

KANSAS CITY STAR'S RELIGIOUS BIAS

In a badly conceived editorial on March 2, the *Kansas City Star* railed against allowing private and religious schools to be exempt from Missouri's minimum wage increase. It is the exemption for religious schools [read: Catholic ones] that exercises the editors the most. How do we know? Because it repeatedly singles out religious organizations for criticism.

Why is the editorial badly conceived? Because it is palpably hypocritical. It admits that public employers, including the public schools, are exempt from the minimum wage law, yet it is only mildly critical of this exception. In other words, if exemptions from this law are a problem, why has the *Star* consistently refused to take the public schools to task?

Moreover, why didn't the *Kansas City Star* list all the organizations that are exempt from the minimum wage? They include tipped employees, small businesses, and most farm workers. Under federal law, seasonal workers, public school teachers and administrators, and many others are exempt from the minimum wage.

The editorial gives away its bias by focusing on why religious schools are afforded exemptions from some laws.

EUROPEANS

UNDERVALUE

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The Pew Research Center recently released a survey of democratic rights in 34 countries. Countries represented in the survey were drawn from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Respondents were asked how important certain democratic values were to them, and how satisfied they were with the state of affairs on several variables. The following nine categories were chosen: Fair Judiciary; Gender Equality; Free Religion; Regular Elections; Free Speech; Free Media; Free Internet; Free Civil Society; and Free Opposition Parties.

The data reported the “% who say it is very important to have ____ in their country.”

The median score (the score where half the numbers are higher and half are lower) on Free Religion, as compared to the median score on the other eight categories, was relatively high for all parts of the world except for Europe. In other words, outside Europe, Free Religion garnered a relatively high percentage.

The median score for Europe was 57%. That was the lowest median score across the board. In other words, the other eight categories were seen as more important to Europeans.

“In over half the countries surveyed,” the report said, “those who say religion is very important in their lives are more likely to believe religious freedom is very important.” This makes sense, but it also means that those who are not themselves religious are not likely to support this foundational human right.

The survey confirms the de-Christianization of Europe. Regrettably, secular societies are, by and large, more

inclined to value individual autonomy and devalue freedom of religion. Those who are religious are not only in a minority, they live in countries where their religious rights are comparatively tenuous.

Six nations stand out for their very high support for gender equality and their very low support for freedom of religion: Canada, Sweden, France, Netherlands, Spain, and Australia.

For those who value freedom of religion, matters were better in the United States. Of the nine categories, the top three were Fair Judiciary (93%), Gender Equality (91%) and Free Religion (86%).

The role that freedom of religion plays in the life of a free country is no longer understood by many in the West. It should be the focus of history textbooks and is deserving of a national conversation on how to preserve our freedoms. Instead, we are more interested in promoting the freedom of middle school kids to “transition” from one sex to the other.

POLL TAPS CHRISTIANITY'S DECLINE

The Pew Research Center survey on white evangelicals, President Trump, and Christianity's public role was released March 12. Half of all Americans say Christianity's influence is declining. This perspective was true for all religious groups; those who were the least likely to ascribe to this point of view were Jews, the unaffiliated and non-believers.

The reasons why this is happening vary. The number one reason given was the “growth in the number of people in the U.S. who

are not religious" (60%). This was followed by "misconduct by Christian leaders" (58%) and "more permissive attitudes about sexual behavior and sexuality in popular culture" (53%). "Negative portrayals of Christianity in pop culture" was next (41%).

White evangelicals and Catholics have much in common: the majority cited all four of the above reasons for the decline of Christianity's influence, the lone exception being white evangelicals who cited "misconduct by Christian leaders" (48%).

Not surprisingly, Catholics, having been burnt by the clergy sexual abuse scandal, were the most likely (66%) to say "misconduct by Christian leaders" was a major cause of Christianity's decline. The other three most cited reasons are the most illuminating.

What does the growth of people who are not religious have in common with permissive attitudes about sexuality and negative portrayals of Christianity in pop culture? The sense that a more Christian nation would be a more moral one.

This sentiment is not without reason. The rejection of Christian sexual ethics, with its emphasis on sexual reticence, is made manifest in sexual promiscuity and attacks on Christianity. This suggests that secular elites in the media, the entertainment industry, and education have crafted a culture that works to the detriment of most Americans. Yet they continue to see themselves as the enlightened ones. Most Americans know better.

