

WHITE HOUSE LIES ABOUT HORMEL

In late March, the Catholic League learned that the Clinton administration was moving quickly to resurrect the nomination of James Hormel as Ambassador to Luxembourg. On March 30, we released a statement to the press stating our long-standing objection: it is not Mr. Hormel's sexual orientation that we find objectionable (we have never opposed any nominee or candidate for public office on these grounds), rather it is his approval of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence that we abhor.

On the same day as our new release, William Donohue wrote a letter to every member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee registering the league's concerns. Then, the very next day, at a White House press briefing, Press Secretary Joe Lockhart said there was "no basis in fact" that James Hormel saluted a group of actors who mock nuns and the Catholic sacraments. Baltimore broadcaster Les Kinsolving raised the question with Mr. Lockhart.

Kinsolving asked Lockhart if President Clinton agreed with Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco that the "Sisters" should cancel their public celebration on Easter Sunday. Kinsolving also wanted to know if the President would ask Hormel to join with Mayor Brown in opposing the Easter event that the "Sisters" are planning. Lockhart characterized the questions as a "sort of ad hominem attack on Mr. Hormel."

William Donohue defended Kinsolving, calling Lockhart a liar:

"White House Press Secretary Joe Lockhart lied to reporters when he said 'there was no basis in fact' to the charge that James Hormel saluted the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in San Francisco. In 1996, Hormel laughed approvingly as this anti-Catholic group paraded in front of him while he was doing commentary on KOFY TV; Hormel was covering the Lesbian, Gay,

Transgender Pride Parade.

“Lockhart did not make a mistake yesterday—he lied. He said to Les Kinsolving that ‘having spoken to Mr. Hormel directly on this subject, it has no basis in fact.’ But the truth is there is a video of Hormel greeting the ‘Sisters’; the Catholic League has a copy of this video. In addition, Senator Tim Hutchinson gave Hormel the opportunity to repudiate this group, and Hormel refused to do so. None of this is news to Lockhart. He prefers to discredit critics of Hormel by saying that Hormel is the victim of ‘ad hominem’ attacks. This is spin control as perfected by the masters in the White House.”

Donohue’s charges against Lockhart were picked up by the press. It remains to be seen how this will flush out in the end.