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**Baptist Leader Opposes
'Tax Credit' Parochial Aid**

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist spokesman here opposed proposed legislation that would allow tax credits to parents of children in parochial schools.

John W. Baker, acting executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, charged that such aid to parochial schools would violate both the principles of religious liberty and of sound public policy.

The week-long hearings were conducted by the Committee on Ways and Means of the U. S. House of Representatives. Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D., Ark) is chairman of the committee.

The proposal, in brief, would allow a tax credit for tuition paid by a parent or guardian to any private nonprofit elementary or secondary school. This tax credit would be allowed to cover actual tuition costs up to a maximum of \$200 per dependent.

The plan would work like this. If a parent with four children in parochial schools owed the federal government \$1,200 for income taxes, he would be allowed \$800 credit on this tax bill. Thus, he would pay only \$400 income taxes.

A Ways and Means Committee publication summarizing the proposal states that there are a total of 140 bills pending in the House of Representatives providing tax credits and/or deductions for elementary or secondary education expenses in private schools.

"What must not be lost sight of," Baker testified, "is that though the tax credits would be provided for parents or guardians of students in private nonprofit schools the purpose of the act is to aid schools rather than parents and to give substantial governmental aid to private school systems."

He further pointed out that "more than 90 per cent of the schools to be aided are operated by churches to provide religious education and religiously impregnated secular subjects to students who usually are members of the religious group sponsoring the school."

The Baptist representative declared that "we do not object to this kind of education... but we do disagree with the proposition that these schools should be supported in part by public funds."

"There can be no escape from the conclusion," Baker continued, "that such infusion of public funds into religious education benefits the sponsoring church and that the net result is that the taxpayers generally are forced to join in subsidizing religion."

Baker asserted that such practice would violate both the "free exercise" and the "no establishment" clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution. The amendment reads in part: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Baker further emphasized that the proposed tax credit plan would be "unwise public policy fiscally, educationally and socially."

Such a policy, he said, would lead to inequities between families with substantial incomes and those with low incomes and that "tax credits" would "provide an inequitable tax loophole for a special group of taxpayers."

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Baker listed several ill effects of "tax credits." Among them are: (1) a weakening of the public school system, (2) promotion of internal strife and tensions among the religious and other groups in the nation, and (3) opening the door to a wide variety of private school systems supported by public funds.

Baker concluded that "the democratic and melting pot attributes which the public school system fosters stand to suffer in the struggle and, if this happens, the nation will be the loser."

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House Committee Hears Major Clash on Parochial Aid Plan

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Powerful forces exerted heavy pressures on the Committee on Ways and Means of the U. S. House of Representatives in week-long hearings on a proposed tax credit plan to provide federal aid to the nation's private and parochial schools.

The bill before the committee, headed by Chairman Wilbur D. Mills (D., Ark.), is H. R. 16141. This bill proposes approximately \$3 billion a year for five years to aid public and private elementary and secondary education.

Estimates varied as to the amounts going to private and parochial schools, but they all ranged around three-fourths of a billion dollars a year as a beginning figure.

In order to aid public education, the bill would establish a public education trust fund out of which a federal matching payment of 50 per cent of state education expenditures would be made.

In order to aid parochial and private schools, the bill would provide a tax credit, not to exceed \$200 per child, to a parent or guardian paying tuition to such schools.

If such a plan is enacted into law, a parochial school parent would receive up to \$200 credit on his federal income tax bill for each child for whom he paid tuition.

The beginning loss in federal income tax revenue under such a tax credit plan was estimated by an administration official to be between \$790 million and \$970 million.

Witnesses before the Committee on Ways and Means can be classified in four main categories: (1) the Nixon administration, (2) organizations and coalitions for public aid to private schools, (3) organizations and coalitions against public aid to private education, and (4) a long list of miscellaneous individuals both for and against the bill.

As for members of the House of Representatives, they have introduced 140 identical or similar bills proposing aid for private schools. While several congressmen testified in favor of the tax credit plan, no congressman offered testimony in opposition.

High level administration officials testified on behalf of President Nixon. They were George P. Shultz, secretary of the Treasury, Casper W. Weinberger, director of the Office of Management and Budget, and Elliot L. Richardson, secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

While President Nixon has repeatedly pledged Catholic educators to find ways and means of financial relief for parochial schools, his spokesmen at this series of hearings gave qualified support of the tax credit proposal.

There was unqualified support by the administration of the principle of tax credit aid to parochial schools. However, Secretary Shultz made it clear that in order to gain the President's support, the Congress must either find additional revenues to offset the tax loss or must provide for a reduction in existing programs.

The administration spokesmen suggested that, if current government programs are to be reduced to provide the funds for parochial schools, the funds should come from education programs.

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The dilemma of the Nixon administration was revealed by budget director Weinberger. Agreeing with Shultz, Weinberger said, "The message is simple. There simply is not very much money available for new federal programs... It is necessary when putting forward a new program to have in mind old programs which can be eliminated... We oppose proposals that will necessarily lead to new taxes."

Thus, President Nixon faces a tough problem--how to keep his pledge to Catholic educators without raising taxes or cutting public school funds.

