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SPEECH of Honorable John E. Fogarty at St. Raymond's Hall,  
Sunday, February 12, 1950.

I am not a skilled lecturer. Neither am I an author seeking to rouse your emotions in order to promote the sale of my book. I hope you will understand that I cannot create a scene here. I am unable to make a passionate plea for support of my ideas, nor am I able to scream hatred of any person, or group of persons.

I can remember being taught in school - a Catholic school - that one of America's greatest features lies in the fact that our system of Government guarantees - not permits, mind you - but guarantees to every man the right to worship his God according to the dictates of his conscience.

That right is something priceless and any thinking person will realize that its enjoyment is to be advanced and defended by the Government of these 48 States. Whatever the Government will do which will make that right more difficult of enjoyment is, in effect, a restriction, or even a denial, that the right exists.

There is another right which this democratic system guarantees to its citizen. That is the right of every parent to determine the type of school which his child shall attend.

That right has been spelled out by the Supreme Court of the United States and, I submit, is not open to question.

However, there are those who strive mightily and constantly to hedge both these rights with restrictions and penalties in order that they may get across their own concept - which is that both are merely privileges to be

enjoyed so long as the sovereign state is willing, and to be denied once the sovereign state determines that it alone will be the mind and the conscience of its citizens.

In the United States we have always been jealous of the air of freedom in which our educational system operates. We do not believe that there should be but one educational system, financed by the State, taking its guidance and direction, and eventually its curriculum from the Federal Government officials in Washington.

Because these things are so, the problem of Federal assistance in the field of elementary and secondary education has always been a thorny one.

Educators and men and women interested in the social welfare of the Nation have long been concerned over the poor standards of education in many of the so-called poorer States. These States are referred to as poor because their tax resources are not sufficient to bring their elementary and high schools up to the National average which has been steadily rising because of the advances made by States with adequate tax revenue.

These educators and socially minded people have tried for more than 20 years to obtain Federal assistance for these schools so that all America's children could enjoy a decent education in grade school and high school.

During recent years an ever-increasing number of members of Congress have become interested in the problem and many sincere efforts have been made to work out a satisfactory solution.

During the 80th Congress the Senate of the United States passed a Federal Aid to Education Bill. This measure never reached the floor of the House for debate mainly because many members feared that with the extension of this Federal assistance would go a dangerous measure of Federal control over our schools.

I want to point out to you that during all these years when this problem has been the subject of searching investigation, lengthy Congressional hearings and debate, there had never been rancor or expressions of hate.

In an honest attempt to provide what I sincerely believed was a just and workable solution to the problem of providing Federal aid to America's educational system within the limits of the law, I introduced HR 1570.

This measure provided that the Federal Government would make 300 million dollars available to the States to assist them in maintaining their own schools. The bulk of the funds were destined for the poorer States but all States would share in the program to some extent.

Some speakers have referred to the Fogarty Bill as one which interests the Catholic hierarchy, because it would benefit the Catholic parochial system. Such men demonstrate by such charges that they have never read the Bill. No where in all its pages is there a single provision which would make a single dollar available to any parochial school.

When I introduced that Bill I did it with the knowledge that this was to be the first venture of the Federal Government in the field of elementary and secondary education. Under the terms of all the various measures which

have been introduced in Congress - all school children within a State are counted in, in order to determine that State's allotment. Under the Bill passed by the Senate in the 80th Congress, all children attending parochial schools would be counted out when it came to providing the benefits of this expenditure of Federal money. Perhaps I am naive but that didn't strike me as just.

Our system of Government acknowledges the right of a parent to send his child to a school where that child will learn something about his Divine Creator. This Government must protect that right, and it seems to me that denying even a token benefit to a Catholic child out of the expenditure of this Government's money, is a far cry from protecting the right of that child's parent.

With this thought in mind I incorporated in my Bill a plan for making health examinations, secular text-books, and school bus rides available for all school children regardless of the type of school that child attended. I attempted to make these services available to children in non-tax-supported schools because the Supreme Court of the United States has upheld the expenditure of public monies for these purposes.

