

Editorial

A call to fairness

The letter on this page bearing the headline "Writer decries 'blatant bias' of Courier-Journal editorial staff" merits consideration. Although it is offered here as the opinion of one individual, the letter is representative of criticism we have received from time to time about our policy of giving coverage to Church-related groups, including those that espouse controversial ideas. Although we developed this policy in order to make readers aware of the various social and political movements in the Church, some readers continually interpret our coverage of a given group as support of that group and its ideology. That is not the case.

With reference to our Oct. 17 coverage of the Witness for Peace delegation, the letter in question accuses us of promoting communism, of failing to see the significant flaws of the Sandinista government, of publishing news about subversive elements at the expense of such worthwhile causes as the pro-life movement, and of contradicting the dictates of the Catholic Church and the U.S. government.

The writer speaks of the Witness for Peace delegates as "those who would infringe on the rights of others for the sake of their particular opinion, one that is contrary to that of the U.S. government and those people responsible for policy decisions within the State Department" and claims that we have "glamorized" them.

We have two things to say about that comment: 1) the assertion that the delegates should not be allowed to express their opinions in the pages of the Courier-Journal is an infringement on their rights for the sake of a contradictory but equally particular opinion; and 2) our decision whether to cover a given group is not based upon that group's agreement with or opposition to U.S. government policy. Among those who have opposed U.S. government policy at various times throughout the nation's history are such "subversive elements" as pro-lifers, the abolitionists and the Catholic Church itself. Indeed, the British must have considered Thomas Jefferson a subversive.

We hope readers do not really wish for the staff of the Courier-Journal to silence dissent. Withholding access to the press is a tactic often used by communists. In recent months, in fact, the Church has criticized the Sandinistas most loudly for their policy of denying the Church access to the media.

Despite the letter's claim that our Oct. 17 article on Witness for Peace was favorable to that group, we believe that it was strictly objective. We reported what the delegates said, nothing more. The Witness delegation was an ecumenical group that included a Sister of St. Joseph; hence our coverage. Two weeks later, in our Oct. 31 edition, we gave equally prominent and objective coverage to Humberto Belli's criticism of the Sandinistas.

Further, we hope readers know that the staff of the Courier-Journal does not agree with every letter we publish in our Opinion column. We consider that column a forum through which readers may debate issues, and — our own opinions notwithstanding — we publish nearly every letter we receive (with the exception of letters that are libelous or in poor taste).

As to the complaint that we publish articles on subversives at the expense of worthwhile causes — the pro-life movement, the poor, families, etc. — we feel our record speaks for itself. Recall our three-page coverage of the Right to Life Convention, our stories on homeless shelters, on a single mother struggling to make a life for herself and her child, on families dealing with death, etc.

Please, let's be fair. We do not have to agree with any speaker, but we must acknowledge each person's constitutional and moral right to speak his or her mind. No one has a monopoly on truth; it is only through debate and dialogue that an objective truth can be reached. That principle is the foundation of our government and is its primary virtue in comparison with the governments of other nations. If we do not accept the right to dissent, our government will be little different from the totalitarian regimes we condemn.

Editorial advice is good; be sceptical of 'evidence'

To the Editor:

The October 31 editorial discussed the conflicting statements made as to "What is truth?" in Nicaragua. The testimony given by the Witness for Peace delegates, unprofessional observers, were at odds with that presented by Humberto Belli, lawyer, editorial writer for freedom of the press. Mr. Belli is a native Nicaraguan.

The editorial advice was good; maintain an open mind and retain a grain of scepticism when analyzing "evidence." I found it rewarding to search for evidence in the area of early statements of the "commandantes" who later took over and betrayed the revolution against the Somoza regime.

The most unlikely source appeared in the interview column of Playboy magazine, September, 1983. The revealing quote as I remember was "We are Marxist-Leninists leading a Marxist Revolution without boundaries." Another comment concerned taking everything from Panama to the Rio Grande.

There is also a book composed of the writings of the nine "commandantes" of the Sandinistas, entitled "FSEN-Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution," published by the University of Miami Graduate Institute of International studies in

Coral Gables, Fla. It is all there, the goals and the philosophy.

The "Grenada Papers" captured in that operation in the military and communist headquarters shed a great deal of light on what Nicaragua is all about. If anyone is really concerned with "evidence" this might help their "search for truth." Many of these papers are de-classified and available.

The unsophisticated visitor to any area which is communist-dominated is at the mercy of the adroit use of words. In some areas it is "agrarian reform;" in Nicaragua it is "sandinista." They chose this term rather than a Marxist title. Sandino was a revolutionary, a nationalist, who when he had consolidated power years ago in Nicaragua was approached by Farabundo Marti, an international Communist then living in Mexico who suggested joining forces. Sandino rejected him, telling him communists were not wanted in his country. Because Sandino was a national hero, that name was chosen as an attractive cover. It helped to recruit followers and entranced romantic peace "missionaries."

G.F. Newberry
160 Azalea Road
Rochester

And opinions

Writer decries 'blatant bias' of Courier-Journal editorial staff

To the Editor:

This correspondence is to bring to your attention what is perceived to be a blatant undefendable bias on the part of the editorial and reporting staff of the Courier-Journal.

