Chapter XIX

PARENT GROUP REACTION TO JESUIT WITHDRAWAL AND FINAL DECISION (1970)

The narrative now turns to the efforts of George A. Coleman and Harry R. Ernst as representatives of a parents' group to propose a plan for the retention of Jesuits at Xavier. A letter from Mr. Ernst came to Fr. Provincial William G. Guindon, both by mail and by hand, and set forth the proposals. The parents incorporated would not take trusteeship, but would, by lease, under a new group of Jesuit at Xavier trustees, assume authority for legal and financial matters. Academic responsibility would rest with the Jesuit trustees.

As precedents, there were cited the Shreveport Plan at St. John's, Shreveport, Louisiana, and the Austin Prep Arrangement, and those concluded with the Philadelphia and Grosse Point Academies of the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Under those arrangements, enrollments had increased and Christian enterprises flourished. The letter incorporating these thoughts eventuated in a telephone conversation on Sunday, January 25, 1970, in which an opportunity for fuller discussion was requested by Mr. Ernst. A briefer resume of this letter was forwarded to Cardinal Cushing, with whom a discussion was also requested.

On January 27th, in acknowledgement of the telephone call to him, Fr. Provincial sent a letter to Mr. Ernst detailing the substance of this conversation. There had been discussion of Fr. John R. Vigneau's statement that some group might propose plans for the continuation of Xavier as a Catholic institution,
and that such proposals would be gladly received. So Fr. Provincial reiterated the manner in which Jesuit volunteers could be authorized to work there, not under Jesuit trustees, but under the trusteeship of such a new group.

Also, on January 27th a three-page proposal was sent to Fr. Vigneau, along with a copy to Fr. Provincial. This detailed the plan which was submitted in the names of Dr. Harry Ernst, George A. Coleman, and Dr. Richard Stanton, but signed by Mr. Coleman on behalf of the committee. The letter narrated that a group of fifteen fathers on January 18th had voted to seek an interview with Fr. Provincial to discuss the feasibility and conditions of a Shreveport or Austin Prep Plan to save Xavier. After some statements on the January 25th telephone call, the accuracy of which on some smaller points was open to question by Fr. Provincial, a definite, if incomplete, proposal was made.

The parents' group would first incorporate in order to negotiate. The Jesuits would contract in writing to supply a minimum of fifteen volunteers, with one to serve as principal. Added Jesuits would be appreciated. Then the fifteen Jesuits would be constituted the trustees of Xavier. They would lease the property to the parents' corporation for one dollar ($1.00) a year. In the event that the cardinal took over the property, the lease would be arranged with him, but the contract for fifteen Jesuits would remain. All legal and financial details of the school would be the responsibility of the lay corporation, and they would protect and enhance the property.
Plans on curriculum, to be approved by the lay corporation and the cardinal, would be presented by some two Jesuit priests as chairmen in the eyes of the fathers' group of the Jesuit trustee group of fifteen volunteers. All these volunteers would be paid by the lay corporation. The initial contract would be for five years, subject to mutual cancellation on six months' notice, but such that no class of students, once accepted, would fail to complete its full four years of instruction. In this way flexibility would be permitted and inequity avoided.

Since this was a statement of intent, fuller details had yet to be arranged. Another month was needed by the group to learn more details on the Shreveport and Austin plans. They wished, however, that pending that time no disposition be made of the property. A brief timetable was appended. If the plan was judged feasible by February 1st -- then only a few days away --, there should be a joint announcement by the cardinal and the provincial that a plan was being worked out. By February 10th, the tentatively established new boards would go over details with Shreveport and Austin plans as models. By March 1, there should be a definite announcement on the future of Xavier. Copies of this letter to Fr. Vigneau went not only to Fr. Provincial, but also to Cardinal Cushing and one proposed Jesuit trustee.

Since Mr. Coleman personally delivered to Fr. Provincial his copy of the letter, they conferred for a time on its substance. After the session, Fr. Provincial prepared at once a memorandum on the conversation, and on the same day
composed a response for Mr. Coleman. He stressed his opposition to having Jesuits comprise the board of trustees since withdrawal from this task was an integral part of the withdrawal of Jesuit presence from Xavier. As for volunteers, he was in the dark about any names except two who were presumably volunteers. Even with the possibility of a turning over of the property to Cardinal Cushing for school use, there was need of a real estate appraisal, and time for this was still required. Hence, February 1st was an impossible date if and since appraisal must precede negotiations. As to volunteers, there would be no contractual agreement on numbers, but the methodology for their being sanctioned as volunteers to the proposed lay management was detailed. These points of the memorandum were incorporated into a letter.

