

League Assails Clinton Administration for Bigotry

In an unprecedented move, the Catholic League assailed the administration of a standing president for anti-Catholic bigotry. From the time President Clinton took office, it has become increasingly evident that his administration is insensitive at best, and downright hostile at worst, to Catholic interests. But the final straw occurred during the third weekend in August. Faith Mitchell, a spokes-woman for the State Department, charged that the Vatican's disagreement over the Cairo conference on population and development "has to do with the fact that the conference is really calling for a new role for women, calling for girls' education and improving the status of women."

That statement was so outrageous that one of our members, and now one of the members of our Board of Advisors, Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School, wrote a strong letter registering her concerns to President Clinton. The letter was signed by prominent Catholic women and Catholic women's organizations and was published as a Catholic League open letter to the President in the August 29th edition of the *New York Times*. The [half-page ad](#) triggered an immediate response from Catholic malcontents in a September 2nd ad in the *Times*.

The Catholic League made this statement at the risk of sounding partisan. But so as not to be misunderstood, it is not the position of the Catholic League that Catholics should favor Republicans more than Democrats or vice versa. We would condemn just as swiftly any Republican administration that said the things that members of the Clinton administration have said about Catholics. There are good reasons for voting for Democrats and good reasons for voting for Republicans; the converse is also true. As an organization, we hold no vested interest in either party.

But we will also not shy from criticizing any public official – or administration – that crudely caricatures Catholics the way Faith Mitchell did.

Church Robber Indicted on Civil Rights Charge

Following calls from the Catholic League for a civil rights prosecution, church robber David Cedenó has been indicted by an Essex County, Massachusetts, grand jury for constitutional rights violations and two other hate crimes. Cedenó and an accomplice robbed St. Mary's Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts on June 10th, brazenly stealing two chalices and a communion paten from the altar during Mass, and desecrating the Blessed Sacrament, which was spilled onto the floor of the sanctuary.

In a letter to Essex County District Attorney Kevin Burke, Daniel T. Flatly, President of the League's Massachusetts Chapter, called Cedenó's act "an outrageous and unprecedented crime," and asked that he seek the maximum penalties allowed by law. The League demanded that Cedenó be charged not just with larceny and disturbing an assembly of worship, but with violating the constitutional rights of worshippers.

On July 20th, David Cedenó was indicted for larceny, disturbing an assembly of worship, constitutional rights violations, and destruction of religious property. The last three charges are hate crimes under Massachusetts law.

Cedenó, who is 17, will be tried as an adult in the Superior Court of Essex County. Assistant District Attorney Jane Hegarty, chief of the District Attorney's Civil Rights Division, will prosecute the case which has received wide

publicity.

Catholic League Members Rally to the Cause

It's quite gratifying to receive so many letters from Catholic League members complimenting us on our feisty style. It should be noted that our members are no wimps either. Consider the following.

Over the past few months, Catholic League members have been asked to support new anti-condom ads and to sign petitions demanding fair treatment by the media when the Holy Father visits New York. The result: we not only have money to support new ads in New York and Washington, we have enough to pay for advertisement in the Boston rail system as well. As for the petitions, they have been coming in by the thousands. And that's daily! Put that together with the fact that we can now claim well in excess of 100,000 members nationwide, and the results are impressive by any standard.

It is precisely this kind of support that enables the Catholic League to do its job. The job of the Catholic League – defending the rights of Catholics and responding to assaults on the Church – is important, but just as important is the effect we hope to have on fellow Catholics, clergy as well as laity. To be explicit, our job is to energize the faithful, too many of whom have become disinterested and lacking in initiative.

There are several reasons for this lethargy. Unlike some other segments of society, Catholics have never forged a collective identity that approaches the level found among blacks and

Jews. For one reason, ethnicity has competed with religion, allowing the Irish, Italians, Poles, Slavs, French, Latins and others to establish bonds of affection based on their lineage. Hence, the urban phenomenon of having Irish, Italian and Polish churches, all within walking distance to each other. Just consider the pain that so many of these parishes are now experiencing because of the need to merge these previously disparate parishes. Irish-Catholics, Italian-Catholics and Polish-Catholics may all be Catholic, but it is what precedes the hyphen that ultimately keeps them distinct.

