

WHO ARE THE BIGOTS?

A correspondent of the Chicago Inter Ocean, in answer to the question whether the Patriotic Order of the Sons of America is a bigoted or an un-American organization says:

1. It is said to be an order of bigotry and un-American, because it excludes from its membership all persons not born in the United States. 2. It is said that it (not by its laws) practically does not admit members of the Catholic church.

Now, while this last proposition is not true, because prominent Catholics have been active in the order, and as a matter of fact became very unruly members and broke up one camp in this town, that is Camp No. 11, when the president of that camp was a Roman Catholic, and it was his bigotry that caused the trouble, but even if these propositions were both true, what then?

Has it come to be the condition of affairs that every nationality in the land can have its societies, and every sect or trade can have its orders, except the native American? but that he must stand aside and bow his head and say, I am an American, but I dare not say so in public (?). I have been told by the people, "We are Americans, although born in a foreign land, and when you exclude us you arrogate to yourselves qualifications which you do not possess, and you cast a reflection upon us who were not born here, hence you have no right to organize such a society."

Now, I assume that we have a right to exclude persons who are foreign born, and that it is not arrogance on our part, nor is it a reflection on them. Do they not do the same? And are we offended thereby?

I have a right to organize a society and exclude red-haired people or people with black hair or black skin or flat noses, and who has the right to object? Let us see:

The Grand Army excludes all men who did not serve between certain dates during the late war. How many gallant soldiers have served the country in the Indian wars since 1866, and yet they can not come in? Who says this is bigotry?

The Loyal Legion and the Army of the Tennessee exclude private soldiers. No one can join except those who were commissioned officers during the war.

The gallant governor of Illinois was a soldier tried and true. Was he not a part of that "legion" of loyal men who did noble work in the 60's, and yet he is excluded from the Loyal Legion. Has any one called this bigotry? I cannot join the Sons of St. George, although I have been invited to lecture at an open meeting of that order, and was assured that my views were in perfect accord with theirs. I was not born in England.

The English can have the Sons of St. George; the Irish can have the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Knights of St. Patrick; the Scots can have their Scottish clans; the Germans may have their turner societies and their various vereins; the Jews have their special benevolent societies; and nobody thinks of their being exclusive,

and nobody calls it bigotry; but if the native American should organize, then it is called bigotry.

But, says one, when you call yourselves patriotic, then you insinuate that nobody else is patriotic. Again I say this is not true. Certain commissioned officers of the late war say, "We are the Loyal Legion." Do they say that no one else is loyal? Certainly not.

Hence we say we have a perfect right to organize the Patriotic Order Sons of America, to assume the name and to confine our membership to native Americans, and he who objects to such an action is a selfish, arrogant bigot of the most pronounced type.

Secondly, it is charged that the order practically excludes Catholics. Now, even if this were true, it is not bigotry; it is our right. "Some men can not endure a gaping pig or an innocent cat; it is their whim." What do the Catholics do in this matter? Do they not have the Knights of St. Patrick? Have we objected? Nay, more; they have even imported their holiday into America, and ask that our schools be closed to witness their public parade.

Have they not the Order of St. Petrie (French) and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and we have never even a desire to join? Again, we have a benevolent order in this city known as the Independent Order of Foresters. Catholics and Protestants were admitted alike, but it did not suit our Catholic brethren, so they organized the Catholic Order of Foresters and we are excluded. Families whom I have attended for years and men who joined the Foresters at my solicitation were taken out joined the Catholic Order of Foresters and requested to have a Catholic physician. And we did not object, we had no right to object.

This is a privilege accorded to every man to join any society he wishes, if it does not teach disloyalty to the nation or disobedience to the law. We do object to the Mafia and Clan-na-Gael, not because of their nationality, but because the records show that they teach violation of law. Hence I say, secondly, we have a right to exclude Catholics if we so desired, and he who objects is a bigot of the most pronounced type.

Now, as to the next charge, that the Patriotic Order is hors de combat to the Catholic church, we say that is not true; but when the church or any of its authorities makes war upon our institutions, then we are ready to defend those institutions, and when the Catholic clergy attack our public schools, then we must declare ourselves in readiness to defend the schools against that attack.

Now, when Mr. Michael Coreoran calls this order to account for its position on this question we say to him: If you are fighting the system of public school education in its free, unsectarian form, then you may place us on the other side as your enemy, and we charge that this is the position of certain portions of the Catholic clergy. If Mr. Coreoran is not opposed to unsectarian schools, then he has no part in this controversy, for that is the whole question.

The Sons of America charge that persons high in authority in the Catho-

lic church are at war with the vital elements of our free unsectarian schools, and if Mr. C. or his friends are among these then "him have we offended;" but if he is not, if he stands by the school as Pat Grant does, and as members of the Catholic Library Association have, and as every true American should, then "him have we not offended."

But the very fact that these people are so extremely sensitive about the existence of this patriotic order is evidence to all plain, unbiased people that there is something wrong about them or they would not be so easily "offended."

In twenty years experience as a surgeon I have always found that it is the diseased tissue that is the more sensitive to touch. Now as to specific points. Witness the war made on our public schools in Wisconsin last fall by the Catholic and Lutheran churches, and when a priest has openly said that the order will some day come to all Catholics to shoot the collector who comes to gather taxes for the support of the public school, instead of that priest being rebuked by the authorities of the church he is made a bishop. This, we claim, is treason, and such Catholics we hope "we" have offended.

Again Bishop Cleary of Hamilton, Ontario (where the school fund is divided and the free unsectarian public school is destroyed), said in a public address last September to the school children: "If it shall come to the test between yielding up our present claim for division of the school fund or dividing the Dominion, I shall stand for division of the Dominion." If this is the spirit of the Catholic church then it is our duty to oppose it. If not then there is no fight between us. But later Bishop Kean said only a few days ago in his Central Music Hall address, "The home, the church, and the school should be free from state control." Now so far as the school is concerned we say the doctrine is un-American and at open war with our institutions and hence we oppose it. Again he said in his Detroit interview, "I am in favor of division of the school fund," etc.,

which is un-American, and to this doctrine we are opposed. When such doctrines are persistently put forward by the Catholic church is it not high time that we should take a stand and save the public schools from the degraded standard which they now hold in the Province of Quebec? Does any other church in the land make such claims? If so, then the Sons of America will oppose that effort just the same as they do in the Catholic church.

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