The letter referred to some factual matters which, while annoying, did not attest the substance either of the plan or its rejection. It might also be observed that, up to this point, nothing was said about Jesuit contributions from their salaries to the school. In the Shreveport contract, according to a telephone conversation of Fr. James C. Carter, S.J., Director of Education for the New Orleans Province to Fr. Joseph D. Devlin, on February 2, 1970, the Shreveport Jesuits were obliged to contribute eighty percent of their salaries back to the school corporation.

Fr. General was the next recipient of pleas and complaint. Prior to his receiving the extended plea for a continuation of Xavier, which was dated February 8, 1970, he had
written to Fr. Provincial on February 2nd. In view of the public statement of January 13th, there seemed little on which to comment concerning Fr. Provincial's letter to him of January 9th. He trusted that the matter had been fully discussed in advance with the Xavier community since some letters from its members had objected to certain assertions made in the public statement. He reminded the provincial that there would soon be need for a formal petition to suppress Xavier as a religious house undoubtedly erected canonically.

The Coleman documentation which went nominally to Fr. General was also distributed to Cardinal Cushing and to all who had been official participants in the January Province Congress. It consisted of a two and one-third page letter signed by the three spokesmen for the fathers' group, plus a series of accompanying documents and an index page.

In first place, among accompanying documents, was the recent correspondence between Cardinal Cushing and Fr. Provincial, a rather unusual use of private correspondence. It was later learned that the Cardinal had supplied this correspondence. Another important and controversial enclosure was A Considered Reaction to the Speech of Fr. Vigneau Announcing to the Public the Abandonment of Xavier School -- January 13, 1970. Next appeared a series of facts and events occurring during the past year, designed to show that the situation was not as clear-cut as alleged. Next came accounts of the Shreveport and Austin plans as submitted by officials in those schools. The Wiener Survey was included to show the strength of the school.
The optimistic letter of the headmaster on May 29, 1969, was added. Dangers to students were indicated through newspaper clippings concerning a lecture at Xavier by an ex-priest, Arthur Melville. There was data from the Steering Committee, set up to establish a better flow of thought on sensitive matters between school and parents. To conclude the data there appeared Fr. Vigneau's speech of January 13, 1970.

The letter proper stressed the excellent grades given to Xavier until complaints arose about the demolition of the original chapel and the substitution of a liturgy room with a different type of ornamentation and without reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. The charge was made that it was the headmaster who had determined to close the school without prior consultation with relevant groups such as the trustees, advisory lay board, faculty committee, parents, students, alumni. This unilateral decision was disclosed to Fr. Provincial who was allegedly able to use the "pro forma" backing of the congress to accomplish the purpose. Hence, the deed, according to this letter, was really accomplished by two men.

Reasons given on January 13 were alleged to be misstatement, or open to other interpretations. The lack of students was denied since alumni and parental assistance in recruitment had not been used. Staff was hardly lacking since half the present staff was remaining and there were twelve new volunteers. These latter, plus two of the current staff, were under sixty years of age and were ready to commit themselves for five years. If lay teachers were leaving, it was because they
had been informed that the school was closing. Efforts of parents in raising funds had been thwarted in November, 1969.

An earlier statement of Fr. Vigneau on the value of teaching at Xavier was contrasted with his present view. There was the remark that, if there was a place where the value could be doubted, it was in the completely secularized Jesuit colleges which were being kept open. The decision was particularly unjust toward those in the two lower years.

The proposal on the Shreveport system, offered on January 27th, was rejected by Fr. Vigneau as lacking sufficient detail and by Fr. Provincial's postponing any decision until March, when a financial report would be available. Such a delay made the proposals being considered too late. Cardinal Cushing's pleas had been turned down abruptly as the enclosed correspondence would show. The two plans submitted (evidently referring to the Shreveport and Austin plans) were precedents for the retention of Christian education in an age when colleges were becoming increasingly secularized. The sponsors guaranteed, in conclusion, that the project would be forwarded, not in the public media, but in the family of the church.

