

LEAGUE ENDORSES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AMENDMENT

On July 23, Catholic League president William Donohue testified before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the House Committee on the Judiciary on a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Religious Freedom Amendment, which was first sponsored by Rep. Ernest Istook and then revised twice, once by Rep. Henry Hyde and again by Rep. Dick Armey, reads as follows: "In order to secure the right of the people to acknowledge and serve God according to the dictates of conscience, neither the United States nor any State shall deny any person equal access to a benefit, or otherwise discriminate against any person, on account of religious belief, expression or exercise. This amendment does not authorize government to coerce or inhibit religious belief, expression or exercise."

William Donohue explained why the Catholic League is backing the amendment:

"The central reason why the Catholic League is endorsing the Religious Freedom Amendment is quite simple: we believe that in the past few decades a number of court decisions and administrative orders have been passed that are inimical to religious freedom, the result of which has been a diminution of First Amendment guarantees. We do not seek to amend the First Amendment, rather we seek to restore the status quo ante, that is the condition that was outlined by the Framers of the Constitution and was found acceptable by the courts for most of our nation's history. In short, we want our rights back.

"There is nothing in the amendment that would coerce anyone from observing any religion, and that is how it should be. What we are looking for is not special treatment but an end

to the two-class system we have at the moment where secular expression is given preferential treatment over religious expression.”

Donohue submitted a 17 page testimony to the Subcommittee on the Constitution (which was then placed on the Internet). In his oral presentation, he offered several examples of governmental bias against religious expression and was questioned by several members of Henry Hyde’s subcommittee.

Donohue focused on a variety of issues, ranging from the Pentagon to local schools. Though the hearings were dubbed by many in the media as a way to bring prayer back into the schools, Donohue’s testimony was not directed at that issue. Instead, he discussed concrete cases where government has encroached upon religion and where religious speech was treated as second-class speech as compared to secular expression.

It was Donohue’s position that even if the amendment failed, the very fact that the hearings were held sent an important signal to those in Washington.

PENTAGON GAGS SPEECH OF CATHOLICS

In an unusual move, the Pentagon sought to muzzle the free speech of Roman Catholics. The issue was whether Catholics in the Air Force, Army and Navy could participate in an appeal by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) to protest President Clinton’s veto of the bill banning partial-birth abortions. The NCCB asked Catholics to send postcards to their representatives and senators urging them to override President

Clinton's veto of the bill.

Rev. Msgr. Aloysius R. Callahan, Chancellor of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, wrote to Catholic priests in the military asking them to urge lay Catholics to participate in the protest. On June 7, all senior chaplains were notified that they were barred from doing what the NCCB requested.

The Catholic League registered its complaint as follows:

"It is outrageous that the Pentagon would try to silence the free speech rights of Catholics in the military. It is one thing to say that those in the military should avoid working in an election campaign for Republicans or Democrats, quite another to say that enlisted men and women have no right to send a postcard to their Congressmen and Senators protesting a piece of legislation. And we are not talking about a matter of national security, something the Pentagon might legitimately seek to control. But we are talking about life and death."

The league asked President Clinton to raise his objections to the Pentagon edict.

OREGON D.A. YIELDS AFTER BUGGING PRIEST IN CONFESSIONAL

The Catholic League scored perhaps its biggest victory yet in pressuring the District Attorney from Lane County, Oregon into apologizing for authorizing the bugging of a priest in the confessional. District Attorney Doug Harclerod issued his

apology and a pledge never to do this again on May 22.

The case began on April 22 when Father Tim Mockaitis of Eugene, Oregon administered the Sacrament of Reconciliation to Conan Wayne Hale in the Lane County Jail. Father Mockaitis had previously administered the sacraments to inmates of the jail on many occasions, and therefore thought that there was nothing extraordinary about the request. What he didn't know was that D.A. Harclerod had secured a court order to tape the conversation in the confessional. Father Mockaitis didn't learn that he was bugged until a reporter from the Eugene Register-Guard discovered from court records what had happened and then informed the priest of his discovery. This occurred on May 3 and on May 7 representatives of the Archdiocese of Portland met with the Lane County District Attorney to review the incident.

On May 9, the Catholic League issued a news release announcing that it was taking its case to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, stating that it would join any lawsuit against the D.A. that might be brought. The American Civil Liberties Union and the Rutherford Institute soon issued statements of protest as well.

The league's official response to the media was as follows: "The pursuit of justice in a democracy is never an absolute, rather it is a conditional pursuit. Other noble ends, such as respect for the rights of the accused and respect for religious freedom, often limit the reach of the state. In this regard, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, an integral exercise of religious freedom in Roman Catholicism, cannot be sacrificed to satisfy the ambitions of overly-zealous prosecutors."

