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Nonpublic School Panel
Pushes Views in Congress

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--The President's Panel on Nonpublic Education carried its cause to the U. S. Congress in a hearing before the House general subcommittee on education of which Rep. Roman C. Pucinski (D., Ill.) is chairman.

Three of the panel members appeared before the subcommittee, read their report to President Nixon into the record, and consumed the entire morning in a dialogue with the subcommittee members. There were no other witnesses that day.

In his open remarks Chairman Pucinski stated that one of the problems of legislating aid to public schools was to do so without hurting the private schools. He asserted that ways of aiding nonpublic schools must be found before major help for public schools could come from the Congress.

Under consideration by the subcommittee are a number of bills variously labeled Quality School Assistance Act of 1972, Education Revenue Sharing Act of 1971 and National Partnership in Education Act of 1971. Without exception these bills provide for ways the federal government can aid nonpublic schools or their pupils.

At the hearing all seven of the congressional committee members who put in an appearance stated their sympathy with the efforts that are being made to provide federal aid to the nation's private and parochial schools. In their discussion, however, the panel members openly struggled with the constitutional problems, with court decisions, and with adverse public opinion.

Admittedly, both by the congressmen and the panel members, many of the efforts to aid nonpublic schools were either unconstitutional or of dubious constitutionality. Even so, there seemed to be a mood that aid to private schools should be enacted by the Congress and signed into law by the President in order to have them tested in the courts.

In addition to the chairman, subcommittee members present were Reps. Peter A. Peyser (R., N.Y.), Alphonzo Bell (R., Calif.), Lloyd Meeds (D., Wash.), Louise Day Hicks (R., Mass.), William D. Ford (D., Mich.), and Albert H. Quie (R., Minn.).

The members of the President's Panel on Nonpublic Education present were Clarence Walton, chairman and president of Catholic University, Bishop William E. McManus, director of Catholic Education in Chicago, and Ivan E. Zylstra of Grand Rapids, Mich.

Walton in his presentation pointed up the cost to the American public if the nonpublic schools were to close. He said there would be both a heavy economic and a psychological cost.

Pucinski followed up with a line of questions about the dollar cost to the nation if the nonpublic schools closed and sent their pupils to public schools. He pointed out that the estimated costs ranged from \$3 billion to \$7 billion. He then asked if the public schools could absorb such an increase.

Walton responded that in many crowded areas such as Philadelphia the public schools could not absorb the increased burden of taking over all the nonpublic school pupils.

Bishop McManus stated that in Chicago if the city exercised its powers of eminent domain, took over the parochial school properties, and if taxes were hiked 30 to 40 per cent, the public schools could absorb the increase.

The bishop doubted that this situation would confront the nation, however, because he believes that Catholic parents would not allow their schools to disappear.

McManus then objected to pursuing this line of questioning because he did not want to plead for aid to parochial schools by threatening the public schools. There were no more questions along this line.

Even though the congressmen unanimously agreed on the principle of working out some means of aiding nonpublic schools, there were wide divisions of opinion as to the ways this should be done.

No one, not even the panel members, advocated direct tax aid to parochial schools. Other suggestions were tax credits, purchase of services, aids to poor parents with children in parochial schools, construction loan programs and tuition reimbursements.

The discussion brought out that if significant federal aid to nonpublic schools is achieved this will have the effect of altering the nation's education system. Educational pluralism would thereby be encouraged by tax funds.

On the other hand, such aid would also affect the nature of private schools. It was pointed out that public funds are followed by public supervision and public control.

Such a possibility was pointed out in the panel's report to the President. Among the guidelines suggested by the panel are these:

(1) Aid to nonpublic schools must achieve a public purpose, (2) aid must go to pupils and not to schools, (3) nonpublic school aid should be subject to review by public authority, (4) systems of accountability must be developed, and (5) nonpublic schools benefitting by public aid should be required to sign compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin.