The Considered Reaction required close attention since views on its authorship and sponsorship were to arise. It was, its content declared, the work of parents who have the responsibility, even after Vatican II, to seek out a Catholic education for their children. They denied Xavier's insurmountable financial difficulty since they had not been sufficiently asked to aid it. There was also, for some future
years, enough Jesuit volunteers to rescue Xavier without loss to other institutions. It went as far as to assert that, over a span of years prior to 1970, there had been volunteers to salvage Xavier. This was a very intriguing statement for a province prefect who had been kept in the dark about this group clamoring in vain to be assigned to Xavier. Parents, too, were never given the opportunity to explore possibilities of increasing next year's first year enrollment, or to study reasons, perhaps (perjoratively?) revealing and instructive, as to why there was a notable drop in applications.

Much space was allotted to Fr. Vigneau who equated the will of some Jesuits at Xavier, not only with the will of all at Xavier, but with the will of the entire province. He seemed oddly disposed against Xavier clientele, though not equally so against that of other Jesuit schools. Nor should a reason, even based on personal apostolic grounds, override the rights and expectations of parents. There was much talk of readiness to corporate with groups ready to conduct Xavier. The cooperation had been cold and remote, more a radical unchristianity than the radical Christianity heralded.

This first portion of the Coleman report was followed by another section referred to as the Xavier Episode. It really was a repetition, perhaps by a different hand, of what had already been said, but worded in somewhat more emotional terms. In failing to consult the laity on the planned withdrawal, repudiated clericalism was evident. Since there was no exact yardstick to measure the value of work among blacks, the poor and
in the ghetto, as against work at Xavier, people were asked to accept this evaluation against Xavier on a say-so.

As for a plan for a lay board as trustees to contract for volunteers, the door was slammed in its face. Refusal to meet such plans was not cooperation, but dictation. Nor could doubts be cast on volunteers since most were under sixty, and the fact that they would be obtained from other Jesuit high schools could not be called pirating.

Nor was time enough allotted for consideration. Hence, they must term the negotiations as secretive, chilling, impersonal, Olympian and triumphant. If the greater glory of God was to be used as a measuring rod, it should rather apply against the Jesuit colleges which left so much to be desired. The Jesuit stewardship of Xavier school, built by archdiocesan funds and handed over completely to the Society, was strangely irresponsible. Yet this section ends ironically in that it asserted that the struggle to retain Xavier will be carried on, not in the media but within the church family.

The page on facts and events as well as the earlier section on the financial, educational and apostolic excellence of Xavier were designed to offset the poorer picture of these matters alleged to favor withdrawal. A note of concern entered as material was introduced on the more Marxist presentation to the Xavier students by an ex-priest. The early appreciation of the Steering Committee was contrasted with its demise for "practical reasons" in November, 1969. The complaints on the new chapel appeared to have stymied the Communications Committee.
The Shreveport Plan was described from data supplied on January 26th to George Coleman by Rev. Roy Schilling, S.J., Principal of St. John's at Shreveport. That school then enrolled 300 pupils, charged tuition of $456.00, had a faculty of nine Jesuits and thirteen lay people, plus a full-time business manager. When it had seemed that the school might closed, this plan was approved experimentally for a five-year period subject to termination on notice given six months prior to the opening of the next school year. The contract could be continued for additional years.

Moreover, there were two distinct corporations -- the community and the school. The community was incorporated under the old charter as St. John's College of Shreveport. The new corporation "The Jesuit High School of Shreveport" had not been set up by February 5, 1970. This school corporation was to be essentially lay, but with a small non-controlling number of Jesuits. All control of the school, except finance, was vested in the Jesuit community corporation. The school Jesuits worked under contract to the school corporation. Their salaries were not above the level of poverty and, from the surplus of these salaries, money was to go to the school as a contribution. The lay corporation guaranteed the upkeep of the property. As to funds previously held in the bank by the one corporation (except the account of the Jesuit salaries) but including scholarships, these were made over to the lay corporation. If the venture were dissolved, unspent funds were to be returned to the Jesuit community. There was no reference to the data learned on
February 2nd that it was eighty percent of current Jesuit salaries which were being contributed to the school.

