

The Media trashes the Pope

This piece was written by the League's Patrick Riley and appeared in the Chicago Tribune on August 19, 1993

The press, by all appearances, is out to get the Pope. Anyone surveying the sea of print media during John Paul II's visit to Denver would find its waters red with his blood and roiling with anti-Catholic sharks.

The papal youth rally in Colorado was seized as an occasion to drag out tired anti-Catholic cliches, from sexual repression to the repression of Galileo. In fact the two were combined by a syndicated columnist named Georgie Anne Geyer, who seems to think the Church's age-old condemnation of contraception dates only twenty-five years back to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

This condemnation, like the condemnation of Galileo, is "basically unscientific." It is "spiritual poison." It "cannot be simply respected as the theological position of one church," but "has become the business of all of us." Why? Because the world "is adding 97 million people every year," and "30 million are starving in Africa alone."

Does Ms. Geyer think drought, bad government, or war might have something to do with famine in Africa? Not that we can see. Papal teaching is the villain.

She concludes:

So, as the pope visits the Rocky Mountains this week, his teachings and policies on birth control can no longer be seen merely as the business of Catholics. The church's teachings ... could now instead lead to the death of us all.

If Catholic teachings threaten our very lives, shouldn't they be outlawed? Right reason would surely tell us so.

But if you think Ms. Geyer is alarmist, try *Washington Post*

columnist Judy Mann:

Pope John Paul II is scheduled to visit Denver this week in connection with World Youth Day. The anti-abortion forces are taking the occasion to stage a variety of demonstrations and to whip up the zealots. It is only appropriate that the rest of us take the occasion of his visit to reflect on the disastrous consequences of the church's stand against artificial birth control methods and abortion. The dead children of Rio – as many as 14 were killed in the incidents that night- should not be forgotten.

You see, the Pope and his “disastrous” opposition to contraception and abortion are responsible for the murders of street children in Rio de Janeiro.

For incisiveness, it's hard to beat the rebuttal of Russell Shaw, a national board member of the Catholic League and an official of the Knights of Columbus. He wrote in the *Washington Post*:

Judy Mann blames the wretched condition of street children in Rio de Janeiro on the Catholic Church and its teaching on birth control and abortion. I have only one question. On whom does Ms. Mann blame the wretched condition of children in Washington, D.C., where birth control and abortion are condoned, accepted, and encouraged by the public authorities?

Not all taking part in this papal feeding frenzy were professional journalists. One of them aborts babies for a living. Dr. Warren Hem, a nationally-known abortionist in the Denver suburb of Boulder, claimed in the *New York Times* that he “began wearing a bulletproof vest to work” because the Pope was coming to town.

The Pope and his bishops have so harshly attacked abortion for so long, it has created a climate of permission for the most radical activists. Now the church does not wish to take responsibility for the

unpredictable, violent consequences of its rhetoric.... I hope that when Catholic officials next hear of a violent attack against a physician or a patient at an abortion clinic, they can bring themselves to ... realize their own culpability.

The headline given Dr. Hem's article by the *New York Times*: "The Pope and My Right to Life."

Another non-journalist, a schoolteacher in Virginia who had been a Jesuit seminarian, was given a full page in the *Washington Post* to expatiate on various criticisms of the Church, including the charge that it is run "by old men in Rome who have an anti-woman mentality."

To this claim Professor William E. May, a Catholic League member who is also a member of the Vatican's International Theological Commission, responded that the writer should read Pope John Paul's letter on the dignity of woman.

Even campus journalism has caught the anti-papal bug. The *Broadside*, a student newspaper at George Mason University across the Potomac from Washington, ran a cartoon blaming the Pope for deaths from AIDS. Actually the campus newspaper went the professional newspapers one better, showing the Pope gloating over the graves of his victims.

Anyone who thinks anti-Catholicism is passe need only read the newspapers for a rude awakening. Contemporary anti-Catholicism, if anything, is more venomous, more explosive politically, than the naive nineteenth-century biases of Thomas Nast and the Know-Nothings.

Anti-Catholic comment taints NY mayor race

Anti-Catholic bigotry has reared its ugly head in the New York City mayoral campaign and the Catholic League quickly called the source of the defamatory comments to account.

During a radio show Ms. Ronnie Eldridge, a New York City Councilperson (and wife of columnist Jimmy Breslin, a world-class Catholic basher), remarked that Rudolph Giuliani was “suspect” as a candidate because of his Catholic school education.

