

Editorial

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LETTERS FROM READERS

Mar 12, 2009

Moral authority

If Catholic hospitals close or even resort to martyred acts of civil disobedience because of the eventual passage of the Freedom of Choice Act, the bishops may tend to blame lay people ("Federal FOCA bill sparks threats of hospital closings," March 6). Possibly in their eyes, the faithful abandoned sound morality by voting for a president who backed extreme pro-choice legislation.

Recent lay Catholic voting preference aside, the bishops themselves fostered a blurred moral compass by covering up the crimes and illicit behavior of countless clergy in their midst for seemingly endless years. Even now, questionable clergy remain in active ministry, and the church refuses to adopt a truly open and transparent policy with regard to credibly accused predator priests.

With a federal investigation of mismanaged clergy sex abuse cases underway in the Los Angeles Diocese and a lawsuit by a clergy sex abuse victim against the Vatican moving forward, what kind of moral superiority do Catholic bishops have right now? Their lack of consistency in dealing with sexual issues - from womb to tomb - is a prime reason pro-abortion agendas are gaining ground.

Linda Briggs-Harty | Webster Groves

For the lawyers

The story "Federal FOCA bill sparks threats of hospital closings" (March 6) asks the timely question of whether the Freedom of Choice Act would mandate that Catholic hospitals perform abortions. Concerned about this since the election, I went online and found the text of the bill. Sensing the FOCA draft was unusually vague, I asked an attorney to review it to see if the text implied an abortion mandate for all hospitals.

The attorney replied that it didn't have a lot of specifics, and that implementation would involve lengthy negotiations to determine its meaning. She even suggested that the courts might throw it out for excessive vagueness.

As written, I sense FOCA's true potential is in the third part. Basically, it says, "An individual aggrieved by a violation of this section may obtain appropriate relief (including relief against a government) in a civil action."

Seems like this bill was drafted to please the Trial Lawyers Association, not the National Abortion Rights Action League. Implementation would trigger a flood of lawsuits by all sides.

John P. Orr | Swansea

Wasted money

After the billion-dollar unused runway at Lambert, which practically ruined the town of Bridgeton, I thought the Airport Commission had changed its prolific spending when it put on hold the \$105 million rehabbing of the terminal.

Now, however I learn that Lambert Airport Director Richard Hrabko has hired a consulting firm to the tune of \$1.3 million to promote the airport ("Airport votes to hire firm to help it 'sell' St. Louis," March 5). To quote Mr. Hrabko, "We have to get out and sell the product - the product is St. Louis."

That is not the function of the airport. Airline travel is down nationwide. All the consulting in the world won't change that.

Even the person speaking for the consulting firm does not sound optimistic. "At the end of the day we're not magicians," he said. "Airlines are going to fly to places that make money."

Let's hope the Board of Estimate and Apportionment stops this waste of money.

Joseph Kunkel | St. Louis

Buyer's remorse

Maureen Dowd finally is writing mainstream ("McCain Twitters as Obama fritters away a promise," March 5). For months, she lambasted Sen. John McCain and extolled now-President Barack Obama. The majority of Americans turned a blind eye to his dialogue and dismal ethical principles.

Now, former supporters are surprised he's broken a pledge on earmarks and transparency. There is a discrepancy between promises made and policies enacted.

He has appointed several individuals to his cabinet who are tax cheats and tax evaders, yet he expects citizens to file honest returns and willingly pay their taxes. This administration is sending a disturbing message and is rewarding dishonesty.

Our country is bailing out companies with poor management and unsustainable union contracts, insurance institutions that are too large to fail (we're told), banks with outrageous financial practices and homeowners who took on loans without proper financial means. This administration already has added trillions of dollars to the deficit for excessive and unnecessary spending projects.

As we watch the stock market plunge and security evaporate, Mr. Obama marches on with even more spending and more programs that will result in higher prices and taxes. The promised tax decrease for the "middle class" will be wiped out by increased costs and tax hikes imposed on necessary daily living expenses. Consequently, the middle class gains nothing.

As this administration takes a vacation from reality, Ms. Dowd and a growing number of former Democratic supporters seem to be suffering from "buyer's remorse."

Conservative voters didn't buy into it from the beginning.

Sue Jernigan | St. Louis County

Coming back for more

Regarding "Mileage tax gains traction on Capitol Hill" (March 8): Our lawmakers mandate to Detroit the miles per gallon that cars must get. Now, because those cars they are giving us extra mileage per gallon, the revenue from the federal gas tax of 18 cents per gallon has been decreasing. We are purchasing less fuel.

Now Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who never has seen a tax increase she didn't like, thinks a mileage tax is a good way to make up for the revenue "shortfall." And Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., rushed to the defense of this idea, also suggesting that we should be charged for each mile we travel.

These people will tax us any way they can.

We do what Washington asked us to do - drive more fuel-efficient cars - but the politicians still come back to us for more.

No wonder there is much discontent with Washington.

Dale Carroll | Imperial

Shameful politics

Rush Limbaugh, former President George W. Bush and former Sen. Joseph McCarthy belong to a subset of American politics that is shameful. Each of these influential voices built their ascendancy on fear and lies. Mr. McCarthy gained prominence by creating a panic about communism in the United States. Mr. Bush used his position to catapult our country into a war that was waged to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction,

which never have been found. And, now Mr. Limbaugh, a radio entertainer, is using his energy and vocal prowess to convince his radio audience that President Barack Obama is our enemy. Mr. Limbaugh hopes that Mr. Obama fails as our leader, which could be fatal to our nation's existence considering the fragility of our condition.

Mr. Limbaugh should be put under the microscope. He must be held accountable for his mistakes and the manipulation of his followers. He should be treated like Don Imus or Jimmy The Greek, both of whom were punished severely for their offensive statements. It is time to punish Mr. Limbaugh.

Ed Beck | Ferguson

Let them eat cake?

Having read the upteenth review of multi-million-dollar (or near million-dollar) homes in the "Home Spotlight" in the Homes section, I must protest. In the midst of the worst housing market in the history of our country, foreclosures at unprecedented levels and most home buyers in the starter range, free advertising for the housing elite is off the chart. This "let them eat cake" philosophy is stunning.

It is time for the Obama supporters to confront reality and attempt to fix this economy. Facing it might be a good start. Help struggling St. Louis home buyers with realistic options.

Mike Kohnen | Millstadt

Let the kids play

The March 5 photograph of a "play and swing set" at the White House reminded me of a conversation I had last year. Several neighbors were watching young children playing on the playground at our grade school. One parent, who didn't have adequate health insurance, told her son that it was OK to play but not to climb or swing on the swings. Her reasoning was that she could not afford emergency care if he had a serious fall that included a broken bone or concussion.

As a modern nation, we can do better for families. Unlike the reform attempt in 1993, most parties at the table this time agree that "doing nothing" is not an option. Businesses, the administration, health care providers and consumer leaders must move toward a mix that we will recognize as universal health care for families and for kids at the playground.

Dan Sullivan | Glendale