The Austin Prep Plan was described in material supplied by Robert Jenkins, a trustee of the prep. When, in the spring of 1969, the Augustinian Provincial had publicly announced that the school must close due to lack of religious teachers and financial problems, a four-hour discussion had led to a reprieve for the school provided a suitable plan was submitted to provincial headquarters in Villanova, Pennsylvania. Nineteen men worked on a plan and five flew to Villanova for a two-hour conference.

Agreeing that he had made a mistake, the provincial proposed an increase in trustees, up to eleven, to include five priests at Austin, five lay men, and himself as board chairman. At the time of the Jenkins Report the five priests taught only theology but exercised such administrative functions as discipline, hiring and transporting. Tuition had been increased from $450.00 to $650.00 and there were twenty lay teachers. The 1969-70 registration was 605. There was the usual hired help. An executive committee of five laymen and two Augustinians operated the school and met regularly. Since the laymen were pleased with the current arrangements, they were willing to discuss them with those interested in a similar plan for Xavier.

The final item of this sheaf of documents was a copy of Fr. Vigneau's January 13th address. The text was underscored at key points and at times punctuated with question marks to indicate what were considered overly personal and questionable remarks. One could sense the conclusions to be drawn from these
Amendations by referring to the content of the official letter and the Considered Reaction.

As early as February 14th, an answer to these communications came by telegram from Fr. General to Fr. Provincial wherein he requested that the advisability of the Shreveport Plan at Xavier be discussed. Only on February 16th did Fr. James C. Carter forward to Fr. Devlin his previously promised views on the Shreveport Plan. He indicated that the question remained open of whether or not St. John's, Shreveport, was a truly Jesuit and Christian school. A week later Fr. John R. Walsh, Rector of the School, sent Fr. Devlin copies of pertinent legal documents. Annual Jesuit salaries for 1969-70 were projected at $58,764.00, and the projected Jesuit contribution to the School at $16,764.00. It did appear that the nine Jesuits on the staff, out of a faculty of twenty-one, would be able to increase the contribution to $20,000.00 — not eighty percent of their salaries as earlier indicated. Fr. Walsh had no adverse comment.

After receiving the Coleman data, Fr. Provincial conferred with individual consultors and wrote a series of letters on February 12th and 14th. By Telex to Fr. General he requested that no substantive response be given to the Coleman group until he had an opportunity to confer in Rome with Fr. General on March 5th. At that time, he would be in Rome on a return from a visit to New England Jesuits in the Middle East.
On the same day, in acknowledging to Fr. Coleman his reception of the material, he wished firmly to seek an explanation of the inclusion of his correspondence with Cardinal Cushing in response to a letter from the cardinal. He requested no further distribution of this material.

Fr. Provincial also wrote to Cardinal Cushing that Fr. General, in an upcoming conference in Rome, would be interested in how correspondence between the two of them had come to the public domain. Although distressed by this situation, he would appreciate a conference prior to his departure on February 20th. It is interesting to note that papers on February 15th carried a formal statement from Cardinal Cushing on the closing of Catholic schools due to financial drains on parishes and lack of religious, who were preferring other forms of social over school activity. The cardinal also observed that some who might have become religious were opting directly as lay people for social service.

On February 14th, Fr. Provincial sent a four and one-half page letter to Fr. General, with copies forwarded to Cardinal Cushing, Mr. Coleman and one Jesuit proponent for continuing Jesuit presence. He explained how it was that he would be in Rome in early March and informed Fr. General of the names of the other recipients of this letter. He referred to the inclusion in the Coleman Report of private correspondence between the cardinal and himself and his request that the source of its being divulged be made known. He then made the charge that, if not the cardinal's letter of January 17, at least the Considered
Reaction, supposedly written by a parent, was written by a New England Province Jesuit. Any such use by ours of externs to overturn decisions of superiors was a serious matter.

He then discussed the theoretical possibilities on Xavier. To continue as before was impossible. A Shreveport arrangement requiring some definite number of Jesuits, could not be supplied. Any retaining of Jesuits as trustees was against the withdrawal of Jesuit presence from management as much required as withdrawal from administration and teaching. Some possibilities of handing over the school to others, or its sale, were outlined.

It could be doubted that the cardinal would continue a school. He could be relieved of a burden if Xavier School were sold in his behalf. The cardinal, on the return of the school, might dispense of it himself, with the Society receiving a pro rata share in liquidated assets. He reiterated the reasons in manpower shortages and student decreases as grounds for his decision. He did have the good news that enough of the present junior class had made an advance deposit to guarantee the continuation of the school for them during 1970-71.

