

Elders wins Surgeon General bid; Catholic League scores points, wins friends

President Clinton couldn't afford to see another nominee shot down in flames, so careful maneuvering, parliamentary procedure and a great deal of political capital were utilized in order to win Senate confirmation for controversial Surgeon General nominee Dr. Joycelyn Elders.

Letters of "apology" from both Dr. Elders and President Clinton addressed to NCCB chair Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore were released just days before the Senate vote in an attempt to appease Catholics but critics, including the Catholic League, were quick to point out the inadequacy of the so-called apology and its politically motivated timing.

In a press conference called by the Catholic League on September 7, the day of the Senate vote, Dr. Patrick Riley noted, "All she said was 'Well, if you're offended, I'm sorry.' She doesn't withdraw what she said. It's hardly an adequate apology."

James A. Smith, government relations director for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission called the apology to I Keeler "half hearted" and went on to point out that there had been no apology offered to evangelicals and other Christians who had also been vilified by the acid-tongued Elders.

The Catholic League statement opposing Elders' confirmation was co-signed by Smith, representing the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as by representatives of Catholic War Veterans, the American Family Association and Eagle Forum.

Brian T. Olszewski, editor of the lively *Northwest Indiana*

Catholic offered a tongue-in-cheek editorial comment: “Do you think the president called her and said, ‘Look, Joycelyn, I know you don’t like Catholics but I’m going to need them again in ’96, so could you at least apologize.’ He does, she did, and now the Senate will confirm her appointment.”

Knights of Columbus spokesman Russell Shaw, a member of the Catholic League national board, told Catholic News Service that her response was not “altogether satisfactory.”

Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, chair of the bishops’ pro-life committee acknowledged her apology but went on to question her public stands and aggressive pursuit of issues with which the church cannot possibly agree.

Boston’s *Pilot* editorialized, “She never apologized for what she said. She merely regretted that you and I took offense.” In his weekly column in the *Pilot*, Cardinal Bernard Law lashed out at the anti-Catholic and anti-religious bias in American culture today (story below).

Carroll Quinn, president of the National Council of Catholic Women summed up the feelings of many when she said that Elders’ apology “does not end our concern over the willingness of a government nominee to make anti-Catholic statements in the first place.”

Boston cardinal blasts media bias

“It is not a case of Catholic paranoia to think that it is open season on the Catholic Church in the public square.” Boston’s Cardinal Bernard Law didn’t mince words in going

after the news media in his weekly *Pilot* column (9/3/93).

The Cardinal went on to blast the media for "the negative way in which the Church is so often portrayed in the press," singling out the media's handling of stories about clergy and child abuse which "weigh heaviest on every bishop's heart." He acknowledged that even "One such case is one too many."

He went on to excoriate the media for increasing the pain of all involved in these human tragedies by their irresponsible handling of these stories.

He also chided the media for their next great fixation, "the exaltation of Catholic dissent."

"The press," he said, "seems obsessed with a desire to redefine Catholicism along lines which are congruous with the prevailing culture: absolutes are out and toleration is the ultimate and only virtue. This kind of tolerance is the antithesis of what faith is all about."

Cardinal Law cut to the heart of the problem noting, "These are difficult days because the culture of death in which we live is diametrically opposed to faith." And he added, "The Catholic Church takes a beating in the press because we are the largest religious body in the country. The underlying hostility of our culture is not only anti-Catholic, however, it is anti all organized religion ."

Massachusetts chapter president Dan Flatley praised the cardinal's statement. "Within the American hierarchy, Cardinal Law has been one of the most consistent, forthright and outspoken critics of media bias against the Church. He has also been a strong supporter of the Catholic League. We applaud his courage. His remarks deserve the attention of all concerned Catholics."

A Catholic New Service story quoting extensively from the Cardinal's column appeared in dozens of Catholic weeklies

across the country.

The Culture of Disbelief

Newsweek's religion editor recently reviewed *The Culture of Disbelief*, an insightful new book written by Yale law professor Stephen Carter, who takes a critical look at the way America's culture treats religion and religious people.

The former law clerk for the late Justice Thurgood Marshall, Carter argues persuasively for a return to the days when ideas driven by religious convictions were welcomed as valuable contributions to public debate.

Describing religion as "a way of denying the authority of the rest of the world," Carter sees an essential role for religion as "an independent moral voice" which should mediate through institutions "between the citizen and the government."

Carter points to the legalization of abortion as the event which triggered the flight of liberals from religion. Liberal elites "belittle religious devotion" and "discourage religion as serious activity."

