

EVANGELICALS AND USAFA GET BUM RAP

Catholic League president William Donohue explained today why he believes evangelicals and the Air Force Academy have gotten a bum rap:

“At yesterday’s hearing before a House Armed Services subcommittee, former U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) chaplain Melinda Morton, a Lutheran minister, accused the school of having a ‘pervasive and systemic climate of religious intolerance.’ She memorized her talking points very well: her ideological co-conspirator, Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, had previously charged that a ‘systemic and pervasive’ climate of intolerance exists. Strong words given that of the thousands of cadets who have been at the Academy in the last four years, only thirteen have had cause to complain.

“Even more telling is the fact that not one Roman Catholic has complained. The panel that investigated the school interviewed many cadets, faculty and staff; they were split into various focus groups. Speaking of the First and Second Class Catholic Cadets, the Academy’s report concluded that ‘The overall, unanimous position of these cadets was clear: free exercise of religion is not a problem at USAFA.’ Of the Third and Fourth Class Catholic Cadets, the report said, ‘These cadets were surprised that this is an issue at USAFA’; it also said, ‘None of these cadets had specific instances of religious intolerance or bias.’

“Now this is bizarre. In those instances when evangelicals have crossed the line with heavy-handed proselytizing efforts, Catholics have typically been the target audience. So why

have no Catholics—who are 30 percent of the student body—complained? After all, according to a Jewish graduate who has frequently complained to school officials about the alleged problem, ‘This is not Christian versus Jew. This is evangelical Christians against everybody else.’ Other complainants have made similar comments.

“No one has been more maligned in this scam than Dr. James Dobson. Repeatedly, it has been said that the close proximity of his Focus on the Family headquarters and the USAFA is problematic. Nice try by the left-wing zealots, but we Catholics aren’t biting. Dobson is our friend.”