In addition to this provincial communication, a letter with sixteen pages of documents was forwarded on February 16, 1970, to Fr. General by Fr. Vigneau. Since Fr. General was later to praise this memorial, it is set forth in detail. It was written, according to its opening words, with a heavy heart. Trained as he had been, he found it difficult to defend himself; but the good of the province demanded an explanation of his views
on Xavier and on the extended course of action leading to the decision concerning it. He regretted that some good men had failed to speak out at opportune moments, but they must now face reality with courage and Christian hope. Even lay people who are saddened at the decision to withdraw were concerned with the public display of disloyalty of some Jesuits. Even the formal protesters represent only fifteen Fathers.

As for the Shreveport Plan, of which Fr. General had requested consideration, Fr. Vigneau offered a series of reasons for opposing it. A commitment asking for fifteen Jesuits at a new Xavier was impossible to make, especially if the whole province manpower needs were kept in mind. The request ignored the current decrease in student applicants and the low quality of those accepted one year ago. The debt of Xavier was ignored or considered non-existent. A less clear statement was made on gratitude due to, and expected by, Cardinal Cushing. In the form of control proposed, there was but management under lay control, while legal control remained with the Society. Hence, there was not the most basic withdrawal, he correctly implied, from legal trusteeship.

Moreover, the whole plan was suspect, due to the racist atmosphere of Shreveport -- a point, as has been seen, not touched on in the two long February letters of the Shreveport rector and principal, but which had been indicated in an earlier phone call from the Director of Education of the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus. Nor was this consideration a feature in the analogous Austin Prep situation. There was easy
provision in the Shreveport arrangement to withdraw if untoward
social objectives, arising out of racism, were attempted.

Twelve pages followed giving a chronological history of
Xavier, from its beginning in 1962, when the School had to
subsidize the bus transportation of students. It concentrated on
the period from January, 1966, when it was voted to raise tuition
from $400.00 to $585.00, and continued through the January, 1970,
Province Congress. Fr. Vigneau cited his paper on manpower
shortages, written October, 1966, for the Province Sociological

As a result of some critical remarks in the
accreditation report of 1967 on the need of increases in manpower
and salaries, a document had been sent to Rome and acknowledged
in April, 1968. He had stated at the Round Hills Conference on
Social Apostolates in November, 1967, that quality in secondary
schools could only be maintained, in view of decreasing manpower
and inadequate money, by closing some of them or turning them
over to others. That some such action should follow was a
conclusion of this conference with sixty-nine Jesuits in
attendance, and at which Xavier was mentioned as a logical place
at which to begin a cutback.

The increase in tuition to $900.00 was announced only
after consultations, and with reasons, in the hope that any
responses would throw light on the apostolic ministry of New
England Secondary Schools. Shortly after this letter on
increased tuition rates was sent, a meeting of parents resulted
in a Christmas appeal for funds. Prior to the first Province
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Congress, a meeting on Xavier's status was held by trustees and community, and an account forwarded to Fr. General on February 20, 1969. At the Congress the precarious position of Xavier was brought to attention.

Even in the First Phase of Planning going on after December 8, 1968, some Xavier faculty agreed on withdrawal, while little was said by present proponents of non-withdrawal. In the various plans in the second volume of Phase I Planning (a document dealing with renewal by the Jesuits in New England), forty-two favored a withdrawal from Xavier. Only Fairfield Prep had a lower number of recommendations for being discontinued. In view of this opposition to the continuation of Jesuit presence at Xavier, little reaction was evident to maintain it or to fight for its continued life.

To show his long continued view on the need to narrow secondary school apostolates, Fr. Vigneau cited his remarks at the April 27, 1969 session, of the Province Congress, which appeared in the report of the Planning Program. He had told of the honest struggles at Xavier to come to grapple with a death warrant, and expected that the province would supply norms whereby the Xavier community could judge whether it had truly worthwhile apostolic work. He had urged that the congress satisfy that demand. In reality, the second congress had, in addition to setting up the two criteria for all work, proposed for secondary schools what later seemed to be halfway measures such as continued planning, possible increased collaboration with colleges and separate incorporation. Quite honestly, he was
convinced, these solutions only led to, or continued, drift.

