

DONOHUE INTERVIEWED ABOUT DISNEY FILM

Bill Donohue was interviewed by Virginia Allen of The Heritage Foundation on January 26. The following is an excerpt from the "Daily Signal Podcast."

Allen: Well, it's been fascinating to watch some of the events that have just taken place within the last year in regards to Disney.

And we've seen this shift that for so many years, for decades, Disney had these four guiding keys that they told their employees, that their mission, the foundation of what they were about was about safety, courtesy, show, and efficiency. Those were their four guiding principles, but then they introduced a fifth key. Talk a little bit about that fifth key and that shift that we've seen at Disney, really, I would say, over a number of years, but maybe put on warp speed within the last one to five years.

Donohue: Well, their idea of diversity, of course, is something which is very controversial. By the way, this is not just Disney. I've been doing this job here at the Catholic League now for about 30 years. We've always seen this kind of a, they didn't use the term woke culture, woke politics, left-wing politics. We've always seen it in the media and education, entertainment industry, the arts, nonprofit activist organizations.

Only in the last few years, in the last, I'd say, three to five years have we seen the elite at the top in the military, the health care industry, and the corporate world—and certainly Disney's in the corporate world—go down this road.

Allen: So what do you think the motivator is for Disney with all of this? We know that they have adopted a lot of these really, really radical ideologies, but why?

Donohue: Well, a lot of the people in the financial industry

now, BlackRock and others with this entire idea of equity, are pushing this. A lot of it has to do with just being chic. They want to show that they have a moral perch, that they are better than the rest of us.

They're trying to say, "We're not like everybody else." Basically what they're saying is that, "The working class people are the problem. We're not that problem," which is why they don't mind raising the rates for their theme parks because they really don't want the working class. They don't want middle-class people. They prefer the more well-educated people.

And if you take a look at the surveys, the more well-educated people, particularly those with post-graduate education, they're the most Left of any segment of American society. Sure. Why shouldn't they be? They live in neighborhoods where they have gated communities. They have their own private security. Their kids go to private school, they don't go to the public schools, and we know that.

So they're aloof from the consequences of their own ideas. And until people have to live with the consequences of their ideas, they have an escape valve and that's going on at Disney.

Allen: One of the things that I found really interesting and that I really appreciated about the documentary "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom" is that you-all actually talked to Disney employees, to people that have watched this shift in change. What is the perspective from those on the inside? How do they feel about the direction that Disney's headed in?

Donohue: Well, once again, we see the same kind of phenomena. The average American wants to go out on the golf course or go bowling or go to a movie or take a vacation or go out with their kids, go to a park, go to a picnic. They don't get involved in politics. A tiny minority have always been involved in politics, but today it's gone to such extremes that they are misrepresenting the average person.

From what we've learned, and I can't prove this, but from what

we've learned, the average Disney employee is not a political animal. They are not motivated by some animus against the family or religion. A lot of this is an attack on Christianity, let's face it. But they're not represented. They don't have a voice. They're not organized. And those people who are organized, the old adage about the squeaky wheel has always been true, but now it's more true than ever. And unless the rank and file begin to push back—by the way, that's what this movie is about.

This movie is not about making money for the Catholic League, if anything, it's costing us a lot of money. We went into this for one purpose, to be a cultural marker, to get to hit a cultural nerve in our society, to get people jacked up.

The average person—look at all those great women out there, the mothers who learned, through COVID, what was going on in the classroom. That's very much related to this. That's how we found out about what's going on in the classroom and what DeSantis was doing.

Getting kids at the age of 5, 6, 7, and 8 to question, "Are you happy, satisfied being a boy or a girl?" What is the purpose of this? This is sexual engineering. It's child abuse. It's exploitative. They shouldn't be teaching the kids about gay or straight, anything to do with sexuality at those ages. They should let kids be kids. But the loud minority now has spoken up.

Allen: Well, what are the implications on Disney? Because we see at an increasing number Disney's willingness to put gay characters, to put trans characters into their movies. We saw last year with the film "Lightyear" that it included a scene with two women kissing. What is the tangible effect that we know or do we know if there's a bottom-line effect that Disney is feeling?

