

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The American Baptist Convention
The Southern Baptist Convention
The National Baptist Convention of America
The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.
The North American Baptist General Conference
The Baptist General Conference of America



1628 16th Street, N.W., Washington 9, D.C. * * * * * C. EMANUEL CARLSON, Ph.D., Executive Director

This monthly newsletter is sent free to editors, executives, and institutions. In order to cover cost of production and mailing a charge of \$1.00 per year is made to all others.

December 1955

PUBLIC FUNDS AND PRIVATE EDUCATION

For years we have taken our "free public schools" for granted as part of our American way of life. It is true that in colonial days most educational efforts were of a private nature, but with the Declaration of Independence and the forming of the Union came a new understanding of the importance of public education. The Northwest Ordinance, 1787, set a precedent in making the resources of the nation available for the building of the nation. It set aside the 16th section of each township for education and that 16th section of land has played an important role. Through the years since then national leaders have emphasized that a free nation must have an instructed citizenry that is competent to participate in the democratic process.

The solidarity of public opinion for public education is currently being challenged by a strange combination of interests. These interests do not stem from a common source but they may easily produce a common result. The basic question involved is, shall the state educate its citizens or shall it turn that task over to private agencies together with the funds by means of which to do the job?

Tax funds for private education have been under discussion recently in three significant groups, and from three different viewpoints.

The oft-repeated formula of Roman Catholicism was the basis of the Bishops' well publicized statement, "The Place of the Private and Church-related Schools in American Education." The reasoning begins with a child born to a family, it concludes with a mind taught only by "the church", and it assumes that good citizenship must result. The demands of society, which are recognized in paragraph 2 below, are sidetracked in paragraph 3, and omitted in paragraph 4, leaving a person who "thinks with the church", as interpreted by the bishops:

"The right of the parent to attend to the child's education is, moreover antecedent to any human law or institution. It is vested in his very nature and is demanded as a fulfillment of his actual parenthood. In this it reflects the inviolability of the human person and his freedom under God.

"It is indeed a right which must be exercised in accordance with sound reason and consistently with the just demands of society, but it remains fundamentally intact in the parent's keeping. It is a manifestation of the law of nature in concrete

action. So it is that private and religious education in America rests upon the law of nature as well as upon the law of the land.

"For Catholic parents there is an additional imperative. As they willingly accept the obligation of their faith, they realize that the mind of the church on so important a subject as education cannot in conscience be ignored.

"As this mind is interpreted for them by their spiritual leaders, the bishops, they know that the circumstances of modern life demand the positive training of their children in the fundamentals of religion, a training which cannot be soundly imparted elsewhere than in schools dedicated to the purpose. As conscientious Catholics, they 'think with the church;' with supreme confidence in a divine wisdom, and with magnificent generosity, they have provided the indicated means, the Catholic school."

The concluding point of the lengthy argument, however, is that those "measures, grants, or aids, which are manifestly designed for the health, safety and welfare of American youth" should be available for parochial education as well as for public education.

Two factors are involved, control and cost. The American principle has said, "Let the church control as much education as it can pay for, but let the democratic public control the program supported by public funds." That the church should wish to control more than it can pay for is not surprising.

While the Bishops were working on their statement, the legislators and the governor of Virginia were at work on a plan to avoid the integration of the schools in that state. Point 5 of the legislative program proposed by the Gray report was as follows:

"5. That localities be authorized to raise sums of money by a tax on property, subject to local taxation, to be expended by local school authorities for educational purposes, including cost of transportation and to receive and expend state aid for the same purposes.

"Those localities wherein no public schools are operated should be authorized to provide for an educational levy or a cash appropriation in lieu of such levy. The maximum amount of the levy or cash appropriation, as the case may be, should be limited in the same manner as school levies or school appropriations are limited.

"The procedure to be followed by school officials and local tax levying bodies for obtaining these educational funds would be the same as prescribed by law for the raising of funds for public school purposes. The educational funds so raised would be expended by the local school board for the payment of tuition grants for elementary or secondary school education and could, in the discretion of the board, be expended for transportation costs. Local school boards should be vested with the authority to pay out such grants and costs under their own rules and regulations.

"Localities should be granted and allocated their share of state funds upon certifying that such funds would be expended for tuition grants. Any person who expends a tuition grant for

any purpose other than the education of his child should be amenable to prosecution therefor."

