

HEALTH CARE POLITICS: ABORTION ISSUE BOILS OVER

It seldom happens that one issue dominates an entire season, but this summer the debate over health care commanded everyone's attention. It wouldn't have occasioned the interest of the Catholic League had it not been for the life issues. But when abortion and conscience rights for health care workers are included in the legislation, it's enough to draw us to the table; "end-of-life" issues were originally in the Senate bill.

Two weeks into the Obama administration, a Gallup poll reported that the president received high marks from the public on most issues. The one glaring exception was abortion: only 35 percent agreed with him on allowing funding of abortions overseas. It was then revealed in another survey that a majority of Americans now consider themselves pro-life. When we went to press, the president still hadn't asked his party members in Congress to exclude abortion from the health care bills.

It is no secret that this is the most radical pro-abortion administration in American history. The number of former employees of Planned Parenthood, NARAL and Emily's List is astounding. So extreme is the president and his staff on this issue that they are apparently willing to sink health care reform before ever excluding abortion from the final bill.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, a strong advocate of universal health care, was so troubled by the prospect of a health care bill that funds abortion that it pulled its support. By doing so, it stood on principle. Justin Cardinal Rigali and Bishop William Murphy provided the leadership.

It was hard to listen to those who support the bills make the claim that abortion is nowhere mentioned in them. True but phony: it is precisely because abortion is seen as a medical procedure that it is automatically included in these health care bills, unless otherwise noted. This explains why the pro-abortion industry was delighted with them. Want further proof? Rep. Bart Stupak, Rep. Joe Pitts, Rep. Eric Cantor, Rep. Sam Johnson, Senator Mike Enzi and Senator Orrin Hatch all specifically introduced legislation that would bar abortion funding from these bills. And guess what? They all lost.

As this issue of *Catalyst* documents, the Catholic League spent a good part of the summer seeking to educate the public, especially Catholics, about the details. We pointed out, for example, that when the White House posted a “Reality Check” on these bills, and sought to debunk many of the reasons why its opponents were wrong, it never tried to convince the public that abortion wasn’t included in the bills.

WEB ATTACK

A few years back, someone managed to hack into the Catholic League’s website and disable it. We contacted the FBI and they arrested a young Muslim man. On August 5, we got hit again, only this time it was much worse. This time the guilty party staged an attack on our web host, Catholic Online, a company based in California.

It’s called a “denial of service” attack. This assault affected hundreds of other websites that share the same web server hosted by Catholic Online. What happens is that hackers find a way to send an enormous amount of junk requests, literally overpowering the system. The attack continued the

next day until Catholic Online found a way to correct the condition. In the end, the Catholic League had to purchase its own server. But we are staying with Catholic Online—we are very happy with their work.

Catholic Online was able to check its web server access logs and determined that the Catholic League was the target of the attack. We filed a report with the FBI. We may never know who pulled this caper off.

We're thick-skinned at the Catholic League, so we just shrugged it off. Over the years, we have had to deal with death threats, vicious lies and accusations, hate mail, obscene phone calls, etc. It comes with the territory. The only way to avoid these kinds of things is to be passive, and that's not exactly our style.

If we weren't doing our job, we wouldn't be targeted. So it's really a backhanded compliment.

LYING AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

I have often told my daughters that one of the great things about my job is that I don't have to lie. I believe in what the Catholic Church teaches, and believe that its voice should be given a fair hearing in society. Because it often is not—indeed there is a cacophony of cat-calls trying to shut it up—the Catholic League is needed more than ever.

It is one thing to confront adversaries who truly believe they are meritorious; it is quite another to deal with liars. Unfortunately, lying has become pervasive in our society, and I am not talking about hyperbole: I am talking about intentionally spinning the truth. It's becoming an epidemic.

A few months ago, I was debating a woman on Canadian TV about the movie, "Angels & Demons." My complaint centered on the lies about the Roman Catholic Church that the Dan Brown book, and Ron Howard movie, made. She replied that parts of what they said were true. When I asked her to identify what part was historically true, she breezily said, "I don't know." I told her the first thing that came into my mind: "You are positively astounding." That was the end of the debate.

Over the past year, we tried to get the word out that a bill in New York State changing the statute of limitations on the sexual abuse of minors was unfairly targeting the Catholic Church. The bill's author, Assemblywoman Margaret Markey, said this accusation was false: she maintained that the public schools were covered by her bill. After being pounded by Catholics who knew better, she amended her bill to include the public schools. She never commented on why her amendment was necessary.

