

Editorials

'Alberto' Again

Anyone who has seen the defamatory comic book, "Alberto," should applaud the action of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights in asking the Christian Booksellers Association to expel its publisher from the organization.

This newspaper, long ago publicized the anti-Catholic nature of the comic, published by Jack T. Chick of California, an anti-Catholic. We asked Christian bookstores in this area to recognize the bigoted nature of the comic and to cease offering it for sale. Some were "Christian" about it; some were not.

To refresh readers' memories, the comic charges that the Vatican keeps the names of all Protestants in a giant computer, that Jesuits take an oath to kill on command, and the Roman Catholic Church is part of a conspiracy to destroy Christianity. And that is only part of the message of this hate-filled little picture book. In asking the CBA to expel Chick, the Civil Rights League reminds that if it does not, then "it will be giving tacit approval to what is perhaps the most formidable and vicious campaign of sectarian hatred in the last 50 years."

Last spring, according to Religious News Service, the league filed a mail-fraud complaint against Chick with U.S. postal authorities. The league says no action has yet been taken on the complaint because postal authorities "realize it is a touchy case."

This is the same postal service that is armed to the teeth and cat-quick to enforce petty regulations against papers such as this one from publicizing bingo and other raffles.

Vote or Else?

One of the clever devices cooked up by bigots in certain areas of the country used to be the poll tax whereby Americans had to pay to vote, thus automatically disenfranchising certain "undesireable" poor folk.

That seems to have gone the way of lynching but perhaps it is time to consider its reverse — a poll tax on those who do not vote. Americans are notorious for staying away from the polls in droves, even in national elections; especially in local elections.

When it came time to produce this annual plea for citizens to exercise their voting rights, we decided to eschew the usual obvious reminders and platitudes. Obviously they don't work. Maybe people who don't vote also don't read editorials. Or current events.

Appeals to the minds and consciences of non-voters seem doomed to failure; they may need encouragement in other areas, such as the billfold. Consideration of a reverse poll tax might be the eye-opener.

What to do with the money collected? At the risk of creating a bureaucratic and political boondoggle, how

about to fund to help less than well-heeled Americans seeking political office?

Cinch Bet

It almost sounds like a Twilight Zone episode.

Religious News Service report from Los Angeles: A Superior Court judge has ruled that the Nazi genocide of Jews "is not reasonably subject to dispute."

Why did the court have to rule on the obvious? Because something called the Institute for Historical Review offered a \$50,000 prize to anyone who could prove that the Nazis killed Jews in gas chambers.

The "institute" probably guessed that no one would take the time to take them up on it. The "institute" guessed wrong.

Mel Mermelstein submitted evidence and then sued the institute for breach of contract when it failed to pay him the money.

The judge also ruled that the court "takes judicial notice that Jews were gassed to death in Poland at Auschwitz in the summer of 1944."

Why did the individual Mermelstein get involved and how did he come by the "proof"? He happens to have survived that infamous camp. And he not only is seeking the \$50,000 but is suing the institute for another \$1 million for breach of contract.

and Opinions

SSJs Thank Diocesans

Editor:

On behalf of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, I wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all diocesans for the support they have shown for the work of our Sisters in the missions. Through their prayers, concern and generous contributions to the Diocesan Missions Appeal, the work of our Sisters has flourished in Brazil and in Selma, Ala.

All of our Sisters will continue to remember them in their prayers that the Lord will richly bless them for the sacrifices they have made for those less fortunate.

Sister Jamesine Riley
Superior General
Sisters of St. Joseph
of Rochester
4095 East Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14610

No Alternative To Bond Issue

Editor:

The many articles in the Courier-Journal opposing the Prison Bond Issue and suggesting alternatives to imprisonment do not represent the views of us who are members of the Diocese of Rochester. All alternatives suggested have been tried and are still being utilized as much as our safety allows.

I do feel you have a moral obligation to consider the consequences if the bond issue is defeated. Certainly, it should be evident that the citizens of New York want criminals incarcerated and the judiciary is going to respond to that mandate.

The result will be that correctional facilities will be dangerously overcrowded and unsafe for both the staff and inmates. Opportunities for inmates in programs will be reduced and imprisonment more difficult to endure.

The State Legislature will be forced to use available resources to eliminate this dangerous condition and divert the limited funds earmarked for education and human services programs.

The cost of the Prison Bond Bill for every taxpayer will be less than \$6 a year.

I urge your editors to consider these alternatives before encouraging us to vote against the bond issue.

John B. Wilmot
Superintendent
Elmira Correctional and
Reception Center
Elmira, N.Y. 14902

Proposition 1: Vote No

Editor:

Proposition Number 1 on the ballot this year proposes a \$500 million, 30-year bond issue, the proceeds of which would be used primarily to build 4,000 new prison and jail cells. The planning and building of the cells would take a number of years.

This would cost us taxpayers more than \$3 billion over the next 30 years which is the sum of the cost of the money at high interest rates plus the cost of maintaining 4,000 extra prisoners at \$16,000 per year per prisoner, figured at today's prices, not including lost taxes or public assistance for the prisoner's family. We are looking at \$100 million a year.

