

HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE GETS MUDDIED EVEN FURTHER

Remarks by Rep. Dick Armey yesterday have muddied the House Chaplain issue even further. A report in today's *Dallas Morning News* says that Armey did not know the denominations of the finalists for the job.

Catholic League president William Donohue picked up on this today:

"First Rep. Armey wanted us to believe that he didn't know that Father Timothy O'Brien was the top candidate as chosen by the selection committee and now he wants us to believe that he didn't know that Father O'Brien was a priest. This is strange. Did he think he was a Buddhist?

"In an AP story yesterday, Rep. Earl Pomeroy, co-chairman of the selection committee, said that Armey, Rep. Dennis Hastert and Rep. Dick Gephardt all knew that O'Brien was the top choice. This makes it all the more urgent for Armey to talk to Pomeroy about this. And then he can talk to all the other committee members who have said the same thing.

"Our favorite, of course, is the business of Armey not knowing that O'Brien was a priest. This is strange given the fact that on October 7, Rep. Pomeroy and Rep. Tom Bliley sent Armey a letter listing the three finalists as 'Rev. Robert Dvorak, Father Tim O'Brien and Dr. Charles Wright'; all three have doctorates but O'Brien was nonetheless identified as 'Father.' Moreover, on December 2, it was reported in the *New York Times* that Armey had commented to O'Brien in the interview that where he grew up in North Dakota there was a lot of anti-Catholicism. A strange remark to make to someone whom Armey thought could have been a Buddhist.

"To make matters worse, on December 23 Armey accused O'Brien

of lobbying for the job, the effect of which, he wrote, 'resulted in eliminating another Catholic priest who was endorsed by Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C.' This is strange given that O'Brien could have been a Buddhist. It can't get any muddier than this."