

DPC

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saying that in light of opposition to recommended 1990-91 grade reconfigurations in the southeast and southwest quadrants, the commission would delay grade configuration in those schools for one year.

The first comment following the panel presentation was offered by Southeast Region representative Lee Chase, a religious-education coordinator at St. Anne's, Rochester.

Chase observed that his own parish had gone through a painful school closing in 1988. Students from St. Anne's now attend the Brighton Catholic School System.

The number of students from the parish attending Catholic schools has actually increased since the parish school closed, Chase said.

In addition, Chase said the parish staff has realized that opposition to the closing stemmed from more than mere concern about the school. Rather, protest over the school closing was part of a grieving process over such issues as changes in the church since the Second Vatican Council and the increasing shortage of priests, he said.

The school closing, Chase observed, "was the change that broke the camel's back."

Bishop Clark concurred with that assessment. "This is not a school issue. It's not just a catechetical issue. It's an ecclesial issue," the bishop said.

Pickett said that he, too, had been surprised by the number of other issues that have surfaced during discussion about the schools. In addition to the decrease in the number of priests and changes wrought by Vatican II, he noted, people are struggling with their "understanding of church" and with the role and status of bishops in relation to pastors.

Several DPC members commented that they had received information from the Alliance for Catholic Education, which has

prepared a counter proposal for school restructuring. The ACE literature also included criticisms of Bishop Clark on matters distinct from the school issue, they said.

All of the panel members said they were open to dialogue with those opposed to the plan, and to seeking opponents' input into the planning process.

As for the delay in restructuring, Pickett said that — while some people perceive it as a victory for opponents of the plan — the postponement will simply allow time for some additional changes. The key component of the plan — quadrant-wide planning for Catholic education rather than parish-level planning — goes into effect July 1 when the quadrant boards begin their operations.

In other discussions at the meeting,

Bishop Clark — as part of his open forum — said that the second draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral on women in the church and society had been submitted to the Executive Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops during the committee's March meeting.

Bishop Clark, who is chairman of the NCCB Committee on Women, a member of the subcommittee writing the pastoral, and a member of the NCCB's executive committee, said that the draft was accepted for distribution and further review. He added that the document will be ready for a vote on its ratification by the bishops at their November meeting.

During the afternoon session, DPC members were asked to evaluate a document on the placement of priests. The

guidelines had been approved by the Priests' Council Feb. 6.

Father John Mulligan, vicar general of the diocese, said the document — entitled "Principles on Which to Ground a Plan for the Future Deployment of Priestly Personnel" — was developed by a committee of the Priests' Council because of concerns over the increasingly difficult choices that must be made about where to assign priests in light of a growing shortage of clergy.

Bishop Clark observed that the guidelines, which he has not yet approved pending further consultation, were not intended for circulation throughout the diocese. Rather, he said, the document is intended simply to serve as a guide for the Priests' Personnel Board as it considers where to assign priests.

Parents

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be reasonably expected to ignore the additional assessment," ACE's plan read.

The counterproposal also stated "(a)fter restructuring, each elementary-aged child attending a quadrant school will represent a financial liability to the parish at which he or she is registered ... Parishes might well refuse to accept families with school-age children as registrants if the families reside outside the legal parish boundaries."

Both Bishop Clark and Brother Brian Walsh, diocesan superintendent of schools, rebutted this claim when the schools plan was released, asserting that the diocese negotiates informal financial arrangements with parishes without schools, if such parishes have difficulty subsidizing school children.

Pickett acknowledged that some parishes have ignored the mandated subsidy in the past, but said he expected "100 percent" compliance with the mandated subsidies within the next two to three years following implementation of the commission's plan.

ACE's counterproposal also criticized

the commission plan's call for quadrant junior highs, claiming that centralized junior highs will destroy the current diversity of junior high choices now available.

Pickett, throughout the months of planning, has reiterated the diocese's contention that quadrant junior highs will be more financially sound and better equipped to house special education programs and extracurricular activities than elementary schools with seventh and eighth grades.

The counterproposal also contained suggestions for alternative financing of diocesan schools. Most importantly, it called for a springtime diocesan Catholic Schools Appeal modeled after the fall Thanks Giving Appeal, which raises money for various diocesan ministries.

"With a Catholic population of 389,400, or about 75,000 Catholic families, a(n appeal) which raised an average contribution of \$40 per family would gross \$3 million per year for Catholic schools," the counterproposal stated.

Father Norton contended that such an appeal would constitute a "double tax" on diocesan Catholics who already support Catholic schools to the tune of about \$500,000 through last year's Thanks Giv-

ing Appeal.

John F. Wagner Jr., executive chairman of ACE, said the group wants to meet with diocesan officials before taking any further action on its counterproposal. He noted that, as of Monday, March 26, the diocese had not contacted him in response to the proposal.

Wagner said ACE would not rule out such tactics as public protests and demonstrations if the diocese does not respond to ACE's counterproposal, but he emphasized that his group would prefer to participate in a dialogue with diocesan officials first.

Inventors invite children

The Inventor's Society of Western New York, Inc., and Rochester Earth Day 1990 are co-sponsoring an Invention Contest for children in grades three through six.

Elementary students are invited to outline in a notebook three inventive solutions to an environmental problem such as landfills, toxic wastes, acid rain, etc.

The deadline is April 27. For information on the contest rules, call 716/272-9900, ext. 3030. Earth Day information is available by calling 325-3840.

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