The Bishops and the Virginians were obviously aware of each other, but had no desire to cooperate. The position of the Roman Catholic church on segregation, and the Old Dominion's policies on parochialism make the combination a forced one. Nonetheless, the net result of the Virginia proposal is to use public funds for an educational program that serves only a part of the general public. That it is made "non-sectarian" does not alter the basic principle. How far it will be used remains to be seen.

When the White House Conference on Education met, 1800 strong, to advise the President on educational policy, the representatives were mindful of the wishes of both of the above interests. The representatives to the conference were broadly representative of the American States and Territories, and of the full range of American life. About one-third were "professional educators", and the two-thirds were professional people, labor leaders, homemakers, clergymen, and most everything else. Many of those present had participated in similar conferences in their own states and could, therefore, reflect the broad public opinion of the nation.

Most of the discussion tables took the position that the support of privately controlled education is a private matter, and accordingly outside the scope of deliberation. The summary of the reports from 166 tables said:

"The groups that considered the question whether nonpublic schools have sufficient revenue to meet present and anticipated needs agreed that the nonpublic schools were probably having financial difficulties in meeting their needs.

"While the participants recognized the right of parents to educate their children in nonpublic schools in accordance with American tradition, a large majority of the participants did not favor the use of tax funds for support of nonpublic educational institutions.

"A small number of participants discussed the matter of health and welfare benefits to pupils of nonpublic schools. Among these participants there was considerable sentiment that such services should not be denied to these pupils.

"As means for increasing support of nonpublic schools, private and corporate gifts and grants and tuition fees were suggested."

Obviously, the above statement is only one small part of the total deliberations of the White House Conference. The Director of this office was privileged to participate in the conference and will seek to share later the data and observations which have a broader significance.

This issue is, of course, not new on the American scene. Approximately a century of agitation is back of our present situation, and back of our American experience lies the long story of education in Europe. It is unfortunate, indeed, that the history of education has become so largely a neglected field of study. Unless we recover an awareness of the lessons of the past we may find ourselves learning again by the slow hard way of experience.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has frequently studied the principles involved and sought to apply them to the current scene. In March, 1950, the Committee said:

"We freely recognize the right of any religious group to maintain its own schools, but we hold it is wrong to compel all the people to pay taxes in assistance of special schools which some people prefer to the public schools that are open to everybody. We contend that educational benefits of any Federal aid bill, if granted, should be limited strictly to free tax-supported, publicly controlled educational institutions, whether or not state constitutions or laws directly or indirectly permit use of state funds for sectarian educational institutions."

Commenting on bill H.R. 4468 in March, 1951, the Committee put it as follows:

"We reaffirm our belief that any bill to provide Federal aid to education must be restricted to public education alone and we continue to oppose any legislation which would divert such funds to private and religious schools."

U.N.E.S.C.O.

Between the National Conference on the Church and Social Welfare held at Cleveland and the Conference on Religion in the Public Schools held at St. Louis, your Director had time to stop at Cincinnati for a first visit to the annual meeting of the U. S. National Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). That experience is worthy of the time and attention of many of those who seek to keep world need in view.

The experience was especially significant this year because of the critical positions taken by some national organizations. At least one person was there to try to figure out the nature of the conflict of interests and if possible to discern the subterranean sources of opposition. That job is not completed but has begun.

Of particular interest was the insistence by Dr. Luther H. Evans, the Director-General of UNESCO, that the agency remain an inter-governmental agency undertaking projects only upon invitation of a government. Speaking of the projects which are now in the making, Dr. Evans, who was formerly Librarian of Congress, had this to say:

"One project is aimed at a concerted international attack on the problems of arid zones in an area reading from the Middle East to South Asia, and in which UNESCO can help the governments and the people of this area to overcome some of the grave economic and social problems peculiar to arid lands. Another, perhaps more difficult to grapple with because of its truly global scope, envisages a major concentration of effort to increase the mutual understanding of Eastern and Western cultural values. More particularly, over a period of six to eight years, the project seeks to promote a more adequate knowledge in western member states of those Eastern cultures which are important today--to

make possible an appreciation of the relevance of their spiritual inheritance to the present-day educational, scientific and cultural problems of the West. A third project proposes a far-reaching campaign under UNESCO leadership and guidance to solve the widespread problem of supplying reading materials for new literates--to meet, in other words, the challenge presented by the fact that far too many adult literacy campaigns, far too many new primary schools, fail in the long run to bring the lasting benefits expected of them. Their pupils find themselves out of school in a society where there is nothing to read of sufficient interest and value to develop and maintain the habit of reading, or to fully explain the cultural traditions of one's own land.

