

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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Letters Policy

The Catholic Courier wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the letter writers' opinions.

Letters must not exceed 500 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

Writer fails to address SOA's past

To the editors:

In response to the letter from the Ithaca writer (Nov. 4) who supports the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), I offer these thoughts.

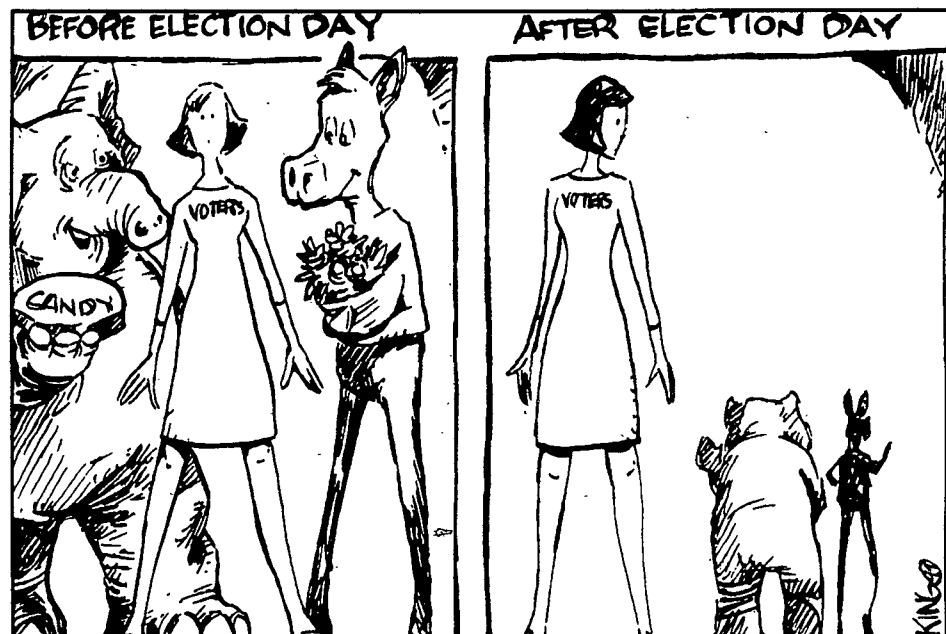
First, the writer ignores the human rights abuses attributed to SOA graduates by citing the *National Review* which is biased by its support of a strong war-making state. It's hard to bring God's message of love of neighbor, friend and foe alike, while looking down the barrel of an M-16. National security is not a Christian value and those claiming to support it refute Christ's call to "love your enemy" (Matt. 5:44).

Secondly, the writer switches topics when he brings up issues not related to the SOA's systematic abuse of Latin America. Why isn't evidence offered to support his claim that the SOA teaches professionalism and respect for human rights? Instead the writer cites the FMLN and the Sandinistas which are unrelated to questions about the SOA. A Christian should speak out against all human rights abuse, but by making unsubstantiated claims of the SOA teaching respect for human rights the writer ignores the overwhelming evidence of abuse at the hands of SOA graduates. The U.N.'s 1993 Truth Commission on El Salvador cited over 60 Salvadoran officers for the worst violations of human rights and over two-thirds were trained at the SOA.

Thirdly, I recommend Jesuit Jon Sobrino's book *Companions of Jesus* (Orbis, 1990). The book concerns the 1989 massacre of six Jesuits and their two female co-workers at the University of Central America (UCA) in El Salvador and the martyrs' stories. Sobrino eloquently writes of the Jesuits' stand against all violence during the war in El Salvador. Assassinated Rector Father Ignacio Ellacuria proposed a dialogue between the warring parties and for this the Salvadoran military killed him. Nineteen of the 26 officers cited in the Jesuit murders were trained at the SOA.

Finally, I would ask readers to attend the vigil at 4 p.m. on Nov. 16 at Rep. LaFalce's local office at 408 S. Union Street in Spencerport to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Jesuit murders. Mr. LaFalce, considered to be a liberal Democrat, supports the SOA despite efforts, even from Bishop Clark, to change his mind. We will sing, read and celebrate the UCA Jesuits' desire to build up the people of God.

John Honeck
Bankside Drive, Hamlin



Label used to discredit foes

To the editors:

According to the Oct. 21 *Catholic Courier*, the Interfaith Alliance was founded "to counter claims by the 'radical religious right' that it spoke for all people of faith." This group doesn't speak for me or the Catholics I know. Any religious group that labels others as the "radical religious right" immediately causes a red flag to be raised in my mind.