Blacks have never had this problem, though it is certainly true that those who trace their ancestry to Africa do not see themselves, and are not seen by others, as having a heritage that is identical to blacks from the West Indies, for example. There are Chinese Jews and Iraqi Jews, as well as Jews from Europe and Africa, and there are marked distinctions – especially in Israel today -between Ashkanazic and Sephardic Jews. But both blacks and Jews still have a sense of peoplehood that Catholics lack. That is due, in large part, to the legacies of slavery and the Holocaust, catastrophes for which there is no single analogue in the Catholic experience. Success has also stymied Catholic energy. While job discrimination against Catholics continues to be reality, it is true that most Catholics do not experience anything like the degree of antipathy that greeted their grandparents. Having become comfortably middle class, many Catholics have shut themselves off from societal issues, even when those issues touch home. Tocqueville called this individualism, the tendency among democratic people to withdraw into the circle of family and friends, absenting themselves from the affairs of their neighborhood and the society at large. Individualism, the great Frenchmen argued, was not synonymous with narcissism (he saw that as egoism), it was synonymous with an indifference to the chores of community.

Above all, what explains the Catholic response, or lack

thereof, is the inability of Catholics to see attacks on their Church as attacks on themselves. This dichotomy is partly the social consequence of a hierarchical structure, the result of having clear lines of authority drawn between clergy and laity. Unfortunately, too many Catholics still think that they have little or no role to play in defending their Church. Yet when the Church is attacked, it is foolish and indeed dangerous to think that the clergy can do it all. Vatican II put the ball in our court. "The laity carry out their manifold apostolate both in the Church and in the world," reads chapter three of the "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," by engaging itself in "important fields of action: namely, church communities, the family, youth, the social milieu, and national and international affairs." That's a lot of ground, providing opportunities for everyone.

By acting as a catalyst, the Catholic League hopes to propel all the laity and the clergy to action. It is neither possible, nor desirable, to expect all Catholics to become full-time warriors, but it is important to mobilize the conscience of Catholics. There are shots being taken against the Catholic Church today that are deeply disturbing. That they are coming not so much from kooks but from the establishment itself is all the more troubling.

The good news, however, is that the Catholic League, backed by its incredibly enthusiastic members, is growing in numbers, stature and influence. Perhaps most gratifying of all is the evidence we have that the clergy very much appreciate our efforts. They not only compliment us, they more frequently are adopting our combative style. And to the extent that we can impel a besieged clergy to respond in a tougher fashion than they would otherwise, we will have accomplished a great deal.

The Holy See, Cairo and The Pundits

By William A. Donohue

The Cairo Conference on Population and Development will mostly be remembered for what the Holy See did: it held the line against the determined modernists from the U.S. and Western Europe. It's been some time since the Vatican asserted itself so boldly, surprising friend and foe alike. While it may be a bit presumptuous to say that the Vatican won, it certainly did not lose. It succeeded in denying the abortion-rights fanatics a clear victory and it succeeded in removing reference to "other unions" outside marriage from the final document. At the very least, the Vatican won the respect of its most vociferous critics, and in the game of world politics, that alone counts for a lot.

The pundits, of course, came at the Vatican from all sides. Four types of reactions were evident: stupidity, intellectual dishonesty, hypocrisy and bigotry.

Here's a sample of each.

As the name of the Cairo conference implies, the issue of development was supposed to be given equal weight to the issue of population. But in reality, neither the pundits who covered the conference, nor the participants who attended the proceedings, had much interest in anything but population matters. In some cases, it wasn't disinterest that accounted for the lack of discussion, it was pure stupidity. For example, consider the spokeswoman from Zero Population Growth (ZPG) whom I debated on National Public Radio.

