

STEM CELL BILL SKIRTS REAL ISSUE

When the House passed a bill authorizing an expansion of federal funds for new embryonic stem cell research, we released the following statement to the press:

“Those who voted for the bill sponsored by Reps. Mike Castle and Diana DeGette are quick to emphasize that the legislation is tightly drawn: it will only affect some human embryos that would have been discarded had the donor couple not consented to having them used for research. Sounds reasonable. Embryos are not being created for the purpose of destroying them (which is what happens in stem cell research); the embryos would have been discarded anyway; written permission must be given by the donor couple; and some who are ill may be helped enormously by such research.

“So what’s wrong with the bill? What is wrong is that this piece of legislation allows lawmakers to once again skirt the only issue that really matters—the moral status of the human embryo. If the human embryo is nascent life, a self-directing organism that has the potential to develop into a full-grown person, then it is morally outrageous for anyone to kill it. If this is not true, then why are those who voted for the Castle-DeGette bill not taking a cavalier attitude? Why are they emphasizing that the bill is tightly written? In short, what is the source of their caution, if human life is not at stake? If they can’t answer this, then there is something terribly frightening at work.

“We went down this road before when Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun said it was not the job of the high court to decide the question of when life begins. But, in fact, in legalizing abortion, Blackmun and his six colleagues made it their job to declare children in their mother’s womb to be

less than human. That is why it is imperative to get all federal lawmakers to state with precision their understanding of when life begins. Until this is done, all stem cell bills should be tabled.”

For more on Blackmun’s ignoble contribution, see pp 8-9.

HIGH COURT UPHOLDS PRISONERS’ RIGHTS

On May 31, in a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the religious liberty rights of prisoners.

The Catholic League frequently receives complaints from Catholic prisoners who maintain that their religious-liberty rights have been violated. We probe each case separately seeking to verify the authenticity of the complaint. In some cases, we have been successful in restoring rights that have been abridged. In other cases, we have determined that the complaint is without merit. And there are times when we have not been able to decide whether it is the inmate or the warden who is spinning the truth.

In any event, we applauded this decision by the Supreme Court, not simply because it underscores prisoners’ First Amendment rights, but because it sustains a larger issue—the issue of religious liberty in general.

In this ruling, the high court overturned the Sixth Circuit’s decision to nix the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). This law is an important piece of federal legislation designed to protect religious rights from being invalidated by a distorted interpretation of the so-

called establishment clause of the First Amendment.

By overturning the Sixth Circuit's decision, the high court rejected the notion that RLUIPA gives religious prisoners "a preferred status in the prison community." It does nothing of the sort—it merely secures their right to religious liberty.

ERRATUM

In the June *Catalyst*, we ran a story, "Sticking Their Noses Where They Don't Belong," that took issue with non-Catholics injecting themselves into the affairs of the Catholic Church; the article was prompted by media coverage of the election of Pope Benedict XVI.

In the piece, we quoted a remark by Christel Kucharz of ABC news that suggested that the German people were uniformly aligned against the new pope. We cast doubt about her not meeting anyone who spoke favorably of the new pope. In fact, she did. More to the point, she did so in the same article where she wrote about the negative German observations.

When Ms. Kucharz contacted us from Germany about this, she sent the article in question, making the point that she didn't skew the piece. After reading what she sent, we concluded she was right. What happened is that we were given an excerpt of her article that was taken from some other source. That excerpt unfairly represented what she said, and we repeated the error. We have apologized to Ms. Kucharz about this, and she has graciously accepted.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE COVER-UP

It is not the Catholic Church that is impeding justice for the victims of child sexual molestation, it is Planned Parenthood and the ACLU.

On March 1, some medical records of Planned Parenthood clinics were seized by the Medicaid fraud control unit of the Indiana attorney general's office. The seizure was authorized to determine "whether or not children were neglected by virtue of a failure to report instances of child molestation to the proper authorities."

Immediately, Planned Parenthood instructed its clinics not to cooperate. On May 31, an Indiana judge ruled that Planned Parenthood must turn over its records. (In Indiana, anyone who is under 14 and is sexually active is considered a sexual abuse victim, and health care providers are required to report such cases to the authorities.) The local ACLU affiliate is representing Planned Parenthood: they consider it a "fishing expedition."

Here is what William Donohue told the media: "If a Catholic diocese were to refuse to turn over its priest personnel records to the authorities on the grounds that the request was a 'fishing expedition,' it would be labeled an obstruction of justice by every major media outlet in the nation; no doubt '60 Minutes' and Showtime would find it grist for a story or a movie. But because the cover-up is being done by the darlings of the liberal establishment—Planned Parenthood and the ACLU—not a howl of protest can be heard."

And it's not just in Indiana—it's all over. This is why Donohue decided to write to every member of the New York State legislature urging adoption of a bill by State Senator Stephen Saland that would make no exemptions for abortion providers in mandating that child sexual abuse be reported to the

authorities.

For the past three years in New York, Planned Parenthood and the ACLU have been trying to stop this legislation (along with the National Association of Social Workers and the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence). “It’s time to end the cover-up,” said Donohue, “protect the kids and have one law for everyone.”

CHRISTIAN CENTURY LOSES ITS HEAD

On May 17, *Christian Century*, a Protestant magazine, published a remarkable editorial equating conservative evangelicals like Dr. James Dobson with the Nazis. Dobson, along with many others—including the Catholic League—has been angry over attempts to exclude people of faith from the judiciary. So how does this strike the *Christian Century*? “The National Socialists removed judges who didn’t go along with the party program.”

According to this logic, demands that pro-life Christians not be denied a seat on the bench is the equivalent of Nazis who threw decent judges off the bench (that’s if they didn’t kill them). The editorial ended with a bang by saying that conservative Christian leaders need to ask whether they “want to be remembered as faithful followers of Jesus or as those who adopted the rhetoric and tactics of Nazi Germany?” For the *Christian Century*, it’s hardly a tough call: “It looks like they have already made their choice.”

Interestingly, the first line of the periodical’s mission statement reads, “The CHRISTIAN CENTURY magazine believes that

the Christian faith calls Christians to a profound engagement with the world—an engagement of both head and heart.” Now they should either apologize to conservative Christians who want to engage the world or change its mission statement to say that it only applies to liberals. But neither is likely given that it has obviously lost its head.

GAY NAZIS STORM CHURCH

Act Up, a radical gay group, stormed Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on June 5. One of the homosexuals, who was dressed as a priest, proceeded to perform a mock marriage of a gay couple while others screamed, “Pope Benedict XVI, homophobe, AIDS accomplice.” Their stunt was also marked by violence: Monsignor Patrick Jacquin was pushed to the ground, trampled and kicked in the neck. The terrorists said they were marking the first anniversary of France’s first gay wedding; the courts subsequently nullified the union.

This is not the first time these gay activists have engaged in Nazi-like tactics. In December 1989, Act Up members invaded St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York, breaking up a Mass and spitting the Communion wafer on the floor.

On its website, Act Up urges homosexuals to partake in “direct action.” This includes, obviously, acting like Brownshirts.