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Atheist Soros Funds Catholic Groups

by Cliff Kincaid on November 12, 2009

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The critical role of the Catholic Church in passing national health care reform legislation is coming under serious media scrutiny. But the story has taken a strange turn. It has now been revealed that George Soros, the billionaire hedge fund operator and well-known atheist, has been pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into “progressive” Catholic groups that are significant players in the national debates over health care and immigration.

On the surface, it would appear that Soros would be opposed to many positions of the Catholic Church. A major financial backer of the ACLU, Soros supports such causes as drug legalization, the rights of “sex workers” and felons, euthanasia, radical feminism, abortion rights, and homosexual rights. He does all of this in the name of promoting an “open society.”

But a review of the records of his Open Society Institute finds that a group calling itself Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good (<http://www.catholicsinalliance.org/>) (CACG) has received \$200,000 from them over the last several years.

James Todd of Pewsitter.com (http://www.pewsitter.com/page_1.html), which represents traditional Catholics, calls such groups “CINOs,” or Catholics In Name Only. He explains, “This group and several others have sprung up recently-I suspect purposely organized and funded-to counterbalance the growing influence of the faithful Catholics AND to try to deceive and mislead the middle of the road Catholics that have determined the last 13 Presidential elections.”

An AIM investigation also finds, however, that Soros money has gone into the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (<http://www.cliniclegal.org/>) (CLINIC), an organization established by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops back in 1988. It has received at least \$530,000 from the Open Society Institute.

The two issues merge in the fact that the Catholic Bishops are demanding that national health care legislation cover illegal aliens.

In a story (<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/09/religious-leaders-seek-healthcare-for-illegal-immigrants.html>) headlined, "Religious Leaders Seek Healthcare for Illegal Immigrants," the Los Angeles Times recently quoted Kathy Saile, director of domestic social development with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, as saying that illegal immigrants should be included in any healthcare reform plan. Father Richard Estrada of Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Los Angeles was described as being part of a religious service and phone bank "to urge congressional leaders to include illegal immigrants in any healthcare reform plan." His church has in the past offered sanctuary to illegal immigrants.

CACG played a role in House passage of H.R. 3962, the bill known as Pelosicare and boasts that it had joined with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Health Association, and "dozens of other Catholic and faith-based groups in celebrating this historic vote."

The group's blog even offered a "Health Care Reform Prayer (<http://www.catholicsinalliance.org/node/21233>)," asking for God's help in passing federal legislation.

John Gehring, CACG media director, told AIM that "We have been primarily focused on highlighting the moral dimensions of this issue and articulating how Catholic social teaching addresses health care as a human right central to a just society. Along with other faith-based groups like PICO National Network, Faith in Public Life, Sojourners and others we brought citizens and faith leaders to Capitol Hill several weeks ago to meet with representatives and they emphasized the urgency for reform and specifically the critical issue of affordability.

For example, Fr. Joseph Shad, S.J., a hospital chaplain at Mercy Hospital in Portland, Maine, came to Capitol Hill and met with representatives. He shared stories we have collected from citizens across the country as part of our project, Voices for Health Reform.”

On the passage of the Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3962, CACG said, “As Catholics, we applaud the efforts of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Bart Stupak, and others who helped extend current restrictions on federal funding of abortion to health plans participating in the public [health] exchanges.”

But Judie Brown of the American Life League says (<http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/brown/091112>) the provision doesn’t go far enough and accuses the Bishops who lobbied for passage of wanting “mandatory, government-run health care for one and all more than it desires the protection of all vulnerable human beings’ right to life.”

The anti-abortion restrictions, Brown points out, still permit federal funding of abortions in some circumstances. What’s more, she says the bill:

- Expands access to and funding of abortifacient contraception (section 1714).
- Promotes federal funding of Planned Parenthood-style permissive sex education programs (section 2526).
- Allows euthanasia through withholding or withdrawing “medical treatment or medical care” and withholding or withdrawing of “nutrition or hydration” (section 240).
- Has only vaguely worded references to conscience rights and only partial protection of the same (section 258 and 259).
- Contains language that forces a “participating health benefits plan” to not “discriminate” against any facilities that provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions (section 304).

