

BIGOTRY TARS TWO NEW YORK STATE CAMPUSES

For the past few months, the Catholic League has been involved in an on-going battle over anti-religious bigotry that took place on two campuses of the State University of New York (SUNY). A satisfactory resolution to this matter was reached with the Stony Brook campus of SUNY, but not with the New Paltz campus.

In November, SUNY-New Paltz hosted a conference entitled, "Revolt Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom." The conference featured a sex-toy sale, masturbation workshops, explicit discussions of sadomasochism, lesbian sex, etc. That was bad enough, but what got the league involved was the attack on Christians and Jews; both were mocked and humiliated in a most callous way. Then things really exploded at SUNY-Stony Brook when a campus newspaper published an anti-Catholic attack on Dr. Candace de Russy, the SUNY Trustee who blew the whistle on the fracas at New Paltz.

The newspaper, the Stony Brook *Press*, depicted graphically and editorially a vile, anti-Catholic and ad hominem attack against Dr. de Russy. The league came to her assistance by writing to the governor, school chancellor, SUNY trustees, the presidents of the two SUNY campuses and every member of the New York State legislature. The letter asked school administrators to denounce the bigotry and requested members of the Assembly and Senate to support Dr. de Russy. Free speech, we reminded them, applies to politicians and educators, not just offending students.

Dr. Shirley Strum Kenny, president of the Stony Brook campus, responded professionally by criticizing what she labeled as a "sexist, anti-Catholic outburst against Mrs. de Russy." She also pledged to push for a course in Ethics in Journalism so

that students will “take their ethical responsibilities seriously in the future.”

There has been no response from New Paltz president Roger Bowen and that is why the league has not dropped this case. However, Governor George Pataki and SUNY Chancellor John Ryan, as well as many members of the legislature, strongly criticized what happened. Most encouraging, a resolution was introduced in the Assembly that addresses this issue in a responsible manner.

The league is most pleased with the support that Dr. de Russy has received. Aside from a dishonest editorial in the *New York Times* accusing her of “meddling,” the public and the press have stood by this courageous Catholic scholar.