Then the league addressed the perennial church-state issue, only this time calling attention to violations committed by the state: "We hear ad nauseam about violations of church and state from those bent on privatizing religion. But little is

heard when the state violates church-state boundaries, as surely was done in this instance. "But even those who are not Catholic will want to support the Catholic League in this effort: what is at stake is more than just freedom of religion, it is the lust for power that emanates from the state. What happened in Eugene is the kind of thing that Storm Troopers delighted in doing not too long ago, and as history has shown, militants like that respect no limits in anything they do."

Media interest in the case led to a round of interviews with Catholic League staffers and thus helped to feed the pressure on Harclerod. But he wouldn't budge and even refused to talk to reporters. On May 13, league president William Donohue was quoted in the New York Times as saying that bugging a priest in the confessional was "unprecedented in American history" and described the taping as "a Nazi tactic." He added, "They know damned well that the relationship between a priest and penitent is sacred and cannot be violated."

On May 14, the Catholic League picked up the pace by calling for a Congressional investigation. The league contacted Congressman Charles Canady of Florida to conduct the inquiry; Canady is Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the House Judiciary Committee. There was immediate interest in this case from Congressman Canady's office.

In its press release calling for the Congressional inquiry, the league said the following: "For over 200 years this sacrament [Reconciliation] has been afforded a confidential status by the state and has been enshrined in law by several U.S. Supreme Court decisions. In 1973, in *Doe v. Bolton*, the high court stated that 'The right to privacy has no more conspicuous place than in the physician-patient relationship, unless it be in the priest-penitent relationship.'" When the D.A. capitulated on May 22, he did so in a manner that still left many issues unresolved. Although he said that "I was wrong to authorize taping that confession," he added that what

he did was "legal and ethical but simply not right." The league was not entirely satisfied with this response and was concerned that other D.A.'s throughout the nation might think that bugging a priest in the confessional might be legal, however unpopular the practice might be. That is why the league called upon Congressman Peter T. King of New York to introduce legislation that would settle the matter once and for all.

Congressman King has already introduced a bill that will protect all privileged religious communications. Entitled the "Religious Communications Sanctity Act," the bill was formally introduced to the public on June 10 at a press conference organized by the Catholic League. Congressman King, Dr. Donohue and Joseph Zwilling, the spokesman for the New York Archdiocese, spoke at the event. The press conference was supported by dozens of religious organizations from several denominations.

LEAGUE BACKS SCHOOL BILL THAT AIDS THE POOR

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is urging passage of a new bill sponsored by Congressman Jim Talent that would award scholarships to the parents of indigent children. The bill would allow parents to choose from a wide variety of schools, including private religious schools. Known as the Community Renewal Project Act of 1996, the bill is aimed at many aspects of "moral renewal," ranging from economic empowerment to family solidarity. The Catholic League issued the following statement to the press regarding the bill:

“The Community Renewal Project is badly needed. Congressman Talent’s bill would grant scholarships to the parents of poor children that would enable them to choose the school of their choice. By doing so, the bill would go a long way toward breaking the gridlock of poverty and despair that many inner city children suffer.

“There is overwhelming evidence that Catholic schools do a superior job of educating children. Nowhere is this success more recognizable than in urban minority communities. Catholic schools offer moral, as well as academic, excellence, and have done more to provide upward mobility to indigent youngsters than any other source. It is high time government put its money where it can have the greatest growth potential.

“By granting scholarships to localities that would then grant them to parents, this bill bypasses the legal problems associated with other bills. Those who champion the interests of the poor and are supportive of religious freedom will want to see this bill passed.”

HBO OFFERS TABLOID LOOK AT CATHOLIC CHURCH

On May 6, Home Box Office aired *Priestly Sins: Sex and the Catholic Church*. The one hour special focused on the issue of sexual abuse in the priesthood. We were told that the problem is one of “epic” proportions and that the root cause is celibacy. The Catholic League issued the following news release on the film and called for a boycott of HBO:

“The HBO production, *Priestly Sins*, is to serious scholarship what the *Enquirer* is to serious journalism.

Tabloid sensationalism has a market, but it was not known until now that HBO was a player in this field.

"The film is classic propaganda, moving from anecdote to generalization. The accompanying music and flashes of cathedrals, church doors and statues are used to create a mystical background, against which horror stories unfold. Now no one doubts that some priests have failed miserably in their duties and that innocent persons have been cruelly hurt. But sentiments of sorry and anger should not be used to mask the demands of honest reporting.

