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GOVERNOR'S EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

STATE AID FOR NON-PUBLIC
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Adopted January 7, 1971

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS IN REGARD TO AID
FOR NON-PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

After careful personal study and much Committee debate and discussion, the Governor's Educational Advisory Committee is releasing these preliminary recommendations in regard to the proposal that additional tax funds be allocated to aid non-public elementary and secondary schools.

Non-Public Education in Iowa

Non-public schools in Iowa now enroll approximately 11 per cent of the children at the elementary-secondary level. More than 95 per cent of these non-public students attend schools sponsored by three church bodies as follows:

Number of Schools:	Roman Catholic	Lutheran	Christian	Total
Elementary	186	30	12	228
Secondary	43	0	4	47
Total	<u>229</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>275</u>
Enrollment:				
Elementary	51,634	2,547	2,032	56,213
Secondary	18,327	0	772	19,099
Total	<u>69,961</u>	<u>2,547</u>	<u>2,804</u>	<u>75,312</u>

(Data source: Data on Iowa Schools 1969-70, Pupils -- Public and Nonpublic, Part I)

Financial Support

In a time of rising costs, the burden of supporting two school systems is a problem in many Iowa communities. Sponsors of non-public schools claim they will be unable to continue without substantial state aid. A number of parochial schools have already been closed.

Many parents maintain they are unable to meet rising tuition costs in the parochial schools. As a result, the sponsoring churches are not reaching many of their own young people.

Admittedly, the Committee is divided on the issue of aid to non-public schools just as will be the legislature and the people of Iowa. But the following recommendation represents a consensus of the majority of the Committee:

1. The Committee has concluded that the State of Iowa should not allocate any additional public assistance for the support of non-public elementary and secondary schools.

The Committee reasoning leading to this conclusion is that the diversion of state funds to non-public schools will weaken the public schools and perpetuate a dual school system which will in the long run be more expensive.

It can also be argued that any non-public school is a form of segregation -- if not by race, certainly by religion or social class.

The parochial school might be considered a recruiting force for the sponsoring church.

Substantial state aid could result in parochial schools being started by other denominations to meet the competition and a dilution of the quality of students in the public schools.

Extent of Religious Education

It may be assumed that thriving religious institutions are a healthy addition to a democratic society. The regrettable situation today is that more youth are not acquiring a good religious background. In Iowa, it is limited

to those who are attending parochial schools and those who regularly attend other forms of religious instruction on a voluntary basis.

Religion in the Public Schools

The courts are now more lenient in allowing subjects of a religious nature to be taught in the public schools. It is now generally established that the public schools can teach the Bible as literature, the history of religion, and the nature of various religions, thereby giving every pupil an awareness of religion and stimulating him to pursue it further on his own or with the help of his church.

Certainly, the public schools in Iowa could be doing more to enrich the religious understanding of all young people by adding those courses to the curriculum that can be legally taught. That, together with released time instruction in cooperation with local churches presents a workable alternative to the expensive perpetuation of a dual school system.

Released Time and Shared Time

It is permissible in Iowa for public and non-public schools to cooperate in the education of children through shared-time and released-time programs. Citizens may petition the public schools to initiate these programs. However, the public system is under no legal obligation to participate. Therefore, the Committee strongly recommends that:

2. Public school officials should increase their efforts to cooperate with non-public schools in shared-time and released-time programs.

Religious organizations might well cooperate in acquiring facilities near existing public schools, so that released-time religious training can be made

more readily available for all children on a voluntary basis.

Effect of Non-Public School Closings

Approximately 10 per cent of the school districts in Iowa have a non-public enrollment in excess of 20 per cent of the total enrollment in the district. The Committee recognizes that some Iowa school districts may face serious financial problems due to the possible closing of non-public schools within the district. Emergency funds by the legislature may be justified to financially assist local school districts that are in extreme difficulty due to the closing of non-public schools. Corrective changes should be made in the Code of Iowa to permit local districts to purchase, lease, or rent private school facilities regardless of their bonding capacity.

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MINORITY REPORT

AID FOR NON-PUBLIC ELEMENTARY
AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

MINORITY REPORT TO THE RECOMMENDATION IN REGARD TO
AID FOR NON-PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This minority report is filed by the undersigned for the purpose of bringing out a number of considerations on the matter of state aid for non-public elementary and secondary education that are not found in the majority report. In addition, the undersigned believe there exists in the majority report several errors in fact and several unsubstantiated assumptions. After a brief summary of basic omissions, this minority report will utilize the structure of the majority report in that its comments will apply to specific sections of the majority report.

Basic Issues Ignored

1. Chief Justice E. Harold Hallows in a recent decision concerning Amish parents in Wisconsin stated:

"No liberty guaranteed by our Constitution is more important or vital to our free society than is a religious liberty protected by the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment."