After an exchange on abortion, I moved the subject to the question of economic development. When I completed my remarks, I asked the ZPG lady why she showed little interest in this

aspect of the Cairo conference. She quickly said that she was very much concerned about the issue of development and explained that that was why she wanted to comment further on the right of women to have an abortion. Stunned at first, I answered by saying that abortion rights and economic development were not synonymous. Ignoring this, she pressed her case for abortion rights once again. I finally said that a good debate on this subject was impossible as my adversary was simply too dumb to understand the meaning of the term "development. "

I ran into intellectual dishonesty on a FOX TV show, this time with a spokeswoman from NARAL, a national abortion-rights organization. I commented that the terms "fertility regulation" and "reproductive rights" were code for abortion-on-demand. The NARAL lady tried to deny this.

She also tried to deny the significance of other language in the document. It was originally stated that "the family is *the* basic unit in society," but it was changed to read "the family is *a* basic unit in society." I maintained that the change was made so as to place alternative lifestyles on the same platform with the family. When she denied this I threw it back in her court: if the change in the language from the family being *the* basic unit to *a* basic unit didn't mean what I said it did, then she should have no trouble accepting the original wording. I got no reply but that didn't stop me from accusing her, on the air, of intellectual dishonesty. In any event, the Vatican succeeded in forcing a change back to the original wording.

Hypocrisy was evident in much of the commentary on the Cairo conference. No one outdid William Safire of the *New York Times*. Normally a trenchant observer of domestic and international politics, Safire exposed a side of him in his column of September 5th that I had not seen before. He accused the Vatican of engaging in "unprecedented papal meddling in U.S. politics" for simply criticizing the Clinton

administration's positions at the conference.

Much to Safire's chagrin, the Holy See is an elected member state of the United Nations. As such, it has the right to applaud or criticize the policies of any other member state, including the U.S. But even if the Holy See did not belong to the U.N., it would be curious to learn from Safire why the Vatican should refrain from passing comment on world affairs. After all, all we ever hear these days (especially from the *New York Times*) is that the Vatican was "silent" during the Holocaust. Now the Vatican is being blamed for saying too much. Perhaps Pope John Paul II should consult with Safire and his newspaper on when to speak out and when to shut up; it would make for interesting reading.

What is most appalling about Safire's commentary is that it should come from a man known to be a libertarian First Amendment absolutist. In the late 1970s, Safire had no problem telling his fellow Jews in Skokie, Illinois just how wrong they were in not allowing Nazis to march in their town. Now the same guy who thinks Nazis should be treated like the Boy Scouts thinks the Vatican ought to muzzle its objections to abortion-on-demand.

Finally, the bigots were in full-force during the Cairo proceedings. Frances Kissling, the inveterate Catholic-baiter from Catholics for a Free Choice, made her rounds on the talk shows slamming the Church anytime she got a chance. She repeated her call to have the Holy See booted out of the U.N. though it is not certain that anyone paid much attention to her. Then there was Sister Maureen Fiedler and her little-known band called Catholics Speak Out. Profoundly alienated, Sister Fiedler chimes right in with the bigots, so much so that she sounds like the Queen of the Sour Grapes Brigade.

The anti-Catholic bigots in the Clinton administration got so exercised during the Cairo conference that Leon Panetta, the White House Chief of Staff, acknowledged that there was a

problem with Catholic-bashing and vowed to discipline anyone who continued to chide the Vatican. That was perhaps the brightest note to come out of the week-long conference.

League Posters Come to Boston

The Catholic League's latest anti-condom ad that worked so effectively in New York was scheduled to be posted in Boston for one month, beginning September 23. When we went to press the ad had not yet been placed, but it is expected that the same result will follow in Boston as it did in New York: it will ignite a much needed discussion over the propriety of distributing condoms to kids. Operations Director C. J. Doyle will address the issue in the Boston area. The ad, a slightly revised version of the New York one, was made possible through the generosity of Catholic League members.

