

There's No Such Thing As a Free Lunch

By Beth Spring
Religion Today

Washington— Cutting budgets is never easy, but when it means making school children go hungry it meets with particularly heartfelt opposition.

And the prospect of children going hungry is exactly what representatives of the U.S. Catholic Conference are concerned with, ever since the House Budget Committee recommended a cut of \$500 million in child nutrition programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We think, in many areas, we are providing countless children with their only daily hot, nutritious meal," Father Thomas G. Gallagher said in testimony before a subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee. Father Gallagher, USCC's secretary of education, said about 4,700 Catholic schools participate in the national school lunch program.

Most of these schools are in major metropolitan centers across the country and they provide nutritious meals to

hundreds of thousands of poor and needy inner-city children each day. The school lunch program represents one of the few programs providing a constitutionally acceptable form of federal aid to private students.

"We seriously doubt this administration's concern for children and parents who elect private schools when it proposes such drastic cuts in program benefits," Father Gallagher said.

Enacted in 1946, the National School Lunch Act was "the first piece of federal legislation to provide equal benefits to all the nation's children regardless of where they attend school," the testimony explained. While Catholic schools are not the only participants in the program, they constitute the majority.

A spokesman at the Council on American Private Education estimated one-tenth of independent (non-Catholic) schools make use of the program. CAPE supports USCC's position, saying "we associate ourselves fully with their testimony."

Father Gallagher's testimony focused on some of the assumptions underlying the congressional recommendation. For instance, the proposal calls for "full-paying students" to pay an additional five cents per lunch.

Father Gallagher argued that "most of the paying students come from families whose incomes are not far above the reduced price cut-off line. These families can ill afford a price increase."

Further, he said, "a sizeable drop in the number of paying students in any one program will have a detrimental impact on the total program."

The testimony also elaborated on the "fragile and delicate fiscal balance under which the total program operates." Since, in some cases, the full-price students carry the program, keeping it solvent, increasing their lunch prices could be devastating.

"Most programs break even; many operate at a loss. The anticipated student dropout rate at all phases of the program as a result of the proposed cuts — if approved — will force many of our schools to withdraw from participating in the program," Father Gallagher said.

Another consequence of this will, of course, be the loss of the Catholic's "heavy investment of resources and personnel in the school lunch program," Father Gallagher said.

Other obstacles threatening operation of quality school lunch programs arise from federal regulations.

Of top concern is the Agriculture Department's Assessment, Improvement and Monitoring System (AIMS), which is perceived by those on the receiving end as an "unnecessary, costly, and burdensome set of procedures."

Even though isolated cases of fraud and inefficiency are undeniable, Father Gallagher said AIMS took aim at every school with "onerous" requirements that could lead to costly audits.

In life, it often is said, there is no such thing as a free lunch, but Father Gallagher and others concerned about the poor believe children are not the ones with whom the government should try proving the point.

