

## Save Catholic Schools

Dear Editor: As yet another sizable number of Catholic schools in this state closed their doors this June – never to open again – the importance of your May 10 editorial, "Putting Students First," simply cannot be overestimated.

Richard E. Barnes, executive director of the New York State Catholic Conference had it right when he said, as quoted in your editorial, "Credible media sources have acknowledged that lawmakers are clearly bowing to the interests of the state's public school teachers' unions, which also are responsible for the state's refusal to grant tax relief to the parents of the 500,000 children in independent and religious schools. It is important for lawmakers and the public to keep in mind that the teachers' unions do not represent the state's children. Rather, they are trade associations, whose basic interests begin and end with the financial security of their own membership."

For verification of this view, we need look no further than the words of Reg Weaver, president of the 3.2 million member National Education Association, who took issue with colleagues who would rather focus attention solely on their students and schools rather than enter the arena of politics so as to elect candidates who support public education and the NEA programs needed to dictate our future and the future of our nation. "We choose to ignore politics at our own peril," he wrote. "Education decisions – from those made by local school boards to those made in state capitols and on Capitol Hill – rest in the hands of politicians."

Here it is important to keep in mind that the future of our nation, as envisioned by Reg Weaver and his fellow unionists is a society first envisioned by Robert Owen, a wealthy British socialist reformer who came to the United States in 1825 for the avowed purpose of transforming this country into a religion-free collectivist society and that the legal authority for achieving this objective and for eliminating all forms of non-government schooling, according to the public educationalists, rests in an 1894 amendment to the state Constitution which holds that, "The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools wherein all the children of the state may be educated."

Confronting a government program under which some unwilling citizens under color of law are forced to pay for the political agendas and political campaigns of a Soviet-style school system is by no means an easy task. But face the challenge we must if Catholic schools are to be saved. And that is why working to pass the Maltese-Larkin school property tax credit in the Freedom of Education Act (S3257) is a first step toward that goal; and that lending support and voting for public officials who support educational freedom is so important. And finally that is why the personal dedication of every believer in the restoration of freedom of education in this state is most crucial... and in a very large sense, this is really what putting our youthful students first is all about.

**Edward P. Scharfenberger  
Warwick, N.Y.**

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