

Massachusetts, Planned Parenthood officials plot anti-Catholic, anti-Christian strategy

Officials of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts co-sponsored a conference on December 3, 1993 in Natick, Massachusetts which was attended by more than 300 public school administrators, teachers and health care personnel. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss adoption of a comprehensive sex education program in all grades of the state's public schools as well as a statewide condom distribution program and to develop strategies for neutralizing opposition expected from Catholics and the religious "far right."

Catholic League Operations Director C. Joseph Doyle denounced the conference as "government sponsored Christian bashing."

"It is outrageous and unconstitutional for state government, which is supposed to be neutral in matters of religion, to sponsor a conference in which Catholics and other religious believers are stigmatized as 'far right,' 'Christian right,' 'anti-choice,' and 'the opposition,' and in which workshops are conducted on how to overcome religious believers who choose to exercise their constitutional rights." Doyle went on to pointedly note, "This is not government neutrality towards religion, but outright government hostility towards religion."

An article in *The Pilot*, the Boston Archdiocesan weekly, noted in a boxed warning that the conference's goal, if achieved, "would shift the responsibility for a child's sexual education from parents to a circle of like-minded educators who may not

represent your religious family values.” In light of some of the outrageous statements made at the conference, this warning should be taken seriously.

Conference presenters seemed to be particularly concerned with opposition from “conservative” groups who would oppose “abortion and homosexuality” and seek “to discourage extra-marital sexual activity in general.” One speaker voiced concern about the threat to their agenda posed by the potential of a broad based coalition made up of “Catholic, Protestant and secular conservatives.” Yet another presenter noted the need to expose the “manipulative tactics” of those who, among other things, would hold that the use of sex is for procreation and should be restricted to marriage.

Bishops ask networks to reconsider

The nation’s Catholic bishops have asked the major media networks to “reconsider” their decision to permit the airing of slick new Clinton administration sponsored commercials aimed at promoting the use of condoms. The spots, which began airing in early January, encourage promiscuity while ignoring the relative ineffectiveness of condoms in preventing the transmission of disease. Given the recent Center for Disease Control report which revealed that 39% of condoms tested would fail to stop transmission of the virus which causes AIDS, the FCC should pull the ads for failure to meet the government’s own “truth in advertising” criteria.

What's in a name?

Our dictionary says that a catalyst is “an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action.” After twenty years, we felt that it was time we gave our newsletter a name that truly reflects what the Catholic League is about.

Catholic League founder Father Virgil Blum, S.J. took a lot of criticism when he called Catholics “political eunuchs.” While some might quibble with his choice of words, there's no debating the underlying truth: most Catholics have indeed been too reticent in their response to bigotry.

The Catholic League purposely does not share this complacency. It calls on all Catholics to actively protect and promote their religion, acting as responsible agents of change. In short, it calls on each and every Catholic to become a *catalyst*.

The Catholic League in 1994

As most of you know, I started in July as president of the Catholic League. In my six months as president, many changes have taken place, both internally and externally. Those changes, I am convinced, will only make the League stronger. Let me share them with you.

Internally, we have moved from salaried regional and local offices to a base of volunteer chapters. The cost of maintaining a national office and a publications office is

central to the operations of the Catholic League, and that is why few changes have been forthcoming in those areas. But the situation with chapters is different. Most national organizations have no chapters at all. That, however, is not the way to build a truly national, grassroots organization. But it is also true that grassroots organizations need not be staffed by persons funded by the national office: they can be staffed quite effectively through a base of dedicated and talented volunteers.

Long Island is a case in point. Through the work of Bill Lindner, a board member of the Catholic League, the Long Island chapter has prospered very well. Bill is a volunteer. He not only heads up the Long Island office, he contributes his time – free of charge – to the national office. Fortunately for Bill, and for the Catholic League, he has found a great ally in Brother Syriac of Chaminade High School in Mineola, Long Island.