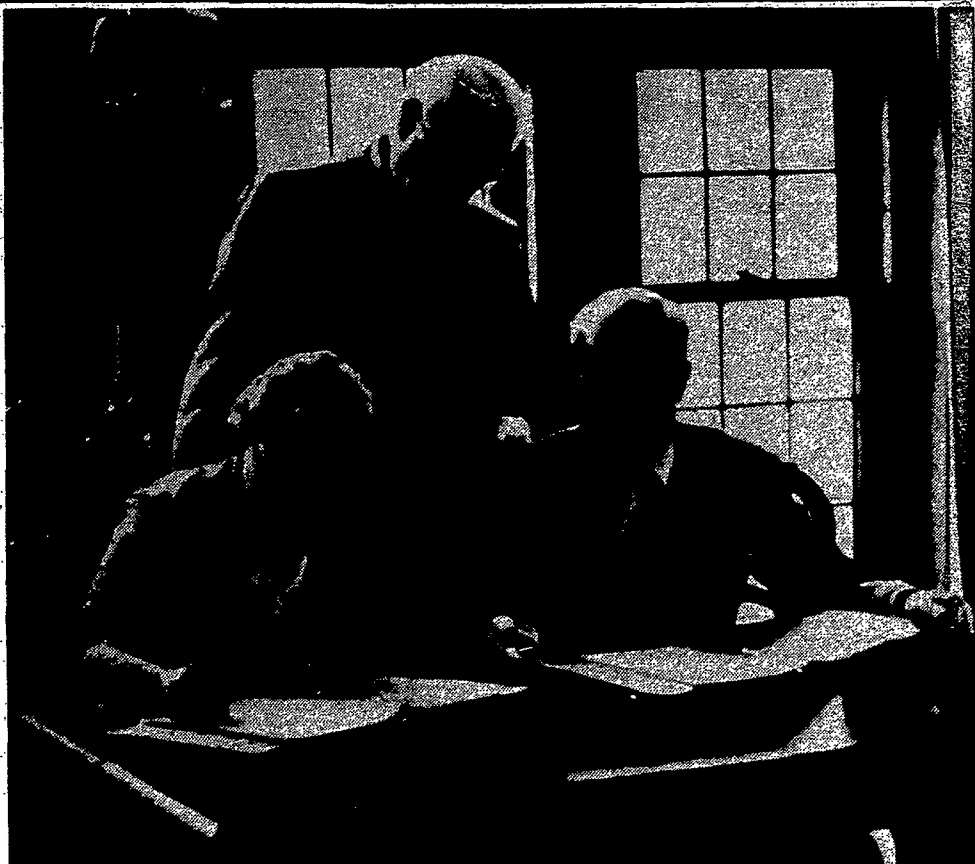


Photo By Terrance J. Brennan

Statement of Understanding

Judge Emmett J. Schnepf, standing, chairman of the Board of Trustees of Nazareth College, and Robert Kidera, Nazareth College president, watch as Sister Jamesine Riley, SSJ, signs the "Statement of Understanding" in ceremonies last week at Nazareth. The statement is the first document ever signed between the Sisters of Saint Joseph and Nazareth College, explaining the working relationship between the two groups. More than 100 people were on hand to witness the signing and partake in the reception that followed.

'Effective Living' Slated at Cenacle

A workshop on Effective Living will be offered at the Cenacle Renewal Center May 9 to 11. According to Sister Betty Rogers, RC, "The program is adapted from a similar workshop which people pay hundreds of dollars for and is offered here for less than cost." The reason for that, she said, is because "the Cenacle is dedicated to helping all people to find a better way of life."

The seminar, open to persons of all faiths, is a series of lectures interspersed with time for reflection and discussion on developing one's potential.

Techniques are taught which help overcome negative habit patterns and attitudes, and raise one's self concept.

Further information on Effective Living is available at the Cenacle, 963 East Ave., Rochester, N.Y. 14607; (716) 271-8755.

Opera Theatre

The Opera Theatre of Rochester will present Donizetti's comic opera, "The Elixir of Love," at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 8, in the Eastman Theatre. Featured roles will be played by singers borrowed from professional companies and Sister Barbara Staropoli of the Nazareth College music department. Lesli Tette of St. Thomas More Parish and Mary Lou Zogby of St. Margaret Mary also will take part. Robert Dwelley is chorus master. The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra will provide accompaniment.

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Business In Diocese

DIAMOND

Fairbanks, Alas. — J.W. "Jack" Diamond, son of John and Eleanor Diamond of Magee Ave. in Rochester, N.Y., has announced his candidacy for the leadership position of the Alaska-wide Teamsters Local 959. Diamond has been in Alaska since 1974. The Teamsters elections will take place in the fall.

George M. Scialdone of Rochester has completed a two-week training course given to new sales representatives of Compugraphic Corporation.

Before joining Compugraphic, Scialdone was a sales representative with Suburban Circle Publications and was previously with the Courier-Journal. A Rochester native, he earned his B.S. degree from the University of Rochester.

Robert F. Sykes, chairman of Sykes Datatronics Inc., has been elected to the board of trustees of St. John Fisher College. Sykes received his B.S. in mechanical engineering from Bucknell University and his M.B.A. from Harvard University in 1949.

'Honor Clergy'

St. Mary's, Canandaigua, will host its annual Honor the Clergy Night, this year on April 29 in the Knights of Columbus headquarters, 177 Main St.

Sister Elizabeth Ann Levalley, SSJ, will be guest speaker and will talk on the religious life.

Teen Program

A program for parents of teenagers will be presented at Our Mother of Sorrows parish on Thursday at 8 p.m., April 24 in the church hall. The program will feature a presentation by Mrs. Veronica Piano, of the Driekurs Association of Rochester, followed by a question and answer session.

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