Carter contends that the "wall of separation" so often cited in church/state conflicts was originally invoked more to protect religion from government than government from religion. In Carter's view, religion is greatly threatened and he espouses a much greater accommodation of religious practices. For example, he would allow the ritual use of peyote by Native Americans and the inclusion of parochial schools in voucher plans.

Although we do not agree with all of Professor Carter's

convictions, his book deserves a thoughtful audience.

Religious freedom survives first Russian test

After President Yeltsin refused to sign a bill that would have restricted foreign missionaries and foreign-based religious organizations in Russia, the Russian legislature recently approved a new version of the bill.

The original bill, which was supported by the Russian Orthodox Church and passed by the Russian legislature in July, was an attempt to control the anticipated flood of churches and sects into Russia following the collapse of Communism. Because its provisions required foreign-based churches to affiliate with a Russian church or else seek state accreditation, the July bill was criticized by religious leaders world-wide as an infringement of religious liberty in Russia.

In a letter to the Russian delegation at the United Nations, Catholic League president Bill Donohue expressed League concerns about the proposed limitations on religious liberty in Russia represented by the July bill.

Although the revised legislation removes some controversial elements of the July bill, questions remain about the extent of governmental limits on foreign religious activity in Russia under the new law, which has been sent back for Yeltsin's signature.

Rocky Mountain High in Denver

The recent papal visit to Denver gave the phrase “Rocky Mountain high” a whole new meaning for the hundreds of thousands of participants and the millions more who followed the event on TV.

The “aftershocks” have reverberated through the media for well over a month and have made for some very interesting reading.

Denver area reporters seemed to be in awe of the young people who attended. In the wake of gang violence and a rash of murders this past summer, our smiling young Catholics must have been a breath of fresh air. The media couldn’t seem to say enough in praise of the youthful exuberance and genuine Christian charity exhibited by these young people.

New York Times Religion editor Peter Steinfels wrote an especially good reflective piece on the aftermath of the papal visit. On Sunday, August 15, the *Times* published a major excerpt from a new book taking liberals and the liberal media to task for their disdain of religious beliefs.

Our thanks goes to the many members who sent in clippings of local coverage. An extra big thank you goes to Dr. James J. Martin of Colorado Springs who sent every article about WYD which appeared in the Denver area print media.

Crime in the Denver area plummeted and dire predictions of massive traffic jams and other disruptions failed to materialize.

Some members of the fourth estate – many of them well after the fact – took their colleagues to task for negative reporting and ill-disguised efforts to seek out “dissident Catholics” in order to satisfy their own preconceptions about the Church and Catholics.

The electronic media in particular paraded out whatever garbage they happened to have “in the can” for the occasion. *60-Minutes* rebroadcast a tawdry piece on pedophilia. Catholic League president Bill Donohue dropped them a note and asked sarcastically if the broadcast was just a coincidence.

Proposition 174

On Nov. 2, the country will be watching intently as Californians go to the polls to decide whether or not to embrace education vouchers.

Proposition 174, the Parental Choice in Education Initiative, would require the state to provide a voucher for \$2,600 per year to students wishing to transfer out of the public-school system to help defray the costs of private school education.

Under the terms of 174, for the first three years only, students transferring from public to private schools would be eligible for vouchers; after that, vouchers would be available to new students wishing to enroll in private schools.

Proponents of 174 contend that its passage would allow parents to exercise choice in the matter of educating their children while saving the state money. Some people, though, have expressed concern that once federal money is used for private education, federal control of private schools will follow.

The Wanderer reports that the Catholic bishops of California have not taken an official stand on the initiative because they do not consider themselves experts in this matter. The bishops are encouraging parents to discuss the issue and a video explaining 174's details has been circulated.

According to *The Wanderer*, the NEA and the California Teachers' Association are engaged in an all-out effort to defeat the initiative which, if passed, would make significant inroads into the public education monopoly.

Proposition 174 is supported by business leaders who are dismayed by the large numbers of poorly educated young people entering the work force. Echoing these concerns, former California Governor George Deukmejian endorsed school choice as "our best hope for substantially improving the quality of education for all children in California."

It is likely that even if proposition 174 passes, it will be subject to constitutional challenges which will delay its implementation.

National columnists back Parental Choice in Education

California vote gets national attention

George F. Will (*Chicago Sun Times*) and Stephen Chapman (*Chicago Tribune*) have come out strongly in favor of proposition 174. Pointing out that private schools often show better results than public schools while spending less money per pupil, Will maintains that as more students use vouchers to attend private schools, the state will save money. Will characterizes the frantic efforts of the NEA and the California Teachers' Association to defeat proposition 174 as spreading "hysteria" about the so-called evil of parental choice. Many of the people who oppose educational choice (for example the Clintons) send their own children to private schools.

