

CATHOLICS UNITED SOWS DIVISION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the debate between Catholics United and the Susan B. Anthony List (SBA List):

On one side of the dispute is a dissident Catholic group which seeks to criminalize speech, and on the other side is a pro-life group which represents the position of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and has the support of the ACLU. Moreover, the dissident Catholic group, Catholics United, is taking a direct shot at the bishops by claiming, in effect, that the USCCB got it wrong when it concluded that abortion funding was contained in the health care bill.

Two years ago, Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput accused Catholics United of doing a “disservice to the Church.” He was right. Now the group is seeking to censor the speech of the SBA List, claiming it is misrepresenting the record of Rep. Steve Driehaus: the SBA List says that when Driehaus voted for the health care bill, he voted to support “taxpayer-funded abortion”; it sought to launch a billboard campaign alerting voters about this, but was challenged by Catholics United saying that the SBA List was guilty of making “false statements” in campaign advertising. The dispute, which is before the Ohio Elections Commission, will not be resolved until after the election; if the SBA List loses, it faces criminal charges.

Catholics United is saying that Francis Cardinal George, the head of the USCCB, got it wrong when he said the health care bill “appropriates billions of dollars in new funding without explicitly prohibiting the use of these funds for abortion.” It further maintains that a unanimous opinion of the legal experts advising the bishops got it wrong when they came to

the same conclusion as Cardinal George. And it also claims that the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service got it wrong when it concluded that abortion funding is allowed under the bill.

It is clear that Catholics United wants to muzzle the free speech of the SBA List and is actively undermining the bishops.

Contact Catholics United head Chris Korzen: ckorzen@catholics-united.org

OLBERMANN BASHES CATHOLIC CHURCH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made last night by MSNBC host Keith Olbermann:

Keith Olbermann went on an extended rant against Tea Party-backed candidates, and one of his targets was Ron Johnson, candidate for the U.S. Senate in Wisconsin. Olbermann said Johnson “testified against toughening laws on pedophiles and employers who shield them. He argued this could damage a business. A business like the Catholic Church.”

Here are the facts. Johnson, a Lutheran, once sat on the finance board of the Diocese of Green Bay. Earlier this year, he testified against a bill that would relax the statute of limitations on cases involving the sexual abuse of minors.

If Olbermann is opposed to the uniform application of civil liberties—statutes of limitations are central to them—he is entitled to do so, but not without explaining his preference

for selective justice. Nonetheless, it is troubling to listen to him indict someone who, in this instance, stood for the rights of the accused. In every state where a bill has been introduced on this subject that applies equally to the private and public sectors, the teachers' unions and superintendents have uniformly opposed them. But Olbermann would never target them.

Since Olbermann is not interested in civil liberties for Catholics, he may want to rethink his criticism of Johnson. Bending to pressure from SNAP, the professional victims' group, Johnson came out last month urging the Diocese of Green Bay to release the names of *accused* priests; it is striking that he did not make a similar request of any other religious or secular group. In this instance, the MSNBC host and Johnson are on the same page: they want one rule for Catholics, and one for everyone else. It is only Olbermann, though, who is known for his Catholic-bashing tirades.

KEN BUCK IS NOT THE TALIBAN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how the First Amendment is being politicized in electoral contests:

When the charge is made that someone in public office, or running for public office, is the enemy of the First Amendment, it is incumbent on those making the accusation to offer hard evidence. The latest flap concerns a video of some past remarks made by Ken Buck, a candidate for the U.S. Senate in Colorado, on the subject of religious liberty.

The First Amendment says that "Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Those words were penned by James

Madison, and what he meant by the first provision (it is not a clause) was that (a) there could be no national religion, and (b) there could be no government favoritism of one religion over another. Ever since, this provision has been the source of debate. For example, the ACLU reads it as banning the display of a statue of Jesus on the ocean floor off the coast of Key Largo; it justifies its position by citing separation of church and state.

Oftentimes, those who reject the ACLU's extremism reply that church and state are never mentioned in the First Amendment. They are correct. But does this mean that the foes of the ACLU's position implicitly seek to entangle church and state? That's quite a jump. For example, while Buck once said he opposes "the concept of church and state," the anecdote he gave about extremists who call the Christmas tree a "holiday tree" (he erroneously attributed this to President Obama) suggests he is hardly the Christian Taliban some are making him out to be. Moreover, Buck has subsequently said, "we have separation of church and state," emphasizing this doesn't mean the two should never interact.

Thomas Jefferson used the metaphor of church and state in a private letter, but he also *intentionally* attended church services in the Capitol, a government building, two days later. And he even awarded federal funds to the Kaskaskias Indians to build a Catholic church. So if Buck is the Taliban, what does that make Jefferson?

MINNESOTA DEMS EXPLAIN MAILER

Yesterday, a mailer by the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) of Minnesota came under fire for its allegedly anti-Catholic

contents. Pictured on one side of the mailer is a priest, shown from his Roman collar down, wearing a button which says, "Ignore the Poor"; on the other side there is a statement critical of Dan Hall, a Protestant minister who is a candidate for the state senate (it says, in part, "Preacher Dan Hall protects politicians—not the poor").

