

Kick the Paedophiles Out of Our Schools!

Child abuse horror throughout Ireland

Andrew Blackmore

1995

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When the case of Father Brendan Smyth, the paedophile priest, came out, the whole country was revolted. But while the politicians attempted to score political points off each other, many important questions were not asked. Here was an unrepentant child molester, carrying out sexual assaults on hundreds of children over a period of forty years, with the full knowledge of the Catholic Church. What sort of twisted religious “morals” could justify the Church protecting such a man, for so long? Anarchists have always opposed clerical control of education. How can we allow the Church, which permits paedophilia, to continue to be in charge of our schools?

Father Michael Carney

We do not need any more evidence of what is going on in our schools. Father Michael Carney, from Galway, was given a 15 month suspended sentence for sexual assault on a student. An unnamed priest in the Creggan, in Derry, is in the centre of a child abuse investigation. This is only the tip of the iceberg.

Any of us who went to a Christian Brothers school will remember the physical and sexual abuse that many of the pupils had to suffer on a regular basis. Just before Christmas a religious brother was sentenced to seven years in jail for raping a 10 year old girl.

Even the most defenceless children are not safe. At least fifteen children, in Madonna House, have been sexually abused. The State has now started investigations into many other Church controlled homes.

Church control of schools

Well over 90% of primary and secondary schools are controlled by the Catholic hierarchy. Control of the school means the Church controls everything; the hiring and firing of the teachers, and the entire ethos, principals and teaching of the school. The taxpayer, through the State, is left to pay the teachers' salaries, and school maintenance.

Death of Sheila Hodgers

It is not only in the sector of education that the church has control. Until recently, the Catholic hierarchy controlled the ethics committees of most hospitals. They decided the ethos of the hospitals, and made life and death decisions. The death of Sheila Hodgers, in 1983, was a direct result of Catholic ethics.

Sheila Hodgers, who was pregnant and suffering from cancer, was refused treatment, which could have saved her life, on the grounds that it would damage her foetus. Both Sheila and the baby died, soon after birth.

Treatment was refused because it is Catholic ethics to put the potential life of a foetus before that of the woman carrying the foetus. So it was okay to allow Sheila Hodgers to die, if there was any chance at all of the baby being born alive.

The Catholic hierarchy influences the State in other ways. As well as direct representations to government, they use lay organisations such as, Opus Dei and the Knights of St Columbanus, to secretly infiltrate decision making positions.

Justice Rory O'Hanlon, of the High Court, has confessed to membership of Opus Dei. But members of Opus Dei rank high up in the gardai, the health services and in education.

Fianna Fáil

Fianna Fáil used to be known as the Bishops Party, due to its allegiance with the Catholic Church. Many members of Fianna Fáil are in the Knights of St Columbanus. At least one, Michael Woods, is in Opus Dei.

The Catholic hierarchy have influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, virtually every decision that the State has made over our lives. They have constantly opposed measures that would make our lives better; the Mother and child scheme, the Welfare State, women's right to life, abortion, travel, information and equal job opportunities, divorce, contraception, equal rights for homosexuals, free speech, funding for the rape crisis centre and for child support groups, strikes, and so on.

Referenda victory

But every cloud has a silver lining. It appears that the tight grasp of the Church is weakening. The three referenda held after the 'X case', resulted in the 'Right to Information and Travel', which was a clear victory.

The Bill which gave equal rights to homosexuals was passed with very small protest. Even the election of Mary Robinson, and the massive growth of the Labour Party vote, show that people are becoming more liberal in their attitudes.

Molesting kids

We must support the weakening of the power of the Catholic hierarchy, who have put the dictates of the Church and their own self preservation, ahead of any rights of people. We have seen recently just how far they are prepared to go.

When they find out about one of their priests molesting a kid they cover it up. Instead of immediately sacking the priest and handing him in to the authorities, they move him to another parish, where he is not known and can start molesting again. The good name of the church has been spared at the cost of hundreds of abused children.

Priests don't have children

Even if the church did not allow paedophilia, it is still unacceptable for them to control our schools. At the end of the day the people who have a say in schools should be the people who have a direct interest in what goes on in them.

That is, the parents and the teachers. Schools should be run so that the parents are happy that their children are safe and getting a good education, and that the teachers are happy that they are being given the resources and wages to do a good job.

The Catholic hierarchy is not in this equation. Priests and nuns are not allowed to have sex, never mind children. They have no direct interest in the welfare of children, and they should have no automatic control over our schools.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with individual priests and nuns being hired by a school as teachers, and having an equal participation with the other teachers. What is wrong is having Bishops with automatic control over the schools' welfare, with no comeback for the parents or teachers.

Separate Church and State

Anarchists believe that no church, no religious group, can have the right to control the ethos and principals of a school, hospital or country. We believe that it is worth fighting for a clear division between the Church and the State.

As far as schools are concerned, we can only be sure of the safety and education of our children if we have a say in how the schools are run. A good start to this would be replacing the existing school boards with properly elected representatives of the parents and teachers.

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