Many parents and students in elementary and secondary schools of our nation today are concerned with diminishing opportunities of obtaining a religiously oriented education as it has been traditionally available in our nation.

2. Parents have been assured by the Supreme Court of the United States that they cannot be forced by law to send their students to a public school, but the very threat of economics is practically removing the option of choosing any alternate to the education provided in the public schools. Each time a non-public school closes, that freedom is lost for an additional number of students.

3. Another basic danger developing with the decline of non-public education is the ever increasing monopoly of government sponsored education and the growing power over education by the administrative and teacher organizations within this monopoly.

4. The quality resulting from competition has long been a basic cause of our national strength. But in the field of education the alternates are being destroyed as non-public schools are forced to close. This hastens the day when there will be no alternate in education available, and the benefits of competition in education will be likewise removed.

Financial Support

The term "two school systems" is misleading. The state is to insure

education for all its young citizens. Children attending non-public schools are Iowa citizens. If the emphasis of educational support is placed as it should be, on providing service to its citizens, the state is not irrevocably bound to use of one structure.

The non-public schools are required to meet the same state standards as public schools. Course work credits, etc. are accepted by the public schools. Therefore, the state's responsibility to see that its children receive a sound education is met. Should it be a crucial matter to the state as to which structure is used to meet the responsibility? Is the structure more important than the right of the parent to obtain something he considers especially vital for his child?

It should be noted that it is neither claimed nor threatened that all non-public schools will close immediately if state assistance is not received. However, this point has been reached by many schools already. And more will reach this point in the next few years. Some will undoubtedly survive, but frequently at the cost of becoming schools only for the very wealthy, hardly a goal to be sought.

It is true that many churches supporting schools, as well as those who do not, are failing to reach many young members. The assumption is made that closing a school will free large amounts of money to then use for programs to reach more young people. This is not accurate. The money now provided through parental contribution and tuition to operate non-public schools would in many cases no longer be contributed to the church due to its use for paying increased taxes to support a larger public school system.

In actuality, closing schools does not automatically provide funds for other church programs. Contributed funds are contributed for a purpose. Remove the purpose and the contributor is free to remove his funds.

The term "diversion" implies that by aiding non-public education state funds will be removed from a legitimate use and put to an illegitimate use. This connotation is unfortunate. The non-public schools meet the education standards of the state. Again, if the emphasis is properly placed on the student and not the structure, the student receives the education for which the state is responsible, and using state funds to help provide that education is certainly legitimate.

Non-public education in Iowa is requesting aid in terms of a portion of any additional revenue to be obtained from increased taxes for education. Therefore, none of the funds currently providing support for public education will be "diverted."

It is not clear from the majority report just how aid to non-public education would "weaken" public education. The belief that it will financially weaken public education is persistent but nonetheless erroneous. The "diversion" point was just discussed. The absorption point will be discussed later.

The charge that a large non-public commitment undermines commitment to improving public education is unsupported. Many cities with a commitment to non-public education are likewise responsive to the needs of a quality public program and readily provide this support.

The belief that the "long-run" costs of aid are greater than absorption costs for non-public students is also unfounded. Discounting the possible immediate cost of enlarged facilities, the year after year increased operating expenses in the public schools for absorbed non-public students will surely be greater than a percentage of this cost in aid to those students if they had stayed in the non-public schools.

The student in the non-public school would continue to be supported by the non-public facilities, thereby removing cost of new facilities. The state would lose the contributed services of the non-public teachers, amounting to the difference between his salary and a comparable public school teacher's salary. The state would also lose the tuition or contribution by the parent. ABSORBING THE STUDENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISCARDS THE NON-PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION OF FACILITIES, CONTRIBUTED SERVICES, AND TUITION OR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION AND PLACES ALL THESE COSTS ON THE TAX BILL.

Underlying the "long-run" point for many people is the fear of the camel's nose. If a little aid is given now, how much more next year, and the next, and the next? State aid is controlled by the legislature and aid is authorized two years at a time. Every two years the state either says "yes" to aid or it says "no." There is no automatic renewal clause nor is there any guarantee that aid will be increased or decreased. The legislature is in full control of the purse strings and responds to the needs of the time.

Religious segregation is another unsupported assumption. Most non-public (parochial) schools accept students of other denominations and faiths. In Iowa social class and racial segregation at the high school level is less likely at a non-public school than at a public school, for the non-public high school draws its students from the entire city and much of the surrounding area. Public schools, particularly those in metropolitan areas, draw from surrounding neighborhoods and are open to segregation due to residential patterns. The non-public elementary school tends to draw from the same local areas as the local public school. It is therefore no more likely to be segregated than the local public school.