"Honest reporting would require that when Richard Sipe (an ex-priest) arrives at a figure of 3,000 sexual abusers among 50,000 priests (6 percent) he is actually referring to sexual **tendencies**, not actual behavior (see the book by Philip Jenkins, *Pedophiles and Priests*). Honest reporting would mandate that the figure of clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic priesthood is less than the figure among the non-celibate Protestant clergy (between .2 to 1.7 percent for priests and between 2-3 percent for ministers). Honest reporting would disclose that Father John McNeill, who offers what he 'thinks' the incidence of abuse might be, is actually the co-founder of Dignity, a homosexual group that openly rejects Catholic teaching and has no standing in the Church.

"No comparative data with other segments of society are presented. Moreover, we hear nothing about false accusations, tarnished careers, greedy lawyers or obsequious therapists. And there is nothing about anti-Catholic bigotry.

"HBO is not the first to float the idea that a 'code of secrecy' keeps the Church from revealing the truth about clergy sexual abuse: that honor extends to the Nazis and others.

"The Catholic League will call on all Catholics to boycott HBO and will provide its members with preprinted postcards that can be sent to the company."

WE'RE "PARANOID"

The *New Republic*, one of Washington's favorite liberal weeklies, doesn't like the Catholic League's Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism. We thought you'd like to know what we had to say in reply, so here is the text of the letter we sent to the editor:

"In your 'Notebook' editorial of April 22, you criticize the Catholic League for issuing an annual report on anti-Catholicism. You cite our complaints against recent college productions of the movies *Agnes of God* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*, as well as the 1995 release of *Priest*, as indicative of our 'paranoia.'

"That would suggest that Michael Medved (who is not Catholic) is also paranoid for branding *Agnes of God* as anti-Catholic. It would suggest that Blockbuster is paranoid for refusing to stock *The Last Temptation of Christ*. And it would suggest that scores of organizations and critics are also paranoid for labeling *Priest* as anti-Catholic. With regard to the last film, your charge also makes inexplicable the explicit statements of anti-Catholicism that both the writer and the director of *Priest* have made.

"The Catholic League does not complain about every *Sister Act*-type movie that is made. But if the *New Republic* can't distinguish between that movie and the films we complained about, then that indicates a tolerance for intolerance that the Catholic League is proud to fight against."

What is perhaps most interesting about the *New Republic's* response is that it charges that the Catholic League "has taken the lead of the Anti-Defamation league, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance and the NAACP" by issuing its report. This is a curious statement insofar as the *New Republic* has not been known for making critical comments about anything those groups do, much less for releasing a report on bigotry.

"PRIMAL FEAR" MALIGNS CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Paramount movie, "Primal Fear," which opened nationwide on April 3, maligns the Catholic Church by presenting every Catholic character as being either a sexual abuser, victim of sexual abuse or swindler. The Archbishop of Chicago is portrayed as a priest who sexually abuses young boys, commands them to have sex with girls in pornographic movies, and associates with laymen who are corrupt.

The Catholic League released the following comment to the media on "Primal Fear."

"Audiences that have an appetite for invidious portrayals of the Catholic Church will be well-fed when they see 'Primal Fear.' There is not a redeeming feature about any Catholic in the entire film; indeed, the ones that are presented are uniformly debased. We learn that the Archbishop of Chicago has sex with altar boys and we hear him order a young boy to take off a girl's blouse. He then instructs the girl to perform oral sex on the altar boy that is standing in front of her while commanding the boy behind her to sodomize her. All of this is being taped by the Archbishop for his own

video collection. If the homeless young people do not cooperate, the Archbishop promises to cut off all food, water and heat.

“At one point in the movie, an attorney complains that ‘it is not the Catholic Church that is on trial.’ But, in fact, it is. And the verdict is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Comments are made that the Archbishop is possessed by demons and ‘gets off’ while watching his porno movies. His lay associates are million dollar swindlers and every characterization of the Archbishop shows him to be a monumental hypocrite.

“In light of the scurrilous charges that were later retracted by Steven Cook against Cardinal Bernardin, the Archbishop of Chicago, it is most distressing to see any movie offer such a negative image of the Chicago Archbishop. While the movie was based on a novel that was published just prior to Cook’s baseless charges, the unmistakable effect of this movie is to keep alive the accuser’s worst allegations. Cardinal Bernardin, who has faithfully served the Church with vigor for many years, is deserving of our utmost respect, not disdain.”

The league is pleased that the Office of Film and Broadcasting of the United States Catholic Conference gave the movie an “0” rating – morally objectionable.

REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM RELEASED

The Catholic League’s second Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism was published in March. It details approximately 150 of the

most egregious examples of anti-Catholicism that took place in 1995. The purpose of the report is to inform those in the media, education and government of the extent and variety of anti-Catholicism that is prevalent in American society today.

The report lists findings drawn from several sectors of society: activist organizations; the arts; commercial establishments; education; government; and the media (including a sample of offensive cartoons).

No claim is made that the report is an exhaustive study of the nature of anti-Catholicism. But it is an indispensable resource for those interested in the subject. It has been sent to every Bishop and Congressman in the nation, as well as to influential persons in the media and others sectors of society.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comment on the report:

“Those in a position to promote meliorating efforts will find that they have their work cut for them. If multiculturalism is taken seriously, then educators must address the problem of anti-Catholicism in such programs. If those in the workforce are interested in promoting greater sensitivity to workers of various cultural backgrounds, then they should show more concern for the sensibilities of Roman Catholics. Those in the media for whom tolerance is a mantra will similarly have to question whether their work contributes to tolerance, or intolerance, of Catholics. And government officials for whom bigotry is the world’s greatest sin will find a new source of evil in reading this report.”

PLAYBOY EXPLOITS CATHOLIC SCHOOLGIRLS

On the cover of the March *Playboy* was a picture of a young woman dressed as a Catholic schoolgirl. The woman appeared undressed in the magazine in a section titled "The Stripper Next Door."

William Donohue denounced this abuse on the NBC show *Extra* and issued the following statement to the press:

"The cover of the March *Playboy* represents the crass sexual exploitation of Catholic schoolgirls. The title of the cover, "The Stripper Next Door," invites its readers to see Catholic schoolgirls as being indistinguishable from the tramps that typically appear in its pages. It represents a deliberate offense against Catholic sensibilities and a calculated attempt to legitimize its depravity.

"We will not ask for an apology because to do so would imply that *Playboy* occupies a position of moral responsibility. It has shown for five decades that decadence is its trademark, so it comes as no surprise that there is nothing so vulgar that Hugh Hefner wouldn't entertain."

When the league asked permission from *Playboy* to reprint the cover in *Catalyst*, it was denied.

KHADAFY - FARRAKHAN

LINK

DEMANDS FEDERAL INVESTIGATION

The Catholic League has asked the U.S. Department of Justice to undertake an investigation of the growing link between the Libyan government of Muammar Khadafy and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. Specifically, the league wants to know whether the Nation of Islam has violated U.S. law by accepting financial support from Libya, a nation certified as terrorist by U.S. authorities. Laws pertaining to the registration of a foreign agent are implicated, and many others may be as well.

It has been reported that a \$1 billion pledge has been made between Khadafy and Farrakhan, enabling them to “work together to influence U.S. elections and foreign policy.” News reports also say that Khadafi wants the “creation of a separate black state in the United States with its own army.” In 1985, Khadafy reportedly loaned \$5 million to Farrakhan seeking to help black Americans in an “armed struggle.”

It is because of the notorious anti-Catholicism of the Nation of Islam, as well as its more well-known anti-Semitism, that the Catholic League was proud to join with the Jewish Action Alliance in protesting this outrageous development. The Nation of Islam publication, The Call, has repeatedly spoken of the Pope as “the Anti-Christ” and spokesmen for the organization have called the Pope “a cracker.” Obscene statements have also been made about the Pope.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue at a demonstration at the Libyan Consulate on February 1. He was joined by Chuck Mansfield of the Long Island Chapter. Here is a sample of Dr. Donohue’s remarks:

“The Nation of Islam, under the aegis of Louis Farrakhan, has an ugly record of bigotry targeted at Jews, Catholics and many others. That this unmitigated hatred might be subsidized by one of the most reckless regimes in the world is

unconscionable. Khadafy is a menace to world peace and Farrakhan is a menace to domestic peace, making an alliance between them doubly threatening.

“Those officials in Washington who boast of standing tall against bigotry, hate speech and terrorism must now be held accountable for their deeds. Catholics and Jews will be watching who does what and when. And when the watching is over, they will register their sentiments in a way every politician understands.”

Dr. Donohue made two speeches at the rally. He focused on the need for reasoned dialogue between contending parties and warned that a Khadafy-Farrakhan link did not bode well for peace and tranquility. He also took note of the fact that Catholics are generally unaware—thanks to the media—of the extent to which the Nation of Islam harbors a prejudice against Catholics.

The Catholic League expects that Attorney General Janet Reno will respond affirmatively to its request for an investigation. Congressman Peter King of New York has already pressed this issue and others are expected to follow suit. The Catholic League has pledged to hold all public officials who are in any way connected to this matter responsible for the outcome.