



The Catholic Civil Rights League

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Use of union dues under renewed scrutiny

Two issues of longstanding interest to the League are on the agenda as Parliament begins its Fall session. Stephen Woodworth's motion to commence a parliamentary study on whether our current Criminal Code provisions about when life begins are in keeping with modern medical knowledge is discussed in a separate article on this page. And ongoing efforts to give union members greater religious and conscientious freedom in the use of their mandatory dues are coming under greater scrutiny.

Private member's Bill C-377, introduced by MP Russ Hiebert, passed second reading in March and is now before the House Standing Committee on Finance. Among other provisions, it would require unions to disclose how much money they spend on political activities. Up to now, no such requirement has existed, and the League has assisted several Catholic union members in their efforts to protest the use of their dues to lobby for such changes as same sex marriage and support for abortion rights.

While both those issues have been catalysts for efforts to create a greater say for members in the use of their dues, new impetus came during the recent Quebec election when it emerged that the Public Service Alliance of Canada had supported several separatist candidates. It's unlikely that the federal government employees who make up PSAC are supportive of the separatist movement, particularly those living in Quebec. In the wake of this support by PSAC, Pierre Poilievre, a Conservative MP from Quebec, has stated that he is considering introducing new legislation allowing workers to opt out of paying dues if they choose not to be part of the union. (Under Canadian law, workers in unionized shops must continue to pay dues even if they choose to withdraw from the union.)

Even where a collective agreement spells out a provision for diversion of dues to charity for religious reasons, attempts to do so are rarely successful and are usually limited to those whose religions forbid unionization. Workers the League has helped in their effort to use the provision are

Catholics who object to the use of their dues to actively support causes, such as same sex marriage and abortion rights, that are in direct conflict with Catholic teaching. As the League recently explained in a Catholic Register interview (Sept. 14), we don't claim any expertise in whether the right to opt out of unionization, or the use of conscientious objection clauses or some other provision, is the best way to promote religious freedom in the use of mandatory dues. But the principle is an important one, and it requires both legislative initiatives and the active involvement of union members. The League will continue to support Catholic union members in related efforts.

Motion 312 fails, but debate continues

OTTAWA, ON September 26, 2012 – Motion 312 was defeated in the House of Commons today by a vote of 203 to 91. This motion, proposed by MP Stephen Woodworth, would have seen Parliament appoint a 12-member committee to study the legal definition of when a child becomes a human being. The Criminal Code currently considers a child a human being only after it has emerged alive from the mother's womb.

“Although the Motion was defeated, it was very encouraging to see the the subject brought forward, as well as the groundswell of support through meetings with MPs, e-mails, letters, phone calls and petitions,” said Joanne McGarry, executive director of the Catholic Civil Rights League, which supported the motion through press interviews, messages to MPs and to its membership. “We thank Mr. Woodworth for proposing the motion, and all those MPs who supported it and thereby kept respect for life on Canada's agenda. This particular motion has been defeated, but the debate on this issue, which many Canadians believe is anything but ‘settled,’ will continue until Canadian law recognizes the humanity of the unborn.”

League seeks better access to abortion statistics

TORONTO, August 24, 2012 – The Catholic Civil Rights League has asked Deb Matthews, Ontario's Minister of Health and Long Term Care, to allow requests about abortion data in Ontario under the province's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FIPPA) legislation. The exemption of abortion information from such requests was made earlier in the year with little publicity under Bill 122.

In a recent letter from League Executive Director Joanne McGarry, the League stated that the exemption will serve no purpose and make it more difficult to evaluate the facts about abortion in the province. "Most of the reasons (given) for the change seem to focus on the sensitive and confidential nature of abortion data, and yet this problem could be solved by simply releasing the numbers in such a way that no one is identified.

"Everyone appreciates the need to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of patients and providers in this and indeed other medical matters. Without reliable data, however, it will be much more difficult to evaluate trends in women's health care, and perhaps also the effectiveness of education programs in that regard. Given that FIPPA officers already have the ability to accept or refuse individual requests for information, legitimate research inquiries should be accepted as they have been in the past."

There has as yet been no response to our letter.

Council prayer should not be banned, says League

TORONTO, August 1, 2012 - The recent filing of a lawsuit against Grey County council for opening public meetings with the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario Secular Alliance's ongoing effort to remove the prayer from the opening of council meetings in at least 18 Ontario municipalities.

