

Parochialism Besetting Chemung Schools

Second in a Series
By MARTIN TOOMBS

Elmira—Declining enrollments and rising costs were the forces that caused the formation of the Chemung County Catholic School System, and they continue to be major problems. And, as with most consolidations, another problem surfaced during the merger negotiations, and is a continuing problem: parochialism.

Current enrollment figures indicate that the school system can expect enrollment to level off at 900-950 students within three years, as grades K-5 presently average 101 students. That would be a decrease of about 100 students from this year's enrollment of 1,042.

The junior high has consistently been a source of additional enrollment for the system. This year 315 students started the year in the junior high, although two years ago when those classes were in grades 5 and 6, they had 287 students.

Sister Joan Cawley, junior high principal, while noting that "our spiritual dimension is what we offer," said that many of the transfers from public school are due to parents seeking a more disciplined atmosphere. She also noted that some of the transfers are unable to adapt; five have returned to public school so far this year.

Dr. Lawrence Stephens, Ph. D., president of the school board, noted that he has heard that some parents don't send their children to the school system because they can't afford it. He pointed out that the schools have never turned a student away for lack of financing, and the system has sufficient scholarship money to help families that need assistance. He added that he thinks parents use that as an excuse, and he wishes they would examine the Catholic schools more closely.

Tuition, currently \$90 for one child, \$150 for two, and \$170 for more than two, will probably increase next year, Stephens said. But, he noted, he was surprised at the tuition when he first moved to Elmira three years ago. He explained that in Ohio he was paying \$230 tuition, and he expected to "get zinged" in "expensive" New York State, and then found that the tuition at the time was \$35.

Stephens emphasized that the school system needs other sources of income, and noted that "Ways and Means has been more active this year." He pointed out that the school system operates "practically with no reserve," and needs "some way to build up" a permanent reserve. To do this, "we need something new and original," he said. One of the problems the school system faces in fund raising is that they also depend on parish payments,

and must protect parish money raising efforts.

Dr. Thomas Curran, board president at the time of the consolidation, noted that he proposed hiring an administrator for the new system with a salary of \$17,000. That was considered unnecessary by other board members, he said, and the pay and responsibilities of the position were reduced. It was "a deep disappointment to me that we weren't able to get a ways-and-means type" of person as an administrator, which would have been possible with a \$17,000 salary, he said.

Bishop Hogan, when visiting Elmira last October, noted at the kickoff for the census that the census was the type of cooperative effort he liked to see among parishes. He said that such efforts help to break down "this disease I call parochialism."

Parochialism has been a problem for the consolidated schools. Stephens noted that only "a small group is really interested in the consolidated school system," and that "some don't even know it exists," because "they are so interested in their own parish." The priorities are "my parish, and consolidation can come after that," Stephens said. He added that a priority this year for the school board should be improvement of communications and



A physical education class at St. Patrick's Junior High School.

relationships with each school's board and the parish councils.

Dr. Curran noted that it is difficult for people to understand that "regionalism is a Christian principle." The traditional allegiance to the parish is strong in Elmira, and, Dr. Curran said, "tradition has been a bitter pill for the consolidation."

Elmira, a city with eight parishes within its bound-

aries, has had parish consolidations suggested in the past, by the "Donovan" report, when fire damaged St. John the Baptist, and, recently, by the Eastside Ministry proposal. Many have seen school closings as the beginning of a parish closing, and there is some evidence to suggest that parishes in other areas have lost membership after a school closing. That, combined with parish pride built up over many years,

has caused people to react defensively about their parish and their parish school. An example of this feeling is that the suggestion that the names of the schools be changed, as was done in Corning and Auburn, was never implemented in Elmira.

NEXT WEEK: Academic improvements and the future of the consolidated system.

SOUTHERN TIER
AUBURN-GENEVA

Sister in Guatemala Grateful for Aid

Auburn — Sister Agnes Donovan, a Maryknoll nun serving in Guatemala City, Guatemala, and former parishioner at St. Mary's

here, was the recipient of the collection taken up during the Seneca-Cayuga Regional Eucharistic Congress Observance celebration held last August.

Translators Sought

Elmira — Several times each year patients are admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital who are unable to communicate due to language barriers. Following a suggestion made by a member of the hospital staff, St. Joseph's is in the process of compiling a directory of hospital employees and community residents who speak foreign languages.

At present, there is a patient who is in need of someone able to translate letters from a relative who writes Hungarian.