The dilemma is that without aid many non-public schools will rapidly become economically segregated because costs will rise to levels only the wealthy can afford. By withholding aid, the state will be promoting the very thing it fears.

A fact to remember under the "recruitment" point is that attendance at a non-public school is voluntary. It is to be assumed that the parent who sends his children to a non-public school has made a rational choice to do so.

The proliferation point is likewise an unsupported assumption. It certainly has not happened in Pennsylvania and Ohio, which have programs which have been in existence for several years. It must be remembered that aid is being sought only for state approved schools. One does not start such a school overnight. Furthermore, the amount of state aid in question is far below the size of investment required to start and operate a school. It would require a lot more than state aid to generate the size of commitment needed to establish and operate a non-public school.

Extent of Religious Education

We are in agreement with the majority opinion on the value of religious education. If "the regrettable situation today is that more youth are not acquiring a good religious background", why this is it felt that non-public schools should be allowed to close because of insufficient aid and thus depriving more students of a desirable religious background?

Religion in the Public Schools

The suggestions of the majority have merit. Yet they can hardly be sufficient to accomplish the kind of a religious background labeled as desirable in the previous section. Learning "about" religion is not enough. Public schools are not satisfied merely to teach "about" citizenship, democracy, and good sportsmanship, but provide opportunity, encouragement, motivation, and correction in the art of acquiring these qualities. Many parents want the same type of assistance from the school in helping their children acquire the art of Christian living.

Released Time and Shared Time

Indeed we agree with the majority that greater public school cooperation in these two programs is vitally necessary to make them work. But even if greater cooperation is received, it is extremely unlikely that the benefits gained will be sufficient to overcome the financial problems of non-public schools. There are several crucial problems in the administration of these programs.

Most non-public schools enroll students from several public school districts. The local public school can serve only those residing in its district. What happens to those students who reside in other districts?

Student travel time between schools often is longer than normal class change time. This requires the student to miss part of both the previous and subsequent periods to the period spent in the public school.

Distance between schools often necessitates transportation. The public school is prohibited from providing it and the cost to the non-public school is more, oftentimes, than the cost of supplying the shared class itself.

Often the synchronizing of schedules is an insoluble problem. In some cases, one school may use flexible modular scheduling, thereby making it impossible to coordinate the two programs.

In some cases the public school simply doesn't have the room to accommodate the non-public student. Also, available space varies from year to year, making shared time unpredictable as a continuous program.

Released time courses cannot become accredited and thereby lose some of their prestige and atmosphere of quality. They become downgraded in importance in the eyes of the student and often, even the parents. Religious education acquires the aura of something extra, something tacked on, and not an integrated part of life, something one may readily neglect.

In both shared time and released time programs, there is no assurance that they will be continued beyond the change of administration or a change in the school board. These programs are in this sense unfair. One district may permit them and a neighboring one may not.

The suggestion for cooperation by religious organizations is being tried in some locations. Its success varies from location to location. Staffing released time programs is difficult. Few teachers are available for this type of instruction. Most non-public teachers are not trained as catechists, but have been trained as teachers of other subjects. The religious have dedicated themselves to the religious life which does not automatically make them teachers of religion.

Effective Non-Public School Closings

There clearly exists a difference of opinion on the cost of aid versus the cost of absorption. Earlier in this report the sources for support for non-public schools were delineated. Again, these are: church provided facilities, salary differential, tuition and contributions. We can lump these together as contributed services. Beginning with these contributed services, and adding an amount of public aid, will inevitably cost less than supporting the student entirely from public funds.

It may be true that some public schools can absorb the non-public students at little or no extra cost due to existing facilities in the public school. Yet the 10% of the districts mentioned in the majority report are largely metropolitan districts enrolling most of the students of the state and do not have sufficient excess facilities. They are also the districts and areas where millage rates are reaching the legal limits for other city services. Additional taxes to support the absorbed students would create a major hardship.

Further Points

In failing to provide any recommendation for further consideration of the financial problem of the non-public schools, the Advisory Committee has in reality neglected to follow the previous advice given by both Governor Robert Ray and President Richard Nixon.

Commenting upon non-public education in his first inaugural address, Governor Ray stated:

"They add greatly to the general welfare of our state, not only by reducing the financial and other burdens of public school districts, but also be contributing valuable variety to the stream of Iowa life."

On April 21, 1970, President Nixon stated:

"In my view it would be a tragedy of the first magnitude if tax-supported state schools were to drive private institutions out of existence."

The majority decision and report has done little, if anything to preserve these traditions in our state or to prevent non-public schools from facing increasing financial problems.

Submitted by Mrs. Terese Dieter and Mr. Angelo Kerper.

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