The alliance is clear enough about its goal for faith-free public spaces. On this particular campaign, its home page states: "Secular Ontario's first initiative is to request that municipalities in Ontario refrain from reciting the "Lord's Prayer" at council meetings. The population of Ontario embraces a variety of religious sects and some do not acknowledge any deity. Municipalities serve all residents and cannot be seen as favouring one particular religion.

Therefore, municipalities have to remain secular so that all of its citizens can feel included."

A genuine understanding of secularism and inclusion would mean that all religions are welcome. In the case of prayer at public meetings, this need not mean that there is no opening reflection, but that it might be non-sectarian, or perhaps rotate among the various religious groups represented in the community.

The Ontario Court of Appeal upheld the former possibility in its 1999 judgment in Freitag v. Penetanguishene, noting that while the recitation of the Lord's Prayer at town council meetings violated the Charter right to freedom of religion, "the purposes articulated by the Mayor for opening the meetings of the Town Council with the Lord's Prayer could be served, for example, by a non-denominational prayer and a moment of silence, similar to the current practice of the House of Commons."

The League supports the right of all elected bodies to begin their meetings with prayer. The experience in Ontario suggests that the majority of people support maintaining this long-standing custom, perhaps augmented by the inclusion of prayers and reflections from other faith traditions. The promotion of religious freedom and diversity should encourage us to embrace religious traditions, not banish them from public life.

BC assisted suicide case to be appealed

OTTAWA, July 16, 2012 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to learn that the federal government will appeal last month's BC Supreme Court ruling in Carter v Canada that struck down Canada's ban on assisted suicide (League press releases, June 15). The League and many other organizations had urged the government to appeal.

In a statement July 13, federal Justice Minister Rob Nicholson said the government intends to seek a stay on all aspects of the ruling, including the exemption for plaintiff Gloria Taylor, while it goes to the BC Court of Appeal. Mrs. Taylor, a BC resident, suffers from Lou Gehrig's disease and said she wants a doctor's help to die before the illness progresses to the point that she can no longer care for herself.

"The government is of the view that the Criminal Code provisions that prohibit medical professionals, or anyone else, from counseling or providing assistance in a suicide, are constitutionally valid," said Mr. Nicholson. "The gov-

ernment also objects to the lower court's decision to grant a 'constitutional exemption' resembling a regulatory framework for assisted suicide."

At the time of the decision, the League noted that the court "has ignored the existing precedent of the Supreme Court of Canada, from the Rodriguez decision from 1993. The Court's ruling has trivialized the serious concerns about the impact of the liberalization of assisted suicide laws, and the impact on those with severe or costly disabilities to make use of that option. There is little comfort for doctors who may be asked to participate in such requests contrary to their conscientious rights."

When Parliament last voted on this issue (on Bill C-384, in 2010), the proposal for liberalization was defeated by a vote of 228 to 59 due to concerns about the potential for abuse of seniors and people with disabilities, the lack of an effective national suicide prevention strategy, and the lack of access to good palliative care in Canada. Little if anything has changed since that vote, so it is of particular concern that a court overruled what Parliament so recently voted.

It is also unfortunate that the ruling implied that suicide is a constitutional right when Parliament has identified it as a national tragedy. Bill 300, for example, which aims to coordinate and strengthen the work of suicide prevention agencies, reached the Senate just before the decision in Carter was delivered.

Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, of which the League is an institutional member, intervened in the case and will seek intervention standing in the appeal.

BC bubble zone convictions to be appealed

VICTORIA, BC Sept. 10, 2012 — The British Columbia Court of Appeal, has granted Cecelia von Dehn and Donald Spratt leave to appeal their convictions for breaching the *Access to Abortion Services Act*, also called the BC "Bubble Zone Law".

Mrs. Von Dehn and Mr. Spratt entered the zone at Everywoman's Health Center at Commercial and Broadway in Vancouver at on June 19, 2009 with signs warning the public that they, too, could be arrested within this unique zone, passed under Bill 48, which prohibits any expression of opinion against abortion in the zone. Subsequent-

ly, they only passed out copies of the 'Bubble Zone' law itself. Mrs. von Dehn had done this on at least three previous occasions, when the police attended and informed her and the clinic that she was not in breach of the *Act*, and therefore was "not arrestable".

