

L.A. SCHOOLS PROMOTE CENSORSHIP; OFFER MADE TO TEACH TOLERANCE

On February 7, it was announced that the Los Angeles Unified School District had removed nearly 300 books from its library shelves it deemed offensive.

In December, 2001, copies of *The Meaning of the Holy Quran* were donated to the school district by a local Muslim foundation. This particular version of the Koran, published in 1934, contains footnote passages that label Jews "arrogant," "illiterate" and "men without faith." After a history teacher complained, the books were pulled from library shelves. A committee of history teachers, Jewish leaders and officials from the donating foundation was authorized to review the books.

William Donohue was impressed by the zealousness of the book banners, as well as their shameless hypocrisy. Academic freedom is, after all, the mantra among educrats. But not in Los Angeles: this same school district has previously censored bulletin board literature and books it found to be offensive to gays and blacks. And now their sensitivity alarm has sounded for Jews. There is no evidence that they have become similarly exercised by anti-Catholicism. This, however, did not stop Donohue from extending the services of the league.

On February 8, Donohue wrote a letter to Roy Romer, the superintendent of schools, and to the eight members of the school board, offering to help resolve the controversy. He asked to do the following: a) conduct a training seminar on the meaning of the First Amendment for all area faculty and administrators b) provide an historical overview of the consequences of state-sponsored censorship in Hitler's

Germany, Stalin's Russia and Mao's China and c) allow a Catholic League staff member to examine their library holdings for anti-Catholic books; we would then ask that these books remain on the shelves as testimony to tolerance.

In his news release on the subject, Donohue drew attention to the silence echoing from civil libertarian quarters: "The American Civil Liberties Union defends books that show how to make an A-bomb. People for the American Way defends books that are patently obscene. The American Library Association defends hard-core pornography on the Internet and even opposes the use of filters that keep little children from being exposed to it." And then let fly with, "But not one of them has objected to the book banning going on in Los Angeles."

Donohue ended his remarks by saying, "That's why the Catholic League's offer is so irresistible."