Meeting With Newsday Editorial Board

On August 25, 1994, Dr. Donohue met with the editorial board of *Newsday*, the Long Island daily. He had previously met with the publisher, Anthony Marro. Both meetings centered on the newspaper's coverage of Catholics.

The meeting with the editorial board convinced Dr. Donohue that *Newsday* is nowhere near as sensitive to offending Catholics as it is toward offending others. One problem is the

absence of practicing Catholics on the editorial board. The other problem is that the ideological predilections of the board make it difficult for the Catholic perspective to be given equitable treatment.

Nonetheless, the meeting was useful. The Catholic League will continue to monitor and to respond to *Newsday's* reporting of Catholic issues.

League Denounces Kissling Attack

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights denounced Frances Kissling and Catholics for Free Choice for their July 12 attack on Pope John Paul II and the Holy See in the ongoing dispute on U.N. population policy. The League called Kissling's remarks "political posturing on behalf of her organization's paymasters."

Catholic League Operations Director C. J. Doyle stated: "Catholics for Free Choice is an anti-Catholic front group financed by the opponents of the Catholic Church in the abortion industry. Its funding sources comprise a virtual Who's Who of the population control movement. A number of the foundation grants which Kissling has received have had explicitly stated anti-Catholic purposes. Frances Kissling, a former abortion clinic operator, is an excommunicate from the Catholic Church. Her organization, which has no members, and which has received money from Hugh Hefner's *Playboy*, is a fraud, whose sole purpose is to conduct anti-Catholic propaganda and spread disinformation in the mass media."

League Assists Conscientious Objector

It is by now commonplace in the medical profession to request, if not to require, doctors and nurses to provide services that Catholics, and others, find troubling. Providing advice on birth control is one example. At Beth Israel Hospital in New York City, nurse Arfaela Ortiz found herself in this predicament and contacted the Catholic League for advice. We helped her prepare a statement to her superiors that cited her religiously-informed conscientious objections to the request for such services. We are glad to report that the hospital officials agreed to honor nurse Ortiz's moral convictions and allowed her to be faithful to her Catholicism.

League Criticizes Recommendations of Massachusetts Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth

In a major attack on religious freedom rights, Massachusetts Governor William Weld's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth has issued recommendations that would empower homosexual activists with the authority to set professional standards for social service providers in the state, including Catholic Charities. The Commission wants to mandate training in

homosexual issues as a condition of licensure for social service agencies and certification for individuals working in that field. Catholic and other religious-based charitable organizations could be prevented from counseling abstinence and chastity.

Catholic League Operations Director C. J. Doyle stated: "This is a shameless effort by an aggressive special interest with an extremist agenda to advance its ideology at the expense of the needy and vulnerable. Catholic, and other religious based social service providers, could be required to compromise their religious beliefs as a condition of receiving state assistance, or for that matter, even as a condition of their continued operation. The Commission is endeavoring to coerce institutions and individuals into changing, or at least silencing, their moral and religious convictions about homosexual behavior. The certification requirement will result in both limitations on free speech and discrimination against Catholics and other religious believers."

The Chairman of the Commission is homosexual militant David LaFontaine. He co-sponsored a 1990 assault on Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston where priests were pelted with condoms and worshippers were showered with taunts, obscenities, and blasphemies. Doyle called LaFontaine's proposal "another sordid attempt to use government, at taxpayer expense, to affirm the homosexual lifestyle." The Catholic League's warnings about the threat to Catholic institutions received extensive coverage in the New England media.

Dr. Donohue Nominated for PEN Award

Dr. William A. Donohue's new book, *Twilight of Liberty: The Legacy of the ACLU* (Transaction Press), has been accepted by the nominating committee of PEN for the Martha Albrand Award for Non-Fiction. This award is one of the most prestigious awards that can be bestowed on any author.