League president Bill Donohue immediately issued a news release calling Ms. Eldridge’s remark “a scare tactic” that was “designed to influence voters by drumming up fears about the nefarious effects of a Catholic education.

“We thought that we had long since passed the day when attendance at a parochial school disqualified a candidate for public office,” Donohue said.

Donohue concluded by noting the Catholic League is the largest Catholic civil rights organization that “defends the right of Catholics lay and clergy alike – to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.”

Ms. Eldridge sent an apology to Mr. Giuliani but not before the story hit the New York media. The *New York Post* headlined the story “Jab at Rudy sparks fire & brimstone.” The League made it clear that it was not seeking to boost Giuliani but was far more concerned about “Catholic-bashing.”

Speaking up...

Editor's note: Dr. Donohue's letter appeared in the Wall Street Journal on August 17, 1993.

Kids and Sex Ed: War of Ideologies

Mr. Criner's splendid article demonstrates both the folly and the malevolence of the sex-ed industry. There is by now an avalanche of data that conclusively shows how ineffectual it is to pursue the education-determines-behavior school of thought favored by the sexperts. It is values, not education, that determines behavior. If it were education, then surely we would have far lower rates of unwanted pregnancies today than we had in the "ignorant and unenlightened" 1950s.

But what is most disturbing about the sex-ed industry is its determination to monopolize the sex-ed curriculum through coercion. By going to the courts to cleanse the classroom of abstinence-based approaches, Planned Parenthood and its friends at the ACLU hope to shield students from a pedagogy that finds sustenance in religious doctrine. But this just goes to show how deeply ingrained is their religio-phobia. Believe it or not, even atheists have been known to prefer the efficacy of the abstinence-based approach.

And if the schools are to be purged of every teaching that was ever grounded in a religion, the commissars of the sex industry will be very busy indeed. For starters, we could ban all teaching that holds insubordination, theft and violence to be taboo. What's next I do not know, but there's a rumor about town that holds that a number of Catholic schools are actually teaching algebra. Better head for the courts now before we all fall victim to another round of religious indoctrination.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

Catholic League for Religious & Civil Rights

ABA ducks abortion stance vote

During its annual meeting, the American Bar Association's House of Delegates, the group's policy-making body, voted against a proposal submitted by the State Bar of Texas to put to a vote of the organization's full membership last year's endorsement of abortion rights. The 1992 action reversed a 1990 vote of the House of Delegates which narrowly rescinded the pro-abortion stance which had been adopted 6 months earlier.

After the vote last year, 3692 members of the organization resigned and many more expressed their outrage over the adoption of the pro-abortion policy. Subsequently, the State Bar of Texas sponsored a resolution calling for a mail ballot of the group's 360,000 members to determine whether the A.B.A. should return to a neutral position on abortion.

Prior to this year's meeting in August, the Catholic League was instrumental in getting the Guild of Catholic Lawyers to urge concerned attorneys to attend the A.B.A. meeting to express their concern about the abortion issue.

League challenges university

policy

In a letter to the editor published by the *St. Cloud Times*, Rosemary Kassekert, a member of the advisory board of the Catholic League's Minnesota Chapter and Chair of its legal task force, has criticized St. Cloud State University's controversial policy statement mandating its definition of acceptable student attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Ms. Kassekert urged the university to change the policy because it is a "blatant form of religious discrimination" and denies students their "right of conscience."

The position paper, which would apply to students seeking entrance to the school's social work department, contains the following statement:

Accepting gay and lesbian people does not mean accepting them as individuals while simultaneously abhorring their assumed behavior. The separation of the client from the client's behavior cannot be used to resolve a social worker's personal dilemmas regarding this protected population.

Paul L. Ringsmuth, a Catholic and vocational rehabilitation counselor has voiced his objections to the policy. In a letter to the *St. Cloud Times*, he called on anyone supporting his challenge "to join or contribute to the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights" because "they are going to need all the financial support they can get to protect our religious rights."

The policy is currently being reviewed by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights in order to determine whether any action will be taken.

Worth Noting

Daniel Meenan, a member of the Chicago Chapter of the Catholic League has written a timely essay from which we quote the following tidbits. We thank him for his permission to reprint these remarks.

