

HEALTH CARE BILL: FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT BY OTHER MEANS?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the proposed health care legislation favored by the Obama administration:

On July 17, 2007, President Obama told his pro-abortion fans at Planned Parenthood that “the first thing I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA).” Two years later, FOCA has yet to be reintroduced. But there are no signs that Planned Parenthood is disappointed, and that’s because Obama is delivering FOCA by stealth.

The principal reason why FOCA was not reintroduced was due to opposition from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Under the tutelage of Francis Cardinal George, head of the USCCB, and Justin Cardinal Rigali, head of the pro-life committee of the USCCB, the bishops made it clear that they would fight tooth and nail any attempt to get FOCA signed into law. Obama got the word, as did the bill’s sponsors, Rep. Jerry Nadler and Sen. Barbara Boxer. But that didn’t derail the pro-abortion forces from trying some back door maneuvering.

The USCCB believes, as does the Obama administration, that health care is a human right. The health care bills that have been served up by supporters of Obama, however, have provisions that mirror the most draconian elements found in FOCA. To be specific, in the past week, an amendment by Sen. Mike Enzi explicitly denying abortion coverage was defeated. When Sen. Orrin Hatch asked Sen. Barbara Mikulski if she would clarify her amendment so that abortion services would not be mandated, she said no; the amendment passed.

In other words, stealth politics is at work. No, FOCA is not

on the table, but central provisions of it have made their way into the health care reform bills. What is most disturbing about all of this is that the public is being hoodwinked: most have no idea of the games that are being played. All the more reason why a national discussion on this issue needs to begin immediately.

THE NEW YORKER LOWERS THE BAR

The current issue of *The New Yorker* (July 20) features an article by Paul Rudnick, "Fun with Nuns," explaining how he initially developed the movie, "Sister Act." It also showcases his vile hatred of nuns.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the article:

Why would a supposedly high-brow publication like *The New Yorker* lower the bar by publishing such trash? That it has done so is indisputable. And why would Rudnick, a self-confessed "suburban New Jersey Jew," loathe nuns so much? We get a glimpse of what's really bothering Rudnick when he explains how "Sister Act" took form. "I was lying on my couch one afternoon in the late nineteen-eighties, trying to come up with an idea for a screenplay, and I began to think about drag." So fitting.

Ten years later, Rudnick's mind was still in the gutter. That is when he gave us "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told." At the time, I wrote that I had not seen the play, nor had any intentions of doing so. "But I have read the reviews," I said, "and it sounds like a routine homosexual play: full-frontal male nudity, filthy language, discussions of body parts, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men, ranting against nature, damning

God for AIDS, etc.”

Now another ten years have passed, and nothing much has changed. Rudnick says in his article, and in the podcast available on the magazine’s website, that his goal in creating “Sister Act” was to “subvert the Catholic Church.” As only he can explain, “The script called for actresses of all shapes and ages, although the Disney executives still squabbled over which nuns should be ‘f-able.’”

None of this happened, of course, and that is because Rudnick walked out.

SURGEON GENERAL PICK ALREADY IN HOT SEAT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains why the newly nominated Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, is in the hot seat:

Yesterday, I commended President Obama and congratulated Dr. Benjamin: she is an excellent choice for Surgeon General. But some things are developing very quickly that will test her mettle right away.

To begin with, at the same news conference that the president used to announce his choice of Dr. Benjamin, he pushed hard for a new health reform bill. Indeed, he let the Senate Finance Committee know that he wants a bill by week’s end. A central issue is whether abortion services will be mandated as part of the plan.

On June 25, 19 Democrats, 11 of whom are Catholic, sent a

letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying they will not vote for healthcare reform “unless it explicitly excludes abortion funding” from the plan. According to Douglas Johnson of the National Right to Life Committee, the bills being considered “contain multiple provisions that would result in federally mandated insurance coverage of abortion on demand, massive federal subsidies for abortion, mandated creation of many new abortion clinics, and nullification of at least some state limitations on abortion.”

So where does Dr. Benjamin come in on all of this? On June 19, the House Committees on Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Education and Labor announced that a new Advisory Committee will decide which services will be covered. And who is in charge of the Health Benefits Advisory Committee? The Surgeon General.

Dr. Benjamin should not wait until the Senate considers her appointment to let the public know where she stands. As a practicing Catholic, she cannot chair a committee that would support mandated abortion coverage in employer insurance plans. There is no “common ground” on this issue.

Contact the Surgeon General’s office by directing comments to Jennifer Buschick at jennifer.buschick@hhs.gov

SURGEON GENERAL PICK IS EXCELLENT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue praised President Barack Obama for his selection of Dr. Regina Benjamin as the new Surgeon General:

President Obama picked the right person to be the new Surgeon General. Dr. Benjamin is a hero to all those victimized by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Her tireless and selfless efforts are a model for all physicians.

Dr. Benjamin is an African-American Catholic public servant who has been recognized by Pope Benedict XVI: the Holy Father awarded her the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal for distinguished service. When the pope celebrated Mass in Washington, D.C. in 2008, Dr. Benjamin was there to receive his blessing. Moreover, she has also received the National Caring Award, an honor which was inspired by Mother Teresa. "Church was always a very important part of my life," she told *Catholic Digest*. "I believe I am carrying on the healing ministry of Christ. I feel obligated to help continue his works."