Donohue: Well, the whole idea here of sexualizing children and then getting to question about whether they're happy being a boy or a girl is to play into this idea that there's no such thing as human nature. And if there's no such thing as human

nature, there's no such thing as nature's God. Everything is fluid.

Well, I have a doctorate in sociology from New York University, and I've written and spoken on this subject for decades, quite frankly, there is such a thing as truth. There is such a thing as reality. All right? I'm not a woman. I can't get pregnant. And unless we speak up and speak the truth, this thing's only going to get worse. And that's what's going on. The Left would have you believe—and this is what's driving this whole thing here with Disney—that life is nothing more than a social construct. No, that's not the case.

As a matter of fact, if you look at human universals, those characteristics are true across cultures throughout all of history. There are hundreds of them. Then the society and the culture takes its cues from nature. That's why we have, for example, the mother taking care of the child more than the father. They're taking cues from nature. This is what they don't want. They want the idea that there's no fundamental difference between the sexes. Everything is fluid. Everything is a rolling social construct. That's simply a lie.

There is truth. There's an anthropological difference between men and women and an anatomical difference between men and women. Biological differences between men and women. They want to erase it and it's madness on stilts.

Allen: One thing that you discuss in the documentary is Disney's relationship with China, which I found very fascinating. How is Disney approaching and navigating their relationship with China?

Donohue: Well, China, of course, is potentially the biggest audience for Hollywood. I say potentially, not right now, but they're looking to get that way. Bob Iger, who's the new CEO, he was the previous CEO before [Bob] Chapek, he came in there now and he got China to accept the Marvel Comics. OK, that's one thing.

But the Chinese communists as well as the Muslim nations of the Middle East, they are not exposed to sexual engineering of

the likes that we were complaining about. Getting to the kids and questioning their sexuality ... they're being spared that because there's a pushback on the part of the communists and part of the Muslim-run nations. They don't afford us in America and in Western Europe the same courtesy.

Allen: Is Disney going to course-correct?

Donohue: Oh, I think there's no such thing as an iron law in history. That's a fable. So things are reversible. Big institutions do change. Sometimes they change quickly. Sometimes it's like turning the Queen Mary. But I do know that there is a bottom line, not just with money, but people have to be concerned about their image.

I've been fighting Disney for a long time. I fought with them back in 1995 when the Disney-owned distributor, Miramax, the Weinstein brothers, they put out this invidious movie about a Catholic priest, the name of the movie, it was called "Priest." And I'm not going to go through all that right now, but we pushed back on that and we saw some changes.

All I'm saying is this, the average person is not an activist. They're looking to people like myself and many, many others. Many of them are in this movie to be leaders, to be the warriors. But we alone are like the generals. We don't win wars by ourselves. We need troops and the troops need the generals.

And if this culture war is up for grabs, I am not saying at all that our side is winning. I am not saying that the other side has won. But at some point, this clash between cultures, the secular militants and those who believe in traditional moral values, we just can't live in a bifurcated society any longer. One side will triumph over the other, and it's my hope that those people that believe in traditional moral values will succeed.

Allen: Before we let you go, could you just take a moment to explain what you-all do at the Catholic League and how making documentaries like "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom" fits into

your mission?

Donohue: That's an excellent question. Our primary goal is to fight anti-Catholicism and to fight against infringements on religious liberty affecting any particular group. But we're primarily involved with Catholics and Christians in a more general sense. But the reason we want the voice of the Catholic Church to be out there despite some failures on the part of the leaders, the teachings have always been solid. The teachings of the Catholic Church have been solid and we want that voice to be heard.

So the documentary is tapping into what's going in our culture. We're trying to get support for traditional moral values as understood by practicing Catholics, observant Jews, evangelical Protestants, most Mormons and Muslims. We should never leave these people out of the equation. They have kids. They're concerned as well. And I dare say, people who are unbelievers, if you've got kids, you've got to be concerned about the direction of our culture. That's what we're trying to do here with this documentary.