

70 Islanders picket Chancery on schools

By GEORGE LEDWITH

"It was something I never dreamed I would have done," said Mrs. Louise Ragucci, a teacher in Assumption School, New Brighton, with seven years in the parochial system, after she and an estimated 70 other lay teachers from Roman Catholic schools on Staten Island participated with hundreds more in a mass demonstration yesterday in front of the Chancery Office in Manhattan.

Sloshing along the Madison Ave. sidewalk behind St. Patrick's Cathedral and carrying signs proclaiming, "More Pay for the Lay Teachers" and "Parity not Charity," an assemblage of nearly 400 parochial school teachers spent their day off making a public gesture for a better salary scale, fringe benefits and "professional stature."

The pickets represented the 2,500-member Catholic Lay Teachers Group, which earlier in the day had rejected the

latest pay offer from the Archdiocese of New York.

"Although we bargain for all of the lay teachers on Staten Island," said Arthur Manzione, a teacher at Assumption School and Staten Island representative for the teachers' group, "we actually have about 80 dues-paying members."

Manzione said Island schools don't have as large a turnover as other parts of the city, and "a good percentage have been teaching for 20 to 30 years" in the Island parochial system.

"Our faculties are more established," said Manzione, "and we knew we couldn't count on some of them as much as the younger groups."

"The demonstration turnout surprised us, though," he said, "because even though some of the Island teachers there had only been in the system a matter of months, there were others who have been around for many years. It was an indication that our demands are just and affect all the teachers."

"Proportionally," said Barry F. Ryan, union president, "Staten Island had a better representation than any part of the archdiocesan system except the Bronx."

Of the teachers questioned last night about their participation in the salary demonstration, nearly all agreed that the action achieved publicity for their cause and has brought a new awareness to the parishioners who help pay their salaries.

The teachers are optimistic that the demonstration will have an effect on union negotiations with the archdiocese set for tomorrow. But some said they're prepared for the worst — including a strike — although all of them viewed it as a last resort.

"The tremendous amount of wealth in property and stocks the archdiocese holds is not helping the people or us," said Miss Michele Brown, a teacher at Blessed Sacrament School,

(Continued on Page 2)

Staten Island Advance, December 9, 1969