

ROBERTS GRILLED ON RELIGION; CATHOLICS INSULTED

On September 13, Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Dianne Feinstein both asked Supreme Court nominee John Roberts whether he agreed with the comment made by President John F. Kennedy in 1960 regarding matters of church and state.

Neither one of them even hinted at the fact that Kennedy was forced to make his infamous Houston speech just to ward off the anti-Catholic bigots who were trying to destroy him. "Indeed, by taking us down this dirty road again," Bill Donohue said in a press release, "Specter and Feinstein brought us right back to where JFK started."

Roberts handled himself well, but the shame of it is that he had to answer these questions at all. What did Specter and Feinstein expect him to say—that he takes his marching orders from the Vatican? Too bad one of the senators on the Judiciary Committee didn't interrupt Specter by asking him why he didn't press Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer to discuss the relationship between their Jewish heritage and their jurisprudential philosophy. And too bad Feinstein wasn't asked whether she believes that having "In God We Trust" on our coins violates her absolutist understanding of the First Amendment.

Feinstein proved to be particularly obnoxious. The day before she insulted Catholics by blaming them for the deeds of Nazis. In her opening statement, Feinstein said she was going to question the Supreme Court nominee on "the constitutional provision of providing for the separation of church and state." As an example of religious persecution, she cited Jews who lost their lives in Budapest during the Holocaust, a tragedy, she said, that "occurred in the name of religion."

We branded her remark obscene. As Rabbi David Dalin pointed out in his new book, *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*, "Jeno Levai, the great Hungarian Jewish historian, was so angered by accusations of papal 'silence' that he wrote *Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy: Pius XII Did Not Remain Silent*."

Stung by our criticism, Feinstein sent us a copy of what she said at the hearing. Curiously, her speech makes no mention of the offensive remark about the Holocaust having "occurred in the name of religion." So either she decided to read over the remark or someone altered her speech at the last minute. This much is certain: the copy of her speech that was released by her office prior to giving it contained the remark in question. It was even printed in *The Congressional Record*!