

BIGOTRY ERUPTS AT COLORADO STATE UNIV.

A recent, and ugly, display of anti-Catholicism on the campus of Colorado State University (CSU) prompted an exchange of letters between Bill Donohue and CSU Dean of Students Dr. Jody Donovan.

The controversy arose, Donohue explained, when a “diversity bill” was proposed in the CSU student senate. The bill granted senate seats to select organizations on campus: those representing adult learning, veterans, the disabled, LGBT students, women’s groups, as well as various racial and ethnic groups.

A Jewish student senator, Lawrence Horowitz, offered an amendment that would have included seats representing Jewish, Catholic and Muslim students in the diversity bill. He was supported by Catholic student senator Sarah Bruce.

“Inexplicably,” Donohue wrote, “the amendment was rejected, sending a message to students of faith.” When Horowitz and Bruce then joined eight other senators in defeating the original bill, Donohue recounted, “The scene got ugly: the proponents of the original bill exploded in anger. ‘I haven’t ever experienced hate like this, ever,’ is how Ms. Bruce put it.”

Supporters of the original bill then organized demonstrations, a petition, threats of impeachment and threats to “shut the senate down” if they did not get their way. Tellingly, the leader of this intimidation effort, Kwan Atlas, was himself impeached from the student senate last year for “harassment and intimidation.” These tactics worked, as the original bill subsequently passed when one senator changed her vote under threat of impeachment.

“What happened is disturbing enough,” Donohue observed—“excluding students of faith in an ‘inclusion’ bill, and rank abuse of the impeachment process to silence these students—but what makes this even worse is what happened next:

“Bruce tried to reason with students who disagreed with her, but the dialogue broke down when she was told that ‘the Catholic Church does not need to be represented because you are the ‘oppressors’ of the LGBTQ communities and others.’ When she said that she has Catholic constituents who agree with her, she was mocked by the directors of the Black/African American Cultural Center. None of this can be contested: voice recordings were taken.”

Donohue then cited the University’s own official policy on diversity to demonstrate its hypocrisy:

“The Diversity Office on campus says it is ‘committed to enhancing its diversity through the inclusion of individuals reflective of characteristics such as...religious and spiritual beliefs...’ By any measure, this tenet has been violated; injustice has certainly been done to Catholic students, and quite possibly Jewish students, as well.”

Donohue asked Dr. Donovan to respond, and to indicate “what steps might be taken to remedy this situation.” Dr. Donovan’s reply, while respectful, was vague and unsatisfactory:

“Colorado State University strongly supports students and their right to self-govern through their elected body, the Associated Students of Colorado State University. This self-governance includes the right of students on all sides to disagree and to protest against the decisions of their student government. “

She said nothing about the blatant attempts to deny that right to students of faith by threatening to impeach them simply because they voted their consciences. Instead, she portrayed “the initial incidents you describe” as simply “an example of

opposing and disparate voices all being included in a contentious conversation, which, while stressful, was an opportunity for learning and growth as appropriate to an academic community.”

Dr. Donovan wrote that “we don’t condone a variety of student actions that took place around these recent events.” This carefully avoids identifying what those student actions were—threats, intimidation, and expressions of anti-Catholic bigotry—and who they were directed against—students of faith. Instead, she simply wrote that “the University has worked to support and counsel all our students—on all sides of the issue”—as though there is a moral equivalence between those perpetrating bigotry and intolerance and those on the receiving end of it.

The Catholic League will continue to monitor this situation to see whether students of faith are to be included in Colorado State University’s diversity enhancement policies.