

Tax Credit Seen as 'Freedom' Measure

The traditional right of American parents to guide their children's education would be bolstered by passage of the Tuition Tax Credit Act, the Senate Finance Committee was told at recent hearings in Washington.

The point was stressed by Emile Comar, executive editor of the Clarion-Herald, New Orleans archdiocesan newsweekly, and by Harold J.T. Isenberg, president of the Federation of Catholic Teachers, a union in the Archdiocese of New York.

Comar, who is also executive director of the Louisiana Catholic Conference and a state vice president of the Citizens for Educational Freedom, spoke for the CEF. Isenberg represented not only the FTC, but also teachers' organizations in the Brooklyn and Rockville Centre dioceses and in Philadelphia.

Religious News Service reported on the hearings, which were called by Sen. Russell Long (D-La) to consider the bill (S2142) sponsored by Sen. Robert W. Packwood (R-Ore.) and Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.). The proposed legislation would give tax credits to all who pay tuition fees for education at any level. Credits could be applied to as much as 50 percent of tuition costs, but could not exceed \$500 per student.

Administration spokesmen at the hearings made clear President Carter's opposition to any tax relief approach, RNS reported, and their testimony drew bitter comment from state and national advocates of

Catholic schools. The administration is looking for alternative relief measures.

There are other bills designed to help parents who pay tuition—nine have been filed in the House of Representatives—but the Packwood-Moynihan bill is the one that should be passed, Comar told the Senate committee. "The bill now before you," he said, "provides across-the-board incentives, or relief, to taxpayers in that it assists parents with educational costs whether their children attend public or non-public elementary school, high school, trade school, college or university."

"We strongly support this legislation, feeling that any bill which would provide tax credits at the college and university level alone would be highly discriminatory."

It is imperative, he said, that "freedom" be maintained in education.

He spoke also of the increase in taxes for public education that accompanies the decline of non-public school enrollment.

At another point he said, "We recognize that government provides incentives to business and industry to keep the free enterprise system moving. I submit that it is time for the Congress also to provide incentives to the individuals who keep dual and competitive systems of education operating in this free nation."

Isenberg said that Catholic teachers' groups did not dispute the importance or worth of public

schools. "But we are unalterably opposed to an educational monopoly over our children," he asserted. "We cannot have freedom of choice if the only viable educational system open to parents is the public schools."

Education is a long-term process, Isenberg observed, adding that "alternatives of choice must be available to all at each step in the educational process."

With "the religious dimension of human experience" excluded from the public school program, it is taught "implicitly" that this dimension is of no great importance, Isenberg said. He noted that the bill limits tax credits to half of the tuition paid and that this might be taken to apply to the secular part of the non-public school's curriculum.

The two school systems have engaged in "fruitful competition," Isenberg said, to the benefit of both.

The Packwood-Moynihan bill, the teacher said, has three "advantages": it proposes aid to those who directly bear the tuition burden; it is simple and inexpensive to administer; its cost would not be prohibitive.

The Carter Administration, however, opposes the tax credit plan as too expensive and inefficient. The administration's alternative reportedly would be to liberalize eligibility rules so that Federal grants and aid programs for the poor could benefit also the middle-class student. A report from the Congressional Budget Office states that this alternative would be more "efficient" in reaching middle-income families. Tax credits would benefit many upper-income families, Federal experts figure.

Father Patrick Farrell, the U.S. Catholic Conference representative for Catholic schools, said the administration's present position amounted to a repudiation by President Carter of one of his own campaign pledges. Pointing out that the President had declared his intention to find constitutional methods of helping the parents of parochial school children, Father Farrell said that this

commitment had been made "in recognition of the long history and outstanding contributions which these schools have made to our pluralistic society, of the tremendous burden they lift from the public schools, and in recognition of the enormous financial sacrifices made by parents who support them."

He added that non-public schools "make it possible in many instances for disadvantaged youngsters of all races and creeds to receive a quality education which would not otherwise be available to them."

"We invite all fair-minded persons to take a look at our record of service to the poor and the disadvantaged, and we urge the Administration to remember the promises which have been made," the priest said in a statement summarized by RNS.

A further charge that the President "fails to keep campaign pledges" came in a statement distributed by the Catholic School Administrators Association of New York State. The statement quoted Brother Bernard G. Flood, FMS, executive director to the

effect that education funding involves "a violation of civil, and not just religious, liberties."

"Poor and middle-class parents have no choice but to send their children to public schools, thereby exposing them to values and educational methods which may be at variance with family belief, thus threatening First Amendment rights," the administrators' statement continued. "An educational system which offers no value options to the parents is necessarily suspect on civil rights grounds."

abundantly clear that homosexuality is objectively wrong and therefore at least in the abstract is a sinful act.

Now when you get to dealing with homosexuals as opposed to the abstraction of homosexuality, you have an entirely new ballgame. There is not one of us on earth who is capable, in the first place, of making a judgment on the moral culpability of another human being, no matter how patently the objective act seems to be in violation of standards. Who knows, for example, why a homosexual is one in the first place? What components are involved in this phenomenon? To what degree are we dealing with environmental, psychological, physiological or emotional factors? Is it my personal opinion that just about no one really knows all the factors involved in this particular phenomenon and much more study will be required before we do know.

In the meantime, can we legitimately refuse these people entrance into our community? Or is the objective activity they are engaged in enough to put them outside the pale? Or must we simply try to make the distinction in each particular case? And given that situation who is to be the judge?

As far as I am concerned there is the need for a great deal of further study, as to what is involved here. But there must also be a kind of real charity toward those who are involved. To be repelled by the concept is one thing; to be repelled by the person is untenable.

Information Session Set By NFP

Natural Family Planning of Rochester has scheduled an information session for 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16 at St. Columba's in Caledonia.

Doug and Nancy Osborn, certified and trained natural family planning instructors, will conduct the session which will be open to the public, free of charge. Registration is not necessary.

NFP instructors teach as a couple. They all have used the method for at least one year prior to instructor training and have successfully completed an intensive training program and are certified to teach NFP.

THE OPEN WINDOW



Fr. Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman,

What is the stand of the Church today on homosexuality?

Signed, O.R.

Dear O.R.,

The presumption is that you ask this question because of articles you have read in magazines relative to questioning our approach to homosexuality and homosexuals. It would seem to me that there is a radical difference in the way we approach homosexuals and the way we approach homosexuality. The latter is an abstraction and it would seem fairly obvious that at least as far as the externals of the activity are concerned it is not natural. Of course, there are those who would immediately argue that its unnaturalness depends on what you regard as the purpose of sex and sexuality. If sex is not oriented exclusively toward the propagation of the race, as reputable theologians today suggest, then maybe there is a place for homosexuality in the scheme of things. As far as any official teaching of the Church is concerned, it is

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