

from Church and State

# Let's Get Things Straight...

by Alan R. Bragg

Ed. Note: The Freeman quite entirely disagrees with Father Bragg, questions some of his facts, and deplores his attitude. However, since national attention has been focussed on this Vermont project, we felt that his viewpoint rated a Vermont airing. We would be glad to hear from others on the subject of pioneering educational efforts such as the one in Swanton, another in Bennington, and perhaps still others we're not aware of.

Up here in Swanton, a far-away corner of Vermont, we apparently make news now and then, not so much as concerns our new central high school for the towns of Swanton, Highgate, and Franklin, now under construction—and, as some people think, a rather too de luxe affair for our pocketbooks — there is general agreement that a new high school is greatly needed. There is by no means general agreement that a unit known as a "theological education building" is needed at all.

The plan for such a building, proposed and initiated from the first by the Roman Catholic Church, and apparently considered by them to be indispensable, is, despite local newspapers, very far from being palatable to the rest of our citizenry. Basic to non-Roman Catholic thinking is, generally speaking, the conviction that education has no need to be "slanted" according to one's religious belief. Some of us still treasure the precious gift to us from our forefathers of public schools—primary and secondary—not dominated by a religious sect, Roman Catholic or any other.

It was at first proposed by our local Roman Catholic leadership to have this theological education building as one of a complex of several buildings comprising the new high school and on the same public property. This proposition was, however, soon challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union and Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Roman brethren backed down. As time has gone on, however, a piece of property has been graciously donated, adjoining the school property, so that the theological building may now be built on private property, and close enough to enable the children to reach the theological unit within a most comfortable stroll. It has not yet, to my knowledge, been publicly stated as to who holds the deed to this munificence, nor who the donor is.

One of the latest splashes about this proposed religious education unit appeared in the Vermont Catholic Tribune, the official publication of the (R. C.) Diocese of Burlington, Vt. under date of January 8th, 1969. This splash is entitled, "No Truth to Rumours", and here we read: "In addition, a separate religious education facility will be built on private adjacent land and supported by the various religion (religious?) denominations in the area." Of course, the words, "supported" and "area" are broad ones. As to the former, it seems clear that good, hard cash must be meant—at least to some extent; for no educational institution can be built and maintained, with basic requirements of teachers, books, classrooms, heating, and other facilities, on moral or well-wishing support!

## Letters

### DESTRUCTIVE SCHOOLS

One of the most heartening signs in recent years is the growing belief among many people that the formal educational processes (i.e. schools) are not only "not good" — but that they are positively destructive and harmful. People are becoming aware that the function of schools is not to educate children but, in fact, to do the very opposite — to PREVENT education.

Children, who by nature are alive, curious and loving are forced to sit for 5 or 6 hours a day in classrooms

Inquiry from our Congregational minister, the Rev. Richard A. Frye in Swanton, brings the assurance that no support whatever other than "moral" has been promised for this project from his church. The Board of the Swanton Methodist Church asserts the same, and I can state of a certainty that the Episcopal Church of Swanton has not even given moral support—nor does it intend to. This is the position of the Swanton churches.

The splash further informs its readers that "He (Fr. John La-Brake, SSE, originator of the concept) explained that support has been promised by the Catholic and Episcopal Diocese (s?) in Vermont." Here again one wonders what the nature of this support is, and I, as an Episcopal priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, and recer of the Episcopal Church of Swanton, for one, would be most awfully grateful to hear just how much support in dollars and cents my own diocese has promised. I have not yet been advised of any.

According to the same source, a certain Mr. Floyd Handy, evidently mouthpiece for the Northwest Interfaith Council (of which the Episcopal Church of Swanton is not a member) "claims that the parochial schools are in difficulty." If this is so, it is not my business nor that of any other non-Roman reader. No one ever coerced our Roman brethren into having parochial schools in the first place. Let them work out their own problem, and not look to those who differ from them fundamentally in religious outlook to help support them. It would certainly seem that the Roman Catholic Church, one of the wealthiest organizations, if not the wealthiest in the world, could fish its schools out of troubled waters without looking for either moral, financial, or any other type of support from church bodies, which it has long since put under the curse of excommunication.

Rev. Alan R. Bragg is rector of Holy Trinity Church (Protestant Episcopal), Swanton, Vt. He is a longtime resident of the area and has been prominent in community affairs.

memorizing and reciting nonsense which they have no natural interest in, under strict authoritarian discipline with rigid concepts of "right" and "wrong" and "good" and "bad."

It is quite clear that the basic function of the schools is to set up in children patterns of docility and conformity — patterns designed not to create independent and free adults, but adults who will obey orders, be "faithful" uncomplaining employees, and "good" citizens.

The role of the schools is so apparent that many young parents are beginning to feel that, come what may, it is better for their children not to go to school at all than for them to attend a normal type establishment.

Bernard Sanders  
North Montpelier

### MORE ON EDUCATION

...So pleased with the paper. We especially enjoy the new slants on basic issues. I'd like to read more about the educational systems — the K-12 program — new methods being used in the schools, audio-visual aids, etc.

Burma Youngman  
Huntington

Dear Neighbor:

We'd be glad to receive material on the subject, following the articles on Shaker Mountain School, the Kindergarten bill, and other educational matters. Stir up one of your well-informed friends to put paper in his typewriter and submit some manuscripts to us.

The Editor

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## GENERAL BUSINESS SERVICES

Kenneth P. Moad Director

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expendable automatons. This is not in line with the aims of the college, which tries to make men whole, to develop their individual minds, and give them a vision of the higher truth.

James J. Anderson of Michigan State University says:

"The military . . . stresses hierarchy, the solution to problems through violence rather than reason, and unquestioning obedience to commands from above. At heart, the institutions (ROTC and the university) are completely contradictory." Time, March 7, 1969, p. 54.

To the military alone should belong the process of programming, indoctrination and learning the science of warfare. To St. Michael's College belongs the process of educating intelligent, free-thinking men.

"We say a strange thing about our society when we allow that credit towards a Bachelor of Arts degree in a liberal arts program include the art of war." "Vermont Freeman" Vol. 1, No. 6, p. 10.

It is my belief that SMC should actively disassociate itself from all military organizations on campus. If, our armed forces wish to train the college-man for warfare, let them do so outside the college, for here we are trained to live as thinking gentlemen, not as finely-honed parts of a war-machine.

Jim McGurn, 70

St. Michael's College  
Winooski