Following these statements came the actions of the final seven months prior to the January, 1970, Congress. These included the June, 1969, headmaster's report, the first meeting of a steering committee to see into possible raising of funds, a September 20 community meeting on the application of the two criteria and the possibility of staying at Xavier, and the October 20, 1969, meeting of the steering committee where doubts had arisen due to wonderment on continued Jesuit presence at Xavier. On November 6th, he had written to this committee that he could not begin a process to raise $500,000 in view of the need of the province to study its secondary school commitments. This view he had made known to high school principals and to several of the province staff. Hence, there could be no steering committee meeting until January. At the November 11, 1969, meeting of the province consultors he had vigorously insisted on the over-commitment in secondary schools being on the agenda of the coming congress. Community meetings at Xavier on this subject had been stormy. His resignation as headmaster came on November 18th. An offer to discuss this matter privately was taken up only by one member of the community. The remainder of the narrative was more of a journal of what has been previously seen, and ended with his report of December 31st, submitted to Fr. Provincial urging some ending to Xavier.

Pages thirteen to seventeen of this communication to Fr. General made a series of propositions. There had been concern over expansion as far back as 1962. The province
concern, therefore, on over-expansion was five years old. Xavier had been especially mentioned wherever the question of contraction had been raised. The community at Xavier had been well informed on its financial status. The faculty had known of the problem of increased recruitment efforts, along with poorer results. Even five of those who complain about Xavier's theology courses had declined to teach them. The community has known of the challenges to its continued existence in province meetings but, when they did not agree, remained silent until they then showed negative and emotional reactions.

At the end Fr. Vigneau appended refutations of those striving for the continued Jesuit presence at Xavier. First singled out was one advocating a Shreveport plan with the aid of some nine other Jesuits. Another Jesuit who once saw the need of cutting back schools and, specifically Xavier, was soliciting Jesuit teachers for Xavier. Lack of cooperation was denied and datelines for details were then set until March 31st. The original lay board of advisers had believed they were imposed upon, even in the raising of tuition to $900.00. The newly planned group would arrive only when registration was so low as to spell disaster. Hence, there was the need of early province action.

He ended this section by saying that it was better for him to take the blame himself. These details made clear that Fr. Vigneau had long championed the idea of contraction in the province secondary school apostolates and that his recognition of Xavier as one to go had not begun, as the parents' group
indicated, when complaints on the modernized prayer chapel were raised. His narration also showed that there had been, or should have been, questions on the solvency of Xavier, a fact that is seen that $204,875 of its debt to the province was absorbed by the province. It would have been better had the last pages on personalities not have been written, but they show the bitterness on his part as well as the bitterness he found in his opponents.

Dated the same day as Fr. Vionneau's communication was a letter to Fr. General from Fr. James C. O'Brien, then Principal of Boston College High School, long a member of the Xavier English department and a recipient of the Coleman material as a member of the Province Congress. He regretted that it was from Xavier that the withdrawal had occurred, since Xavier was clearly and courageously implementing the two criteria on church renewal and the reform of social structures. He noted that such a social policy did not seem to meet the sympathy of the Coleman group. He was not convinced that Jesuits have the competence to make a solid contribution to the ghetto apostolates, and he believed that there were many disadvantaged people in the affluent suburbs. The manner in which the withdrawal was decided and promulgated was not the best. Xavier's closing showed, too, what happened to an overexpanded apostolate when key people are transferring to other works. Despite all this the decision was probably inevitable.

Moreover, with so many leaving Xavier, any "resurrection" would be reaction, not "aggiornamento" in view of the known social (or anti-social) views of its chief lay
proponents. With the group of Jesuits who are staying on, he is in sympathy, but about alleged newcomers, some of whom he names, he is less sanguine. These two groups would have little in common. With the new influx a continued attraction of younger Jesuits would be stymied. While hoping that Fr. General will concur with the request for withdrawal, he does hope he will insist on learning what has happened so that mistakes will not be repeated.

Fr. O'Brien did not conclude his statement of views on the Coleman data merely by writing to Fr. General. He also sent a separate letter to Mr. Coleman on February 17th making clear the view that the proposed continued Xavier would be more reactionary than forward-locking, and by this very situation would cease to attract a younger generation of Jesuits.

