

RECEIVED

19 APR 1996



MEDIA MONITORS

BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT

STATION: 2BL

DATE: 15/04/96 TIME: 0930

PROGRAM: JENNY BROCKIE

ITEM: (S96958002) INTV: BISHOP JEFFREY ROBINSON,
ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY. RE: YESTERDAY'S CONFERENCE
OF CHURCHES CALLED FOR A WIDE-RANGING
INVESTIGATION INTO SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN.

JENNY BROCKIE:

I was interested to note that one the heels of the Wood Royal Commission, revelations about paedophilia, the Catholic Church has begun to examine itself a little critically I think over allegations of sexual abuse. At an international conference over the weekend in Sydney, several leading people from the Church, from various churches, had spoken about a reluctance to honestly face up to the problem and to deal with it openly.

One of the most senior critics of the status quo seems to be Bishop Jeffrey Robinson, who is Assistant Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney. He was widely reported yesterday as being critical of the way Rome has addressed what he sees as a growing crisis within the Church, and he joins me now to talk about that. What are your criticisms of the way the Church in Rome has handled this issue?

JEFFREY ROBINSON:

Can I make one comment about the conference itself first. It was an excellent conference yesterday, and the final session was devoted to

SYDNEY MELBOURNE BRISBANE CANBERRA NEWCASTLE DARWIN HOBART

Media Monitors Australia Pty Ltd 303 Cleveland Street Redfern NSW 2016 Facsimile: (02) 319 4322 Telephone: (02) 310 3155

CCI.0631.00019.0008



MEDIA MONITORS

proposals suggestions, to carry the work of the whole conference forward so that it wouldn't die with the conference. And at one stage one person got up and suggested that there should be a Government inquiry into all aspects of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. And other people on the floor said immediately, why limit to the Catholic Church, why not other churches as well? And then others said why limit it to churches?

The danger if you do that is that then other people in other professions can get away with murder because all the attention in on one group. And the whole conference said, yes, lets look at all aspects of sexual abuse across the entire spectrum. So it was a good conference that had that sense of balance, and didn't seize on one group.

Your question about Rome. I have to say that I don't feel that we've had quite the support, quite the sense of urgency that I'd look for. Quite the sense that this is such a fierce problem facing the Church, and that it must be responded to as courageously as possible.

BROCKIE:

And why do you think that hasn't been there, that sense of urgency about dealing with the problem?

ROBINSON:

It's speculation on my part, but I can only say that I feel they are one removed from it. That is, we're the ones meeting the victims

Page 2

SYDNEY MELBOURNE BRISBANE CANBERRA NEWCASTLE DARWIN HOBART
(02) 310 9155 (03) 9548 9191 (07) 3252 3097 (06) 239 5233 (049) 261 628 (089) 814303 (002) 447 140



MEDIA MONITORS

and listening to them. Not people in, well, it's a central bureaucracy isn't it, it's a bit like Canberra.

BROCKIE:

So is that an indication that Rome is out of touch to some degree on this issue. The Vatican is out of touch?

ROBINSON:

I feel it is. I just have to say I think more would have been said. More leadership would have been given if they were really as touch with it as I would like them to be.

BROCKIE:

What sorts of efforts have been made by people such as yourself to put the Vatican in touch with these kind of issues?

ROBINSON:

They are certainly kept informed of what happens, the situations in the different countries. I'm not sure that they are aware that it goes across most countries in the world, it is not restricted to English speaking ones. I think some of them would tend to think that.

BROCKIE:

Can you describe what you see as the extent of the problem of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church?



MEDIA MONITORS

ROBINSON:

It is hard to come at a figure. What we've done, and what we in our committee, called the Professional Standards Committee, what we are doing, is taking other professions who have said that over the course of a lifetime, approximately 10% of the professionals would cross some sexual boundary. Now that can be anything from a suggestion, a remark, all the way through to rape. So it covers a broad spectrum. But even a suggestive remark shouldn't happen. It is a violation of a sexual boundary, and that some 10% would do that.

Now we have no figures to say that that is the same in the Church, but we are simply using that as a benchmark, assuming that it could well be the same. And unless we got prove to the contrary, that is what we'd continue to work on.

BROCKIE:

10%?

ROBINSON:

That's not saying 10% are guilty of sexual abuse. That it, 10% would cross some sexual boundary.

BROCKIE:

Where is the problem then, do you think? It is a problem of accountability within the Catholic Church? It is a problem to do

Page 4

SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	BRISBANE	CANBERRA	NEWCASTLE	DARWIN	HOBART
(02) 310 3155	(03) 9348 9191	(07) 3252 3097	(06) 239 5233	(049) 261 628	(089) 814305	(002) 447 140



MEDIA MONITORS

with training? How do you account for the problem? What sort of theories do you have about it?

ROBINSON:

Well let me return to what I said at the very beginning. It is not a problem isolated to the Catholic Church, and we do nobody a service if we concentrate solely on the Church.

BROCKIE:

I don't think I'm suggesting that, or anyone would suggest that, particularly in the light of the Wood Royal Commission, but none the less, it is an issue that the Church has to deal with, isn't it?

ROBINSON:

I'm not for a second denying that. There's several avenues that we are trying to follow in that study. All sexual abuse is an abuse of power in a sexual form. So one has to look at power, and when you talk about a church, you are talking particularly about spiritual power. That reverence that people have for their priest. So we've got to look very closely at that, at ideas about power, how it is exercised, how it is misused. That's a very important one.