Brother Syriac has played an indispensable role in organizing a highly energized chapter at Chaminade; similarly, the work of Mrs. Chojnacki in organizing a chapter at Sacred Heart in West Hempstead is exemplary. Bill, Brother Syriac and Mrs. Chojnacki are living proof that a volunteer model can be a model of excellence. And under the tutelage of Joe Doyle of Boston, the future of the volunteer chapters looks very bright indeed.

Externally, the Catholic League has made its mark.

Our media coverage, together with our impact on national and local issues, has clearly been felt. Cited increasingly in the press, and called on for interviews by radio and television, the Catholic League has positioned itself as the premier Catholic civil rights organization in the country. Having won the good will of persons like Cardinal O'Connor of New York, we are poised to increase our effectiveness in 1994.

Perhaps the best news of all is the dramatic growth in membership. As a result of our heightened media profile and our direct mail campaign, the unprecedented growth. One of the nice problems we have had lately is trying to keep up with the processing of all the new members we have been attracting. It is a problem that will happily endure in 1994 as well.

Why all the action now? You already know the answer.

Catholics have had it. They've had it with the ridicule, the snide remarks, the bigoted portrayals in the media and the jokes that would never be told of Jews, blacks or homosexuals. Most of all, they've had it with the lackadaisical response that their fellow lay Catholics have heretofore shown when their Church comes under attack.

The Catholic League is experiencing a resurgence precisely because we are not willing to acquiesce.

Our stance is explicitly combative. We are not an organization 'for the faint-hearted, nor are we at all defensive about our posture. Always responsible but never timid, the Catholic League will move in 1994 to let everyone know – friend and foe alike – that Catholic- bashing will trigger a vigorous response. We don't expect to win all the battles but we do expect to win the respect of everyone, including, importantly, the bigots.

The Power of the Pen

We at the Catholic League are grateful for all the clippings that our members send us. Many times members send articles or

cartoons that unfairly portray Catholics. More often than not they request that we offer a response. We often do and appreciate being alerted to these instances as we cannot possibly monitor every newspaper or magazine. But there is something else that can be done as well: members can write directly to the offending source themselves, sending a copy to us (at the bottom of the letter all that's needed is "cc: Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights").

Here's an example of what can happen as a result. When the *Chattanooga Times* recently published a widely distributed cartoon showing Michael Jackson as a good candidate for the priesthood, one of our members, Margaret N. Agnew of Lookout Mountain, Georgia, wrote to the paper's editor, Paul Neely; evidently a few other Catholics wrote in as well. Subsequently, Mr. Neely had the graciousness to say that he regretted publishing the cartoon.

It would be wrong to think that everyone in the media is either anti-Catholic or unreasonable. There are many like Mr. Neely who, though they themselves did not intend to hurt Catholics, sometimes unwittingly give circulation to unfair characterizations. But just as important, they have the authority to rectify past wrongs.

So let Margaret Agnew be an inspiration to everyone. The power of the pen is not to be underrated. And remember, the Catholic League needs more than your prayers and contributions, it needs your input as well.

Speaking of Pens...

From a letter to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, written by Rev. John Jay Hughes regarding Anna Quindlen column on Catholics for Free Choice:

"Quindlen calls for dialogue with those who, like her, reject Catholic teaching while still claiming the name. Is she equally keen for dialogue with Catholics of racist and anti-

Semitic views, who, to our shame still exist? Or is she happy to see such views rejected for what they are: un-Catholic because un-Christian? "

From a letter to the Boston Herald, written by Daniel T. Flatley, President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Catholic League regarding column by Margery Eagan:

"Eagan is unconvincing when she asserts that it is not the message or the members of the church that she objects to, but the hierarchy. For centuries anti-Catholic bigots have reviled the pope while proclaiming their love for Catholics."

From a letter to The Enterprise (Brockton, Mass.) by Catholic League Operations Director C. Joseph Doyle regarding an editorial which remarked on the Catholic faith of a judicial nominee:

"Should the Governor's Council succumb to homosexual power politics and reject Kirby because of his moral and religious beliefs about homosexuality, then it will be sending a signal that Catholics who uphold traditional values 'need not apply' for public employment in Massachusetts."

