

ABUSE PROBE NEEDED NATIONWIDE

On March 13, the *New York Times* ran a lengthy front-page story, "At State-Run Homes, Abuse and Impunity," that showed how common it is for state employees servicing the developmentally disabled to abuse residents. Because they are protected by the Civil Service Employees Association, it is almost impossible to fire them. Though it is against the law not to report cases of abuse to the police, "fewer than 5 percent were referred to law enforcement." Moreover, "In 25 percent of the cases involving physical, sexual or psychological abuse, the state employees were transferred to other homes." In many serious cases, the same employee was moved more than once.

The day before, the *New York Daily News* ran a story on "rubber room" teachers in New York City. Hundreds of teachers have been removed from the classroom for misconduct—it is almost impossible to fire them because they are protected by the teachers' unions—and currently there are 83 who have a criminal case pending against them. And as we know from previous stories, moving abusive teachers around from school district to school district is so common in the profession that it is called "passing the trash."

On March 2, the *New York Post* ran a story by Michael Goodwin detailing how approximately 500 teachers "have been convicted of criminal offenses, including assault, sex crimes, kidnapping, burglary, prostitution and lewdness." Goodwin added that "many arbitrators are reluctant to fire teachers for almost any reason."

After being informed on these abuses, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo removed the two top officials of state-run homes, and ordered a probe of the agencies.

Bill Donohue wrote to every governor asking for an

investigation of all public-run agencies and schools. In his letter, Donohue told the governors, "It would not only serve the common good by protecting the developmentally disabled and children, it would render a service to all vulnerable segments of the population."

It is clear that this problem is not unique to New York, and it sure isn't just a problem in the Catholic Church.