

JESUIT UNIV. PRESIDENT CALLED “NAZI PRIEST”; LEADS TO FIRING

Following a protest by the Catholic League, a 24 year-old copy editor in Spokane, Washington was asked to resign after she labeled Gonzaga University president Rev. Robert Spitzer a “Nazi priest” in the pages of the *Spokesman-Review*.

On November 8, the Spokane daily ran a short piece entitled, “Nazi priest promotes his book.” The story was simply a blurb announcing a talk and book signing that Father Spitzer was doing at a local bookstore. Neither his talk nor book had anything to do with Nazism.

Upon learning of this story, William Donohue called the editor’s office at the *Spokesman-Review*. He was told that the “Nazi priest” label was an error and that there would be an apology in the next day’s newspaper. Donohue charged that it was not an error and instead argued that the guilty party had deliberately defamed Rev. Spitzer because he had banned a representative from Planned Parenthood from speaking on his campus last spring.

Donohue told the woman that according to her newspaper’s definition, the Democratic Party consists of Nazis: in 1992 at the Democratic National Convention, he said, pro-life leader Governor Robert Casey was banned from speaking. She had no comment.

Donohue demanded that the person responsible for the “Nazi priest” label be fired. The Catholic League then contacted all the major newspapers across the country and blanketed all the TV and radio stations in Spokane. Within 24 hours, Robin Moody was asked to resign by the newspaper’s editors.

What Donohue didn't know when he made his phone call was that Moody was the president of the women's studies club at Gonzaga who sought to bring a Planned Parenthood spokesperson to the campus. But his instincts were right: he knew the "Nazi priest" label was connected to the Planned Parenthood incident.

The *Spokesman-Review* put forth the line that this "error" got passed the editors because it happened the night of the election and things were busy. In his statement to the press, Donohue didn't buy it. "On the contrary," he said, "Ms. Moody's decision was as deliberate as it was ideologically driven. She got what she deserved."

A call to the Spokane media after the event gave evidence that the Catholic League's complaint was not only the subject of talk radio, the league was the only organization that sought to can the culprit.