The country is split on whether Christianity's decline is permanent (27%) or temporary (24%). Comparing the faithful to those who are not religious, the former are more optimistic than the latter about this being a temporary condition.

The decline of Christianity and the rise of secularism does not bode well for the future of American society. Self-giving

and selflessness, which are hallmarks of Christianity, stand in stark contrast to the self-indulgence and selfishness that mark the culture of secularism.

THE DARK SIDE OF BLOOMBERG

Michael Bloomberg will never be president. After reading this, you may breathe a sigh of relief.

In the South Carolina presidential debate, Senator Elizabeth Warren commented that when she was a special-education teacher she was happy not to have a boss like Bloomberg. She recounted how he allegedly said to one of his pregnant employees, "Kill It!" Bloomberg denied the accusation.

In 1997, Bloomberg was sued by Sekiko Sakai Garrison. He settled with the Japanese woman, but neither the amount nor any other information about the non-disclosure agreement (NDA) has been made public.

Bloomberg should never have been allowed to get away with this. Before dropping out, he succumbed to public pressure and said he would release Garrison from the NDA. But neither he nor his company reached out to her. So nothing ever came of it.

In the Catholic Church, NDA's are not tolerated (they once were). While there are legitimate reasons for having NDA's, such as protecting the privacy rights of victims, those who are in public office, or are in pursuit of it, must be held to a higher standard. This is doubly true of presidential candidates.

Last year a Bloomberg L.P. spokesman told ABC News that the

company rarely settles disputes, preferring to take their case to the courts. What was different about this case? Why didn't Bloomberg take his chances in the courts? Why did he find it necessary to settle?

Garrison's lawyer told ABC News that she may be willing to speak if the NDA were to be voided. But the matter became moot when Bloomberg quit the race. Nonetheless, consider what we know.

According to Garrison's lawsuit, on April 11, 1995, at approximately 11:20 a.m., Bloomberg posed for a picture with two female workers and a group of students from New York University in the company snack area. He noticed Garrison standing nearby and struck up a conversation with her. "How's married life? You still married?" She said everything was going along just great, and that she was pregnant. Bloomberg responded, "Kill it!" Stunned, she asked him to repeat what he said. "Kill it!" He then muttered, "Great! Number 16!" He was expressing his unhappiness with the sixteen women who were out on maternity leave.

Who is telling the truth? Bloomberg or Garrison? We can't be certain but it sure looks like she is. There are several reasons for drawing this conclusion.

Garrison understood Bloomberg's remark as suggesting she abort her baby in order to keep her job. She was visibly upset with him and told several managers in the company what happened.

In August 1995, four months after this incident, Garrison filed a complaint with the New York Division of Human Rights. According to ABC News, she spoke to "ten people within the firm, five of whom were managers."

What did they do for her? According to her lawsuit, filed two years later, nothing. It's actually worse than nothing. "The managers told her to ignore the comment, forget it ever happened and not to act on her complaint. These managers

reiterated threats of termination if plaintiff pressed the complaint.”

The day after the “Kill It” episode, Garrison went to work but was so distraught and ill that she had to leave. She called in sick the next day. She was subsequently fired.

Some in the media are portraying this as a he said/she said type of dispute: Bloomberg says he never said “Kill It!” and she says he did. But this account is false. There is at least one witness.

David Zielenzinger, a former Bloomberg technology worker, told the Washington Post he heard the conversation. “I remember she had been telling some of her girlfriends that she was pregnant. And Mike came out and I remember he said, ‘Are you going to kill it?’ And that stopped everything. And I couldn’t believe it.” Zielenzinger said this was vintage Bloomberg. “He talked kind of crudely about women all the time.”

Bloomberg learned from some employees that Garrison was upset with him after their exchange. His remarks are telling. [She made handwritten notes of the call, which were obtained by the Post.]

Bloomberg called her at home and left a lengthy voice mail. He asked her to give him a call, saying he learned from another employee that “you were upset.” He said that “whatever you heard wasn’t what I said and whatever I said had nothing to do with pregnancies.”

Why, then, did Bloomberg apologize? Here is how he ended the call. “I apologize if there was something you heard but I didn’t say it, didn’t mean it, didn’t say it.” A spokesman for the company did not deny this account.

