

HOW GAYS CRASHED THE ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Bill Donohue

As we approached the 10th anniversary of homosexuals marching under their own banner in New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade, it behooved us to understand how this happened.

To begin with, gays were never banned from marching. As I said on radio and TV in New York for two decades, no one ever asked anyone what they did in bed and with whom. Gays were banned from marching under their own banner, and that is because to do so would deflect from what the day is all about—honoring St. Patrick. For the same reason, pro-life groups were banned from marching under their own banner.

The first gay group to march was in 1991. Mayor David Dinkins entered into a discussion with the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the parade organizers, and a compromise was reached: members of the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization (ILGO) could march with the mid-town chapter of the AOH, accompanied by the mayor.

When ILGO sought to march in the 1992 parade, they were barred. They were accused of "outrageous behavior" when they marched in 1991, making obscene gestures in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral and in front of the reviewing stand at 5th Avenue and 67th Street.

On January 21, 1992, the Hibernian National and State Boards issued a joint statement asserting that "no organization or organizations are allowed to use New York City's 231st Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 17, 1992 as a vehicle to publicly insult any person or group watching or reviewing the parade." They repeated the charge that ILGO engaged in "outrageous behavior and conduct."

ILGO did not give up and proceeded to march, illegally, in the 1994 parade. They were arrested for marching without a permit on March 17, but that didn't make any difference to Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Robert Sackett. On November 2, 1994, he threw out the charges, saying the arrest of the ILGO members was a "blatant denial of First Amendment rights."

A week later, here is what I said about that ruling.

"Judge Sackett is an embarrassment of the courts. For him to simply disregard the fact that ILGO (a) had no permit to march (b) never sought one in the first place (c) was never denied the right to protest elsewhere and (d) had already lost in the courts in its bid to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade, demonstrates that Judge Sackett shows no respect for the law."

In 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that banning ILGO from the Boston St. Patrick's Day Parade was constitutional. It was a private parade, the high court said, and the organizers had a First Amendment right to freedom of association, essentially affirming their right to craft their own rules.

Meanwhile in New York, the AOH handed the parade over to a new group, the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, headed by John Dunleavy. Even though the Supreme Court upheld the right of parade organizers to ban ILGO, they attempted to march in the late 1990s, and were arrested for doing so. I took pictures of them and was assaulted by one of the lesbians. I did not hit her back knowing the media would capture my retaliatory move, and blame me.

Why was ILGO so determined to march? It had nothing to do with honoring St. Patrick. *This is not an opinion—it is what they said.*

In 2017, Anne Maguire and Maxine Wolfe published their reminiscences on an array of subjects, one of which was the parade. Maguire, who was co-founder of ILGO, talked about the

politics of the group. She explicitly said that the protests at the St. Patrick's Day Parade "sort of dovetailed with ACT UP." She also admitted that "the vast majority" of ILGO members were illegal aliens who sought to mobilize politically.

Maguire said that within their first year in the U.S., "somebody brought up in a meeting, 'Wouldn't it be kind of funny if we marched in the St. Patrick's Day parade?'" To which most of them said, "Are you kidding me?" This is how it all began—as a lark.

They asked for a permit, were denied, and "it just completely blew up." They saw homophobia everywhere, from being denied a permit to "ACT UP and AIDS."

Maguire's admission that there was a nexus between the parade and ACT UP is telling: she was referring to what ACT UP did on December 10, 1989 at St. Patrick's Cathedral. That was the day when gays crashed the Sunday 10:15 a.m. Mass, celebrated by Cardinal John O'Connor. ACT UP activists interrupted the Mass, handcuffed themselves to the pews, blew whistles, shouted obscenities and spat the Host on the floor. One of the most prominent members at the "Stop The Church" protest who was arrested was Ann Northrop.

Northrop blamed Cardinal O'Connor for AIDS, not promiscuous homosexuals. How did the archbishop cause AIDS? By saying that monogamy protects against the sexually transmitted disease! This is like blaming obesity on those who diet.

Further proof that ILGO's interest in marching in the parade was a lark, having everything to do with making a political statement and nothing to do with honoring St. Patrick, was made plain by Maguire. In 1996, a year after the Supreme Court ruled against ILGO, she wrote the following.

"What is clear about ILGO and the St. Patrick's Day parade is that most [ILGO] people, particularly those of us who are most

actively involved, had no inclination to be associated with, never mind march in, the parade. [The protest], very simply, is where our 'coming out' took place."

