

HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE CONTINUES TO FESTER

Last week nearly 40 Republican lawmakers met with their leaders to discuss how concerned they are with the controversy surrounding the House Chaplain issue. Having returned from their districts after the President's Day break, they know that their constituents want this matter resolved. Now House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt is taking House Speaker Dennis Hastert to task for not providing Democrats with a forum to "have their questions answered about the breakdown of the process."

Catholic League president William Donohue released the following statement on the issue today:

"The Republicans created this problem and then added to it with unprecedented bungling. Now they don't know how to get out of it. With Super Tuesday behind them, they should come to a conclusion which all fair-minded observers can live with, and they should do so without delay. From the beginning, the Catholic League has raised serious questions about the selection process without once suggesting that a particular outcome must be achieved.

"We have repeatedly said that the Catholic League is not here to service the Republicans any more than we are here to service the Democrats. We are here to service the Church. We also deplore the semi-truths and outright falsehoods recently deployed by unwise persons. At stake is the credibility of those who have put politics before principle and dishonesty before a quest for truth. The sooner this is over the better."

WHITNEY MUSEUM—MODEL OF HYPOCRISY

The Whitney Museum's decision to host "Sanitation" by Hans Haacke provides the German-born artist with a platform to denounce Mayor Rudolph Giuliani for criticizing the "Sensation" exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art last fall. Nazi-style script is used to highlight critical comments made by Giuliani and others; they are juxtaposed with the words of the First Amendment. The exhibition opens March 23.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

"'In 1993, *New York Times* writer Holland Cotter chastised those who seriously equated grant refusals by the National Endowment for the Arts with censorship in Nazi Germany. They 'should be off somewhere doing the most basic historical research,' he wrote. Cotter was referring to the controversy over the Whitney display 'Abject Art,' an exhibition that featured depictions of excrement, a film showing one man pushing his head into another man's rectum, a photo of an artist with a bullwhip in his rectum, etc. The same disability is now at work again.

"The surest way for fascism to win is to destroy the moral bedrock of a democratic society. That is why Haacke is disingenuous: not only is he wrong in painting Giuliani a fascist—he had the guts to challenge the bigots—Haacke's work is seed for the very ideology he claims to deplore.

"Haacke is a phony. In the early 1990s, he blasted art patron Charles Saatchi for doing business in South Africa, but now he lays off Charlie Hustle for sponsoring 'Sensation,' even though Saatchi pimped his way into the museum. That's because Haacke's tolerance for Catholic bashing is infinitely greater

than his tolerance for racial segregation.

“The Whitney is also a phony. Two years ago it was charged with censorship for canceling ‘The Great American Nude,’ and now it takes great umbrage at those who criticize blasphemy and pornography.”

“EARLY SHOW” GETS TOO CUTE WITH CATHOLICISM

On yesterday’s edition of the CBS program, the “Early Show,” co-hosts Bryant Gumbel and Jane Clayson joined meteorologist Mark McEwen in an extended ridicule of Catholicism. The subject was Lent. During the course of the conversation, Gumbel and McEwen admitted they were raised Catholic but were no longer practicing. “I was born Catholic and I got a problem with it,” said McEwen. His problem is that the Church is not inclusive enough for him; he specifically cited gays as a group that is excluded. Then there were the proverbial jokes about Catholics not eating meat on Fridays, etc.

On January 31, it was co-host Julie Chen who chimed in with weatherman McEwen making jokes about Catholic guilt, nuns “ready to take you out” and “being scarred for life,” saying Hail Marys, etc.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“The ‘Early Show’ is getting too cute with its discussions of Catholicism. Besides showing their ignorance, Gumbel, Clayson, Chen and McEwen display a troubling double standard: they are ever so careful how they talk about other segments of society.

To the refrain that their morning banter is harmless, we suggest they choose another target and then explain to the offended group how innocent their light-hearted fare really is. African Americans, WASPS and Asians would be our recommendation.”

GOOD FRIDAY HOLIDAY UPHELD (AGAIN)

In January, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a challenge to a Maryland law that mandates Good Friday as a holiday in the public schools. Today it followed suit by allowing Indiana to give state employees the day off; the justices did not comment on why they refused to hear an appeal that argued the holiday was a violation of the First Amendment.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed the court decision today:

“The high court’s decision not to hear a challenge to the right of Indiana to declare Good Friday a holiday is welcome, but it would have been preferable to accept the case and then deal directly with the faulty reasoning of the appeals court that reached the right conclusion. The appeals court maintained that ‘Indiana does not celebrate the religious aspects of Good Friday,’ holding that the holiday ‘has absolutely no religious significance.’ Instead, the appeals court noted, Good Friday just happens to fall in the middle of ‘the long vacationless spring—a day when employees should take off to rejuvenate themselves.’