I have delayed in sending this to you primarily out of a sense of concern for unity in the Church. But as the apostles showed, there are some issues which take precedence, and among them is truth. Why has the Courier-Journal chosen to ignore the fact that the Nicaraguan government is supported by the very forces that suppress the Church throughout the world? Example: the homeland of our Pope.

This bias was again made evident in the October 17 issue of the Journal with the feature article "Witness for Peace Delegates embark on Nicaragua visit." The very nature of the group, with its predisposition toward the communist government of Nicaragua, when read in conjunction of the favorable slant of the article and the predominant opinion on page 18 (a letter to the editor from John E. Milich, "Writer urges protest against U.S. foreign policy") would lead the casual reader to conclude that the Courier-Journal endorses this contingency and its causes. The questions which develop are: a) What is the official position of the Church toward the current government of Nicaragua and the Sandinistas (and shouldn't this be represented by the Journal)? b) Is it the function of the Courier-Journal to publish articles about a contingency whose "church affiliations vary from none to Zen Buddhist," is sponsored by Nicaraguan Invasion Contingency Action, which is, as the article pointed out, the same group that harassed Congressman Eckert's office staff until they were forced to bring police into the matter? c) What meaningful conclusions can be drawn now, or when the group returns, which would give impetus to (give) front page (treatment) to the activities of such a group?

I would propose that your article served

Writer disputes group's use of 'homophobic'

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to those clergy and religious who are concerned about what they term the "homophobic" tone in connection with the city council race. I do not live within the city limits, and so I am not directly affected by the outcome of the city elections; however, I am concerned with the general perceptions, political and moral, surrounding the issue of a candidate for public office who openly ascribes to a homosexual lifestyle.

Clearly, there are qualifications for public office other than one's ability to get the particular job done. The reason for political parties is based on this. A political party, after all, is composed of individuals who have joined together based on some shared ideological framework concerning economic and/or social issues affecting the general populace. Candidates are put forth who characterize and symbolize that party's ideological and sociological perspectives on how good government should be achieved in light of what they consider to be good government.

To the extent that elected officials in our republican form of government are supposed to reflect the concerns and aspirations of their constituents, and to the extent that those officials act as role models for the populace, the avowed homosexual lifestyle of a candidate is indeed a legitimate issue for consideration in determining that candidate's qualifications for political office.

Government is as much an attitude as it is a manipulation of economic and social resources. If the populace wishes the government to reflect a belief in the rule of law, for example, it puts forth and elects officials who demonstrate a belief and a lifestyle in that regard. Likewise, if a populace wishes the government to portray, reflect and

the exclusive purpose of platforming the quasi-subversive activities of a fringe organization and in no way promoted the cause of peace. Further, the article glamorizes civil disobedience and those who would infringe on the rights of others for the sake of their particular opinion, an opinion which is contrary to that of the U.S. government and those responsible for policy decisions within the State Department. The evidence indicates that the current military dictatorship in Nicaragua is not the people's choice and the country under its direction has become a heavily armed camp which serves as a training ground for terrorists and the imperialist aims of the Soviet government which subsidizes Nicaragua's military regime, and finally that the government which NICA favors is a vocal and unrelenting opponent of the United States; witness the latest address of their president before the United Nations just this week. The impression that those who live in Nicaragua under the supervision of this regime can not help but be tainted after their stay with "the people" exclusive of their predisposition when they arrive.

There are at our door steps in the Rochester Diocese so many needs that are not being addressed with the zeal I see in your articles dealing with the liberal causes. Primary among these is of course leading souls to Jesus Christ and His Church. Instead of atheists and Zen Buddhists, why not the clergy and outreach groups who are having an impact on the lives of our brothers and sisters at home. The secular press supplies us with information about what the communists are doing to reform the world; is it too much to ask that the Church's publication tells us what the Church is doing? What about the sin all around us: pornography, abortion, break-up of marriages and families, and a myriad of problems we can deal with?

Michael E. McGuire
375 Oakdale Drive
Rochester

achieve certain standards of behavior, it elects candidates who are hoped to exemplify that behavior. When a candidate openly conducts himself, or espouses beliefs in a manner that a majority of constituents consider to be deviant behavior, then that candidate must expect and accept the fact that such behavior will in some way impact upon his acceptability as an elected official. It is not necessary, nor is it correct to ascribe the term "homophobic" to those who in trying to determine a candidate's qualifications for office, take into consideration that candidate's homosexual lifestyle.

Louis G. Joy
143 Stowell Drive
Rochester

Critic commends editorial

To the Editor:

One who finds faults with the actions of others — and says so — must in all fairness be ready to commend actions when such actions deserve commendation. Your editorial "Amidst the rhetoric, what?" (Oct. 31) deserves such commendation.

As long as the press presents all sides, without fear or favor, without taking sides and without slanting the issues, peace and justice will follow us all the days of our lives. It would be wonderful if the media in general adopted your views, for such a position is the essence upon which our first amendment freedom of the press is founded.

Your editorial leads me to the conclusion that there should be an eleventh beatitude. "Blessed are they who know not and know that they know not, say that the know not, for they shall be called honest and wise."

John J. Clark, III
RD-1-Box 61
Wayland

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1½ pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made, and the letters will reflect the writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.