

League confronts Massachusetts governor on appointment of anti-Catholic gay activist

The Catholic League has asked Massachusetts Governor William Weld to dismiss David LaFontaine, head of the Governor's Gay and Lesbian Youth Commission.

According to League officials, LaFontaine participated in the ACT-UP hate rally at Holy Cross Cathedral in June 1990 at which newly ordained priests and their families were subjected to obscenities and pelted with condoms.

In addition, LaFontaine was arrested in the Massachusetts State House when he disrupted a press conference called by the Catholic League and several other organizations to protest an exhibit of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe.

In an "Action Alert" mailing, the Catholic League called on its members to call or write the governor's office to demand LaFontaine's dismissal.

In a letter to the governor, Massachusetts Chapter president Dan Flatley noted that "It is fundamentally unacceptable that someone who willfully associates himself with the extremist activities of a violent hate group should hold a gubernatorial appointment." The League said it is "grotesquely hypocritical that someone who took part in an anti-Catholic demonstration marked by a vicious outpouring of hatred, bigotry and obscenity, should be charged by the Commonwealth with the task of promoting tolerance and respect for diversity."

The League pointed out that disturbing an assembly of worship and harassing others in the exercise of their constitutional

rights are hate crimes in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts news media were quick to take up the story. One Boston television station repeatedly showed film of LaFontaine's arrest in the State House. Coverage included stories in several papers including the *Boston Globe*. Editorials and op-ed pieces told the story in a dozen daily papers and Massachusetts Chapter Executive Director Joe Doyle ran from studio to studio to appear on news broadcasts and call-in shows.

The headlines told the story:

"Catholic group asks gay panelist's ouster," (*The Boston Globe*).

"Catholic League urges Weld to oust gay commission chief," (*The Boston Herald*).

"Catholic group seeks ouster of gay commission chairman," (*Fall River Herald News*).

"Are some forms of bigotry acceptable?" (op-ed piece in *The Daily Transcript*).

"Catholics call for removal of gay commission chairman," (*Berkshire Eagle*).

"Governor Weld's Choice," (Jim Kelly's City Hall Column in the *South Boston Tribune*).

"Catholic group tells Weld: Fire gay adviser," (*The Patriot Ledger*).

"Catholic group urges removal of gay official," (*Lowell Sun*).

"League asks removal of commission chair," (*The Anchor*, Diocese of Fall River).

"Catholics target gay activist," (*Springfield Union-News*).

"R.S.V.P. Governor," (editorial, *The Boston Pilot*, Archdiocese of Boston), and one week later, "P.S. to Our R.S.V.P."

As we went to press with this issue of the *Catholic League Newsletter*, Governor Weld continued to defend LaFontaine, ignoring the firestorm of criticism being heaped on him for this injudicious appointment.