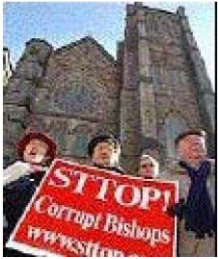




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Victims of priest abuse continue fight in USA



Roman Catholic protesters express their opinions of their hierarchy

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS. The “honeymoon” period for the bishop who replaced the disgraced Cardinal Bernard F. Law, as administrator of the Archdiocese of Boston, appears to be over. Bishop Richard G. Lennon has come under fire for the way he is handling the settlement of the many cases of the victims of abuse within the Boston area. The Roman Catholic church has taken a series of tough legal steps, including resisting a subpoena from the state attorney general and pressing an argument that the First Amendment protects it from litigation by victims, as Bishop Lennon pushes to resolve abuse-related claims by more than 500 people.

Eighty-three mental health professionals from around the nation are denouncing Bishop Richard G. Lennon’s decision to allow church lawyers to question counsellors treating alleged victims of clergy sexual abuse. They are calling the action “an act of re-abuse.”

Their own expert

The direct challenge to Lennon, led by a New York psychoanalyst who had been hand-picked by US bishops as an expert on sexual abuse, comes as plaintiffs’ attorneys and victims increasingly are complaining of Bishop Lennon’s lack of action since assuming his office. Attorneys for alleged victims say settlement talks, which Lennon promised to intensify, have all but broken down. And some victims say the sense of hope they felt with Lennon’s appointment has swiftly ebbed. “The church’s priorities have been very evident — reaching out to parishes, reaching out to its law firms — but there has yet to be any effort to reach out to the victims as a whole,” said Olan Horne of Lowell, who said he and other members of a victims’ group called Survivors of Joseph Birmingham had placed nearly a dozen phone calls before finally hearing that Lennon would meet with them.

Meanwhile, a lawyer acting for the Cardinal at the centre of the Boston scandal, Cardinal Bernard F. Law, has publicly rowed with Superior Court Judge Constance M. Sweeney. In an unusual public rebuke, the Cardinal’s personal attorney accused Superior Court Judge Constance M. Sweeney of making prejudicial remarks that could undermine Law’s ability to get unbiased justice if any of the hundreds of pending civil claims of clergy sexual abuse go to trial.

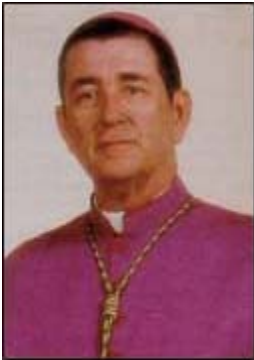
J. Owen Todd, Law’s attorney, noted in an interview with the Globe newspaper that Sweeney’s caustic written and oral comments regarding court motions filed on Law’s behalf have been published in several newspapers and said that, as a result, “One has to wonder if there’s a potential juror left that hasn’t read them and formed some conclusions on the basis of the judge’s remarks.” Todd said he may file a motion demanding that Sweeney remove herself from hearing clergy sexual abuse claims.

A former superior court judge, Todd took particular exception to remarks Sweeney made in open court last week, when she rejected a motion to allow Law to delay his continuing pre-



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trial testimony in civil suits filed by alleged victims of the Rev. Paul R. Shanley. "Instead of just denying the motion, as she has a right to do, the judge held a hearing at which she made what I regard to be irresponsible and intemperate remarks that the motion was brought in bad faith in order to 'sandbag' opposing counsel," Todd said. "It seems to me that a judge charging an attorney with bad faith is as serious as an attorney charging a judge with bias and prejudice." Todd also objected to Sweeney's written remarks in a ruling last November, in which she said that evidence in church records contradicts Law's sworn testimony that he and his aides did not, as plaintiffs contend, return some abusive priests to parish work without first determining they posed no risk to children. "Judge Sweeney must have the sense to realize that her remarks prejudice the defendants and my particular defendant, Cardinal Law, in the pending cases before her," Todd said.



Bishop Richard Lennon

The cardinal is scheduled on February 25, to give testimony before a grand jury working under Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly that is looking into possible criminal violations by church officials. Although Law resigned as archbishop of Boston last month due to his role in the clergy sexual abuse crisis, he remains a named defendant in several pending lawsuits charging Boston clergy with sexual abuse.

Judge Sweeney's most direct comments concerning Law were made last November in a written ruling that cleared the way for plaintiff lawyers to obtain the psychiatric records of a priest accused of sexual misconduct. "The actual material before the court includes statements from Cardinal Law that between 1984 and 1989 some offending priests were returned to active ministry when, after treatment, archdiocesan personnel and the Cardinal determined they did not present risks of harm to children," the judge wrote. "Despite this assertion," Sweeney continued, "other archdiocesan records obtained through discovery reveal that some offending priests may well have been assigned to parishes, youth groups and the like, even though the cardinal or other archdiocesan personnel knew that the priests in question were at the least suspected of engaging in continuing sexual encounters with children."

Dangerous

Jeffrey R. Anderson, a Minnesota lawyer who has represented scores of alleged victims of priests, called Todd's remarks "extraordinary and very, very dangerous," but not unexpected. "First they deny responsibility," Anderson said. "When that doesn't work, they blame the victim. Then they blame the parents. Then they blame the media. Now they're running out of people to blame, so they blame the judge. I'm sure that if a jury decides a case against them, they will blame the jury."

Meanwhile, the supporters of those abused by priests have carried their battle into the neighbouring state of New Hampshire.

In the city of Manchester mournful strains of classical music filled the freezing cold morning air yesterday outside St. Joseph's Cathedral as protesters holding pictures of children overhead stepped one by one onto a small stool amid a silent crowd. "Patrick," one woman said. "Abused at age 11." "This is Jamie," said another. "He was abused from age 10 to 14." With the names of those alleged victims - 83 in all - this staid New Hampshire city be-



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came another focal point for the priest sex abuse scandal that has shocked the nation for the past year. focal point More than 200 protesters descended upon the city to show solidarity with the victims and to try to force the resignation of John B. McCormack, the bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire, which is based in Manchester. Demonstrators said McCormack, once the top church official in Boston handling sexual abuse complaints against priests for Cardinal Bernard F. Law, should be held responsible for shielding those priests. "There has been no justice yet for the people sexually abused by a priest, either in the Boston Archdiocese or the Manchester Diocese," said Anne Barrett Doyle of the Coalition of Catholics and Survivors who helped to organize the event. "Bishops throughout the country who protected rapists need to step down." After the 30-minute recitation of names there was a silent march around the towering, red brick cathedral, and finally a series of angry speeches from regional and national leaders of the movement to hold the church accountable for the abuse crisis.

Can't forget

Knots of protesters have gathered for weeks outside the cathedral, but this marked the first demonstration to attract large numbers.

McCormack, who does not regularly say Mass at the cathedral, was in northern New Hampshire during the protest, said Patrick McGee, a spokesman for the Manchester Diocese. He declined to give the bishop's exact location.

McCormack's absence did not diminish the protesters' anger at him. One called the bishop a "devil's minion," while another said, "McCormack can't remember, victims can't forget."