

CARDINAL PELL SHOULD SUE FOR LIBEL



Bill Donohue comments on stories in Australian newspapers maintaining that Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, will not be named pope because of his tainted record of sexual abuse:

No cardinal should ever have to endure the vicious mudslinging campaign being conducted by an embittered radical ex-priest, dishonest reporters, discredited victims' groups, and incompetent Catholic journalists. But this is exactly what Cardinal Pell has had to endure this week. Not without reason is he thinking about suing the culprits.

The source of the smear campaign is Dr. Paul Collins, an ex-priest who resigned in 2001 after clashing with the Vatican. Collins has a long record of defending every dissident, in and out of the Catholic Church, on a wide range of subjects. That he would float the idea that Cardinal Pell has "long [been] dogged" by accusations of sexual abuse suggests that the charges against Pell are still unresolved. This is a pernicious lie.

In 2002, Cardinal Pell was completely exonerated of allegations that he abused a teenager in the 1960s. Yet reporter Barney Zwartz, whose story was picked up in *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, led readers to believe that Pell's name was not fully cleared. Amazingly, here is what Zwartz said in 2010, *but did not say yesterday*: "Cardinal Pell stood down as Archbishop of Sydney in 2002 after he was accused of abusing a teenager at a church camp in the 1960s, but an independent investigation by a retired non-Catholic judge cleared him."

Piling on Cardinal Pell is the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP), the most discredited and dishonest so-called victims' group in the U.S. Finally, we have what is perhaps the most inexcusable aspect of this smear campaign: *CathNews*, a prominent Australian Catholic media outlet, picked up this trashy story in its print and online editions. Now it has apologized for doing so, admitting that it made "unfair, false and seriously defamatory allegations against Cardinal Pell, who has worked hard to eradicate the evil of sexual abuse." Looks like sexual abuse isn't the only evil matter attendant to this story.