The *New York Times* is hurting. It is \$1 billion in debt and has declining revenue. In the spring, rumors were floating that it would have to sell the *Boston Globe* (which it has). At the time, union leaders pressed newspaper officials to square with them. On April 9, in the pages of the *New York Times*, Richard Perez-Pena, said that "Executives of the Times Company and the paper have refused to discuss the matter." What ever happened to transparency and all the talk about sunshine being the best policy? This is the same newspaper that wants institutions ranging from the CIA to the Catholic Church to turn over internal documents. Isn't it convenient to make exemptions for oneself?

On May 18, *New York Times* reporter David Carr wrote a column about the financial future of the newspaper. "What's going to happen to the *New York Times*?" was the question on everyone's lips. "I thought I'd take a crack at that question with a few caveats," he said. Then he came clean. "First, I'm not briefed by the people in charge and they generally listen with some

amusement to my opinions and head the other way.” Great. The newspaper of record laughs at one of its business reporters when asked to discuss what’s wrong with the business. How cute.

Once Sonia Sotomayor was nominated to be on the Supreme Court, how many times did you hear about all those Catholics on the high court? Some of the comments were really below the belt. But did anyone mention that of the 12 Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee, 7 are Jewish? So why is it a problem to have a majority of Catholics on the Supreme Court, but not a problem to have a majority of Jews making the selection for the Democrats?

When the health care bill was being debated over the summer, several pro-abortion members of the House and Senate denied that the bill provided funding for abortion. Senator Mike Enzi and Senator Orrin Hatch called them on it: they introduced amendments that would explicitly exclude abortion from the bill. The amendments lost.

Similarly, Rep. Lois Capps introduced an amendment that she claimed would not provide funds for abortion. Rep. Joe Pitts disagreed and put the question to Counsel at the committee hearing. “If the Capps amendment is adopted, would the secretary of health and human services be allowed to cover elective abortions in the public plan?” The answer was yes. In fact, Counsel admitted that the Capps amendment was, in the words of Pitts, “a sham.” Case closed.

Speaking of abortion, a subject about which more lies have been told than any other issue, how can the pro-abortion people explain how an eight-month old baby can survive after being cut from the womb of her mother? This happened in July in Massachusetts. According to the champions of abortion, a fetus is just a clump of cells. Then how do they explain why the clump of cells has a birth certificate and a name? And since when do clumps of cells start crying and smiling?

All of us have lied at one time or another, and in some cases it can be justified. If someone shows up at my office threatening to kill one of my employees, and asks if he or she is at work, I will lie without blinking an eye. But that's not what's going on in most instances. How these people can routinely lie about matters that cause great damage to others, and apparently experience no guilt, is, as I say, positively astounding.

HEALTH CARE BILL: FOCA BY OTHER MEANS?

In July 2007 Barack Obama told his pro-abortion fans at Planned Parenthood that “the first thing [he'd] do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA).” Two years later, FOCA has yet to be reintroduced. But there are no signs that Planned Parenthood is disappointed, and that is because Obama is delivering FOCA by stealth means.

The principal reason why FOCA was not reintroduced was due to the opposition from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Under the tutelage of Francis Cardinal George, head of the USCCB, and Justin Cardinal Rigali, head of the pro-life committee of the USCCB, the bishops made it clear that they would fight any attempt to get FOCA signed into law. Obama got the word, as did the bill's sponsors, Rep. Jerry Nadler and Sen. Barbara Boxer. But that did not derail the pro-abortion forces from trying some back door maneuvering.

The USCCB believes, as does the Obama administration, that health care is a human right. The health care bills that have been served up by supporters of Obama, however, have

provisions that mirror the most draconian elements found in FOCA. To be specific, in July, an amendment by Sen. Mike Enzi explicitly denying abortion coverage was defeated. When Sen. Orrin Hatch asked Sen. Barbara Mikulski if she would clarify her amendment so that abortion services would not be amended, she said no; the amendment passed.

In other words, stealth politics is at work. No, FOCA is not on the table, but central provisions of it have made their way into the health care reform bills. What is most disturbing about all of this is that the public is being hoodwinked: most have no idea of the games that are being played.

ABORTION AS HEALTH CARE?