Until we, as a nation, abandon our overly materialistic approach to many of our present day problems such as rampant divorce, standards of ethics, abortion, pornography, pre-marital sex, condoms for children, and the like, start to approach them first as legitimate moral questions and therefore as part of our spiritual nature, rather than merely mundane matters, we are bound to experience a continuing failure of communication accompanied by misunderstanding, suspicion, hostility and unhappiness. The Bible tells us how God confounded some of his people when their materialistic vanity prompted them to build the great city of Babel without any reference to God and "the Lord confused the speech of all the world. "

Though we consider ourselves too intelligent and advanced to be subjected to "Babel, "similarities prevail within our great nation today and until we start to put first in our deliberations, as individuals and a society, the God who made us, we will continue to be faced with widespread misunderstanding, confusion and wide divisions we witness and which satisfies no one. Certainly, the chaos and ultimate destruction of the Godless Soviet Union should serve as an example of what can happen when we humans shut out God and morality from our public lives.

New York Daily News discovers Catholic League

New York *Daily News* Religion editor Charles W. Bell wrote a solid piece on the Catholic League (August 21) following an interview with League president Bill Donohue.

Headlined "Catholic group uses media to defend faith," the well-written and positive article compared the League's role to that of the ADL. The article dispelled the myth that the League is somehow supported or subsidized by the church by pointedly noting that we pay rent to the New York Archdiocese for the space occupied by our national headquarters.

"Blacks, Jews and homosexuals get more respect in this country than Catholics," Donohue told Bell. "I'm going to relentlessly hammer this home."

Donohue made it clear that the League wasn't interested in attacking well-intentioned humor or satire involving the church but he noted, "There is a line and it is crossed when Catholics are held up to ridicule simply because of their faith."

Bell and Donohue frankly discussed some of the difficulties encountered by the League in the transition years following founder, Father Virgil C. Blum's death. Donohue made it clear that as far as he and the board of directors were concerned, that was history and the League was moving aggressively forward to build its base of support and make itself the Catholic counter-part of the Anti-Defamation League.

CHAPTER NEWS

Long Island Chapter

The chapter's annual Awards Dinner is scheduled for October. Honorees have been notified.

Ten League members attended the annual Red Mass sponsored by the Guild of Catholic Lawyers. League President Bill Donohue was seated on the dais for the brunch at the Plaza Hotel.

Wisconsin Chapter

Executive Director George Koch is now working out of his home office and may be reached at (414) 476- 7364.

The Blum Center at Marquette now has a Wisconsin Desk to deal specifically with state parental choice issues. Senate Bill 310 and companion Assembly Bill 627 are being closely watched. Public hearings were held in early August and we will keep you posted on subsequent progress.

Greater Philadelphia – South Jersey Chapter

Executive Director Jim Nolan has recruited several volunteers to work in the chapter office.

Jim reports that he had two of his letters published in the Philadelphia *Daily News*.

He was recently elected as one of the five directors of the newly formed Committee for Life. Three of the other four directors also serve on the chapter board.

California Chapter

The chapter's annual dinner has been scheduled for Friday, October 22 and Catholic League president Bill Donohue will be the featured speaker. There will be a Mass at the historic San Gabriel Mission followed by a dinner at Startup's. Chapter members should watch their mail for further details.

Meanwhile, mark that date on your calendars!

Chapter Executive Director Ted Mayer is wearing a new hat as the League's Western Regional Coordinator. One of his special projects has been overseeing the League's participation in the Combined Federal Campaign. Ted is planning a small scale advertising campaign in selected military base and Catholic newspapers during this year's enrollment period in order to increase participation. All members in the military or other federal service may support the League through this convenient payroll deduction program.

Ted Mayer and chapter board member Tom Brandlin met recently with Anti-Defamation League officials to discuss areas of mutual concern.

They report that the meeting went well and are looking forward to a time when the two organizations can be of mutual help to each other.

Massachusetts Chapter

Frances Kissling of Catholics for Free Choice finally admitted on the air that her organization has no members and that it has funding from the Playboy Foundation. The revelations were made during a broadcast debate with Eastern Regional Director Joe Doyle on WRKO radio on August 21.

A second broadcast debate on another station several days later was canceled. It seems that no one from the other side wanted to go toe to toe with Joe. If you've ever heard him on the attack, you'll appreciate their timidity.