

HEALTH CARE POLEMICS

The debate over what is and what isn't covered in the health care bills has triggered a slew of unfair misrepresentations. For example, Planned Parenthood ripped the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for its opposition to a bill that would provide funding for abortion. Also, a normally responsible *New York Times* journalist wrote a grossly distorted front-page article on Catholics and health care reform.

Planned Parenthood Rips the Bishops...

In an article found on the *Huffington Post*, Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood, said, "Seems that, if the U.S. Conference [of Catholic Bishops] had its way, the national health care system would make American women second-class citizens and deny them access to benefits they currently have." And that's just the danger she implied the bishops were doing in the U.S. Abroad, she said that the bishops' "hard-line opposition to women's rights also endangers millions of women around the globe." Of course she could not provide an example of why these bishops have not been locked up.

Recently, Richards was summoned to the White House to discuss health care reform. Is this the type of advice she was given—to lash out at Catholic bishops? If not, she should have been reined in.

Richards was either ignorant or lying when she said, "comprehensive reproductive health care [is] supported by the majority of Americans." In fact, nearly two in every three Americans (63 percent) favor laws preventing the use of taxpayer funds for abortions. But no matter, data never convince ideologues such as Richards.

It's amazing that American people were called fascists by U.S. Congressmen because they oppose the health care bills on the table, and Catholic bishops are told by one of the leading

proponents of health care reform that they are a threat to human rights.

New York Times Errs Wildly...

It was also amazing to read the error of David D. Kirkpatrick, a respected journalist, on the front of the August 28 *New York Times*. In a story titled, "Some Roman Catholic Bishops Assail Health Plan," Kirkpatrick did not cite a single bishop who supports the Obama health care bills. So why the qualifier?

The bishops, while supportive of universal health care, have said that they will not support any bill that provides for abortion coverage. Unfortunately, the bills being considered do exactly that; amendments to get abortion out of these bills have universally failed.

Justin Cardinal Rigali was identified as a bishop who is opposed to any bill that includes abortion coverage. What's wrong with this is that Kirkpatrick gives the impression that Rigali is just another Catholic voice: In fact, the Archbishop of Philadelphia speaks for the USCCB on pro-life issues.

Another problem was identifying Rockville Centre Bishop William Murphy as being sympathetic to the health care bills. Yet on his website, it explicitly stated that he "has never announced support for one particular version of health care reform legislation. To suggest otherwise is false."

The *Times* article said that "Catholic Charities and the Catholic Health Association endorsed the president's plan without reservation." Not true. On its website, Catholic Charities stated quite clearly, "Let there be no doubt, Catholic Charities USA does not support nor will it support any provision or amendment that fails to uphold the sanctity and dignity of human life."

Similarly, the Catholic Health Association (CHA) was equally clear: "CHA has not endorsed any of the health care reform

bills, but our message to lawmakers is clear: health reform should not result in an expansion of abortion, and must sustain conscience protections for health care providers who do not want to participate in abortions or other morally objectionable procedures.”

The newspaper accurately said that Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good supports Obamacare. But it failed to mention that the dissident Catholic lay group is a creation of George Soros.

All in all, this was the most distorted article to appear in the mainstream media on Catholics and health care reform. That a normally responsible journalist, like Kirkpatrick, wrote it makes it all the more disturbing.