

Condom policy shocks D.C. religious leaders

by Leo F. Scanlon

The mayor of Washington, D.C. announced in mid-May the most sweeping program for the distribution of condoms in public schools and prisons yet undertaken by a U.S. municipality, despite overwhelming opposition from religious leaders. The proposal was developed by the D.C. Commission of Public Health and approved by Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly, who announced that she will distribute clean needles to drug addicts as well. She justified the measures by pointing to the horrendous rate of HIV infection among inner-city teenagers, 1 in 40 of whom are estimated to carry the virus. The city's radical policies are a bellwether for similar efforts nationally, and have spurred condom distribution proposals in nearby municipalities.

District religious leaders, especially from Baptist and Catholic churches, were quick to attack the policies, but are increasingly powerless to influence the city government, which is being used as a "laboratory" for the most bizarre policies of both the Bush administration and the Democratic Party.

A group of Baptist ministers denounced the plan as a "morally incorrect" and "politically bankrupt" scheme which "teaches the wrong values in a society already crippled and dying from a lack of morals and values." Speaking for the Archdiocese of Washington, Cardinal James Hickey characterized the plan as morally and practically unsound, and said that schools should support the efforts of parents to encourage "young people to exercise self-control and to develop the virtue of chastity," and help young people to "develop the self-respect and strength of character to practice abstinence."

The announcement drew fire from parents and even from prisoners, who viewed the measure as a tacit endorsement of the homosexuality which is rampant in the city jails. Some noted that city officials are encouraging illegal activity.

The condom plan was announced only weeks after the District City Council passed an equally controversial measure which extended city health and insurance benefits to homosexual and unmarried heterosexual couples. The so-called "domestic partnership" bill was opposed by all of the clergy in the city, as well as by leading citizens associations, and is now being challenged by a congressional resolution which would overturn the action.

The statehood issue

The onslaught of degenerate legislation is the prelude to a battle which is shaping up over the proposal to strip the District of its constitutional status as a Federal City, and create a state of "New Columbia." The City Council has passed an extra-constitutional bill which declares the city to be a state. Despite the fact that a previous campaign to accomplish this goal through the constitutional amendment process failed, the District Committee of the Congress has approved the measure, which will come before the full Congress at about election time.

The peculiar nature of the District of Columbia makes it a prime staging ground for policies which need national exposure, but would never be approved by Congress. Bills enacted by the City Council go before the District Committee of the Congress, which then presents them to the full Congress in a process similar to the conference procedure by which the House and Senate resolve differences over legislation. If the conference fails, the bill is not law. If Congress does not override the actions of the District government, they have the de facto approval of Congress, and must be challenged in the federal courts.

Bishop Leonard Olivier of the Archdiocese of Washington took note of these political complexities in his statement opposing the domestic partnership bill, which characterized the act as "an attack aimed at the very heart of our community—the family." He said that it was "with both reluctance and sadness that the Catholic Church asks Congress to overturn an action by our City Council," since "we have long supported home rule and want to be respectful of locally elected officials." A similar concern was raised by Mrs. Gilpin Walker and the Cleveland Park Citizens' Association, which pointed out that the council action—a self-serving scheme to benefit homosexuals without expanding health care for the needy of the city—"would discourage consideration by Congress of statehood."

Congress should be discouraged from considering the statehood scheme, since its main effect would be to create an artificial state dominated by an extremist clique bent on using the people of the District as guinea pigs. As in the case of Los Angeles, politicians are making alliances with the street thugs and gangs which control cash, drugs, and guns.

The "decriminalization" of prison homosexuality implemented by Mayor Kelly is, among other things, a sop to the street-gang structure inside the prisons which are home to nearly one out of two black males in the District before they reach the age of 30. Prison homosexuality is controlled by these gangs. The politicians who have presided over the holocaust which is destroying the inner cities—people like D.C. Shadow Senator Jesse Jackson, Mayor Kelly, and her friends on the Democratic National Committee—are pushing the statehood scheme in alliance with the homosexual mafia and the criminal gangs which control drug trafficking in the city.