Chapman urges Californians to reply “It’s about time” to critics of proposition 174 who warn that its passage will sound the death knell of public education as we know it. Because proposition 174 is about rewarding success and punishing failure, Chapman agrees that it may pose a threat to many California schools which are unfamiliar with success. The alternative to proposition 174, says Chapman, “is to go on subsidizing failure, which is a sure way to get more of it.”

Puerto Rico experiments with parental choice

Meanwhile, on September 3, Puerto Rico’s governor Rossello signed into law legislation creating an education voucher program. Framing the matter in terms of good schools versus bad schools, rather than private schools versus public schools, the governor said that families would now have the power to determine which was which.

According to *The San Juan Star*, the new law, called the Special Scholarships and Free School Selection Program, gives students the option of choosing which public school to attend or to attend a private school. On the other hand, private school students are encouraged to attend public schools, and the law offers high school students a chance to take university-level courses. The vouchers are limited to \$1,500.00 for each child, with the estimated cost of attending private schools set at \$1,000.00 to \$1,500.00 per student.

FOCA dead; “access” bill lives

They’re not saying it very loudly, but supporters of the Freedom of Choice Act are privately conceding that the bill is

dead for this session of Congress and perhaps mortally wounded.

Another piece of legislation, tagged the “clinic access bill,” is alive and well, however, and would make it a Federal crime to block abortion clinics or threaten or kill abortion providers. The access bill has a strong likelihood of passage and has taken on “front burner” status for the pro-choice camp.

While all segments of the pro-life movement united to kill FOCA, the movement is sharply divided on the propriety of clinic demonstrations and all but a lunatic fringe few would not condemn threats against or the killing of abortion providers.

While there have always been serious questions raised about the propriety and effectiveness of clinic demonstrations, the Catholic League has entered the legal arena on more than one occasion to defend the *free speech rights* of pro-life demonstrators.

The Hyde amendment, which has restricted federal payment for abortions since 1977, is also a likely target for challenge next year, but given its overwhelming passage this year, those who would seek to eliminate it or reduce its impact face the prospect of bloody congressional infighting.

Vermont printers' case drags on

A Vermont judge has denied a defense motion, refusing to throw out the case against Chuck and Susan Baker, Catholic owners of

a printing business who were sued by the ACLU when they refused to print membership materials for Catholics for Free Choice, a pro-abortion group.

The ACLU claimed that the Bakers' refusal to print the job violated a state antidiscrimination law and filed suit seeking an injunction which would force the Bakers to print the objectionable materials and an award of attorney fees.

The Bakers argued at a hearing in March that their refusal to print the membership cards was not an act of discrimination, but rather a matter of principle because they would not have printed pro-abortion materials for anyone, "whether 'Catholics for Choice' or 'Jews for Choice' or 'Protestants for Choice.'"

Unfortunately, the court did not accept the Bakers' argument and refused to dismiss the case. By denying the Baker's motion for summary judgment, the court has paved the way for the matter to go to trial. A trial date has not yet been set.

The Bakers have been represented in their ordeal by Dan Lynch, a local attorney; the Catholic League, Free Speech Advocates, Christian Advocates Serving Evangelism and the American Center for Law and Justice have joined in the Bakers' defense.

On August 22, in a broadcast debate with Massachusetts executive director Joe Doyle, Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for Free Choice, admitted that her organization was "not a membership organization." In light of that public admission one might ask just what the Bakers were supposed to print.

League rips mass disruption by gays

Responding to the disruption of a Mass being celebrated by Bishop Thomas V. Daily at St. James Cathedral in Brooklyn by members of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, Catholic League President Bill Donohue quickly issued a news release condemning the actions of the demonstrators.

According to *The Tablet*, 29 demonstrators who were protesting Bishop Daily's recent pastoral letter on homosexuality came to the bishop's regularly scheduled Mass. They stood up at the beginning of the Bishop's homily and turned their backs to the altar. The protestors left mass during the recitation of the creed and remained outside of the church where they spoke to members of the press. Spokespersons for the group asserted that Bishop Daily's statement that homosexuality is "a strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil," would encourage violence against homosexuals. The bishops letter simply restated church teaching and included the statement that homosexuals are "always worthy of the church's care and love."

In his statement, Catholic League president Bill Donohue denounced the disruptive tactics of the demonstrators. "Those who differ with the teachings of the Catholic Church, on any matter," Donohue said, "have many legitimate avenues of discourse available to them. Not among them, however, is the disruption of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. There is no right to trespass on the right of Americans to exercise their First Amendment freedom of religion."