On the Internet, only the front part of the mailer was shown, leading some to accuse the DFL of bigotry. Late yesterday, the DFL released a statement defending the mailing because "the text explicitly criticizes Preacher Hall," and therefore covers any objections.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue wasn't buying it:

The DFL deliberately exploited Catholic imagery to make a political point. Had they pictured an imam on the front of its mailing, the DFL wouldn't treat its critics so cavalierly. If the DFL wants to paint Hall as anti-poor, then do it. But don't do it by hijacking Catholic imagery. While the text is about Dan Hall, the teaser—that which gets the attention of the reader—is a Catholic-baiting stunt that paints priests as anti-poor.

The person whose name appears on the mailing is Brian Melendez, the state chair of the DFL. The Harvard-educated lawyer, it turns out, offers his services pro bono for cases involving consumer fraud. He should therefore know a thing or two about deceptive advertising, especially given that he concentrated in ethics while attending Harvard Divinity School. We contacted his office yesterday looking to give him a chance to explain himself, but he never got back to us. Perhaps that's because he was too busy advising the DFL how to handle questions about deceptive advertising and unethical behavior.

Contact Melendez: chair@dfll.org

NPR BRISTLES AT CRITICISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a phone call made today by NPR media relations manager Anna Christopher to Jeff Field, the Catholic League's director of communications:

Earlier today, I wrote a news release calling into question NPR's double standard: Juan Williams gets fired for making an allegedly anti-Muslim remark, but no one has ever gotten fired from NPR for its anti-Catholic fare. I listed several explicit examples, and at the end of the release, I asked those on our e-mail list to contact Anna Christopher.

Christopher called Jeff Field to complain about our news release. She accused us of "cherry-picking" instances of NPR's anti-Catholic programming, adding that our "heated" news release resulted in a large amount of "mean-spirited" e-mails.

We didn't "cherry-pick" anything: I simply went to our files and cited a few examples of NPR's intolerance of Catholicism. The news release, as anyone can see [[click here](#)], was hardly "heated." Moreover, I am not responsible for any allegedly "mean-spirited" e-mails she received.

Talk about thin-skinned. Why is it that NPR can dish it out, but can't take it? If it doesn't want Catholics complaining, then lay off us. And while they're at it, they might think about leveling the playing field when it comes to employee "misconduct."

Contact Anna Christopher: achristopher@npr.org

NPR'S DOUBLE STANDARD

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on National Public Radio's (NPR) double standard:

Juan Williams was fired from NPR because he made one allegedly anti-Muslim comment, yet no one has been terminated by NPR for its anti-Catholic fare. To be explicit, on Jan. 7, 2008, the Utah NPR station, KCPW, aired a skit lampooning Mike Huckabee that trashed Jesus. On the show, "Fair Game with Faith Salie," the following was said: "Tired of bland unsatisfying Eucharists? Try this Huckabee family favorite. Deep-Fried Body of Christ—boring holy wafers no more...Mike likes his Christ with whipped cream and sprinkles." After I complained, we heard from Public Radio International, which produced the show, and they pulled it, issuing an apology. While the show did not originate at NPR, its Utah affiliate did not have to air it. No one was fired.

On July 5, 1997, NPR mocked the Eucharist when host Scott Simon and musical satirist, Tom Lehrer, got together. Lehrer sang "The Vatican Rag." Here are some of the lyrics: "Try playing it safer, drink the wine and chew the wafer"; "Two, four, six, eight, time to Trans-substantiate."

Moreover, if Williams merits being fired for expressing reservations about people with Muslim garb boarding a plane, then why was it okay for Dahlia Lithwick of NPR (at the time) to express her reservations about having "too many Catholics" on the Supreme Court? On Nov. 1, 2005, she exclaimed, "People are very, very much talking about the fact that Alito would be the fifth Catholic on the Supreme Court if confirmed." Earlier, on Aug. 2, she expressed concerns about the "very, very strong religious views" of Catholic Justices Antonin

Scalia and Clarence Thomas. Moreover, on July 23, Nina Totenberg of NPR raised a red flag over high court nominee John Roberts' wife because she was "an officer of a pro-life organization." As for Roberts himself, she said, "He's got adopted children. I mean, he's a conservative Catholic."

The duplicity is sickening.

Contact NPR Media Chief Anna Christopher: achristopher@npr.org

ARCHBISHOP DOLAN'S CRITICS PROVE REVEALING

A recent blog post by New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan criticizing the *New York Times* has gained momentum. Dolan called out the *Times* for its "gushing" reviews of an art exhibit by ACT UP that features a picture of the late John Cardinal O'Connor resembling a condom (pictured beside him), with the inscription, "Know Your Scumbag." He also noted its glowing review of a play that mocks Catholicism, "The Divine Sister"; a large crude photo of a cross-dressing homosexual in a nun's habit was also published.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue discussed this issue this morning on "Fox and Friends," and now offers some more thoughts:

The producers of the play are boasting that their work is "indeed irreverent," and gossip maven Liz Smith agrees: she writes approvingly that it is "startlingly vulgar." Rainbow Sash, a group known for disrupting Mass, berates Dolan for throwing "a public hissy fit," and for attempting to "censor" expression, merely because he objects to bigotry.

