

Friction Develops over School Board Programs

By RICHARD BAUMBACH

Elmira — The current president of the General Education Board, which oversees the operation of the consolidated Catholic school system here, says criticisms raised by Dr. Thomas Curran, a chief architect of the four-year-old system are actually objections to programs that Curran established.

Donald Stamp, president, said the remarks made by Curran after he left before the end of an informational meeting last week, called to explain the financial problems facing the system, were Curran's personal opinions, "and although we are working for the same project we don't see eye to eye."

Curran told a reporter he was "upset and concerned about what is happening to the system." Curran, who was the first president of the consolidated school system, told the reporter he left the meeting because of his disapproval with the situation. He made no comments during the meeting.

During the informational meeting no votes were taken on the system's proposed 1975-76 school budget or on increases in tuition. About 300 persons turned out for the session and many

raised questions about the operation of the five-school system.

Curran said outside of the auditorium of Notre Dame High School, where the session was held, that he didn't "think the system is going to survive if we nit pick it to death and if we degrade people who have tried to help the system."

Curran cited as examples of nit picking arguments over eliminating the position of school superintendent to save \$5,100 and holding a candy drive in hopes of making \$10,000 to help balance the system's budget for next year.

Stamp said Curran became part of the nit picking process "when he is picking at what the board is doing. He is taking personalities and using them against different programs we have to choose."

Five parishes are involved directly in the school system and Curran said they could contribute more money "if people would scrutinize the parish finances as they scrutinize the school system's finances."

Some parish councils have expressed reluctance to provide any more money for the system

over and above that which they are committed. The parishes are the chief financial supporters of the system.

Curran said he believes the "major decisions are being made outside of the (school) board and the democratic system and sometimes the decisions are not being made by the parents, but by persons, who, because of their vows, are not eligible to be parents."

Stamp said that comment indicated to him that Curran was talking about the work of the board's finance committee. The finance committee cut an original proposed budget of \$575,000 to \$551,000. That \$551,000 budget is currently before the full 21-member school board.

The \$551,000 budget was achieved through cutbacks in personnel.

Stamp said "the finance committee is not separate from the rest of the board. It is helping the board. We are following the same procedures used in the past. The first year, the pastors decided how much money they could offer to pay for the system. The same thing happened the second year and the third year and this year. We (Stamp said he was personally doing the work) are going through the pastors just like they did in the past. I don't see any change."

Curran in speaking about the finance committee said "it is only supposed to be an armature of the board and coming back to it with facts. It should not take it upon itself to arbitrate with the

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John C. Herbert, son of Mr. and Mrs. Steven Herbert of Lakeshore Boulevard, a summa cum laude graduate of Boston College, has been elected to the Phi Beta Kappa scholastic fraternity. He is a communicant at St. Thomas the Apostle Church. On graduation he will study law.

various pastors. That's not its function."

Stamp said the board will continue to operate the way it has been for the past few months and that the finance committee's proposed \$551,000 budget will be presented again at the board's May meeting.

"As far as I know, and I haven't been told any differently, the same budget will be acted on and the same recommendations will be acted on," Stamp said.

Those recommendations include the elimination of the school superintendent's position, plus the elimination or cur-

tailment of other positions. A cutback in fees paid to teachers, outside of their regular salaries, will also be voted on at the next meeting.

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The baby. What do we know about the baby involved in the Edelin trial?

In December 1973 the bodies of two aborted fetuses were found preserved in the Boston City Hospital morgue. They were intact. They were discovered by representatives from the Suffolk County (Boston) district attorney's office during the course of an investigation into the abortion and fetal-experimentation procedures of the hospital.

Contrary to Massachusetts law, neither fetus had a cause-of-death certificate. Neither had an autopsy authorization, and there were no disposal directions. Both were approximately 24 weeks gestation. And both were aborted by Dr. Kenneth C. Edelin; the first by saline infusion, the other by hysterotomy.

The investigators concluded that there was little or no chance the first had breathed without his mother's support, and that even if he had reached the point of viability he had lost his life while yet sealed within her body, before birth. Although some babies survive saline infusion, the investigators felt there could be nothing in this case to prove whether the point of self-support had been reached.

But the second baby was not only large enough to have reached independent survival, it bore no external effects of the hysterotomy. It appeared the infant may have attained viability. If so, valid medical proof could be determined, and offered to corroborate it.

The responsibility for the body was turned over to the county medical examiner, Dr. George Curtis, who transferred it to the Southern Mortuary where Dr. Curtis performed the post-mortem examination. He took several photographs which show a black male infant with "fine, curly black hair," whose face "had shriveled." He was perfectly

formed, curled into the position of most intact dead fetuses. (These photographs, including the one used subsequently in the trial, are unavailable to the public.)

On Feb. 7, 1974 Dr. Curtis examined the tissues. His report noted "evidence that some inhalation and exhalation had taken place" prior to suffocation. But Dr. Curtis could not determine what had caused the respiratory action or what precisely had caused the insufficient oxygen supply which resulted in death. In his words, "Anoxia (suffocation) could have resulted either from cutting off the air supply (coming) from the mother, or from not getting any oxygen immediately after removal from the womb." Dr. Curtis of course had no way then of knowing that the baby had in fact not been removed immediately from the womb.

The infant weighed between 600 and 700 grams. (The 100 gm. tolerance is due to scientific uncertainties concerning the properties of formalin, the medium used to preserve the body.) Either figure places the weight near 1 1/2 pounds. He measured 21.0 cm. crown to rump (8.26 inches); and 33.5 cm. crown to heel (43.2 inches). These facts indicate a gestation of 24 to 27 1/2 weeks, and further indicate that viability probably had been reached.

Thus the name of Kenneth Edelin was added to the list of BCH medical researchers, and the Suffolk County grand jury looked into the facts presented to it.

On April 11, 1974, five indictments were handed down. Four were concerned with the medical research involving the use of fetal tissue obtained from aborted fetuses in the city hospital (under an 1814 Massachusetts law which expressly forbids "grave-robbing" to obtain fetal tissue for medical research). The fifth indictment was of Kenneth Edelin.

He was not accused of performing an abortion. The accusation was that he had deliberately caused the death by suffocation of a "viable black male infant born or in the process of being born . . . that he did assault and beat him to death" by holding the infant inside the womb after separating him from the uterine wall.

Dr. Edelin stood accused of manslaughter. Few people thought the charge would evolve into a court trial.

But it did.

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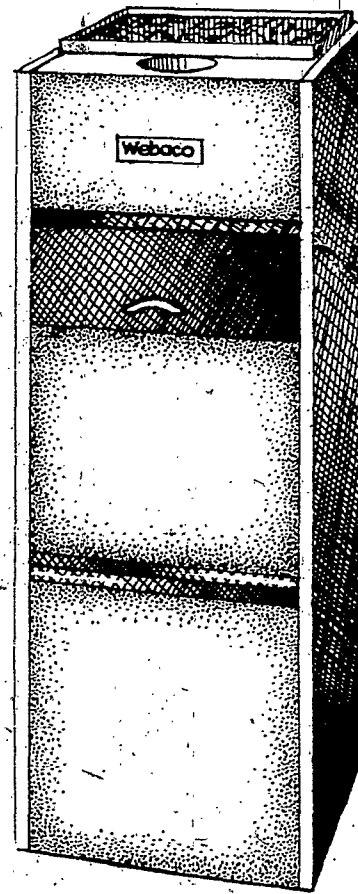
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