

REP. ENGEL PROVIDES SPEEDY RESPONSE

Yesterday, Catholic League president William Donohue issued a news release regarding an anti-Catholic remark made by Pete Leon, an aide to Congressman Eliot L. Engel of New York; the comment was directed at Scott Bloch, who runs the Office of Special Counsel. Congressman Engel faxed a response the same day.

In today's statement, Donohue explains what happened:

"Pete Leon was called into Congressman Engel's office and was told that his remark was offensive and would not be condoned by anyone in the congressman's office. Leon then apologized, saying he is aware of 'the danger of anti-Catholic bigotry.' In turn, I have written to Congressman Engel stating my satisfaction with this outcome. I also commended him for his speedy response."

REP. ENGEL SHOULD FIRE AIDE

Scott Bloch, who heads the Office of Special Counsel, has been the subject of an on-going campaign to discredit him. At issue are his policy decisions and hiring practices. The Catholic League has been critical of his main adversary, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, because the group has slighted Bloch for hiring Roman Catholics. But now the campaign has gotten even uglier: an aide to Congressman Eliot Engel has literally cited Bloch's status as "a devout Catholic" as a reason for opposing him.

Accordingly, Catholic League president William Donohue sent the following letter to Congressman Engel on April 27:

Hon. Eliot L. Engel

2161 Rayburn HOB

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Engel:

As a New Yorker, I am familiar with your record as a congressman. One of your outstanding qualities is your opposition to bigotry in any form. Unfortunately, there is someone on your staff who is besmirching your reputation. To be specific, I am referring to Peter Leon: he has been quoted as opposing Scott Bloch, who heads the Office of Special Counsel, because Bloch is "a devout Catholic" (see enclosed).

If someone on my staff were to oppose a Jewish person on your staff because he was "a devout Jew," I'd fire him. I would like to hear from you what you are going to do about Mr. Leon.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

BILL DONOHUE TO BILL O'REILLY: STOP SPINNING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue replied today to Bill O'Reilly's remarks about the Catholic League last night on TV:

“Last night on his TV show, Bill O’Reilly said, ‘The Catholic League hates me.’ We do not. We simply object when he crosses the line from criticizing the Catholic Church to dissing it.

“In none of the three news releases that I have written on Bill O’Reilly have I ever even hinted at hating him. But the reverse is not true: in his book, *Who’s Looking Out for You?*, O’Reilly branded the Catholic League a ‘witch-hunter.’ So why is he now spinning the truth?

“In that same book, O’Reilly alleges that we said he ‘despises’ the pope. What I said was that O’Reilly, having called Pope John Paul II ‘an autocrat,’ and having admitted that ‘I have never liked this pope,’ has shown ‘contempt’ for him. That was it. In his mind, that makes us—I guess he means me—a ‘witch hunter.’

“O’Reilly has done a great job criticizing those who are already bashing Pope Benedict XVI. Now if he would just stop bloviating, all would be well.”

CATHOLIC LEAGUE BACKS “JUSTICE SUNDAY”

Catholic League president William Donohue explained today why he is supporting the “Justice Sunday” event sponsored by Protestants:

“On April 24, Family Research Council president Tony Perkins will hold ‘Justice Sunday,’ an effort to rally pro-life Protestants against efforts to block people of faith from sitting on the federal bench. He is being supported by

Protestant leaders such as Rev. James Dobson, Dr. Al Mohler and Chuck Colson. He has our support as well.

“For the past few years, the Catholic League has protested the way some Democrats have engaged in obstructionist strategies designed to stop committed Christians from being confirmed for circuit and district court positions. In addition to discussing this issue on radio and TV, we have had Catholic League officials attend congressional hearings on some of the targeted nominees, and have written letters to all 100 senators outlining our position. Our position is this: Though there is no *de jure* discrimination against people of faith, there is *de facto* discrimination.

“For example, when Senator Schumer labeled a pro-life candidate for the federal judiciary a person with ‘deeply held beliefs’ on abortion, we all know what that means: it’s code for deeply held *religious* beliefs. It does not matter that senators like Kennedy, Durbin and Leahy—all of whom are part of the problem—are Catholic: none accepts the teachings of the Catholic Church on abortion, and are thus quite capable of keeping those who do from being a federal judge. So as not to be misunderstood, let me repeat what I’ve said before: the Catholic League believes there are no anti-Catholic senators. But that doesn’t empty the issue—if Catholics who hold to the Church’s position on abortion are repeatedly vetoed—the effect is clearly a form of *de facto* discrimination.

“Some opponents of ‘Justice Sunday’ have said that Dr. Al Mohler has branded the Catholic religion ‘a false religion.’ He’s obviously wrong, but then again he’s a Southern Baptist and that’s what they believe. As long as we’re not called a satanic cult—ala Bob Jones University—I’m prepared to join hands in the culture war.”

TIME FOR NON-CATHOLICS TO BUTT OUT

Catholic League president William Donohue released the following remarks today:

“It’s time for non-Catholics to butt out. It’s one thing for them to be voyeurs—peering into the Catholic Church the way kids peer into candy stores—quite another when they become meddlers.