It is impossible to beat the *New York Times* (though Trinity College professor Mark Silk is a close second). It defends its Catholic bashing by indulging in the following Freudian insight: "While Archbishop Dolan is entitled to his opinions, he might not have liked the intense spotlight cast on the Church when the *Times* extensively reported on the widespread abuse and molestation of children at the hands of the Catholic Clergy." So that is what's bothering Dolan—the *Times*' failed attempt to pin the homosexual scandal on the pope last spring, not the newspaper's flagging of anti-Catholic fare!

As I said this morning on TV, "the *New York Times* has never found an anti-Catholic TV show, movie, artistic exhibition or play that it didn't like," save, perhaps, for artistic reasons. That it now sides with ACT UP, a gay fascist group known for busting into St. Patrick's Cathedral during Mass, throwing condoms in the air and spitting the Host on the floor, shows just how low it has sunk. Archbishop Dolan is right to slam the *Times*, and the Catholic League proudly stands with him.

Contact NYT's public editor Arthur S. Brisbane:
public@nytimes.com

OBAMA: RIGHTS STEM FROM THE STATE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on President Obama's speech on October 18 at a fundraising dinner:

For the second time this fall, President Obama has quoted from the Declaration of Independence, omitting any reference to God. In Rockville, Maryland on Monday, he spoke of

“inalienable rights,” mentioning that “all men are created equal,” but omitted what comes after this phrase: namely, he did not say “that they are endowed by their Creator” with these unalienable rights.

On September 15, after Obama omitted the same words before the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (there are four references to God in the Declaration), I faulted his speech writers but defended the president by saying he should “be given a pass.” I can no longer do so: President Obama, it is painfully obvious, does not believe that individual rights are given to us by God.

The most dramatic historical achievement of the American Revolution was the insistence of the Founders that the state is not the source of our rights. What the state grants, it can take away. We saw this most strikingly under the Soviets: the Soviet Constitution was a marvelous tribute to human liberty, the only problem being that it made the state the origin of individual rights. By declaring God to be the origin of rights, the Founders deliberately awarded a subordinate role to government.

President Obama is the first president in American history not to acknowledge that all rights stem from God. Given that all prepared presidential speeches are written and vetted by many people, and that he was roundly criticized last month for this same

UNSEEMLY ATTACK ON FATHER

SIRICO

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds to an article posted on the website of today's *National Catholic Reporter* by Michael Sean Winters that is highly critical of Father Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute:

Let me first acknowledge that I consider Father Robert Sirico to be a great priest and a great friend. Anyone who knows him can testify to the depth and sincerity of his faith, as well as to his great sense of humor.

In 2007, I gladly defended Father Sirico against an attack from the right that appeared in *Culture Wars*; the author, Thomas J. Herron, has since passed away. Now Father Sirico is being attacked from the left by Michael Sean Winters. The central issue in both cases is the same: Sirico's gay activist years before he became a priest.

Winters tells us that in the early and mid-1970s, Sirico, who had quit Catholicism at the age of 13, became a minister and performed gay marriages. Then he had a conversion: he came back to Catholicism and eventually became a priest. No one, including Winters, has ever even hinted that he hid his past from those who accepted him back and ordained him. So what's the point? The point is that Winters, a Catholic dissident, is unhappy that Sirico is not in rebellion against the teachings of the Catholic Church. That's true, and that is why he doesn't write for the *National Catholic Reporter*.

What seems to be bothering Winters the most is the prominence which Father Siricio has achieved, especially his appearances with Raymond Arroyo on EWTN. One can almost hear Winters say that if only the orthodox Catholics who watch EWTN learn that Sirico was once a gay-friendly guy, they'll throw him under the bus. Wrong. Orthodox Catholics actually believe in redemption.

VATICAN AND “THE SIMPSONS”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on news reports that the Vatican has endorsed the TV show, “The Simpsons”:

“Vatican Claims Homer is Catholic” reads the headline on the website of National Public Radio. The headline is false: the Vatican never made any such pronouncement. What happened is that one priest, Father Francesco Occhetta, commented favorably about the “The Simpsons” in a *semi-official* Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*. News stories say he examined an episode from 2005, “The Father, the Son and the Holy Guest Star.”

The average viewer will find much to praise about “The Simpsons,” and that includes—most of the time—the Catholic League. However, there were two episodes in 1999 that we thought crossed the line, and last year at this time we objected to a Halloween episode that mocked the Eucharist. Last January, I appeared in the “The Simpsons’ 20th Anniversary Special” discussing my misgivings about these shows.

Three complaints by the Catholic League over 20 years does not pit us as the enemy of “The Simpsons,” but it is important to recognize that bestowing bouquets on any show that has been around for two decades poses certain risks. So is Homer Catholic? If so, we missed his conversion.