

2614 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

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READING CENTER'S DIRECTOR UPSET BY FUND CUTBACK

(By Lucian C. Warren)

The plight of the Boorady Memorial Reading Center in Dunkirk was described here a few weeks ago. This is the project which has had outstanding success in training underprivileged children in northern Chautauqua County to become good English readers.

The results have been dramatic, with some of the children rising rapidly from the bottom to the top of their classes as the result of the improved reading facility.

Sister Marie Baptista Pollard, director of the center, informs us that she has just been told by Chautauqua Opportunities Inc., that the program must be sharply cut back.

A directive from the New York City regional office of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) that after today funds will be supplied from the federal antipoverty program to provide classes for only 100 out of 250 children now enrolled at the Dunkirk center.

Sister Baptista outlines the nature of the problem with great clarity as follows:

"Here we are in the United States of America, fighting the drop-out problem by setting up job corps, neighborhood youth corps and various other 'stay-in-school' projects.

"At the same time officials are telling me to 'drop out' children who could be taught to speak, read and write English and become some of the best citizens this country has ever known.

"In the field of medicine and mental health, emphasis is on prevention, while in education of the disadvantaged, we wait until a crisis occurs and then rally our forces at an astronomical cost in time, effort and money."

Representative Charles E. Goodell and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy have gone to bat for the program.

Congressman Goodell only two weeks ago had OEO director Sargent Shriver in his office for a conference on the matter. Shriver promised he would see what he could do to obtain sufficient funds for the Dunkirk project to keep it going at full strength.

Apparently he has either done nothing or not succeeded in finding funds for 150 of the students. It is difficult to believe the latter premise.

Sister Baptista says she has been reading about conditions in New York City public schools, where the number of youngsters who can't learn their school lessons because of a poor command of English is astronomically high.

"This could soon become nation-wide," says the nun, "if nothing is done to help these youngsters.

"The cities can hire all the police force available, preach, 'yak' at the children, but until they offer help when help is most needed and appreciated, there will be no cessation in acts of delinquency which usually begin with defiance.

"Several educational studies point out that when children are tutored in the same building where they already met failure, with the same textbooks they failed with, taught by the same teachers who have no faith in them, the result is that the program—any program—'falls on its face.'

"It has been my experience that a separate educational center is in great part the answer to many questions concerning compensatory education.

"I honestly do not know how we can continue to operate after today. We have teachers, children willing to learn, but no money."

Though the hour is late, it is earnestly hoped that somehow the prayers of Sister Baptista and the hopes of her students and the families can be answered.

[From the Buffalo Express, Dec. 1, 1966]

REPORT BLEAK ON AIDING DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

AUSTIN, Tex.—President Johnson received Wednesday a generally gloomy report on the first efforts to reach poor children through federal education funds.

The "crucial ingredient" in improving education of the disadvantaged, the report said, is changing "the attitude of teachers." Yet in most communities studied the special projects for the poor "were alarmingly deficient in facing up to this need," it said.