Secretary Richardson, on the bill's provision to aid public education, said, "We do not now have a final recommendation to present to the Congress... The administration is unable to support Title 1 of this legislation."

A formidable group of organizations and coalitions testified in favor of some form of public aid to private elementary and secondary schools.

The spokesman for Citizens Relief for Education by Income Tax (credit) was Rabbi Morris L. Sherer, president.

Sherer explained that CREDIT is a "multi-faith coalition of nonpublic school leadership from every part of the country which has the cumulative effect of representing 95 per cent of the nation's five million nonpublic school children."

Sherer was accompanied before the Committee on Ways and Means by Richard Thompson of the National Association of Independent Schools, Edward R. D'Allesio of the United States Catholic Conference, Ivan Zylstra of the National Union of Christian Schools, Frank H. Brede-
weg of the National Catholic Education Association, and Al Senske of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

Another new private school agency, American Association of Christian Schools, was represented by A. A. Janney, president, of Miami, Fla. He stated that the AACCS is "still in the process of organizing itself on the national scene."

There are now, according to Janney, 18 state organizations already members of AACCS or in the process of joining.

He estimated that by the end of the year AACCS would represent 400 private schools with 100,000 enrollment in 23 states.

Janney told the committee that 45 schools in Florida have formed the Florida Association of Christian Schools. He said that he knew of 15 Baptist churches in Miami alone that plan to open private schools next school year.

Janney contrasted his movement to other private school systems that are claiming financial catastrophe in the near future and Catholic schools that are being forced to close at the rate of 400 a year. He said that new private religious schools are being formed at the rate of more than one a day.

The AACCS spokesman said these schools are being formed by "many evangelical, fundamental church members" who "have become increasingly concerned about the accelerating slide into atheism, materialism and humanism that have taken over the mood of public education in the wake of court decisions reversing prayer, Bible reading and in some places even the Pledge of Allegiance from public classrooms."

Although Janney located most of the AACCS schools in the southeastern part of the United States, he said that their schools were scattered throughout the nation. The Washington counsel for AACCS vigorously denied that these schools were racially segregated.

The AACCS spokesman was not enthusiastic about large amounts of federal aid to their schools. However, he said they had decided to ask for it if it becomes available.

Citizens for Education Freedom (CEF) testified through its president, Eugene Linse. Although composed largely of Roman Catholics, CEF says it has on its board of directors and

in its membership "citizens of every race, creed and color." For the past 13 years CEF has been campaigning throughout the USA for public aid to church schools.

Prominent among the witnesses before the committee were Monsignor Francis B. Schulte, for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and John T. Gurash, board chairman of I. N. A. Corporation and chairman of a select group who studied the Philadelphia school problems.

Both of these men pointed out the financial trouble of the parochial schools in Philadelphia and surrounding counties. They declared that the effect on public schools would be catastrophic if the private schools were forced to close.

On the other side, many organizations and coalitions vigorously opposed tax credit legislation as detrimental to the public school system and as violative of the Constitutional principle of church-state separation. Conspicuously absent, however, were spokesmen for the National Education Association and the National Council of Churches, two agencies which frequently testify at such hearings.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a coalition of eight Baptist bodies in the United States, was represented by John W. Baker, acting executive director.

Baker based his opposition to the tax credit proposals as a violation of the principle of religious freedom, and as an unwise public policy.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (formerly known as P.O.A.U.) was represented by C. Stanley Lowell.

In addition, state organizations of a broad coalition of forces called Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty (PEARL) and other similar organizations had witnesses at the hearings. These states included New York, Illinois, Ohio and Michigan.

All of these groups held that although the tax credits were received by parents, the ultimate recipient and beneficiaries were the religious schools themselves.

"The tax credit means the conferring of a tax advantage on the recipient," Lowell declared. "If he pays the money for a private purpose--his child's religious education--he receives the equivalent of a check from the government. There is no difference between the government's paying the money to the parent and the parent's being excused from paying the money to the government. It is exactly the same cash situation.

"The subsidy is given to the parent for a purpose--so that he may pay it over to the church school," Lowell charged.

The Americans United spokesman also asked the committee, "Why is it any more constitutional to subsidize parents in providing a religious education for their children than to subsidize schools to do the same thing?"

A coalition of the American Ethical Union, the American Humanist Association, and the Unitarian Universalist Association was represented by Edd Doerr.

Doerr claimed that tax credits are economically regressive and unsound. He charged that tax credits would be tax support for the various kinds of separatism, discrimination, segregation and unbalance found in parochial and private schools.

What are the prospects for passage of the tax credit bill by Congress this year? In the judgment of many in Washington this possibility is very slim.

The hearings came late in the legislative year. Congressmen are preoccupied with the election campaign. Even if the bill passed the House of Representatives, it would still have to go through the legislative process in the Senate.

In the judgment of this writer, the Committee on Ways and Means compiled a legislative history of the tax credit proposal this year. If the political climate and the financial condition of public and private schools next year arrive at a strategic point, there may be a vigorous effort to enact this legislation in the 93rd Congress.