From a letter to the New York Daily News by Catholic League president William A. Donohue objecting to a cartoon showing a Catholic priest responding to someone proclaiming "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone":

"Cartoons aren't the same since Catholic-bashing became vogue. And by the way, there is nothing remarkable about Catholic priests – all of whom freely admit they are sinners – counseling against casting the first stone. To suggest otherwise is to proess a profound ignorance of Catholic teaching."

Segarra named Deputy Mayor

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has named Ninfa Segarra deputy mayor. She will oversee education and community affairs. Segarra, an attorney and member of the New York City Board of Education, was one of eight outstanding women honored by the Catholic League in its May-June, 1993 newsletter for their exceptional contributions to society.

Segarra was instrumental in rescuing that city's school children from the "Rainbow Curriculum" of former School Chancellor Joseph Fernandez which presented the homosexual lifestyle to first and second grade children as a viable alternative to heterosexuality.

According to *The New York Times*, Giuliani praised Ms . Segarra as a "role model and a hero" who had been "able to stand up for what she believes in." Guliani stated that Segarra's appointment was a clear signal that "we want to make education and schools a major priority of my administration." Segarra will remain on the board of education until her term expires on June 30 of this year.

The Pope's business...

Joe Bob Briggs's nationally syndicated column offers a different perspective on current issues. A recent column, sent in to us by Barbara Nauer in Prairieville, Louisiana, pointedly told the media to "back-off" on pope bashing (*please ignore his irreverent style!*):

“Every time the guy [read: the pope] announces some new set of Catholic theological rules – like just exactly why it’s a sin to use birth control- there’s all this criticism and debate and commentary in the press. Why? What’s the point? Listen up, people: It’s none of our business. It’s only the business of practicing Catholics. And then ... it only leads to two choices – keep being a Catholic, or stop being a Catholic. But for everybody else, what’s the big deal? When you sign up to be a Catholic, you accept whatever the pope says. That’s the way it works.”

Out of the mouths...

High Court passes on Kamehameha decision

On November 8 the Supreme Court denied review of a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision which held that a Protestant school cannot refuse to hire a non-Protestant who inquired about a teaching position at the school.

By ruling in *Kamehameha v. EEOC*, that an organization can claim a religious exemption under Section 702 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act only if a court determines that the institution is “primarily religious” rather than “primarily secular,” the appeals court effectively nullified an exemption from the statute’s ban on religious discrimination in employment. The ninth circuit’s decision runs counter to that of two other circuit courts of appeal which have examined the issue.

In a friend of the court brief filed on behalf of Kamehameha school, the Catholic League argued that if the decision of the

ninth circuit were allowed to stand, the result would be a “severe erosion of the autonomy of religious bodies in determining their own policies, articulating their own voices, and pursuing their own paths free from needless governmental intervention in their affairs.”

Since the exemption codified in Section 702 was intended by Congress to protect religious educational institutions, it is unfortunate that the Court declined to review this case. As the League’s brief points out, the right to hire faculty members who share common religious beliefs and convictions is essential if religious schools are to carry out their educational mission. Furthermore, the ninth circuit’s decision will result in an excessive entanglement of government in religious matters as courts undertake the task of determining whether educational institutions are “primarily religious” or “primarily secular”.

Clinic “obstruction” bill clears U.S. House

The House has voted 246 to 182 to approve the Freedom of Access to Clinics Act (FACE), a bill which prohibits the obstruction of abortion clinics. The measure makes it a felony to threaten, use force or obstruct abortion clinics. Under FACE, the penalty for first time offenders can be up to one year in prison, while repeat offenders are subject to as many as three years of jail time.

Congressman Christopher Smith (R., N.J.) criticized the House action, calling FACE a deplorable infringement on the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment. Smith offered a substitute

amendment to the bill, which would have limited federal penalties to those committing violent acts, rather than targetting those engaged in peaceful, non-violent sit-ins as FACE does, but the amendment was rejected by the House.

Smith noted several inequities inherent in FACE including the fact that the bill singles out abortion protestors for “unique persecution” while ignoring other activists who routinely engage in civil disobedience. “This bill makes a mockery of our cherished tradition of ‘equal justice under the law’,” Smith said. The bill exempts any hostile actions taken by abortion supporters, but applies only to actions by pro-life demonstrators.