When White House budget director Peter Orszag was asked whether “no taxpayer money will go to pay for abortions” under proposed health care legislation, he replied, “I’m not prepared to say explicitly that right now.”

There was no reason for Orszag to sound tentative—everyone who has followed this issue knew that President Obama has been very explicit about his support for abortion, as well as his desire to make the public pay for them. Sure, the president says he wants “common ground”, but there is no evidence of his budging on this issue when it gets to the policy stage. In the end, that’s the only stage that matters.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, another champion of abortion-on-demand through term, commented on health care reform saying, “There are basically five different plans in Congress right now and there are a variety of ways.” None of the plans being touted explicitly says that abortion will not be subsidized. We know that the Democrats,

following the party line, have killed every amendment that would bar public funding of abortion. So who is kidding whom?

If the Bush administration had said that it wanted to seek “common ground” on gun control, and then decided to subsidize handguns in high crime areas, it would have been condemned from high heaven. The Obama administration’s game of flirting with the abortion industry should similarly be condemned. Indeed, it represents the audacity of duplicity to dialogue about abortion and then send the public an invoice for killing kids in utero.

SURGEON GENERAL PICK ALREADY IN HOT SEAT

Soon after she was nominated Surgeon General, we noted that Dr. Regina Benjamin was already in the hot seat.

We commended President Obama and congratulated Dr. Benjamin, a Catholic, as an excellent choice for Surgeon General. Indeed, she has been recognized by Pope Benedict XVI for distinguished service. But there are things that will test her mettle right away.

To begin with, at the same news conference that the president used to announce this nomination, he pushed hard for a new health reform bill. Our main concern is whether abortion services will be mandated as part of the plan.

In June, 19 Democrats, 11 of whom are Catholic, sent a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying they will not vote for health care reform “unless it explicitly excludes abortion funding” from the plan. The National Right to Life Committee

said the bills being considered “contain multiple provisions that would result in federally mandated insurance coverage of abortion on demand, massive federal subsidies for abortion, mandated creation of many new abortion clinics, and nullification of at least some state limitations on abortion.”

So where does Dr. Benjamin come in on all of this? In June the House Committees on Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Education and Labor announced that a new Advisory Committee will decide which services will be covered; the Surgeon General is in charge of that committee.

Dr. Benjamin needs to let the public know where she stands. As a practicing Catholic, she cannot chair a committee that would support mandated abortion coverage in employer insurance plans. There is no “common ground” on this issue.

EUTHANASIA AND HEALTH CARE REFORM

In late July there were growing concerns over Section 1233 of H.R. 3200, the health care reform bill that was introduced in the House.

There was language in this section of the bill that implied that the federal government may become involved in euthanasia. So over two days, July 27-28, the Catholic League staff contacted the following persons, committees or offices looking for clarification:

- Rep. Nancy Pelosi
- Rep. John Dingell
- Rep. Rob Andrews

- Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.
- Rep. Charles Rangel
- Rep. Pete Stark
- Rep. Henry Waxman
- Rep. George Miller
- Rep. Dale Kildee
- Rep. Carolyn Maloney
- Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary

Kathleen Sebelius

- HHS Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
- HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aging
- HHS Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation for Discretionary Health Programs
- HHS Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation for Mandatory Health Programs
- HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- HHS Congressional Liaison Office; HHS Office of Human Services Policy
- HHS Office of Disability, Aging and Long-Term Care Policy
- HHS Office of Planning and Policy Support
- HHS Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation for Human Services
- Ways and Means Committee
- Education and Labor Committee
- Energy and Commerce Committee
- Oversight and Government Reform Committee
- Budget Committee
- White House Health Reform Office.

No one with whom we spoke said the government is entering the business of euthanasia. But this is not enough. We needed to know exactly what was meant by the following phrase contained in that section of the bill: “An explanation by the practitioner of the continuum of end-of-life services and

supports available...”

We also needed to know exactly what was meant by “The Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register proposed quality measures on end of life care and advanced care planning...”

On August 13, the Senate dropped the provision from the legislation. According to Sen. Chuck Grassley, the provision had been dropped because it could be misinterpreted or implemented incorrectly.

STEM CELL POLICY FLAWED

Back in March, President Barack Obama lifted restrictions on federal funding of embryonic stem cell research. The president expressed his concern about the “perils” of such research and asked the National Institutes of Health to draft requirements so that only ethically obtained stem cell lines would receive taxpayer money. The final rules were announced and went into effect in July.

