THEY'RE TRYING TO TREAT CHRISTIANS LIKE SMOKERS

July 28, 1994 *by Phyllis Schlafly*

Bigotry is back in style. All of a sudden, such words as "Christian," "religious" and "fundamentalist" have become trendy epithets of scorn and smear, obviously calculated to stir up hatred, division and fear.

Where, oh where, are the people who, for the last several years, have been preaching the Holy Commandments of "tolerance," "diversity," "nonjudgmentalism," "multiculturalism," and "Big Tent"? They seem to have gone under a rock somewhere, while Christian-bashing has stormed into fashion.

Three disparate groups have joined the assault, each seeking its separate political goal. And, of course, the media find it exciting to report; it stirs the juices, and groups can be baited to make critical comments back and forth in 20-second soundbites.

As chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Rep. Vic Fazio's (D-CA) assigned task is to elect Democrats to Congress in the November elections. Having pondered the impending loss of 25 to 50 Democratic seats, plus the inadvisability of debating Clinton's agenda or behavior, he decided he would rather fight a strawman.

So Fazio called a news conference and unleashed a vitriolic attack on the "fire breathing Christian radical right." That started an orchestrated smear campaign.

Democratic consultant Mark Mellman launched his own broadside against "card carrying members of the flat earth society." The White House Bulletin quoted one Administration official as characterizing the involvement of Christians in politics as "a cancer in the Republican Party."

Democratic Party Chairman David Wilhelm chimed in, saying that the GOP is "under the sway of radical Christian conservatives." The *New York Times* laced its news reports with charges that "fervent Christians" and "foot soldiers of fundamentalism" are "retrograde forces."

Joycelyn Elders's intemperate outbursts are probably not orchestrated by anyone. She's always been a loose cannon. During her tenure in Arkansas, she demonized her opponents as "very religious non-Christians" and the Catholic Church as the "celibate male dominated church." She says Clinton "loves" what she is doing.

The second group that has joined the sport of Christian-bashing is the liberal, country-club Republicans who were left in the shadows during the Reagan years and are now trying to take control of the Republican Party away from the conservatives. Since the Republican liberals don't have enough warm bodies to win Party primaries or conventions, they prefer to fight Party battles in the media.

The liberal Republicans would rather lose with their own nominees than allow conservatives to win. Liberal Republicans are the kind of people who switched to support Lyndon B. Johnson rather than allow Barry Goldwater to be elected President.

The new voters who have come into the Republican Party because of moral and social issues are the principal reason why Republicans have won so many elections. Republican candidates lost big-time in the years when the so-called Religious Right wasn't around to help; e.g., in Barry Goldwater's 1964 race and Gerald Ford's 1976 race.

The third leg of the Christian-bashing cabal is the group that hates Christians and wants to push them completely out of public, political and commercial life. Essentially, their game plan is to treat Christians like our society has begun to treat smokers.

This means that Christians will be tolerated so long as they don't mention anything about religion in any public, party or school gathering. The aim is to make Christians embarrassed to admit, much less profess, their faith in public, and reduce them to the status of smokers catching a quick smoke in a dark alley.

This aggressive secularist drive is the explanation for the Clinton Administration's proposed EEOC guideline banning from the workplace as "discrimination" even the simplest expression of religion, such as wearing a cross or bringing a Bible to work. Fortunately, this malicious proposal was repudiated by Congress.

Prior to the mid-1970s, the party apparachiks could safely ignore Christians because the percentage of church-going Christians who voted was too small to appear on the radar screen of party officials and campaign consultants. The emergence of the pro family movement, starting in 1975, changed all that, and machine-building politicians of both parties resent the entry into the political process of blocs of voters they can't control and can't buy.

Thus, demonizing Christians serves the political goals of all three factions: the Democrats who are desperately trying to win the 1994 elections, the liberal Republicans who seek to take over the Party and reduce conservatives to peons who provide the votes but never select the nominees, and the aggressive secularists whose goal is to put religion in the closet and pretend it doesn't exist except in private.

It's in the best interests of all Americans to identify and repudiate this systematic campaign of bigotry and epithets directed against Christians and religious conservatives. Political campaigns should be about issues and the candidates, not about roasting religion.