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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Catholic Educators Look
For More Aid to Schools

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Optimism and determination characterize the attitude of Roman Catholic educators for future advances in public aid for parochial schools. Two recent items point up this observation.

First is an article on "Events Indicate Tide Is Turning for Our Schools" by Leonard DeFiore, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Washington, which includes the District of Columbia and five counties in Maryland. The article was published in the August 18 "Back to School Supplement" of the Catholic Standard, weekly newspaper of the archdiocese.

Second is a news release from the National Catholic Office for Information of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), which sets forth efforts of the Federal Assistance Advisory Commission of the USCC to increase governmental services for nonpublic school students.

DeFiore discussed two sets of developments (one external and the other internal), which, he said, "signify to me a turning of the tide in support of Catholic education." He described local, state and national "occurrences" as "what might be the beginning of a reversal of public posture regarding Catholic schools."

Locally, DeFiore cited a "stunning victory" in Montgomery County, Md., for public busing of Catholic school children. He said that this local victory "opened the question at the state level as to whether or not busing is presently provided in an appropriate fashion."

On the state level, the Catholic educator was encouraged by the attitude of the Maryland state superintendent of schools, David Hornbeck. He said that the new state public school superintendent "sees himself being responsible for the welfare of all the children in the state of Maryland, and not just superintendent of public schools."

In another state, New Jersey, DeFiore pointed out that 45 legislators are co-sponsoring a referendum to the people "to see if they are interested in a voucher system." (Vouchers would be made out to parents by the state to be cashed in at the school of their choice--public, private or church.)

On the national level, he cited events in the Supreme Court and in the Congress. Concerning the recent Supreme Court decision in the Ohio parochial school aid case he said that it did not give the Catholic parents "immediate relief." But, he added, "It did indicate that the Supreme Court is finally getting the message that the people of this country do want to support freedom of educational choice by parents."

Further, he stated, "This decision ends 30 years of court opinions which had frustrated legislators in their attempts to assist parents in educating their children in non-public schools."

Turning to Congress, DeFiore said that by the time school opens in September there will be more than 100 members of Congress sponsoring tax relief legislation in behalf of nonpublic school education.

He did not predict that this legislation would pass, but he did say that "with a swelling of support from the people, there is no telling what might occur."

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Combining the effect of the above developments, DeFiore said, "This indicates that the mood of the country is changing, and this change is being recognized by our government leaders. For example, both major political parties, for the first time, in 1976, ran on a platform committed to aid for nonpublic school parents."

Internally, within the Catholic community, DeFiore pointed out that their schools have finally achieved both financial and enrollment stability. He said that the fears that crippled Catholic education in the decade (1965-1975) have been largely overcome and that their "problems will be in the normal range."

Coupled with this internal development, DeFiore noted the support for Catholic education given by the Vatican in July. He called this "an unprecedented document supporting Catholic schools and government assistance to these schools." He said that "the document strongly supported aid to Catholic schools as the ideal way for governments to guarantee pluralism in education."

The USCC news release reported an August meeting in Washington of the 20-member Federal Assistance Advisory Commission. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: (1) "To analyze the effectiveness of federally supported education services for nonpublic school students," and (2) "To formulate recommendations whereby Congress and governmental agencies might correct deficiencies in student assistance programs."

While in the nation's capital, the Catholic educators met with key staff members of the education committees of both the Senate and the House where hearings have begun on the extension of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, according to the news release.

In addition, they met with officials in the department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Their complaint there was "what they called 'years of nonresponsiveness' on the part of policy level officials in the U. S. Office of Education to complaints registered by nonpublic school officials when nonpublic school students were receiving 'inequitable treatment' in federally funded programs."

The Catholic educators advisory commission's "priority concern," according to its chairman, Joseph McElligott of the California Catholic Conference, "is in having Congress take appropriate action so that state and local districts will be more accountable for the equitable treatment of nonpublic school students in federal programs."

Further, the Catholic education spokesman said, "In states like Virginia, Missouri, and Wisconsin, where either the state and/or the local educational agencies have long denied comparable federal services (to nonpublic school students) we are looking for ways to bring about a system of equitable participation."

McElligott also noted that some states, including California, have established their own "state compensatory programs," and in those locations USCC's advisory commission wants "assurances which will maintain the flow of federally funded services to eligible nonpublic school students as intended by Congress."

Testimony from the Catholic school community is scheduled in the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education, chaired by Congressman Carl Perkins (D-Ky.) in late September, the USCC news release says.

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Rutledge Back At Home
After Heart Attacks

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ATLANTA (BP)--Arthur B. Rutledge, retired executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, has returned home following hospitalization for three heart attacks in July.

Doctors said Rutledge has made encouraging progress and that after several weeks rest will probably be able to resume a regular schedule.

Since his retirement on Jan. 1, 1977, Rutledge has lived near Cumming, Ga., and has been writing and teaching.

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Mrs. Rutledge, who has been ill for sometime, was hospitalized for one week longer than her husband but was also able to return home.

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'Son of Sam' Baptized in
1973 By Louisville Church

By Bruce Buursma

Baptist Press
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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--David Berkowitz, the man accused of being New York City's .44 caliber killer--"Son of Sam"--was converted from Judaism to Christianity while stationed at nearby Fort Knox, Ky., and was baptized into the membership of Beth Haven Baptist Church in southern Louisville.

Tom Wallace, pastor of the independent Baptist congregation, acknowledged it in an interview at the office of the former Southern Baptist church.