Those who volunteer for any of the interpreting tasks will be included in a directory and called as needed. Those wishing to offer their services are asked to call the Community Relations office at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Sister Agnes reported that the contribution to the Monte Maria Earthquake Fund enabled not only help with initial needs of the people, but also provided for permanent aid by the purchase of metal roofing and a machine to make concrete blocks. She said this will assure safer housing for 40 families.

Sister said that the three-story school building, which provided living quarters for the sisters as well as classrooms, was demolished. A prefabricated house was ready by June. The one-story prefabricated building to replace the lost school will be started soon.

She expressed her thanks to all who contributed.

NAMED DIRECTOR
Geneva — Rev. Durstan McDonald, 39, chaplain and assistant professor of philosophy at Hobart and William Smith Colleges here has been named director of Trinity Institute

Columnist To Speak In Elmira

Elmira — Nancy Murphy, author of "Life, Liberty and Law," a weekly column in the Courier-Journal, will be the featured guest speaker at a Communion Breakfast for members of St. Patrick's Women's Club, Elmira. The breakfast will follow the 9:30 Mass, Sunday, Jan. 16, at St. Patrick's Church and will be held at the Connecticut Yankee Room of the Mark Twain Hotel.

Mrs. Murphy is well known in the Southern Tier for her extensive coverage of pro-life subjects, such as abortion, euthanasia, population control, UNICEF, Humanism, and Secular Atheism. Her topic for the breakfast will be "Values Clarification."

Arrangements for Mrs. Murphy's speaking engagement have been made by the Adult Education Committee of St. Patrick's Women's Club. Officers of area pro-life organizations have been invited.

Workshop Set On Racism

Elmira — A workshop on racism, sponsored by the Division of Continuing Education of Corning Community College, will be offered at St. Peter and Paul's Hall, 161 High St., Elmira, Sunday Feb. 6 and Monday Feb. 7. Facilitator will be Ron Hofsess, director of anti-racism training at Corning Community College. Local coordinators are Kathy Dubel and Father Richard Murphy.

Hofsess describes the workshop as providing "an opportunity to initiate or increase your understanding

184 Senior Citizens Have Health Checked \$35 Buys New Convent Car

Elmira — More than 750 health screening tests were made on 184 senior citizens at the Senior Health Services screening clinic Dec. 8, according to Jean M. Sweeney, RN, a staff member of the senior citizens health agency.

The next screening clinic will be Wednesday, Jan. 19 at the Oakwood Methodist Church, Elmira Heights, from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tests will be available for hypertension, diabetes, hearing, glaucoma, total vision, cancer and tuberculosis. Anyone 60 years or older is invited to attend, free of charge. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Senior Health Services, 732-1486.

Of the tests conducted Dec. 8, 21 per cent showed abnormalities. More than half of the abnormalities occurred in the hypertension and hearing examinations. Visual acuity tests also resulted in 29 referrals. The other tests,

diabetes, glaucoma, ophthalmoscopy, cancer and tuberculosis resulted in 39 referrals.

Probably the most surprising statistic was that of the 184 seniors who attended the clinic, about 15 per cent did not have a regular doctor.

A statistic troublesome to the agency, according to Robert Comin, agency social worker, is the fact that only 38 per cent of those attending the clinic participated in the cancer detection examination. Only one of those persons was referred to a doctor.

Senior Health Services contacts each person to make sure that the person is aware of the results and where they can get treatment.

MARCH FOR LIFE

Binghamton—The Tioga and Broome Counties chapters of Right to Life have chartered a bus to Washington, D.C. for the annual March for Life protesting the Supreme Court's four-year-old decision legalizing abortion. Persons interested in joining the march, slated for Jan. 22, should call (607) 625-2007 for reservations on the bus.

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Bath — St. Mary's Parish purchased a new convent car Jan. 5 for the use of the parish's three Sisters of Mercy, at a total cost to the parish of less than \$35, according to Charles Rice, chairman of St. Mary's Finance Committee.

Six weeks ago the finance committee began contacting parish organizations for donations for a new convent car, Rice explained, when it became obvious that the old car was becoming too expensive to maintain.

Donations received from the Bath Knights of Columbus, the parish Rosary and Altar Society, the Bingo committee and two anonymous donors made the purchase of the 1976 model car possible. The gifts totaled \$3,765. Rice reported, leaving only \$34.28 to be paid from parish funds.

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