Fr. O'Brien also forwarded a copy of this letter to a proponent of a continued Xavier. A reply singled out the failure to deal with the two lower classes at Xavier whom it was believed, along with their parents, were being treated unjustly. Also noted was Fr. O'Brien's use of the poor registration and financial situation as basis for withdrawal, but no mention of the apostolic reason which had been made paramount. He asked, too, for a kinder impression of the Coleman group and their motives. They needed a dram of empathy.

This spate of letters appeared to conclude with a February 15 one from Mr. Coleman announcing that Cardinal Cushing had granted permission for the use of the correspondence enclosed in the material sent to Fr. General, and, as previously
indicated, supplied widely to all who had been delegates at the Province Congress. He still did not believe that the substantive issue of Xavier's future had been met. He did not understand, or was unprepared to accept, the basic determination made to withdraw Jesuit presence in trusteeship, administration and teaching and, to permit only under the principle of choice of ministries, the sanctioning of Jesuit volunteers for a Xavier under some non-Jesuit trusteeship.

A conference was held at provincial headquarters by Fr. Provincial on February 17th. At it were present three province representatives: Fathers Paul T. Lucey, Francis X. Miller and Joseph D. Devlin; and three Xavier trustees: Fathers John R. Vigneau, Richard Olson and Francis J. Donovan. It had been preceded on February 13th by an inconclusive meeting at the Parker House by some similar group, but at which the presence of some outsiders precluded much more than trivia.

As the basis for the meeting were three pages of comments on the proposal of George Coleman concerning Xavier School written by Fr. Provincial and dated February 13th. A set of jottings set forth the progress of the meetings. Although the appraisal of the property was ready, there were but two copies available temporarily and in confidence. This precaution was taken since appraisal price was not necessarily the asking price. Money owed by Xavier to the province was not to be too great a concern. $85,000 was a clearly discernible amount, but province taxes due and minor amounts could be waived in gratitude to the cardinal for his numerous benefactions.
As to the Shreveport Plan, on which Fr. General had urged consideration, it left the Society members as trustees, a notable presence from which the official decision called for disassociation. Fr. Vigneau summarized the position to be maintained by the Xavier trustees that there was no Jesuit responsibility to staff the school or to service as the board of trustees. Should a lease be offered, this must be referred to the cardinal. Any school he might sanction would not have to be a Jesuit school with its criteria as guides.

There did not seem to have been discussed other aspects of the "Comments." These dealt with the possible ways of returning the property to the cardinal, either for a school by others or for sale by the Society or the cardinal. There was a section on necessary retrenchment in secondary school work and of its foreseen inevitability. In addition, there was declining enrollment and desire for other activities. There was, too, the serious matter of Jesuits seeking by extern aid to overturn official policies. On this matter, Fr. Provincial had conferred a few days earlier with one of his consultors who was prepared to urge jurisdictional action if culprits were known clearly.

On Monday, March 9, 1970, there was a meeting of Xavier trustees and their legal and financial advisers with interested groups. A few days before the meeting there had been a request to have the girls of the 1970-71 senior class of the closing Rose Hawthorne School in Concord join with the Xavier seniors. Because it was realized that keeping the school open even for one year was requiring a province subsidy and since expenses exceeded
tuition returns, this request was rejected.

At the March 9th meeting the Parents Group of Xavier was joined by a few non-trustee Jesuits. Some others were present as interested parties: Anthony Saltamacchia, Alba Taylor, and John Kinsbury. This last gentleman had approached Fr. Callahan with an enthusiastic but vague notion of an ecumenical school for which he was seeking aid from an Episcopal clergyman. The purpose of the meeting was to hear serious proposals for the continuation of Xavier as a school, and to discuss facts and figures on its educational and financial status. Fr. Donovan set forth the conclusions of the February 17th meeting at provincial headquarters.

The status quo was impossible. A modified Shreveport plan left direction to the Society and expected men directly supplied by the province, both of which were contrary to the announced withdrawal of Jesuit presence. Any decision by the cardinal to continue the school, or to sell, was unknown. When, in the discussion, some fifteen volunteers were mentioned for a Shreveport plan, it was pointed out that, while the parents' group knew these names, Fr. Provincial did not. As a an excuse for the silence on the names of these men, it was stated that the volunteers would come forward only when they knew that something definite was to be done. So, in truth, they waited themselves out.

