

TOLERATING SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The board of directors of the Boys Choir of Harlem voted unanimously yesterday to keep director Walter J. Turnbull, even though he engaged in a cover-up of child sexual molestation committed by one of his employees, Frank Jones Jr.; Jones is now in prison, having been convicted of 24 counts of sexual abuse and three counts of endangering the welfare of a child. Turnbull and New York City public school officials created the Choir Academy of Harlem, home to the Boys Choir.

The boy who was victimized took his complaint to Turnbull, and to his brother Horace (vice president of the Boys Choir), in 2001. But neither of the Turnbulls contacted city schools officials, as they were required to do by education department regulations. And they did not report the abuse to the authorities either (there is no law mandating school officials to do so). What they did do was to allow the molesting homosexual to chaperone 40 to 50 students on eight performances after education officials barred him from the school. Indeed, Jones spent 60 nights in hotels with students placed in his charge. Regarding his victim, Jones gave the boy the keys to his apartment and gave him free lunches.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“Public school officials have a long record of tolerating the sexual molestation of minors. On the surface, the Boys Choir of Harlem case does not concern the Catholic League, but when we look closer we find something fascinating. The lawyer for the boy, Michael Dowd, is the same attorney who has sued Catholic dioceses for the same offense. But his gut reaction to Turnbull is in stark contrast to his stance on Church

officials who also tolerated abuse. Dowd does not want Turnbull to resign, but when it came to Brooklyn Bishop Thomas Daily, Dowd demanded his resignation for not punishing a molesting homosexual priest.

“This kind of double standard is commonplace all over the nation. There is one standard for bishops, another for public school officials. So let’s stop with the pretense that this issue is all about protecting kids: it’s about getting the Catholic Church.”