

MINNESOTA DEMS EXPLAIN MAILER

A week before Election Day, a mailer by the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) of Minnesota came under fire for its allegedly anti-Catholic contents. Pictured on one side of the mailer was a priest, shown from his Roman collar down, wearing a button which said, "Ignore the Poor"; on the other side there is a statement critical of Dan Hall, a Protestant minister who is a candidate for the state senate (it said, in part, "Preacher Dan Hall protects politicians—not the poor"). Throughout the Internet, only the front part of the mailer was shown, leading some to accuse the DFL of bigotry. After the mailer began to receive an enormous amount of attention, the DFL released a statement defending the mailing because "the text explicitly criticizes Preacher Hall," and therefore covered any objections. We weren't buying it.

The DFL deliberately exploited Catholic imagery to make a political point. Had they pictured an imam on the front of its mailing, the DFL wouldn't treat its critics so cavalierly. If the DFL wanted to paint Hall as anti-poor, then it could have done so. But it didn't have to do it by hijacking Catholic imagery. While the text was about Dan Hall, the teaser—that which gets the attention of the reader—was a Catholic-baiting stunt that paints priests as anti-poor.

The person whose name appeared on the mailing was Brian Melendez, the state chair of the DFL. The Harvard-educated lawyer, it turned out, offers his services pro bono for cases involving consumer fraud. Bill Donohue said, "He should therefore know a thing or two about deceptive advertising, especially given that he concentrated in ethics while attending Harvard Divinity School."

We contacted his office looking to give him a chance to explain himself, but he never got back to us. Perhaps he was too busy advising the DFL how to handle questions about deceptive advertising and unethical behavior.