Why would anyone apologize for something he never said? More important, why, if he never said it, would he say he “didn’t mean it”? This indicates that he did say it, objecting only to

her interpretation of what he meant when he advised her to "Kill It!" What should she have thought? That he was joking about his suggestion that she kill her baby? Did he think she would burst out laughing? What kind of man speaks this way?

Bloomberg had a thing about Garrison. Did he see her as an easy mark? She was the only Japanese woman working in sales in the New York headquarters at the time. Here are some things he allegedly said about her before his infamous "Kill It!" remark.

In front of male employees who knew her boyfriend, he asked her, "Are you still dating your boyfriend? You giving him good [he used a slang term for oral sex]?" On another occasion, after pointing to a newly-hired older female who was conversing with an overweight male salesperson, he asked Garrison, "If you had to, would you rather do THAT or THAT?"

When Bloomberg spotted Garrison wearing an engagement ring, he said, "What, is the guy dumb and blind? What the hell is he marrying you for?" A week later, he said to her, "Still engaged? What, is he THAT GOOD in bed, or did your father pay him off to get rid of you?"

Bloomberg once broke up a conversation between Garrison and a male employee at a business convention so he could make a crude comment about the male employee's girlfriend (she was also an employee). As she entered the elevator, he said, "That is one great piece of ass. You must be a great f***." On another occasion, when Bloomberg saw Garrison wearing a dress he didn't like, he told her, "Don't like the dress. Your ass looks huge in it." He made this comment to her on several occasions whenever she wore a new outfit.

One day Bloomberg saw Garrison return from lunch with a Tiffany shopping bag. "You ARE a real Jap" he said. He was either referring to her Japanese heritage, or, more likely, commenting on her acting like a "Jewish American Princess."

Either way he was denigrating her and making an ethnic slur.

Bloomberg looks even more guilty when we consider that his contempt for pregnant workers is not confined to Garrison.

Less than two years before his alleged "Kill it!" comment, Bloomberg learned that one of his employees, who had just given birth, was having a hard time finding a nanny. He yelled at her in front of a large group of employees. "It's a f*****g baby! All it does is eat and s***. It doesn't know the difference between you and anyone else!"

Bloomberg then made a racist comment. "All you need is some black who doesn't even have to speak English to rescue it from a burning building!" The woman burst into tears in front of her co-workers.

If the CEO speaks this way in front of his employees about pregnant women, it should come as no surprise that he tolerates—indeed promotes—an environment where sexual comments and behavior are not uncommon. This explains why Garrison's lawyer, Bonnie Josephs, said, "The atmosphere was toxic and harassing."

It wasn't just Garrison whom he spoke to this way. In court filings, women employees of Bloomberg allege he said such things as, "I'd like to do that piece of meat"; "I would DO you in a second"; "I'd like to f*** that in a second"; "That's a great piece of ass."

He did not hide his sexism. In September 1996, in front of employees and news reporters at a conference in Toronto, he allegedly said, "I would like nothing more in my life than to have Sharon Stone sit on my face."

Bloomberg set the tone for his entire company. Garrison's immediate boss routinely displayed wind-up toys in the shapes of a penis and a vagina on his desk. He also placed them on her desk, and when she complained, he did it over and over

again. This same man bragged to her about a male employee who performed oral sex on his secretary while she sat on his shoulders in their office.

It is hardly a surprise to learn that when Bloomberg was mayor of New York City, his company continued to foster a morally corrupt workplace.

In 2007, a lawsuit of discrimination against pregnant women and new mothers was filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It was conveniently dismissed in 2011, but not before 67 women said they were prepared to join the case. Bloomberg, they said, took aim at women after they became pregnant and after they took maternity leave.

Bloomberg's disdain for pregnant women is of a piece with his politics. His passion for abortion is so strong that as soon as he became mayor of New York City, he issued an executive order that forced medical students training to become an obstetrician or a gynecologist in a city hospital to learn how to abort a baby. "Kill it!" is something this man can't seem to get enough of.

This is the dark side of Michael Bloomberg. He pushed for all kinds of workplace rules to protect women from being harassed, but only after he spent years harassing them himself.

This is also the dark side of the Church's critics. Virtually every organization in the nation issues NDA's to limit their liability, the exception being the Catholic Church. Yet the Church is rarely praised for making the right reforms. Par for the course.