

We have recently been giving fresh attention to the religious education, Catholic community and value formation aspects of our program which make Catholic schools unique. I think as Catholics appreciate this dimension better, they will be more willing to give us the support we need. I think, too, that this support will come not only from Catholics using their schools, but from the whole Catholic community. In giving attention to other works that had been neglected, we must be careful not to short-change the apostolate which research has established to be our most effective means for preaching the Gospel — the Catholic school.

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