

## Jesuit discounts talk of impeachment

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The man who introduced the first resolution to impeach Richard Nixon said he does not think President Clinton should be impeached.

Jesuit Father Robert F. Drinan, professor of law at Georgetown University, said, "It's very dangerous to lower the barriers" to removing an elected official from office.

In a telephone interview with Catholic News Service, he said that "no one condones the conduct" cited as possible impeachment grounds in independent counsel Kenneth Starr's report to the House of Representatives.

But he said he did not regard the president's conduct as presenting the kind of "offense against the republic" that would call for impeachment.

As a Democratic congressman from Massachusetts, on July 31, 1973, Father Drinan introduced the first resolution in the House calling for the impeachment of President Nixon.

It was a time of almost daily new revelations in the Watergate scandal that a year later forced Nixon to resign in disgrace, but the reason for Father Drinan's resolution was Nixon's secret bombing of Cambodia without the requisite congressional knowledge or clearance.

Father Drinan said his resolution died in the House Judiciary Committee.

He said what Clinton said under oath about his relations with Monica Lewinsky "may or may not be perjury. But even if it is, is that impeachable?"

When it was learned that Nixon had cheated on his taxes and illegally back-dated his tax returns, "we didn't impeach him for that," he said.

He said it was only when evidence



Reuters/CNS

At a Sept. 11 breakfast with religious leaders, President Clinton acknowledged "I don't think there is a fancy way to say I have sinned," and asked for the forgiveness of those he has hurt.

mounted of "massive violations" in the Watergate cover-up that the movement to impeach began to gain the bipartisan support: "We knew we were on solid ground when the Republicans on the Judiciary Committee began coming our way."

He said there is need for a high constitutional standard so that impeachment can't be used as a political tool to reverse the will of the people.

"It boomerangs when it becomes partisan," he said.

In a speech at Marquette University in March 1974, five months before Nixon resigned, Father Drinan said, "Impeachment is designed not to measure the conduct of public men by the yardstick of criminal

statute or a civil ordinance."

He told the Marquette group impeachment was developed as a means to punish an abuse of official power or betrayal of the public trust when "the abuse of power is so detrimental to society that the removal of the individual who has violated his trust can be brought about by the people without all the formalities of due process which must be given to a person accused of a statutory crime."

Father Drinan, former law school dean at Boston College, served in the House from 1970 until 1980. He returned to teaching after the Vatican called on priests holding political office to leave those positions.

## Abortion ban veto decried

By Thomas J. Flaherty  
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — President Clinton's veto of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act is as deserving of moral condemnation as the actions that led to the current controversy over the Clinton presidency, Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York suggested in an address to a medical doctors' gathering.

The cardinal said he was "terribly distressed" that Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., who gained widespread applause for addressing Clinton's situation with former intern Monica Lewinsky in moral terms, had supported partial-birth abortion.

"I wrote Senator Lieberman to tell him I shared in the popular applause for his courage in speaking about the morality of the situation and not the politics," the cardinal reported.

He said Lieberman was "a wonderful man in many respects" and hoped he would be re-elected. But he said he went on to tell Lieberman he could not understand support for such a "heinous offense" against human life as partial-birth abortion.

Cardinal O'Connor made his remarks in an address Sept. 11 to a joint gathering of the Catholic Medical Association USA.

Taking note of public reaction to the allegations against Clinton, he asked, "Where was the country, where was the world, when the president vetoed the bill passed by the Congress of the United States to ban partial-birth abortion?"

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