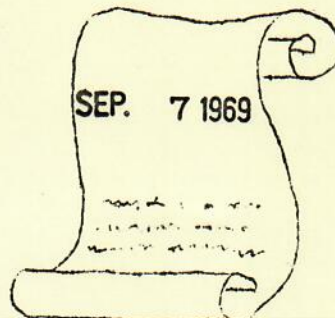


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Debate Separation Of Church, State

The perennial question of separation of church and state was debated Thursday evening at a conference held by the Bill of Rights Committee of the First Constitutional Convention. This time the debate may lead to concrete results. The Committee is presently studying issues which will affect their writing of a new Bill of Rights for Guam. The debaters were representatives from the private schools of St. Jude, St. Anthony, and the Far East Island Mission.

There was a *schism* in the group's philophy concerning state aid to private schools, even though all present represented private schools. The Far East Island Mission Academy "has always held to the position of

complete separation of church and state," according to Paul Nelson. In speaking of public aid to the church supported schools, Nelson also said, "Once this gets started. . .the next part of the drama is already before us. Not only do the parochial schools want and desire (and need) help for their textbooks and their bussing and lunches--but now it's to pay the salaries of the teachers. . .As soon as we start compromising in that area, then where are we going to draw the line?"

On the other hand, Sister Caroline of St. Jude's pointed out that all people are taxpayers, regardless of their religion, and that their tax money should be distributed to help them as citizens--not as members of a particular church. "If you have to send your children to a public school in order to get your tax money back, then you're already depriving yourself of one right." Sister Caroline suggested that

money be given directly to the parents so that they might use it to educate their children at the school of their choice--public or private.

Sister Mary Gerard of St. Anthony's said, "It's cheaper for the government to give limited aid than it is for them to try to accommodate all school children of Guam." Another point she brought out, which is often used by proponents of public aid to private schools, ~~was that parents of child ren in private schhalls are being "doubly taxed" because they must continue to pay taxes to support public schools from which they do not benefit.~~

Lowell Hagely, principal of the Far East Island Mission, countered with the remark, "We're also paying taxes for wars we may not believe in . . . I may be paying taxes for someone's welfare."

A basic disagreement in the interpretation of the U. S. Constitution and the role of govern-

ment with respect to the church-state relationship existed. Sister Caroline stated that the role of government is to protect the right of every parent to see that his child is educated according to his choice."

Nelson contended, on the other hand, that the freedom or right which should be protected is that of the parent to choose to send his child to any school, regardless of whether or not the school was funded privately or publicly.

With regard to the Constitution Sister Mary Gerard said, "The Constitution has separation of church and state--meaning that the government is not to support any particular church to the detriment of any other church." The representatives from the Far East Island Mission held that the Constitution and, even more definitely, the Organic Act state that no aid shall be give to ANY church.

The Organic Act presently reads: "No pubic money or pro-

perty shall ever be appropriated supplied, donated, or used directly or indirectly for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church denomination, sectarian institution or association. . ."

Members of the committee present were Joseph Ada, chairman, Joe Quintanilla, William Flores, and Jesus Camacho. Those present from the parochial schools were Sisters Bernadette Marie and Mary Gerard of St. Anthony's, Sisters Flora, Carolina, and Alice of St. Jude's, Father Arnold of St. Jude's and Paul Nelson, Lowell Hagely and Jerry Wiggle of Far East Island Mission.