This was certainly not flouting the law, rather I think it was a demonstration of respect for the Constitution and Supreme Court. Neither was there any attempt to force a State to expend any monies in providing these services. My measure proposed that the Federal Government could arrange for these services in any State whose constitution or laws prohibited it from making such arrangements for children in other than public schools. This would be done

through a very simple arrangement, similar to that which already functions successfully in the School Lunch Program.

I believe this was an honest attempt to provide a just and equitable solution to a most difficult problem. The Fogarty Bill would make the great bulk of the three hundred million dollars available to the States for use in their public school systems. Ten per cent of the 300 million would be available for the welfare services I mentioned to all the children in whom the Federal Government has an interest.

Before the House Education and Labor Committee began its hearings on this matter there was introduced a measure which would specifically prohibit the use of any of these Federal dollars to give any type of benefit to children attending parochial schools. (This measure has become known as the Barden Bill. In order to make certain that parochial school children would be kept off school busses financed with the Federal money, the Barden Bill prohibited the use of this Federal money for the school bus transportation of any children.)

I felt, with good cause I believe, that this measure discriminated against the thousands of children attending parochial schools and I so testified at the Committee's hearings. I have continued to protest against the measure and to insist that in this broad Federal assistance program there must be provision, at the very least, for school-bus rides for ALL children attending elementary and secondary schools.

Because of this insistence, and the insistence of other fair minded members of Congress a considerable controversy developed in the House Education and Labor Committee to the point that this Committee has been unable to agree on

the form of a Bill which it will report.

During the past several months many people outside of the Congress have joined in this controversy. Serious charges have been hurled without regard for the merits of the problem. There has been a great deal of heat - and very little light.

I have received thousands of letters. Most, I believe have come from well intentioned people on both sides of the argument. But I have found that most of those who criticise the position I take are not well-informed.

I have been told in many of these letters that I am being subjected to pressure from the Catholic Hierarchy. These letters usually come from those who protest their great love for Catholics, "some of whom are my best friends", they say. I can tell you honestly that no member of the Catholic Hierarchy has ever spoken to me about the Fogarty Bill. I have had letters from Catholic priests, to be sure. But if my memory serves me correctly they were all expressing opposition to the Barden Bill and at times I was a little put out because they seemed to know nothing of the Fogarty Bill.

I have also received many letters from ministers of other religions. I know these were expressions of sincere conviction but most of them expressed opposition to the expenditure of Federal money for parochial schools. I honestly don't know of any Catholic who has sought to have this Federal aid program extended to parochial schools. I know for a fact that the Fogarty Bill won't accomplish that purpose.

I have argued and pleaded for school-bus rides for children attending school, regardless of the type of school. That's all I have done. And I am

certain no member of the Catholic Hierarchy is going to ride on a school bus.

I have heard it said that the child attending the parochial school is not receiving a genuine American education. His school is a divisive influence, we are told. I feel terribly hurt when I hear these expressions. I know the parochial school is a great influence for good in the United States. The system is maintained, at no small sacrifice, by good American parents who are proud and jealous of their American heritage.

More divisive I believe is the setting apart of these little children from their playmates - telling them they cannot ride on a school-bus because their parents insist they learn about God Almighty as well as Karl Marx.

There is nothing Episcopal, or Catholic, or Jewish about a mechanical monster without heart or mind. There is no honest reason why a little child should not be given a ride on such a device. These children, as has often been said, are the children of tomorrow. They will make tomorrow's world, if we of our generation leave anything for them. They should be made to grow up in the knowledge that they must be exposed to the elements and the dangers of public highways while their little playmates ride to school. To me it is elemental justice, elemental Americanism, to look out for the physical and spiritual welfare of all America's children.

Everyone doesn't agree with us, I know. We don't expect unanimous agreement in our system. But I firmly believe the problem should be looked at honestly and without imputing bad motives to anyone.

I recall the words of St. Augustine - In areas of agreement - Unity. In areas of disagreement - Liberty and Freedom. But in all things - Charity.