

OPPOSITION TO JAMES HORMEL WAS NOT ANTI-GAY

At a news conference yesterday, James Hormel contended that Senator John Ashcroft opposed his confirmation as ambassador to Luxembourg “solely because I am a gay man.” Senator Ashcroft has denied this was the reason he opposed the Hormel appointment. The Catholic League, which led the opposition to the Hormel appointment at the time, believes that Hormel’s accusation is unfair and without basis in fact. The league’s president, William Donohue, explained why:

“On January 21, 1998, the Catholic League issued a news release formally opposing the nomination of James Hormel as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. We did so because of Hormel’s reaction to an anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, during the 1996 San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Parade. During the parade, Hormel joined two broadcasters from KOFY-TV in welcoming the nun-dressed drag queens, laughing at their antics. Worse than this was Hormel’s refusal to dissociate himself from this Catholic-bashing incident. On December 19, 1997, Senator Tim Hutchinson gave Hormel an opportunity to ‘repudiate those who would mock the church,’ but the would-be ambassador declined comment.

“On June 19, 1998, I expressly stated in a news release that ‘James Hormel should not be denied the post of ambassadorship to Luxembourg on the basis of his sexual orientation.’ But I did say that he should be denied this position because of his tolerance for anti-Catholicism. On January 13, 1999, I wrote to every U.S. senator asking that the Hormel nomination be rejected. In a letter dated April 26, 1999, Senator John Ashcroft wrote to me saying, ‘I believe that Mr. Hormel is not an appropriate nominee for the post of U.S. Ambassador.’ Nothing in his letter gave even the slightest hint of an anti-

gay bias.

“The issue all along has been Hormel’s reluctance to distance himself from anti-Catholic bigots, not his sexual orientation. It is time to set the record straight.”