“This is intellectually dishonest. The purpose of treating Good Friday as a holiday is to allow for the reverential

commemoration of the crucifixion of Christ. Almost 9 in 10 Americans are Christian, thus it could be said that not to allow the states this prerogative would be to show an hostility to religion that is unacceptable. What the states are doing is accommodating religion—they are not sponsoring anything.

“The justices on the appeals court acted cowardly. Indeed, they demonstrated that they need a few days off so that they can rejuvenate themselves. A trip to the Holy Land might do them wonders.”

WHAT THE BUDDHIST BUST SAYS ABOUT GORE

Maria Hsia was found guilty today on all five counts charging her with arranging more than \$100,000 in illegal contributions during the 1996 presidential campaign. Hsia, who has been a fund-raiser for Vice President Al Gore since the 1980s, helped arrange the Buddhist temple fund-raiser.

Gore initially claimed that he did not know that the event was a fund-raiser but then later changed his characterization. Buddhist nuns and monks wrote individual checks and were then reimbursed by the Hsi Lai Temple. That event raised \$65,000 in illegal contributions.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke for the league today:

“From the beginning, there have been two issues involved in the Buddhist temple fund-raising event. One is now concluded: the host is a criminal. What remains unclear is the status of

the guest.

“In recent weeks Governor George Bush and Senator John McCain have been the target of much criticism for the way they have handled the delicate issue of religion and politics. But their errors pale in significance to what is at stake in the Buddhist bust: what is at stake is an outrageous violation of the principle of separation of church and state coupled with gangsterism.

“Just imagine the outcry if Jack Kemp, running with Bob Dole, had gone to a fund-raiser at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in 1996, organized by one of his long-time buddies. Imagine further the spectacle of nuns and priests writing checks to the Republican party and then getting reimbursed by the Archdiocese of New York. Is there any doubt what would have been the fate of Kemp, to say nothing of Cardinal O’Connor? The fact that Gore is apparently getting away with this is emblematic of a sickening double standard. The Bob Jones fiasco is bad, but check-writing clergymen being hustled in a house of worship makes that look positively angelic by comparison.”

DEMOCRATS DISCOVER ANTI-CATHOLICISM

Congresssional Democrats have introduced a resolution condemning Bob Jones University for its anti-Catholicism and other forms of bigotry. William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, commented on this move today:

“It was the Democrats who gave us Dr. Jocelyn Elders in 1993 as Surgeon General and it was the Democrats who gave us James Hormel as the Ambassador to Luxembourg in 1999.

“When she was nominated, Elders was on record for having made several anti-Catholic statements. For example, in 1992, she commented, ‘Look at who’s fighting the pro-choice movement: a celibate, male-dominated Church....’ In the same year, she said ‘the first 400 years black people had their freedom aborted, and the Church said nothing. The way of life for the Native American was aborted; the Church was silent. We attempted to eradicate a whole race of people through the Holocaust, and the Church was silent....’

“In 1996, in San Francisco, Hormel laughed approvingly at the anti-Catholic Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence as they mocked nuns in the Gay Pride Parade; he did so while doing commentary for KOFY-TV. When given an opportunity to repudiate his behavior, he refused to do so.

“But now the same gang that gave us Jocelyn Elders and James Hormel say they’ve discovered anti-Catholicism because of the Bob Jones fiasco. They must all be wearing deep boots these days.”

McCain BECOMES DIVISIVE AND HYPOCRITICAL

Senator John McCain has charged that Rev. Pat Robertson and Rev. Jerry Falwell represent “the forces of evil.” On another front, in Washington state McCain continued his tactic of authorizing phone calls alerting voters to the Bob Jones University appearance of Governor George W. Bush. McCain first used this strategy in Michigan; he first denied approving the calls and then later admitted he did.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue

today:

"Rev. Pat Robertson was wrong to call Warren Rudman a 'vicious bigot' and Rev. Jerry Falwell was wrong to defend Bob Jones III as not having 'an anti-Catholic bone in his body.' But neither man can plausibly be called 'evil.' Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot were evil. But to say that Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell are evil is to trivialize the term and thereby make light of what truly is worthy of that name. McCain appears to be losing it.

"The Catholic League pounded away at George W. Bush for the way he handled his Bob Jones appearance, but we also acknowledged his apology. McCain has not. This explains McCain's demagoguery: by authorizing more 'Catholic voter alert' type calls trying to intimidate people from voting for Bush, McCain is playing with the politics of fear.

"Since McCain is so upset with Bob Jones University, we implore him to ask his South Carolina operative, Rep. Lindsey Graham, to give back his honorary degree to this anti-Catholic school."