Bishop McManus agreed that if alteration in the nature of nonpublic schools were required to obtain public funds, then "this is the price we must be willing to pay."

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Bureaucratic Bungling Blocks
Meals for Migrants, Aide Says

5/3/72

By Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--Migrant children, among the "most needy" of all poor youngsters, continue to go hungry in America because of insensitive bureaucratic bungling and massive red tape, a food specialist testified here in Senate subcommittee hearings.

The testimony also cited repeated pleas from church and school officials for greater assistance to meet the needs of migrants. Southern Baptists have an extensive ministry to migrants in such states as Florida, Texas and Michigan, but were not represented in the testimony before Congress.

Marvin Levin, who recently resigned from the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to go to Bangladesh to work with famine relief programs, testified before a joint hearing by the Senate subcommittee on migratory labor and the select committee on nutrition and human needs. Levin was formerly with CARE in India and for a number of years he has been a consultant in foreign and domestic child nutrition programs.

Levin told the Senate committees that he was not assigning the blame for poor management to any one political party because the problems described in his 20-page testimony "are deeply rooted and no doubt existed before the present administration took office.

"I am testifying out of a deep personal concern for the fate of the migrant child in our society," Levin declared. He said later that he recognized that his testimony and the documentation of "bureaucratic inefficiency" may "jeopardize a future relationship with respect to federal employment."

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Throughout his statement Levin presented documentation to show that it was the "method and manner" of implementing and interpreting the laws to feed hungry children, rather than a need for new legislation, that deprived migrant youngsters from sufficient nutritional meals.

"I know of no plot to promote the continued hunger of migrant and other needy children," Levin declared. "The story to be told is much more mundane, it is an account of bureaucratic inefficiency, of mismanagement, of ineptitude, of a pervasive (even if not conscious) insensitivity to the needs of poor children and the demands imposed on those who hope to feed them."

Levin charged that the USDA's implementation and interpretation of the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act "have been especially detrimental to migrant children and probably detrimental to most needy children."

Among the number of recommendations to the Senate committees, Levin suggested that nonprofit organizations should be "invited" to participate in federal nutrition programs. Such organizations could improve operation of nutrition services and "would succeed in lowering the overall program cost while improving quality," Levin said.

Levin declared that the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) within the USDA answered with "silence" a recommendation to seek "alternative ways" of meeting the needs of migrants since "conventional outlets are inadequate."

"School and church officials" have emphasized the need for greater assistance, Levin said. He mentioned that one church official reported that the need for a breakfast program to feed migrant children was so great that he spent his own limited funds to provide it. In that particular area, Levin observed, migrant children were found to have cases of ulcerated stomachs due to extreme malnutrition.

"Yet the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has taken no actions to meet this very special need," Levin charged.

Other recommendations include asking the USDA and FNS to categorize migrants as a "special target group" and list migrant children as "categorically eligible for free lunches."

The latter recommendation is especially needed, Levin noted in his testimony, because so many migrant parents are "functionally illiterate" and unable to fill in the applications required for their children to be eligible for free lunches.

Levin said that "even in areas considered politically conservative" the local officials certify migrant children eligible for the free meals, thus bypassing the local red tape. The problem is in the guidelines from the national level where "FNS assistance is too uncertain in quantity and quality," Levin maintained in his testimony.

The Departments of Labor; Health, Education and Welfare, and the Office of Economic Opportunity, along with 48 states, recognize migrants as a special group, thus dispensing with some of the red tape in other government agencies and at the state level, Levin observed.

Levin charged further that the evidence he presented to the Senate committees shows that USDA practices have "adversely affected" programs established for migrants by other federal agencies. He pointed out data to show that many programs designed to benefit educational and other needs must be diverted for food programs because the USDA fails to provide the necessary funds.

In describing the massive red tape and the failure of the USDA to coordinate its programs with other agencies, Levin said that local civic groups sponsoring food programs for migrants must receive the approval of as many as 11 state and regional offices.



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