“Yesterday, the *New York Daily News* had the audacity to run two opinion pieces under the banner, ‘Agendas for the New Pope,’ both by non-Catholics and both hostile. SFGate.com writer Mark Morford offered the new pope 14 ‘thoughts and ideas,’ including the suggestion that he view a movie about a pervert called *Kinsey*. And the nation’s leading anti-Catholic, Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice, ‘laid out a schedule [for the pope] for the next one hundred days.’

“*Tikkun* editor Rabbi Michael Lerner ripped the new pope saying, ‘This guy is going to continue the Vatican’s authoritarian, hierarchical, antigay policies.’ But since when did this guy Lerner object to authoritarianism? Richard Cohen goes one better bemoaning the fact that as a Jew he feels locked out of the process of electing the new pope (maybe he can arrange for me to vote in the next Israeli election).

“CBS Evening News, contrary to reports that it has crashed, showed it is still alive: ‘In choosing Joseph Ratzinger, the cardinals picked the most polarizing figure in the Catholic Church.’ Dean Hoge, a non-Catholic who teaches at Catholic

University, calls the pope a polarizing figure, saying that 'dissident Catholics'—the only ones he would know—'won't go away' and that indeed, 'they'll push harder.' That makes sense. The head of United Church of Christ, Rev. John Thomas, blasted the pope for being 'confrontational,' an attribute obviously absent in him.

"And, of, course, from the *Jewish Forward* to *People* magazine, we have learned that the new pope previously governed a Catholic office once associated with the Inquisition. After listening to these people rant, the idea of bringing it back is awfully tempting."

NEW POPE WILL INFURIATE "PROGRESSIVES"

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on why the new pope will infuriate "progressive" Catholics:

"In November, 1997, before a packed house of 'progressive' Catholics at the annual Call to Action convention, Sister Maureen Fiedler exclaimed that 'a lot of people in this Church are waiting for a person in this Church to pass away.' Translated, this means they couldn't wait for John Paul II to drop dead. Indeed, I have personally heard many disaffected Catholics, including quite a few nuns, say the same thing. Now that the conclave is about to begin, they think their moment has arrived. Watch for them to crash once the new pope is named.

"Whoever the new pope is, he will not turn the Church over to the Call to Action fringe. That's because they represent a dying breed. Consider what happened in 1996-97.

“In April, 1996, Sister Maureen Fiedler of Maryland’s Quixote Center launched a petition drive aimed at getting one-million Catholics to sign a statement calling for radical changes in the Church’s teachings on women and sexuality. The campaign was dubbed We Are Church, and was well-greased by fat cats who hate the Catholic Church: the Ford Foundation, which funnels millions to Catholics for a Free Choice, used its ‘Catholic’ group to give big bucks to Fiedler. ‘We were blessed with substantial grants,’ Fiedler admitted. ‘We had organizing kits,’ she said, ‘we had grass-roots [efforts]; we did full-page ads [in newspapers]; we had massive mailings; we did public collections in front of cathedrals, like St. Patrick’s in New York.’ They even bribed kids by giving them a dollar for every signature they got. When the year was up, the campaign was such a bomb that it was extended for six months. In the end, it netted only 37,000 signatures. It was at the Call to Action 1997 convention in Detroit that Fiedler reported the sorry results. She blew up at lay Catholics, saying that progressives overestimated their ‘theological maturity’; she concluded by sounding her death wish for the pope.

“It is for reasons like this that the new pope is not about to turn Left, for to do so would be tantamount to going South.”

BILL MAHER TRASHES POPE

On April 8, and again on April 12, the HBO show, “Real Time with Bill Maher,” featured a verbal assault on Pope John Paul II. Led by Maher, the pope was also attacked by Arianna Huffington. Here is a sample of what happened:

Maher: “People waited in line for 24 hours to see the pope’s

body and when they got to see the pope they smelled worse than he did."

Maher: "For those who could not make the funeral, the Vatican has asked that in lieu of flowers, just stop touching your d-."

Maher: "American Catholics say we love the pope, he should be a saint but he is kind of full of s- on everything we believe."

Maher also said that the whole story of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the resurrection was "grafted from paganism." He ended by mocking the death of the pope and the upcoming conclave.

Huffington egged Maher on, saying "this guy" [the pope] should be blamed for the sexual abuse scandal, as well as AIDS in Africa.

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows;

"HBO bears the ultimate responsibility for this exercise in incivility. They must know that Maher is a man infused with hatred towards the Catholic Church, and that Huffington has long demonstrated that she has no ethical standards whatsoever. So what did they expect? Because Maher and Huffington have a total IQ in double digits, it is not worth our while to try to correct their ignorance. But that doesn't mean we won't try to persuade HBO to stop with the bigotry. Timing, as well as content, matters, and on these two counts, HBO failed miserably."