"A fourth major project concerns the extension of compulsory free primary education in Latin America. This is one I want to go into more fully for two reasons. It is 'major' indeed in concept, involving as it does all independent countries south of the Rio Grande. Further, it is of great and immediate interest to the United States.

"The suggested project, as it is being planned at this beginning stage, is concerned with the training of normal school teachers and educational specialists. The ultimate objective is the extension of free and compulsory education in the entire region, particularly at the primary level. It is proposed to launch the project in 1957, following up UNESCO's Regional Conference on Free and Compulsory Education for Latin America, and the OAS Conference of Latin American Ministers of Education, which will be held simultaneously in Lima next April.

"The origin of this major project is to be found, as you would expect, in the concern of Latin American officials and educators themselves in the problem of school education. All of the countries of Latin America have had on their statute books, for from 35 to nearly 100 years, laws providing for free and compulsory education for varying periods. For many reasons, it has not been possible to apply these laws effectively. There has been considerable improvement during the last 30 years, but even so it is estimated that about 50 per cent of the children in Latin America do not get the education to which the law entitles them. The percentage ranges from 20 per cent in some countries to nearly 70 per cent in others.

"Moreover, more than half of the children who do have the opportunity to go to school do not stay there for more than two years. Rarely do more than 20 per cent of those who enter primary school complete the compulsory school period. The situation is particularly serious in rural areas, where 80 to 90 per cent of the children have no schools.

"Our member states in Latin America tell us that schooling in its usual form is wasteful and inefficient in many rural communities. There economic development supplemented by fundamental education and community development must bring about improvements in living conditions before a real demand can exist for the adequate development of schools. The systematic extension of community rural schools in which the teacher is also a community

leader who helps the adults understand and solve their own problems is probably the most effective way to accomplish substantial results within a reasonable time. We think also, that while it is possible to accomplish such with programs of purely rural education, it is no less important to integrate the rural schools in the national system of education.

"A problem of this magnitude is not going to be solved in a few years, nor by spending the \$550,000 which we have suggested might be appropriately allocated to it out of UNESCO's budget for the two years 1957-58. The amount for each biennium would be examined afresh at the preceding session of the General Conference. Schools will have to be built, teachers trained and their salaries raised. Educational specialists and leaders must be developed to revise curricula and teaching methods and materials, to supervise, to administer, to inspire. The effort required merely to provide the complete and accurate statistics on which planning can be based is a large undertaking itself. The bulk of the responsibility for all of this will fall on the member states concerned. Some outside financial help, provided through bilateral and multilateral agreements, or the suggested development fund under the United Nations auspices--these might ease the burden a little here and there. Of course UNESCO and the Organization of American States would help analyse the problem, provide technical aid, assist in planning for future action. But the main financial burden would still remain with the States themselves.

"And not merely the main financial burden. Each state would do its own planning, set targets for the period of the project, take the budgetary measures to reach it, build the schools, train the teachers, and so on. Engaged on parallel programs, each would profit from the exchange of knowledge and technical skill which cooperative international enterprise makes possible.

"As envisaged by us, UNESCO's part of the program would be to help assure the training of normal school staff and of educational specialists and administrators for each country sufficient to take over both the training program and the full technical direction of plans for extending primary education to the entire school-age population. We calculate that the training of this normal school and administrative personnel will take at least six to eight years. By this time the program ought to be really rolling towards its true goal of universal free and compulsory primary education.

"The project is broken down into five specific parts: (1) the extension of primary education, particularly in rural areas, (2) improvement of primary school teacher training, both qualitative and quantitative, and again with emphasis on rural school teachers, (3) training normal school staff at the Inter-American Rural Normal School which the Organization of American States has founded with the Venezuelan Government at Rubio, Venezuela, (4) university training of such educational specialists as curriculum experts, principals, administrators, and so on, and (5) seminars for educational leaders."