"He made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ here. I baptized the fellow. I noted he was a Jewish boy, who had found Christ. Anytime a Jewish person comes forward to take a stand in a Baptist church, it's a little special. I asked the people to pray for him.

"But," added Wallace, "then he was lost in the world."

Records at the 3,500 member church show that Berkowitz was one of 2,200 persons baptized there by immersion in 1973. Baptized on May 6, he is still a member of the church, although his card has long since been transferred to the "inactive" files.

Those who remember Berkowitz from his church-going days in Louisville say he was an "exemplary Christian," that it is almost impossible to believe that he is now accused of killing six people and terrorizing New York City for more than a year.

"He was a person seeking deliverance from his past," said Wallace, noting that Berkowitz was said to have been embittered by the fact that his natural parents gave him up for adoption.

Moreover, Wallace added, Berkowitz is reported to have been experimenting with hard drugs during his Army tour in Korea, just prior to coming to Fort Knox.

"My initial impression of him was that I had never met anyone more sincere or more honest," Wallace said. "Everybody was relaxed about him. Now, all of a sudden, he's got weird ideas. I'd like to blame it on a flash back from his drug life."

The man who invited Berkowitz to Beth Haven, then fellow Fort Knox soldier Jim Almond, said in a telephone interview that the accused killer "accepted Christ" on his first visit to the Louisville church.

"I just asked him to go to church with me one day," Almond said from his apartment in Greenville, S. C., where he now is a 25-year-old student at Bob Jones University. "He (Berkowitz) said, 'I'm a Jew.' I told him I didn't care what he was, did he want to go to church?"

"Well, we went and he really enjoyed it," Almond said. "He went forward at the invitation. And after the service, he came up to me grinning and laughing and saying 'Man, I'm saved' Then we came back that same day for the evening service, and he went forward again at the invitation. He told me afterward that he just wanted to make sure it took."

Almond, who called himself "probably the last friend David had," said Berkowitz led an energetic Christian life at Fort Knox for nearly a year before "back sliding" shortly before his discharge in June of 1974.

"He was very sincere about his new Christian life," Almond said. "He would give out tracts and talk to the fellows on base about Jesus and what He had done for him.

"But, I think his parents got to him," Almond said. "They practically disowned him when they found out he had become a Christian. He started hanging around with the guys who drank and smoked pot and had dirty pictures on their wall. Maybe he worried about going home and being lonely. Loneliness is a killer."

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Beth Haven Church members who befriended Berkowitz portrayed him as a pleasant and effusive type whose appetite for "spiritual food" could not be sated. They said he would routinely attend both Sunday morning and evening worship services, the Wednesday evening prayer meeting, and the Thursday evening "soul winners" class at the church and then go out witnessing for his faith door-to-door.

"Just about everytime the church door was open he was there," said Sue Winfrey, a 25-year-old Beth Haven member who frequently sat with Berkowitz during worship services and joined him for the church's weekly college and career class.

"He wasn't at all like they say he is," she continued. "He was a really nice guy, friendly to everybody, talked a lot, sang songs and played his guitar. When I first heard that he was arrested for the murders, I couldn't believe it was him. I thought that would be the last thing he would have done. He seemed to be real strong in his faith."

Terri Luce, a 20-year-old Beth Haven member, served as a stewardess on one of the church buses that transported soldiers from Fort Knox to Beth Haven. She said that Berkowitz was always there when the bus came around.

"He was a really fantastic guy with a great personality," Miss Luce said. "On the bus he would tell Bible stories to the kids. We talked all the time, mostly about church activities and spiritual things. He was in the Army, and my Dad is in the Army, we got along well. My parents really thought a lot of him."

Rosalie Luce, Miss Luce's mother, said she remembers Berkowitz as "a great soul winner... I never heard him say an unkind word. He brought a lot of GI's in from the base. It breaks my heart to see what has happened. I still don't believe it was him, but if it was, I'm just thankful he was saved. The Bible says, once saved, always saved."

Miss Luce picked up a color snapshot her father, Sgt. Richard Luce, had taken of Berkowitz during a 1973 worship service at Beth Haven. It shows a neatly dressed young man, wearing the enigmatic smile that now has been seen around the world.

It was then, Miss Luce recalled, that Berkowitz seemed most at peace with himself, conquering a shyness of women and studying the Bible with vigor. "I pray for him a lot, now," Miss Luce said softly. "I just wonder what happened."

Wallace, senior pastor of the church which disassociated itself from the Southern Baptist Convention several years ago and is now loosely affiliated with a Southwide Independent Baptist movement, wonders too.

"I have had hundreds and hundreds of success stories," Wallace began. "And I've had some wrecks along the highway. We know many people who have gotten a good start in their Christian life and then soured up and gone bad. Either David wasn't saved or he lost touch with the Lord. Only David and God know that.

"I still feel in some ways like his pastor," Wallace continued, "and if he wanted to see me I'd go. I'd try to turn this thing around, not for me, for the cause of Christ."

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Bruce Buursma is a staff writer specializing in religion for the Courier Journal in Louisville.

Mrs. W. O. Thomason
Dies in Nashville

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Baptist Press
8/ 25/77

NASHVILLE (BP)--Mrs. Mary Thomason, wife of W. O. Thomason, former executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, died Aug. 23 following an extended illness.

Mrs. Thomason, 50, an invalid for several years, was buried in Nashville following funeral services at First Baptist Church.

She is survived by Thomason and one daughter, Mrs. Linda Brown of Washington, D. C.; her mother, who resides in Nashville; and a brother from Los Angeles.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the Nashville Multiple Sclerosis Society or the First Baptist Church World Missions Fund.