

so vociferous in denouncing previously "tainted" marches in Washington and New York. For the gathering, the politics of doing the right thing mattered most, the politics of emotional radicalism, something that can dispense with the traditional trappings of ideology, though something not precisely geared to a sustained movement in the 1948 Wallace sense of the term.

The most pressing question seemed whether or not the movement would hold together through the vicissitudes of the summer ahead. The war called together a wide grouping of the middle class into a new political coalition and a new political idiom that conflicts with New Deal anti-Communist liberalism in tone and style as much as in program; this goes far to explain why the speeches were addressed as much to the problems of changing American social institutions as they were to those of stopping the war. But the new movement has yet to come to terms with some of the hard realities of how to deal with the tough world of power in which the Johnsons and Humphreys hold the reins and give in only when forced. It is fragmenting under the banner of the new individualism, even as the radical rhetoric continues to win new adherents. But if the demonstration demonstrated anything it is that the movement is no longer a peace movement *per se*; it has become part of a much larger and more broadly-based movement groping to change the working definitions of the political order. JONATHAN EISEN



Sister Scabs In the Suburbs

Chicago, Ill.

A group of lay and religious teachers in the Chicago Archdiocesan school system face a crisis which could affect the future of Catholic education in America. Last August, they formed a union, the Archdiocesan Teachers' Federation, in response to the firing of 26 lay teachers at St. Patrick High School, strikes at three other high schools, and the closing of several inner-city schools. The teachers organized as a way of gaining a voice in the policy and decision-making in their schools. The Archdiocese seemed to think it sufficient to form a Personnel Policy Committee consisting entirely of principals, and excluding teachers. Apparently the Archdiocese believes that the right to organize should be restricted to the top.

In October, the Archdiocesan Teachers' Federation affiliated with the Illinois Federation of Teachers, becoming Local 1700 ATF of the AFL-CIO. The union successfully organized two high schools—Leo and Little Flower—and made contact with several others; it conducted in-service labor education programs at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus, sponsored discussions on

inner-city education at the union office, and supported the archdiocesan position on the bussing issue.

In December, a spokesman for the teachers of Elizabeth Seton High School, in South Holland (an affluent suburb of Chicago), informed the union of their desire to organize. The union requested and secured the principal's permission to speak to the Seton faculty and, presuming that the meeting would include both religious and lay, sent a Sister and a layman to speak to the group. They found, however, that the principal had restricted the meeting to lay faculty; she sent a Sister delegate to sit in on the meeting.

Within a week, 22 of the 31 lay teachers at Seton had officially joined the union. They drew up a contract, elected officers and made the results of the election public; in January, they asked the Seton administration to recognize them as a collective bargaining unit. They repeatedly sought this recognition from January 22 through March, but were ignored. On March 13 and 14, seven of the 22 union members (including all four of the officers) received form letters from the administration telling them that their services would not be needed at Elizabeth Seton the following year. The teachers requested specific reasons for each dismissal, but the administration merely replied that the form letter was self-explanatory.

Then, when the teachers threatened to strike, the administration promised to begin bargaining with them the next day; at the bargaining session the administration first announced that the bargaining unit voted in by the teachers was not acceptable and then flatly demanded that the Seton teaching Sisters be allowed to vote for the unit that would represent the teachers. The union previously had offered the Sisters every opportunity to join ATF (it makes no distinction between religious and lay teachers), but the nuns at Seton had been forbidden to do so. The administration's sudden interest in the Sisters' voting rights was suspect, to say the least. Under the circumstances, too, it was unlikely that the Sisters could vote freely. (This was borne out later in the dispute.) Therefore, the lay teachers refused the bargaining condition and the strike was on.

It should be pointed out, however, that the strike was merely the culmination of a long list of grievances which had prompted the Seton faculty to organize a union chapter in the first place. Among the things the Seton teachers had been expected to put up with were:

1. Classroom interruption by the administration and correction of teachers before students.
2. Interference by the administration in teachers' presentation of information about civil rights and the war in Vietnam. Teachers' views on these subjects were corrected before students and before parents. Also, they were forbidden to present any material except what was included in the religion and social studies texts, both of which are out of date and very conservative.

3. The changing of grades by the principal. Three of the seven dismissed refused to allow their grades to be changed or reported this to the parents of the students involved.