Kudos to President Obama and congratulations to Dr. Benjamin. She should sail through the Senate.

JUSTICE GINSBURG NEEDS TO EXPLAIN HERSELF

Catholic League president Bill Donohue says U.S. Supreme Court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg needs to explain her recent comment on abortion and eugenics:

Excerpts of a *New York Times Magazine* interview with Ruth Bader Ginsburg, which will appear on July 12, include the following quote by the Supreme Court Justice about the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion: "Frankly I had thought that at the time *Roe* was decided, there was concern

about population growth and particularly growth in populations that we don't want to have too many of."

By contrast, consider what Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, said about this subject:

- "Eugenic sterilization is an urgent need...We must prevent Multiplication of this bad stock."
- "Birth control must lead ultimately to a cleaner race."
- "Today eugenics is suggested by the most diverse minds as the most adequate and thorough avenue to the solution of racial, political and social problems."
- "We are paying for, and even submitting to, the dictates of an ever-increasingly spawning class of human beings who never should have been born at all."
- "We don't want the word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population."

There is another reason why Ginsburg needs to clarify her remark. Before she was seated on the Supreme Court in 1993, she hired 57 law clerks over a period of 13 years. All were white. Now if Antonin Scalia, for example, were associated with her disturbing remark, and if he had never hired a single African American, he already would have been branded a racist. At the very least, Ginsburg should be questioned about her explosive comment.

POPE AND OBAMA'S VIEWS CONVERGING?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on reports that the pope's new encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, places the Holy Father to the left of President Barack Obama on some

issues:

Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good advises Catholics to “Suggest to your pastor that he give a homily highlighting the Pope’s reflections on social justice and the common good.” Notice what was excluded: the pope’s thoughts on the sanctity of human life, bioethics, the indiscriminate acceptance of all lifestyles, sexuality as a form of entertainment, the role of religion in the public square, etc. It is hardly surprising that left-wing Catholics do not want to highlight these issues, but the ironies run even deeper.

In his encyclical, the pope says that “*respect for life*” [his italics] is “an aspect which has acquired increasing prominence in recent time, obliging us to broaden our concept of poverty...” Are the pope’s new fans prepared to think of abortion as a poverty issue?

The best way to service the poor, according to the pope, is not to create bureaucratic monstrosities that cripple the dignity of the indigent. “By considering reciprocity as the heart of what it is to be a human being, [the principle of] subsidiarity is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state.” Similarly, the pope admonishes us not to promote “paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need.” In other words, the tried and failed, dependency-inducing welfare programs that mark the social policy prescriptions of the poverty industry are seen by the pope as a disaster. Not exactly what those who work for HHS want to hear.

Finally, when the pope slams greed and criticizes a market economy shorn of moral principles, he is hardly upsetting most of those who champion the rights of the unborn. But some stereotypes are hard to break.

STEM CELL POLICY FLAWED

Back in March, President Barack Obama lifted restrictions on federal funding of embryonic stem cell research. President Obama expressed concern about the “perils” of such research and asked the National Institutes of Health to draft requirements so that only ethically obtained stem cell lines would receive taxpayer money. The final rules were announced yesterday and go into effect today. While provisions such as informed consent are welcome, the bottom line is that the central issue of the protection of human life is ignored.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue weighed in on the new requirements:

President Obama and other supporters of embryonic stem cell research hide behind ethical requirements to justify using tax dollars for destroying nascent human life. Such guidelines beg the question: if there is no moral dimension to destroying human embryos, why is there a need for ethics rules? While the answer is obvious to people who understand that life begins at conception, advocates of embryo destruction give lip service to ethics while simultaneously pretending that there is no moral issue. The fact of the matter is these requirements are a distraction from the larger issue of the legal destruction of innocent human life.

In Pope Benedict XVI’s latest encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, he says “there is a lack of respect for the right to life...if human embryos are sacrificed to research...” Perhaps Obama can explain to the pope on Friday why the Holy Father is wrong. The pope’s rejoinder no doubt would be priceless, and may even be a wake-up call.

CONNECTICUT “INQUIRY” OF CATHOLIC CHURCH SHOULD END

In March, Rep. Michael Lawlor and Sen. Andrew McDonald introduced legislation in Connecticut to take over the governing structure of the Catholic Church. The bill was withdrawn quickly in response to outrage expressed by Catholics, who rallied at the state Capitol. In retaliation, some state officials sought to penalize the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport, led by Bishop William E. Lori. Moreover, the Office of State Ethics accused the diocese of breaking the state’s lobbying laws. Bishop Lori then filed suit seeking an injunction to stop the punitive measures from being implemented. Now Richard Blumenthal, state Attorney General, has asked ethics officials to end the investigation.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on this latest development:

First tyrannical legislators sought to take control of the Church, and then their lackeys tried to muzzle the free speech of Catholics with bogus ethics inquiries. These attacks show that what is at stake is the protection of the very liberties at the heart of the First Amendment. The naked use of power to intimidate the Catholic Church into silence should be a wake-up call to Catholics everywhere. Indeed, non-Catholics should condemn such bullying tactics as well.

We join Attorney General Blumenthal’s call to end this ugly chapter once and for all. Thus, we ask Carol Carson, executive director of the Office of State Ethics, to call off the

investigation.

Contact Carol Carson: Carol.carson@ct.gov