CATHOLICS TO eBay: TREAT US LIKE FAT PEOPLE

After a consecrated Host was recently auctioned online by eBay (it has since been sold, purportedly to a Knights of Columbus member who bought it out of respect), the Catholic League was deluged with complaints. The policy that eBay cited as a reason for not pulling the item was the subject of the following letter that Catholic League president William Donohue sent to the company today:

“As president of the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization, I was disturbed to learn that eBay would unnecessarily offend 63 million Catholics in the U.S., and 1.1 billion worldwide, by selling a consecrated Host online. To Catholics, the Eucharist is the center of our religion, worthy of the utmost reverence. While we don’t expect non-Catholics to maintain the same perspective, we do expect them to be respectful of our sentiments. That is why the decision not to withdraw this item is so disturbing.

“More than disturbing is the reasoning behind the decision. The Community Watch Team of eBay’s Trust & Safety division said that ‘even though these auctions may be offensive to some, please remember that most of the time the law does not prohibit these items.’ But the law has nothing to do with this issue: lots of things are legal and immoral at the same time. Moreover, we are told that eBay has decided not to prohibit any item ‘endowed with sacred properties by certain religious groups.’ Really? Since the policy is conditional, i.e., it refers only to ‘certain’ groups, it would be instructive to know which religious groups eBay would protect. Obviously, Catholics did not make the cut, so who did? And to say that eBay is ‘religiously neutral’ is disingenuous: all moral decisions are judgmental—none can be neutral.

“Last fall, eBay banned the book, *Why Is America So Fat?* Was that an example of your neutrality? Or maybe I’m missing something—was the book endowed with some sacred properties that eBay honors? In any event, the next time someone insults Catholics, please think of us as fat people.”

CATHOLIC DISSIDENTS ARE FIXATED ON SEX

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the way Catholic dissidents have been behaving lately:

“Catholic dissidents are hung up on sex. Consider the following.

“In its statement on the pope, New Ways Ministry, a pro-gay Catholic group, chastised the Holy Father for ‘making strong attempts to prevent same-sex marriage initiatives from being enacted in secular governments.’ Another pro-gay group, Dignity, lamented the pope’s unwillingness ‘to learn how God is speaking through GLBT [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender] people to spread the gospel.’ Feminists like Sheila Durkin Dierks, author of ‘WomenEucharist,’ boasted that ‘Groups of women are gathering in their homes [to] celebrate the liturgy without an ordained presider.’ (The same is probably going on in the asylum, though regrettably she did not say.)

“Call to Action, a nationwide band of malcontents, wasted no time saying it hopes ‘the new pope recognizes the necessity of lifting the mandatory celibacy ban’; it also made a pitch for women priests. A group called Woman-Church Convergence said it ‘disagreed with the pope on a range of sexuality-related issues,’ adding that ‘We proclaim a new day is dawning in

which the Roman Catholic Church will no longer treat women as second-class citizens.’ (It did not say why women attend Mass more than men.) We Are Church, another association of unhappy Catholics, likes abortion rights, which is why it called for upholding ‘the moral adulthood of the laity in decisions regarding reproduction....’ Similarly, Catholics Speak Out said the pope ‘denied that grown women and men should be able to control their reproductive lives without interference from the church or state.’

“None of this is new: the National Coalition of American Nuns has been openly pro-abortion for decades. What’s different this time is that their jig is up: a new pope will be announced next week, and once that happens, they will have to decide whether to walk or stay. It takes courage to walk, which is why the smart money is on them staying.”

SCHIZOPHRENIA MARKS CHURCH CRITICS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on what is ailing some critics of the Catholic Church:

“It is nothing short of remarkable that some of the nation’s leading critics of the Catholic Church can hold diametrically opposing positions on the same subject without ever seeming to notice. In this regard, demands that the Church needs to involve itself more in the public affairs of society manage to coexist with equally fervent calls for it to recede from public life. What matters is the issue, not principle. Consider today’s column in the *Los Angeles Times* by Robert Scheer.

"Scheer takes President Bush to task for not taking his cues on the Iraqi War from Pope John Paul II. He asks why 'journalists and politicians ignore[d] the pontiff's opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq?' He also says of the pope, 'It hardly honors the man to ignore his impassioned statements on what he considered to be a great moral crisis.' Now had the subject been abortion or gay marriage, is there anyone who doubts that Scheer would never have written this sentence? What makes this really schizophrenic, however, is the fact that Scheer began his journalism career in the 1960s blasting Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York, for his so-called meddling in the Vietnam war.

"Scheer is not alone. During the presidential election campaign last year, the pundits hammered the Catholic Church to death because some bishops publicly addressed abortion, euthanasia, marriage and the family. They were repeatedly warned, by the champions of free speech, not to exercise their First Amendment right to freedom of speech when such subjects were on the table. But if a bishop were to speak against capital punishment, or in favor of an increase in the minimum wage, these same persons wanted the bishops to grab a bullhorn and lecture the faithful.

"As the conclave draws near, watch for more of this incredible public display of cognitive dissonance. It is one of the hallmarks of the Left."