4. The arbitrary discipline of students. There was no clear policy on discipline, and no disciplinary board in the school.

5. Assignment of teachers to classes for which they are not prepared. One teacher with an M.A. in theology was assigned to six and one-half periods of biology. Several lay teachers were teaching religion although they had not attended Catholic colleges and had no credits in theology. Teachers with free periods teach religion.

6. The projected dismissal of students to decrease enrollment (in one sophomore homeroom 11 out of 21 were on probation).

7. Discrimination against Negro students in a variety of ways. (Recently Negro students requested a Mass for Dr. Martin Luther King and were refused. They were told not to cause trouble by asking for such things.)

Since the strike, teachers have called several open meetings to explain their position to parents; they invited the administration, but the invitation was ignored. They have also requested an interview with Mother Mary Omer, Mother General of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, who staff Elizabeth Seton High School. Here, too, they were ignored. A letter written to Mother Mary Omer by Sisters of other teaching communities in Chicago, asking her to meet with the lay teachers and administration of Seton and to encourage teaching Sisters there to exercise their human and American rights to join the union and to speak out in behalf of the lay teachers if this be their conviction, was similarly unacknowledged.

Receiving no recognition, the lay teachers and Sisters of Local 1700 AFL-CIO picketed Elizabeth Seton High School, the Archdiocesan School Board and the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. The only result has been the sending of Charity nuns from other areas to Seton to replace the striking teachers. To their shame, they are known as "Sister Scabs." Another facet to the dispute is that despite Cardinal Cody's directive that high schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago accept all students who apply, the administration of Seton has reduced its enrollment by two hundred students. The rationale behind this action is that the Sisters of Charity are a pontifical institute and therefore are not subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop. The irony of this action is that Sister Mary Omer has been quoted as saying that the IHM Sisters of California, also a pontifical institute, ought to obey their bishop. Apparently, one nun's meat. . . .

The teachers have taken their stand on the social encyclicals of recent popes and in particular John XXIII's contention in *Mater et Magistra* that "workers should be allowed to play an active part in the affairs of an enterprise—private or public—in which they are employed."

So far the only response to their repeated requests for a hearing is an icy silence—from the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Superintendent of Schools, the Sisters of Charity, Mother Mary Omer and the administration of Elizabeth Seton High School.

Since joining the ATF last December, and especially during the last month of their strike, the Seton Chapter has shown that their understanding of unionism is closely related to John XXIII's understanding of it—that is, that unions should evolve beyond their original "bread and butter" goals. For the Seton teachers salary was at no time an issue. Nevertheless, the Seton administration has offered the teachers an increment of approximately \$1,000 for next year if they will return on the administration's terms. One of the terms is acceptance of a faculty senate instead of the union as the teachers' bargaining agent. The creation of a senate was unanimously approved, after the strike had begun, by the teaching nuns at Seton, the non-striking lay teachers and the "Sister Scabs" imported to help break the strike. The union members, however, consider a faculty senate, in this case at least, to be in the same category as the Archdiocese's Personnel Policy Committee—just another name for a company union. At this writing, the strikers have agreed to binding arbitration of the dispute; the administration, honoring the great silence to the last, has not committed itself.

Meanwhile, after several weeks without pay, the strikers are suffering financially. Other union locals have been able to contribute small sums to a fund for them and some have been able to find part-time work. They keep only \$10 a day of their earnings, contributing the rest to a common fund administered by the Chapter president who distributes the money according to the most pressing needs—for rent, medical expenses, food and so on. Most observers have been struck not only by the strikers' professional integrity and solidarity but also by their compassion. When two of the teachers were forced to return to Seton because of acute financial strain, there were no reproaches, no reprimands from the others.

Two questions remain:

1. Does the teaching of the Church on the rights and duties of labor and management exclude herself when she is acting as an employer?

2. Does the Church really want to upgrade Catholic education by using to its full potential the professional concern and dedication which lay teachers bring to the enterprise?

The answers to these questions will affect the future of Catholic education in the United States because the answers will decide what type of lay teachers will be attracted to Catholic education. The Catholic school system has been accused of sending its worst student problems to the public schools. Will our best teachers now be forced to join them?

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