

MARK THOMPSON GETS A PASS



Former BBC chief, and current *New York Times* company president, Mark Thompson, has been cleared of wrongdoing in the BBC case involving Jimmy Savile. Bill Donohue comments on

the lengthy report that was issued on this subject yesterday:

It is entirely plausible that Mark Thompson had nothing to do with spiking the BBC “Newsnight” story on BBC child rapist Jimmy Savile. It is entirely implausible to believe that when Thompson told his BBC lawyers last September to write a letter on his behalf that he knew nothing about its contents: the missive threatened *The Sunday Times* with a lawsuit if it ran a story implicating Thompson in the Savile matter. Indeed, only a fool would contend that he who authorizes his lawyers to write a letter on his behalf wouldn’t know what he was authorizing.

On February 9, British pundit Guido Fawkes wrote that Thompson was told about the axed “Newsnight” report at a Christmas party. Yet on October 7, Thompson said he “never heard any allegations or received any complaints” about Savile’s predatory behavior. On October 10, Lord Patten, the chairman of the BBC Trust, said that Thompson was involved in the decision to kill the Savile story (the next day Patten inexplicably said he “misspoke”). On October 24, we learned that BBC foreign correspondent Caroline Hawley also told Thompson about the “Newsnight” story at the 2011 Christmas party. These October revelations were subsequent to the letter which Thompson authorized, the contents of which he says he knew nothing about.

Thompson should have said from the get-go that while he had heard rumors about Savile for years, and had learned of the

spiked report last Christmas, he had nothing to do with the decision to nix the story.

As for the *New York Times* itself, it deserves credit for the way it handled matters. Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. didn't stand in the way of either his reporters or the public editor, all of whom acted responsibly. It is our hope that the *Times* covers the Catholic Church with the same degree of fairness.