This is exactly what the AOH had been saying all along.

In September 2014, as I previously recounted in the *March Catalyst*, Dunleavy was pushed aside by the vice chairman of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, John Lahey, president of Quinnipiac University. At a press conference held at the New York Athletic Club, welcoming a gay group to march, OUT@NBCUniversal, Lahey and others spoke, but Dunleavy did not. He was treated like dirt by the heavyweights who sucked up to the media. I was never invited, and we all know why.

Lahey paired with elites from other universities, corporations, lawyers and the media to take the reins from Dunleavy. Dunleavy was a former transit dispatcher, a great blue collar guy from Ireland. He was outclassed by these sharks. It did not matter to the elites that the Supreme Court declared that parade officials had a First Amendment right to bar ILGO. What mattered is that they wanted the affirmation of elites unconnected to the parade.

Lahey and company would have us believe that the parade was being threatened with a boycott from its sponsors, and that they could not have it televised on NBC without their advertising support. It is true that Guinness, Heineken and the Ford Motor Company were planning to do just that. It is also true that Manhattan College, Fairfield University and the Irish government were pressuring parade officials.

What Lahey did not say is that they could have looked for other alternatives. What about WPIX? Would they have agreed to televise the march? What about EWTN, the Catholic media giant? What about looking for new sponsors? Quite simply, they used this as an excuse to get what they wanted all along—the elites were all on the same side.

I know that their hearts were not in it because in the spring of 2014, right after the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the issue of gays marching in 2015 was coming to a head. I met with seven owners of Irish pubs in New York City; they owned roughly 25 percent of the Irish bars. All but one agreed to my plea to boycott Guinness. Some chose to cut the price of Guinness' competitors, thus enticing drinkers to choose an alternative; others simply took out the Guinness tap. But it was not enough to change things, and that is because parade officials wanted nothing to do with it.

On September 17, 2014, I wrote Dunleavy a letter restating how I was lied to about gays marching in the parade. I mentioned to him that one of the parade officials, John Fitzsimmons, an attorney, had called me at the end of August. I knew him well and would have fielded the call but I was in Montauk, Long Island taking a break. The call was about including a gay group in the parade in 2015. Here is part of what I said.

"I told Bernadette [the vice president] to let John know that it was okay by me [to include a gay group], as long as (a) there was a formal change in the parade rules governing marching units allowing those that have their own cause to march, and (b) a pro-life group would be marching under its own banner as well. John said he believed that a formal revision of the rules had been made, but that he had to 'check his notes.'

"John called back saying that he checked with you about this issue, and that he also checked his notes. He said there was, in fact, a formal change in the rules, and that a pro-life group would be marching. Bernadette then urged him to pick a pro-life group so that it could be announced at the same time as the NBC gay group [which had already been approved]. He agreed to do this."

It was plain that I had been lied to by Fitzsimmons, so I closed my letter to Dunleavy saying, "John is the source of

the problem.” (Both Fitzsimmons and Dunleavy have since passed away.) I pulled our Catholic League unit the next year and we will never march again.

On the day that gays first marched in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade under their own banner, March 17, 2015, Northrop said she still wasn’t happy. She was angry that a gay group was chosen by NBC, which televised the march, saying “it’s all a corporate deal. It has nothing to do with really opening up the parade and welcoming gay people in and certainly not Irish gay people.”

It’s never enough for narcissistic gays—it’s always about them.

To show how crazed Northrop is, consider that she once celebrated the news that human cloning could make men obsolete. “Essentially, this is sort of the final nail in men’s coffins. Men are now totally irrelevant, if [cloning] is, in fact, true and possible and becomes routine. Men are going to have a very hard time justifying their existence on the planet, I think.” Male hatred is not unusual among radical lesbians, but this comment is hard to beat.

Ten years after the first gay group marched up Fifth Avenue, there is still no pro-life group allowed to march. Each year Irish Pro-Life USA, founded by John Aidan Byrne, requests a permit to march, and every year he is denied. Parade organizer Hilary Beirne never gets back to him.

In other words, the St. Patrick’s Day Parade officials allow homosexual groups to march but not pro-life Catholics. In short, we can thank the Irish elites, in the U.S. and Ireland, for ganging up on John Dunleavy.