There has also got to be some forum in which priests and religious, can comfortably discuss psycho-sexual issues. And I'm not sure that forum exists. So it needs to be put in place. We need to look at the kind of person who has been coming into priesthood and religious life, whether some people have been finding it, as it where,

Page 5

SYDNEY MELBOURNE BRISBANE CANBERRA NEWCASTLE DARWIN HOBART
(02) 310 3155 (03) 9348 9191 (07) 9232 9097 (06) 239 3233 (049) 261 628 (089) 814305 (002) 447 140



MEDIA MONITORS

a safe haven from problems somewhere else, so have been bringing those problems into priesthood. There it is also a fact of course, that a lot of those who were abused where themselves once victims of abuse. So that aspect needs to be looked into to.

And of course there is also the question of preparation for celibacy. There is no proof that celibacy itself is the cause. But obviously a bad preparation for celibacy can be.

BROCKIE:

When you say that there is no proof that celibacy is the cause, how can you be sure of that? Or not the cause, but a contributing factor?

ROBINSON:

There is no statistical evidence that celibates are more likely to abuse than other people are. Particularly in relation to minors. That is certainly true. That comes not from whether one is celibate or not. That comes from the particular direction that ones sexual attraction goes. to some people it is to people of the opposite sex, or for others it is people of the same sex. And to some people, it is to minors, or even to children.

BROCKIE:

I'm talking to Bishop Jeffrey Robinson, who is the Assistant Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney about the issue of sexual abuse, and particularly the attempts, or the lack of attempts perhaps, that the Catholic Church has made to really deal seriously with this issue.

Page 6

SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	BRISBANE	CANBERRA	NEWCASTLE	DARWIN	HOBART
(02) 510 3155	(03) 9348 9191	(07) 3252 3097	(06) 239 5233	(049) 261 628	(089) 814305	(002) 447 140



MEDIA MONITORS

He's been critical of the Vatican in not doing more, not recognising more. I wonder if you think that there is a structural problem within the Catholic Church in addressing this whole issue? Just in the way the Church itself is structured?

ROBINSON:

There is a difficulty in talking about "the Church", because in Australia what you have is 31 Dioceses and 128 religious institutes, and each of them is in fact independent. Each of them follows its own methods and criteria. Each of them keeps its own council. The Pope has such power in the Church that actually Catholics guard furiously and jealously whatever freedom and independence they do have, so that even when the Bishops of Australia come together, they have no power to give orders to a single diocese, or to a single religious institute.

BROCKIE:

Does that mean that each of those dioceses then, could be doing more than they are doing?

ROBINSON:

Well what I'm saying is that the response is uneven. Some I think are doing marvellously well. Others are not doing quite as well. It is a little bit like the Federal/State thing in Australia. Most of the time, most people defend the rights of their state. But sometimes they wish the Federal Government to make a uniform policy for the whole country. And in the same way most of the time, most people in the Church warmly welcome any degree of independence or



MEDIA MONITORS

freedom there is. But when you come to an issue like this, you could wish that there was the ability to make everybody do the same thing.

BROCKIE:

I've had a call from Dr Neil Omerod (?). He was part of the organising committee of this conference that was held over the weekend, and who gave a paper at the conference yesterday. I'll just quickly like to go to Neil Omerod. You wanted to make a comment on this?

NEIL OMEROD:

Yes, I wanted to make a couple of comments. One, I think, Jeff and other members of the Professional Standards Committee who attended the conference yesterday are to be applauded for their honesty and their courage. Secondly, I think it is a pity that the press has focused on what Jeff said about the Pope, because I think it is fairly secondary in terms of the overall thrust of what was being said. I think it is perhaps a bit unrealistic to expect the Pope to give leadership to this.

What became clear in the conference presentation was that the committee members had been moved most by their experience or encounters with survivors. And that this was what had changed them and had changed the direction of their thinking and their policy development. And I just don't think the Pope is going to have that much contact with survivors, which would allow such a change of heart to occur.

Page 8

SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	BRISBANE	CANBERRA	NEWCASTLE	DARWIN	HOBART
(02) 910 9155	(03) 9348 9191	(07) 3252 3097	(06) 239 5293	(049) 261 628	(089) 814505	(002) 447 140



MEDIA MONITORS

BROCKIE:

I'd like to get a response to that from Bishop Jeffrey Robinson. It is really backing up what you were saying at the beginning, isn't it?

ROBINSON:

It was a very moving experience yesterday. It was. There were about 80 people in the room, and I would say half of them were victims. And they were people who were really hurting, and after the presentation quite a number of them came up to me and, you know, the hurt is there.

BROCKIE:

And it is fair to say the track record is not good for the Catholic Church on this issue, is it?

ROBINSON:

No it is not. The very fact of the offences has frightened a lot of people. Fear has been a big part of the response, and I think the crucial thing is what Neil has just said. All church leaders must sit down with the victims and listen to them. Nothing, nothing, can take the place of that.

BROCKIE:

Thank you for your time this morning. Bishop Jeffrey Robinson there, the Assistant Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney. Talking



MEDIA MONITORS

about his comments over the weekend, and that conference over the weekend, dealing with the whole issue of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, and also Dr Neil Omerod there who was from St Pauls College, part of the organising committee of that conference.

AGENCY REPORT: For private research and not to be disseminated. Every effort made to ensure accuracy for the benefit of subscribers but no legal responsibility is taken for errors or omissions.

Audio Tapes available for up to six weeks from date of broadcast. Video Tapes available for up to eight weeks from date of broadcast. Please contact Media Monitors if you have queries regarding any of our other services including: Press Monitoring * Media People * Database Research

Page 10

SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	BRISBANE	CANBERRA	NEWCASTLE	DARWIN	HOBART
(02) 910 3155	(03) 9348 9191	(07) 3252 3097	(06) 239 5233	(049) 261 628	(089) 814305	(002) 447 140

CCI.0631.00019.0017