I suspect they use this label because it's a lot easier to discredit a group, whose views you differ with, if you can portray that group as being on the fringe or out of the mainstream. The media seems willing to help groups like the Interfaith Alliance attach those labels. The media is good at being one-sided with the use of labels. When was the last time you heard the media use the label "radical religious left" to describe those who support abortion, gay marriages, etc.? I never have. Yet, it's OK to use the label "radical religious

right," even in the *Catholic Courier*.

I wonder too about the reason behind their plans to send a letter to the clergy "warning against 'blatantly partisan' voter guides." I suspect that refers to the voter guides distributed by the Christian Coalition. Those guides simply list issues of concern to many Christians and others and show where the candidates stand on those issues. How is that partisan? Could it be that the Interfaith Alliance is trying to scare the clergy into not using the voter guides by calling them "blatantly partisan"?

The election is a long way off. I hope nearer to the election, the *Catholic Courier* will do a similar story on the work of the Catholic Alliance. This group represents the Catholic view on the moral and social issues of the day far more faithfully than does the Interfaith Alliance.

Raymond N. Buonemani
Holcroft Road, Rochester

Headline was disservice to readers

To the editors:

Did your headline writer read a different article than the one headlined "Active Catholics moving toward Republican Party, survey indicates" (Oct. 21)?

Nowhere in the article was data listed that showed that from the 1,001 people who responded to the *Crisis* magazine poll, is there any indication that Catholics were moving their affiliation toward the Republican Party, or toward the Independents, Democrats or even the Whig and Greenpeace parties, only a possible vote.

Your headliner took an unsubstantiated statement by one Steven Wagner, who owns a polling firm, when Wagner said at the outset that 30 million Catholics would vote in the November elections, compared to 19 million who voted in 1998. Wagner claimed that active Catholics are gradually shifting to the Republican Party, only as to whether they would pick one

candidate in the election over another. No information even remotely suggests that any of the 1,001 of the more than 30 million Catholics were even casually likely to change parties before, during or even after the election.

If these 1,001 Catholics said they'd rather have the drug-user Bush over the stick-in-the-mud Gore, that only indicates a candidate swing, not a party affiliation swing. For headline readers, this is a disservice.

Dale Campfield
Perry Drive, Apalachin

EDITORS' NOTE: We certainly don't claim infallibility for our headlines. But saying people are moving "toward" something is different from saying they're moving "into" it. Moreover, the headline attributed the inference to the *Crisis* poll and said nothing about affiliation, per se. We nevertheless regret any confusion the headline may have caused.

Beware apparent civic-mindedness of group with secular alliances

To the editors:

I find it curious, to say the least that those groups that often pose as champions of openness and tolerance often fail to practice what they preach.

This thought comes to mind after having read your recent front page story about the Rochester group that claims that it wants to put a halt to "blatantly partisan" comments and so-called "negative

campaigns" by urging political candidates to sign "civility" pledges. Yet, in the very story, this group is labeled as one that attacks the Christian Coalition as a part of "the radical religious right"! In short, their real aim is to stifle the right of expression of those with whom they disagree by claiming they are extremists unworthy to be part of the political process. Nor does your story indicate that this sup-

posedly independent band of religious leaders is nothing but an offshoot of People for the American Way, a secularist, left-wing "special interest group" whose political agenda can scarcely be described as unbiased; in fact, the PAW is well known for its harsh attacks against those who call for more access to the public square of political discourse by people of faith, be they evangelical Christian pastors or Roman Catholic bishops.

Readers who might otherwise be attracted to the supposed civic-mindedness of the Rochester group should be aware of its origins and purpose before they become ensnared by its soft-sell approach to religious bigotry. As we are reminded in the biblical injunction, "Beware of those wolves disguised as sheep!"

Richard J. Daly
Myers Road, Lansing

Schoolteacher's diocesan pension is 'frozen' in 1985

To the editors:

Bravo Father McBrien for your discourse on what's fair in the workplace. (*Catholic Courier*, October 7).

In June of 1985 I retired from a Diocese of Rochester School with a pension of \$130.11. In June of 1999 my pension remains the same. There has never been

a cost of living increase. My meager pension is frozen in time.

Indeed, there is "a gap between general principles of Catholic social teaching and practices at the local level."

Angela Savino
Robin Road
Horseheads