

Bishops want trade that works for all

Jerry Filteau/CNS

WASHINGTON — In the U.S. bishops' annual Labor Day statement, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington urged U.S. leaders to "look at trade policies from the bottom up — how they touch the lives of the poorest families and most vulnerable workers in our own country and around the world."

Cardinal McCarrick, who issued the statement as chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Policy, said Labor Day is a good time to think about "how to make sure the global economy works for all."

"Trade policies must reflect fundamental values of justice and dignity while encouraging sustainable growth, fighting poverty, respecting workers' rights and caring for the environment," he said.

Labor Day is Sept. 6. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released the cardinal's statement Aug. 17.



Greg Tarczynski/CNS

Fair trade coffee helps to ensure that farmers in developing countries receive a fair price for their labor.

In a globalized economy, Cardinal McCarrick said, "decisions made by governments and companies far from our borders can help or hurt the economic vitality of America's urban centers and rural areas. Decisions made here can affect the ability of subsistence farmers and factory workers in Central America, Africa and Asia to earn a living and feed their families."

He praised the recent commitment made by World Trade Organization members "to reduce some agricultural supports that often assist those who need help the least and neglect those who need it most at home and abroad." He urged the U.S. and other countries to follow through on those commitments.

"For example," he said, "small farms in developing countries can be priced out of the market by protected or subsidized goods from developed countries, while small farms in the U.S. often receive much less gov-

ernment support than large agricultural entities."

He noted the growing concern of many U.S. workers who are "afraid of losing their jobs here to places where labor is plentiful and cheap."

"This can lead to resentment that turns workers into economic enemies. It can also arouse protectionist attitudes resulting in barriers to trade in richer countries that further jeopardize poor workers," he said.

He said trade and economic policies "are not preordained laws of nature" but the work of people and governments.

"Their goal must be to promote the dignity of work and the rights of workers," he said.

"The moral measure of trade policy," he added, "is not simply the trade increased, the growth produced or the money made; rather, it is the lives lifted up, the decent jobs created and the families leaving poverty behind."

Finger Lakes schools consider consolidation

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Representatives from St. Patrick's School in Seneca Falls and St. Mary's School in Waterloo have formed a joint committee to examine the possibility of consolidation, according to Sister Elizabeth Meegan, OP, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Rochester.

The committee, formed in December 2003, consists of both schools' principals as well as teachers and parents from each school. It has been looking at the situation in both schools and at information from the diocesan schools office on the conditions of the buildings, said Diana Oravec, principal of St. Patrick's. The committee has also discussed

potential sites for a possible consolidated school, ways that might be used to attract new students to it, and additional programs and services it might be able to offer, said Fred Smith, principal of St. Mary's. The committee is expected to submit a recommendation to the diocesan office this fall on whether it would be beneficial for the schools to consolidate.

"Declining enrollment is certainly an issue in both schools. The per-pupil cost is going to be higher when you have a lower enrollment," Sister Meegan said, adding that low enrollment makes it difficult to ensure that classes will be large enough to facilitate good socialization among students.

The committee also has been looking at ways to help the staff and students get to know each other, which would ease a transition should consolidation occur, Oravec said. The

schools had been working together on specific events for years, she added, even holding an annual joint Halloween party.

The collaboration became much more extensive this year, Smith said. Students met at each other's churches for Stations of the Cross during Lent; students from both schools participated in Waterloo's Memorial Day parade; and the students and staff of both schools met in June for a picnic and field day.

Smith said he expects the children from both schools to interact with each other even more this year, noting that such collaboration is not only good for students but also for the schools, which benefit from sharing the cost of programs.

Some of the schools' seventh-graders had become acquainted by playing against each other in basketball, but other activities for seventh-graders — such as the Seder meal they shared with Father William Laird, St. Patrick's pastor — are being arranged to enable students to get to know each other as more than just competitors.

"If and when the merger occurs, the kids aren't going to be completely left in the lurch," Oravec said. "We are working together and for the best interests of the kids. We put the kids as our No. 1 priority."

Preserving Catholic education in Seneca County is a priority for the joint committee, she added. If pre-

ventative steps aren't taken, both schools could fail.

"Both of the communities are very supportive of Catholic education and want to ensure the future of Catholic education," Sister Meegan said. "It is difficult for communities that have a long history of Catholic schools to talk about things changing. Change is always difficult for people, particularly with regard to their schools, their churches, because there's a lot of history and a lot of allegiance and love."

Although change is difficult, people in the area are beginning to see the need to consider consolidation of the schools and the benefits it could bring, Smith said.

"You can't keep funding and funding when your enrollment continues to drop. It's just not cost-effective. There's a lot more to be gained from looking at consolidation than there is to lose. People are starting to realize that," he said.

In a letter inserted into parish bulletins, the joint committee stressed the importance of being proactive in pursuing a detailed strategic plan for possible consolidation.

"A meeting will be held in October 2004 to decide on the future of Catholic school education in our communities," the letter said. "With the support of the families in our two parishes who already believe in the value of a Catholic education, we will be successful."

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