Further, the bond issue would commit us, psychologically and financially, to 30 more years of an archaic, unsuccessful and un-Christian way of dealing with non-violent wrongdoers.

There are proven, practical alternatives to incarceration which have been used by other states and foreign countries. They could be implemented almost immediately.

Lt. Gov. Mario Cuomo, in

a statement promoting the bond issue, says, "There is no way to prove that the space freed by the most vigorous but reasonable use of alternatives, would be enough to meet the needs which are bound to expand." The administration evidently has not done its homework. Anyone with a World Almanac can read the FBI crime statistics for New York State and see that violent crimes, including all burglaries, equal only 43 percent of the total; crimes actually listed as "violent" equal 15 percent. And certainly court records are available to the governor's office.

Mr. Cuomo also says, "... there are people now outside of prison — violent criminals — who are not serving time behind bars because prison overcrowding has stymied the criminal justice system. Violent criminals are not tried or are given lenient sentences because there is no prison space to which to sentence them." If one believes that, then we have thousands of non-violent wrongdoers, many of them first offenders, who are occupying or are being sent to cell space while violent criminals are roaming the streets free.

Please push the "No" lever on Proposition Number 1 and you will be pushing our governor and legislators to get to work and really do something about our crime situation. We believe that, as Christians, this is our duty.

Adolphe and Loe d'Audiffret
RR2, Naples, N.Y. 14512

Right to Life Local Issue

Editor:

Is the right to life issue important in local elections? This question is answered in the Monroe County Right to Life Party Newsletter:

1. Each year our County Legislature passes more state funds on to local pro-abortion organizations such as Planned Parenthood. The county also

subsidizes the cost of local Medicaid abortions.

2. There is a need for local programs offering alternatives to abortion.

3. Our school board members should be guarding against those programs in sex education and other areas which promote abortion.

4. Many local candidates go on to hold state and federal positions where good, moral, pro-life men and women are needed.

Christians should examine local candidates carefully and vote on Nov. 3.

Nicholas Hober
101 Lapham St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14615

Bond Issue Waste of Money

Editor:

There was a time when liberals were accused of "throwing money at problems" to make them go away. Now it seems that the other side has developed the same strategy. The vote on the Bond Issue for prison building is the case in point. Building new, and enlarging old prisons is not the way to control crime, repair the criminal justice system, or make the prisons we have somewhat effective.

People who know prisons know it won't work that way.

Hans Mattick, former assistant warden at Cook County Jail, has written: "It is not unfair to say that if men had deliberately set themselves the task of designing an institution that would systematically maladjust men, they would have invented a large, walled, maximum security prison."

Charles Silverman: "A prison is hell. A prison brings out the worst, the most brutal, violent, sadistic tendencies of human

behavior." (Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice)

An inmate: "Prison is a place where the flame in every man burns low. For some it goes out, but for most it flickers weakly; sometimes flashes brightly, but never seems to burn as bright as it once did. Prison is a place where you learn nobody needs you, and the outside world goes on without you. Prison is where you go to bed before you are tired — where you pull the blanket over your head when you're not cold."

The men and women in prison are our collective responsibility. We need to address this problem, and it will cost money. But we should vote against the bond issue which would only waste our money on what we know already does not work.

Father Daniel P. Tormey
1038 Goler House
Rochester, N.Y.

Bond Issue ... Or Else

Editor:

A few weeks ago you wrote an article with bold headline, "Charities Board Slams Prison Bond Issue." I'm sure that the Charities board and the people in the Diocese of Rochester realize that one of the key factors that contribute to disturbances and riots in our prison system nationwide is the overcrowding conditions.

For the past several years, alternatives to incarceration have been explored and sentences of community service and restitution and many other alternatives have alleviated some of the problems in the system. Unfortunately, nearly all recorded efforts to rehabilitate inmates have been failures. The state and federal governments have pumped over \$200 million into state prisons for rehabilitation programs. A recent study of over 200

such programs found that "the rehabilitated efforts that have been reported so far have had no effect on recidivism."

We must then get down to the basic facts that society faces only two choices: either incarcerate the criminals or allow them to roam our streets, raping, robbing and murdering our innocent people. Our county jails and our state prisons have reached the exploding point. It is government's responsibility to insure public safety and to incarcerate those individuals who are, not fit for our society.

The passage of the prison bond issue is not going to be a cure-all for all our crime problems, but it is necessary for the voters to pass it in order to relieve the overcrowding. We must be able to incarcerate the repeat offender who has little regard for our laws or for the rights of innocent people.

In New York State in 1980, murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault were up 11 percent. Our state prisons are overcrowded and 42 out of 57 county jails had to obtain substitute jail orders due to overcrowding in the local facilities in 1980.

The state also has given mandates to the county jails to comply with or suffer court action. In addition to new cells, part of the prison bond money will be used to comply with the state mandates not only to increase cells but also to increase the room for rehabilitation purposes. Perhaps the Catholic Charities board and the Office of Social Ministry should concentrate their efforts on the victims of crime and not on the criminals. If these organizations do not think that crime is a real problem, then why are most of our churches locked during the daylight hours?

Michael J. Maloney
Schuyler County Sheriff
Watkins Glen, N.Y. 14891