Meanwhile, Michael Cannon of the Cato Institute says (<http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2009/11/10/abortion-funding-and-health-care/>) that “Catholics should be outraged at the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops” because while they succeeded in getting a pro-abortion provision dropped from the bill, they “abandoned the Church’s doctrine of subsidiarity by endorsing the rest of the Democrats’ plan to centralize power in Washington.” Cannon says his grandfather served as counsel to the Bishops.

But the Soros-funded Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good has high-level connections of its own. The Treasurer-Secretary is Francis Xavier Doyle, a former top official of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Executive director is Victoria Kovari, a former organizer for the Gamaliel Foundation, the same group that helped launch Barack Obama’s career as a community organizer in Chicago. The chairman is Alfred M. Rotondaro, a senior fellow at another Soros-funded group, the Center for American Progress.

Although CACG describes itself as “a lay Catholic organization that works to promote the common good and the broad spectrum of Catholic social teaching,” Frank Walker of the conservative Pewsitter website (http://www.pewsitter.com/view_news_id_17572.php) labels it a religious and political Trojan Horse designed to mislead Catholics and produce votes for the Democratic Party.

One purpose of the Soros money, Walker says, is to play down the importance of the abortion issue to Catholics and even make abortion rights a “respectable” Catholic position.

Walker notes that “The CACG is run and advised by powerful Democrats. Their board, staff, and advisory committee include top fundraisers and strategists as well as major labor union representation.” He adds, “Catholic Church Leadership from the Sisters of Mercy, the Jesuit order, the government-funded Catholic Charities and Catholic Relief Services are also represented at CACG. Catholic academia has a strong presence.”

Indeed, the CACG advisory council (<http://www.catholicsinalliance.org/advisory-council>) includes figures from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFL-CIO, Catholic University of America, Georgetown University, and Boston College.

In addition to health care reform, other big issues for CACG are “immigration reform” and “worker justice.” The latter links to a group promoting a bill, the Employee Free Choice Act, which would make it easier for unions to gain members.

The SEIU representative on the CACG board is Tom Chabolla, who serves as assistant to SEIU President Andy Stern. Before joining SEIU, he was associate director of programs for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/committee.shtml>) (CCHD), the agency of the Bishops that funded ACORN to the tune of \$7.3 million over the last decade. Funding of ACORN-but not of groups like Gamaliel-has been suspended by the Bishops.

Gamaliel says on its website (<http://www.gamaliel.org/default.htm>) that “Barack H. Obama, former Gamaliel organizer, is the 44th president of the United States,” and that this makes the organizing community proud. It also has a story about Obama friend and White House adviser Valerie Jarrett speaking to a Gamaliel event in Washington, D.C. of 2,500 activists. Jarrett is the official who said that “we” had recruited communist Van Jones to the White House. Another speaker was Melody Barnes, Obama’s Director of the Domestic Policy Council.

Before coming to the White House, Barnes was the executive vice president for Policy at the Soros-funded Center for American Progress (CAP). Van Jones also worked at CAP before going to the White House. CAP CEO and President John Podesta, who served as President Clinton’s chief of staff, is a major “progressive Catholic” and member of the ACORN advisory council, and served as a professor at Georgetown University.

Interestingly, Tom Chabolla of the SEIU and formerly of the CCHD was on the dinner committee for the 33rd Annual Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award Dinner, which was held on May 7, 2009 in Washington, D.C. One of the award winners (<http://www.civilrights.org/dinner/2009/>) was none other than Van Jones.

On Saturday, November 21 and Sunday, November 22, Catholics across the country will be asked to support the CCHD with their financial offerings. Gamaliel is appealing for support, saying that it is “under attack from those with a partisan agenda to de-fund groups committed to organizing for social justice.” It says: “Many Gamaliel Foundation affiliates rely on funding from CCHD to serve their communities.”

But Gamaliel also relies on George Soros. His Open Society Institute provided \$300,000 to

the organization in 2008.

Cliff Kincaid

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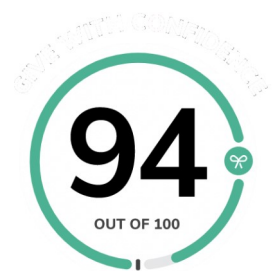
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