However, on June 9, 2009, the police came and without warning arrested and charged them with "protest" and "sidewalk interference". They were later convicted, sentenced to two years probation, and fined \$1,000.

Today, Mrs. Von Dehn said, "This Leave to Appeal will allow at last a scrutiny of the wording of this 1995 legislation which was enlarged in June 2009 to label as "protest" and "sidewalk interference" the passing out of the Legislation itself in the area in which it applies, i.e. a 'bubble zone'. Any citizen should be free to inform the public of a law without being arrested, jailed and having to seek remedy in the courts."

Mr. Spratt and Mrs. von Dehn are now awaiting announcement of a date for their appeal to be heard.

Media Watch

Vatican sues German newsmagazine

The Vatican has filed legal charges against a German satirical magazine that published an offensive depiction of Pope Benedict XVI.

The July issue of Titanic magazine featured a photo of the Pontiff, altered to include what appeared to be a urine stain on the front of his cassock. The photo accompanied a feature story on the "Vatileaks" scandal, and the headline read: "The leak has been found." Archbishop Angelo Becciu, the Vatican's deputy Secretary of State, gave instructions to a German lawyer to "take the necessary legal steps against this publication." A court in Hamburg, responding the Vatican complaint, ordered Titanic to stop marketing copies of the July issue.

- CW News, July 11/12

Visit our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CatholicCivilRightsLeague) for interactive content of interest to League supporters.

Let the League know: If you see articles, notices of TV programs or other media content that you believe have serious anti-Catholic content, please contact us at ccrl@ccrl.ca to help us evaluate and respond in a timely way.

Mark your calendars:

League annual meeting: Join us for the presentation of our annual reports and directors' slate as well as an informative talk by Father Tom Lynch, national director of Priests for Life Canada. Our annual meeting takes place Wednesday October 24 in Toronto, beginning with Mass in memory of deceased League members and supporters at 5:30 pm at St. Michael's Cathedral. Meeting and talk to follow in the auditorium of St. Michael's Choir School, 66 Bond Street.

National Conference of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, Halifax, October 19-21. The League will be presenting a paper about current challenges to parental authority in education in Canada. For more information about the conference, contact Patrick Redmond at pmredmond@sympatico.ca or visit www.catholicsscholarscanada.com.

National Pro-Life Conference, October 25-27, 2012 in Toronto. Speakers include MPs Stephen Woodworth and Brad Trost, and Margaret Somerville, director of the McGill Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law. The League will have an information table at the conference. For registration and further information: 1-866-588-2684 or e-mail aflo@mgl.ca

League director receives Jubilee medal

OTTAWA, ON September 20, 2012 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to announce that Jean Morse-Chevrier, Quebec director of the League for over 10 years, has been awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her contributions to education and advocacy for family and religious rights.

Mrs. Morse-Chevrier, an educational psychologist, has been executive director of REAL Women of Canada and

chairperson of the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec in addition to extensive volunteer work in support of family and religious freedom with the League, the Coalition for Freedom in Education and the Coalition for Christian Parental Rights in Education (RCDPE). She has also volunteered over the years with Montreal Pro-Life, Accueil Grossesse, Vivere, Mouvement pour le respect de la vie, Action Life, Objectif Survie Quebec, Campaign Life and Campaign Life Coalition.

"I am grateful to all these organizations for allowing me to defend life, family, education rights and religious freedom with the support of so many dedicated people," said Mrs. Morse-Chevrier. "All those with whom I have worked share the honour that I receive today."

Development update

In a few short weeks we will begin our Fall development drive. We hope those who can will take the opportunity to support the League financially, and make a renewed effort to support the League by distributing our literature, recommending us to friends and supporting League events locally. We are currently waiting to learn if the Supreme court of Canada allows an appeal of Ontario's decision legalizing almost all aspects of prostitution in Canada. If the appeal is allowed, we hope to participate. We also expect further serious challenges to denominational rights in Catholic schools. Our ability to sustain our activities and undertake new projects will depend on our finances.

In addition to your financial donations, we greatly appreciate your referrals of new members to the League, as we need to continue to grow our support base in order to be effective as well as to keep fundraising appeals to a reasonable level.

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Support the League

We rely completely on your generosity to continue our work. Gifts can be made online (www.ccrl.ca) or by mail to CCRL, 500 – 120 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, ON M4P 1E2., using this convenient form:

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