

CHARITY

SVP fends off attack over LGBT grant in Galway

THE SOCIETY of St Vincent de Paul has rejected criticism of its decision to help fund a gay and lesbian resource centre in Galway, writes Sarah Mac Donald.

Bishop Martin Drennan, of the Diocese of Galway and Kilmacduagh, had questioned the donation by the SVP of €45,000 (£36,000) to the Amach! lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender group in a letter to the society's local office and its head office in Dublin.

In a radio interview, the bishop said it was wrong to fund behaviour the Church sees as "morally wrong".

However, the SVP said its donation was made according to its ethos which is "to be non-judgemental when its assistance is sought". The Amach! group has invited the bishop to witness its work which includes suicide prevention and tackling prejudice.

A spokesman for the SVP said none of the money comes from public donations, church gate collections or day-to-day operations.

THE TABLET

The Tablet Publishing Company
Non-Executive Directors

The Tablet Publishing Company, publisher of the weekly journal *The Tablet* and the bi-monthly *The Pastoral Review*, wishes to fill vacancies occurring on its board, which works in a collegial manner to ensure the success of the company and its journals.

Applications are invited from practising Catholics familiar with current religious, cultural, political and social trends and committed to promoting the Christian message in the light of the vision of the Second Vatican Council.

We would be pleased to hear from those with commercial, marketing, legal or publishing (including web-based) experience. We are also keen to increase the number of women on the board.

Directors are required to attend five board meetings in London and a small number of other company events and functions each year. Those interested should contact the Publisher, who can provide a background information pack.

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Jim Dobbin

The Labour MP and pro-life activist espoused causes from equality to an elected House of Lords, and fostered a sense of a Catholic community at Westminster

CHRIS WHITEHOUSE

Jim Dobbin, who died last Sunday during a visit to Poland as part of his work for the Council of Europe, was a popular, respected and effective MP who was renowned for his commitment to the pro-life cause. A devout Catholic, he joined the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-life Group when he was first elected to Parliament and subsequently became its chairman and latterly its co-chairman. He often said that promoting the pro-life cause was the primary reason he wanted to be an MP.

He led campaigns to restrict abortion on the grounds of gender and disability and spoke out against the introduction of mitochondrial transfer, the process of creating embryos using genetic material from three people. He also opposed the creation of animal-human hybrid embryos and any experimentation on the human embryo. He was passionate in his arguments against euthanasia, and opposed China's one-child-family policy.

Dobbin was a close friend and associate of the late Phyllis Bowman and supported her charity, the Right to Life Charitable Trust. Every year since 2000, he had supported the trust's annual sponsored walk, despite the knee pain he suffered in recent years. He appreciated the trust's direct support for the political fight in Parliament and believed the relationship between the trust and the Parliamentary Pro-life Group was essential to the long-term success of the pro-life movement. He was made a Papal Knight of St Gregory in 2008 for services to the Church in public life.

Born in 1941, he was a traditional, left-leaning, lifelong Labour activist and keen supporter of the cooperative movement. He was by profession a microbiologist working in the National Health Service for many years in Scotland and Oldham, having graduated from Napier College, Edinburgh, in 1970.

He was first elected to public office in 1983 as a member of Rochdale Borough Council, serving as chairman of its housing committee and leader of its Labour group, prior to becoming council leader in 1996. He was elected to the House of Commons the following year as the MP for the Heywood and Middleton constituency in Greater Manchester, taking over from Jim Callaghan, but doubling the latter's majority to a staggering 17,000 votes. Despite boundary changes, he held the seat

in general elections in 2001, 2005 and 2010.

Though pro-life causes were his abiding passion, Dobbin was prominent in his role as chairman of several other all-party parliamentary groups including those on the Channel Islands and on tranquilliser addiction. He was also vice chairman of the parliamentary groups on North Korea and on continence care. He voted against legislation to introduce same-sex marriage, but never condemned party colleagues or fellow Catholics who voted in favour. He supported lowering the age of consent for homosexual relationships to 16 on equality grounds. He also supported the creation of a directly elected House of Lords, took a firm line on cowboy builders and secured a dedicated Minister for Ex-Service People.

An active member of the Catholic Legislators' Network, he supported its convenor, Rob Ffello MP, in his efforts to create a real sense of Catholic community in the Palace of Westminster for the first time since the Reformation. He regularly attended the weekly Catholic Mass in the Crypt Chapel of Westminster and was often to be found afterwards in a local Indian restaurant with fellow Catholic MPs and peers.

Dobbin was devoted to his wife, Patricia (who survives him), whom he married in 1964 and with whom he had four children of whom he was proud though never boastful. He was besotted with his grandchildren and spoke of them frequently to friends and colleagues in Parliament.

While forthright in defending the principles in which he believed, he was by character a gentle and sincere man who made friends easily and provided support to many who looked to him for guidance. He was a proud Labour supporter, an effective political operator, a pro-life stalwart, and a loving husband, father and grandfather. The political life of our nation will be impoverished by his passing.

James Dobbin KSG, MP; microbiologist, parliamentarian and pro-life campaigner; born 26 May 1941, Fife; died 6 September 2014, Shupsk, Poland.

Chris Whitehouse KSG is managing director of a Westminster political consultancy, a trustee of the Right to Life Charitable Trust and secretary of the Catholic Legislators' Network.



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