In answer to a question, the legal ownership of Xavier was clarified and the legal steps required for its disposition explained. Whatever funds were received from its sale, it was
then believed, would have to be expended on other similar educational establishments in Massachusetts. No one knew whether the cardinal, if the property was deeded back to him, would continue a school or dispose of the property.

As far as the presentation of some viable plan was concerned for continuing the school, the trustees did not believe they had one. Financial figures showed the poor economic condition of the school. Its appraisal on plant and site was estimated at $2,700,000 by Mr. Thomas Horan of Meredith and Grew. In a disposition of property, it was believed that the cardinal would receive ninety-five percent of the proceeds, and the Society five percent. The problem of Xavier's low enrollment was reiterated. The principle of attraction, in answer to a question which assumed personal decisions to be totally freewheeling, was explained as subject to final provincial approbation for its application in individual cases. There was a brief but inconclusive talk on an ecumenical school. After the meeting Mr. John Dolan, counsel for Xavier, expressed surprise that there was no substantial plan offered to take over the school. He urged that Fr. Provincial, at an early date, consult Cardinal Cushing on his plans for the plant.

Fr. General wrote on March 12, 1970, approving the withdrawal. To Fr. Provincial, he stated that the comprehensive memorial of Fr. Vigneau, together with Fr. Provincial's added information, had justified the announced decision to withdraw. He agreed that these same documents persuasively demonstrated the inability of the Society to introduce either the Austin or
Shreveport plans. He did regret that permission to withdraw had not first been sought from him. He did see how the pressure of the congress would have diverted attention from this step.

Fr. General also wrote directly to Fr. Vigneau informing him that his chronological memorandum of the steps leading to withdrawal had effectively assisted him to see the decision as foreseeable and necessary. Fr. Vigneau's cogent reasons against the Shreveport and Austin plans clearly substantiated their rejection. Hence, Fr. General was deeply grateful and consoling.

A third letter of Fr. General went to Mr. Coleman. He and his associates were to be esteemed for their interest. Despite a commitment to secondary school education, he had, after consultation, approved the decision to withdraw from Xavier; and he also judged the province unable to assume responsibility for an Austin or Shreveport arrangement. If Mr. Coleman were to submit some other plan, that plan should go to the Xavier trustees.

Mr. Coleman took up this final sentence in Fr. General's letter and wrote again to Fr. Provincial on March 31, 1970. His specific question was whether Fr. Provincial would permit volunteer Jesuits to staff Xavier or not. He knew the volunteers to be ready, willing and competent, but added that it was idle for them to volunteer to Fr. Provincial if they were not assured that the school would be carried on. He then turned his attention to the low estimate on the plant, claiming that instead of a value of $2,700,000, it was more truly valued at $4,630,000.
He claimed that the lower figure, which incidentally had been divulged at the meeting of March 9, 1970, was the sale price as publicly announced on March 9th itself when Xavier went on the market. How could so low a figure be justified? As for future support from a group of parents, it could well be diminished as a consequence of arbitrary and heartless action.

Concerning this letter, Fr. Provincial wrote a series of jottings. He denied that Xavier, for any price, had been placed on the market on any date. He understood others could cite varying values. He was satisfied with Mr. Horan's appraisal. He could not estimate what were the three plans which Mr. Coleman believed his group had offered. He reiterated in what way he was prepared to sanction volunteers, a way at odds with Mr. Coleman's which had them both as trustees and as guaranteed in number to a corporation that merely leased Xavier from its Jesuit trustees. He concluded that all that had been learned since January 13th had only confirmed the decision to withdraw.

Two different viewpoints had clashed. In the province one, Jesuits would neither be trustees nor administrative nor teaching staff but only volunteers who had Fr. Provincial's sanction to teach under others' auspices after discernment under the principle of the choice of ministries. The parents' view retained Jesuit trustees, inserted a second corporation of laity to be financially responsible and to contract for a definite number of Jesuits, preferably volunteers, and to overview curriculum and class content. This was not a minor exception to
withdrawal of Jesuit presence; it was a continuation of it with an extra corporation between Jesuit trustees to deal with province officers and volunteers.

There never seems to have been a plan offered that could continue at least something like Xavier by having a lay corporation become the actual trustees and, in its hiring of teachers, arrange freely with men who, on appropriate request to Fr. Provincial could, and would, be sanctioned to teach and / or administer as part of the faculty of a non-Jesuit school.