Representative Henry Hyde, the Republican congressman from Illinois also spoke out vehemently against the bill, stating, “If these pro-life groups were in front of another killing place – let’s say Auschwitz – you would be honoring them, you would not be making them felons.”

FACE is supported by the Clinton administration and final passage of the bill is expected next year.

Distasteful ‘Catholic Tastes’

by William A. Donohue

Whitney serves up garbage

One of the more disturbing cultural signs that has evidenced itself since the late 1960s is the decline in standards. Standards have fallen in school, work, the military, athletics, music and art. Especially art. There was a time when great artists were measured by the extent to which they

embellished their culture. But no more. What passes as creative these days is the purely iconoclastic. There is nothing ennobling about the scatological or the nihilistic, yet that is what the Whitney Museum seems to prefer. First there was Mapplethorpe and now there is Mike Kelley. Running through February 20th, the Whitney is featuring Kelley's work, *Catholic Tastes*.

If the label *Catholic Tastes* hadn't been adopted by Kelley, there would be little point in this publication taking notice. Curiously, there is nothing explicitly Catholic or anti-Catholic about the exhibit. To be sure, there is much about the exhibit that is vulgar, and the decision to title the showing *Catholic Tastes* was designed to send a message (does anyone believe that the Whitney would have allowed the same exhibition under the title *Jewish Tastes*, or *Gay Tastes*?). Actually, it is the book *Catholic Tastes* that explains the reasoning behind the exhibition. It also explains the virulent anti-Catholicism of Mike Kelley.

Early in the book we learn that Mike Kelley attended a Catholic elementary school. That he now calls himself a "lapsed Catholic" is not quite right. More accurately, Kelley is a man filled with hate, and not just against the Catholic Church: he seems to hate any value structure or institutional framework that is associated with Western civilization or, for that matter, any civilization whatsoever. What he would prefer he does not say, but the self-styled "blue-collar anarchist" is not someone who is likely to find peace on earth.

Kelley is in a perpetual state of rebellion. It is from his "repressive religious education" that he seeks to liberate himself, though the results seem incomplete at best. For Kelley, no freedom that is not libidinal is hardly worthy of the name. All the kinky fixations that such a freedom affords are there in graphic detail: the proverbial phallus symbols are conjoined with displays of excrement and bodily fluids, thus proving that true art demands more than what Mike Kelley

is capable of giving. If it is true that "what you see is what you get," then from Kelley what we get are the contortions of a middle-aged man not yet released from infantile rages.

Kelley's narcissism is another quality that is impossible not to recognize. It is in ventures like *Rothko's Blood Stain (Artist's Conception)/ Self-Portrait as the Shroud of Turin* that Kelley's anti-social and anti-religious impulses come shining through. What Kelley demonstrates is that today's brand of anti-Catholicism goes well beyond the kind of conspiratorial charges that the red-necks have long favored. No, today's anti-Catholic is motivated out of a desire to dissolve the Church of its legitimacy and to call into question its moral authority. Kelley hates the Catholic Church for the same reason other modern artists do: the Church rejects any notion of freedom not tied to the liberating effects of Christ's teachings.

If there is any prediction for the new year that is bound to stand up it is the likelihood that the Catholic Church will continue to draw the venom of those opposed to ordered liberty. Sadly, that includes many of those who have laid claim to our culture. Worse, it includes many who, like the patrons of the Whitney, have typically been seen as the custodians of our culture. That they have now become our culture's chief adversaries is not a fortuitous sign.

In 1959, *New York Times* critic John Canaday stunned the avant-garde set by suggesting that "freaks, charlatans and the misled" had surrounded the truly creative, thereby granting legitimacy to the work of phonies. "Let us admit," he wrote, "that the nature of abstract expressionism allows exceptional tolerance for incompetence and deception." Canaday aptly concluded, "We have been had." And now, a generation later, it can also be said that so, too, has the Whitney.

Editors' note: *Catholic Tastes* is scheduled for exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, June 30-Aug. 11, 1994.