In a statement, the president said: “In order to ensure that all federally funded human stem cell research is conducted according to these same principles and to promote a uniform Federal policy across the executive branch, I hereby direct the heads of executive departments and agencies that support and conduct stem cell research to adopt these Guidelines, to the fullest extent practicable in light of legal authorities and obligations.”

While provisions such as informed consent are welcome, the bottom line is that the central issue of protection of human life was ignored.

President Obama and other supporters of embryonic stem cell research hide behind ethical requirements to justify using tax dollars for destroying nascent human life. Such guidelines beg the question: if there is no moral dimension to destroying human embryos, why is there a need for ethics rules? While the answer is obvious to people who understand that life begins at conception, advocates of embryo destruction give lip service to ethics while simultaneously pretending that there is no moral issue. The fact of the matter is these requirements are a distraction from the larger issue of the legal destruction of innocent human life.

In Pope Benedict XVI's latest encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, he says "there is a lack of respect for the right to life...if human embryos are sacrificed to research..." Too bad the president ignored these words when the two met on July 10.

DEBUNKING THE MYTH-BUSTERS

In the August 14 New York *Daily News*, there was an article seeking to debunk various myths about the health care bills. Unfortunately, the two reporters were guilty of floating the myth that "None of the bills working their way through Congress provides any federal funds for abortion." Thus did the *Daily News* join a list of other media outlets that disseminated this nonsense; AP had the decency to reverse itself.

Abortion is in the bills. Here's the proof: Amendments to explicitly exclude abortion from the bills have been sponsored by Rep. Bart Stupak, Rep. Joe Pitts, Rep. Eric Cantor, Rep. Sam Johnson, Sen. Mike Enzi and Sen. Orrin Hatch. In every case, they lost. When Rep. Pitts asked Committee Counsel about

whether the amendment by Rep. Lois Capps would allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to cover abortion in the public plan, he was told it did. And since HHS head Kathleen Sebelius supports partial-birth abortion, is there anyone in his right mind who thinks she would balk at authorizing abortion? On Aug. 10, when Rep. Zoe Lofgren was specifically asked about this subject, she said, "Abortion will be covered as a benefit by one or more of the healthcare plans available to Americans, and I think it should be."

Let's be frank: abortion is no more mentioned specifically in these bills than appendectomies are, but because both are legal, both are understood to be included. That is why attempts to exclude abortion were made. That they failed should settle the issue. Yet the following pro-abortion groups continue to lie and say abortion isn't covered: NARAL, Planned Parenthood, Center for American Progress and People for the American Way.

Interestingly, *MoveOn.org* fired e-mails all over debunking five myths about the bills. It was correct on all five. Noticeably absent from its list is abortion. That's because they know it's in the bills.

OBAMA SEEKS RELIGIOUS SUPPORT FOR BILL

On August 19, President Barack Obama joined in a call-in and audio Webcast with religious leaders seeking to win their support for a health care bill. We issued a press release explaining why the Catholic bishops weren't on board.

Earlier in the month, Justin Cardinal Rigali, chairman of the

Committee on Pro-Life Activities for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, reaffirmed the bishops' position that it is unacceptable to include abortion funding in a health care reform bill. His letter was sent to every member of the House.

While commending some efforts to include protection for state laws regulating abortion, and leaving intact existing federal laws governing conscience rights, Rigali drew a line in the sand regarding two features of the House bill: (a) he objected to the provision that the Secretary of Health and Human Services would be empowered to mandate abortion coverage in the public plan, and (b) he labeled as a "legal fiction" and an "illusion" the argument that the bill doesn't, in effect, provide federal subsidies for abortion.

Cardinal Rigali was especially forceful in pointing out low-income Americans opposed to abortion will be **"forced by the federal government"** (his emphasis) to pay for abortions when they purchase the public plan. Which means that practicing Catholic non-white poor women will be forced to pay for the abortions of rich white women—women who equate abortion with a root canal.

We noted that it wasn't too late for Obama to get the bishops, and most Catholics, on board. He can bring them back to the table if he follows the model of his predecessors—bar the government from funding abortions as a health care benefit. If he doesn't, if he sticks to his guns and seeks to coerce Americans into funding abortion, it will be a mistake of monumental importance.