

PROTESTANT GROUP ATTACKS MORE THAN VOUCHERS

In Chicago, the week of November 9-13, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC), considered a proposal that would put it on record as opposed to voucher programs or tuition-tax credits for private schools. The proposal explicitly said that "public moneys should be used only for public schools." It further stated that "public education should have the full and conscientious support of Christians and Christian churches." The NCC is scheduled to vote on this proposal next year.

The Catholic League responded to the wording of the proposal with an official statement to the press:

"It is not certain who the National Council of Churches actually speaks for, but it is certain that millions of Catholics would regard the NCC's latest political statement as not representing their interests. Catholics, as well as Evangelicals, Muslims and Orthodox Jews, have shown that schools operated by members of their own faith far surpass the academic record of local public schools, and this is particularly true of faith-based schools in the inner city. Knowing this to be true, the NCC amazingly claims that by unequivocally supporting public education they are somehow supporting the best interests of the poor.

"Everyone knows how Catholic schoolchildren were subjected to discrimination by the Protestant-run public schools in the nineteenth century, and that the origins of Catholic schools was in direct response to this bigotry. That is why it is disturbing to read, in 1998, language from the NCC that smacks of this sorry legacy. For example, the NCC proposal says that 'public education has been under attack for two decades by persons representing *religious*, cultural, and economic views

which offer little or no support for public schooling' (our emphasis). Of course, it could have been said that Catholics would like to use their taxes to pay for schools of their choice, namely parochial ones, but that would convey a positive message. Better to drum up notions of Catholic opposition to assimilation, which is exactly what this proposal does. The NCC should reexamine its language."

The Catholic League would rather the NCC put its cards on the table and have an honest debate about what really concerns the organization than to hide its politics behind code language. We will keep our eye on this one.