

THE SOBRAN CONTROVERSY National Review Editor William F. Buckley publicly

disassociates himself with his senior editor over anti- Israeli commentary.

In this morning's C-SPAN call-in program, National Review Senior Editor Joe Sobran, who's been the center of much controversy recently because of differing opinions with his boss, editor William F. Buckley, was asked to comment upon Buckley's recent editorial suggesting that Mr. Sobran will 'In the weeks and months to come...argue his positions in such fashion as to svoid affronting our national allies.' C-SPAN asked: Is that a statement that says you better get in line or you won't be writing for National Review anymore?"

Joe Sobran: "Well I'm not too clear on what it means. I don't think it means quite that. But you wonder after something like that happens, of course. I must say I'm still kind of flabergasted by it. I mean, apparently it's all right for us to appear in Penthouse magazine, which is what Bill has done many times, but not to write genuine opinions that affront Israel. I don't get it. I mean, it makes no sense to me. There's no need for (Buckley) to disassociate himself from my views--they appear under my byline in my column. I don't endorse all of his views either. Life's not like that. I don't understand the kind of hysteria behind this piece.

C-SPAN: What is your personal relationship with Bill Buckley under the circumstances?

Sobran: Well, it's still pretty good. I can't pretend it's what it was. I mean, I really didn't care for this statement, but he wasn't trying to harm me. Believe it or not, he was trying to help and the result has just been a terrific spate of publicity about this business that wouldn't have otherwise occurred I'm sure.

C-SPAN: In Newsweek's July 7 piece on the whole uproar, writer Jonathan Alter suggests that your regrets are largely tactics...

Sobran: I don't think I did anything wrong. I'm sorry if my views offended anyone, but they are my views and I try to put them as gently as I can in most cases. So, yeah, given that I do tend to speak a little acerbicly at times and, yeah, I'm not down on my knees crawling and begging Mr. Alter's forgiveness. He's trying to herd the non-Jews into agreement and submission in my opinion.

C-SPAN: What did you think of Alter's piece in Newsweek?

Sobran: Well, He didn't do much reporting because he was so busy arguing with me. I think he seemed a little bit rattled. He didn't give a very good background on the thing. He didn't even state the points very accurately.

C-SPAN: Have any of your papers dropped your column?

Sobran: Only one or two.



The Sobran Scandal from the July edition of The American Spectator - What Happened?

"Well, that was a very minor kind of skirmish. That was a controversy about whether I should have reviewed a book by William Buckley. And I did -- in another magazine, the American Spectator. It wasn't so much that I gave it a favorable review because everybody who reads the Spectator is likely to be a Buckley fan anyway, but that I try to analyze the source of Buckley's appeal for millions of people. Any way, this kind of intersected with another controversy at The New Republic where the same book of Buckley's had been reviewed by a guy named Henry Fairlie who had a kind of old grudge against Buckley. The question was raised whether a guy who hated Buckley and was attacked in his book should review that book. The New Republic book editor defended himself saying yes, that what was improper was a staffer of Buckley's to be reviewing Buckley's book. So I wrote about that little controversy when that came up.

There's a Newsweek piece by Jonathan [redacted] who quotes Sobran as saying "I will think twice before again addressing the topics which have brought such pain." BPL asks What was he talking about?

"The thing was they didn't stop with attacking me, I can take that. I'm used to being abused. I know all these dirty tricks. I've been called so many names it doesn't bother me much any more. But then, you see, the black ball was applied to National Review and Bill Buckley and the gang. All sorts of people were calling on them, on Bill Buckley to fire me."

Why?

"For allegedly being a biggot."

When?

"Oh, about a mont ago."

A column written in the National Review?

"No. For columns written on my own -- my own syndicated column."

What was the column that tripped the reaction?

"Oh there were a series of them. I've been criticizing the Israeli lobby, or Israel inparticular I should say, as an unreliable ally."

"I think that alot of people get the impression, and I had it too before I was in the media myself -- you get the impression that there is a big conspiracy -- well there isn't. What there is is a kind of very suffocating etiquette. People are voluntarily



observing a lot of conventions that they don't have to observe and that does stifle the truth. I think that is just what Bill Buckley has done. I think he's going to give the naive reader the impression that he's under terrific pressure from Jews. Well, he's not. He's under terrific internal pressure. He thinks he has to maintain a certain kind of appearance that he doesn't really have to. He does not <sup>bear</sup> ~~bare~~ any malice toward Jews. I know that. He does not have to worry about appearing to if he criticizes the Jewish lobbies and Jewish interests of various kinds. He can afford that, and we all ought to be more candid about it, because believe me you just can't scare-up enough people for a Nazi party in this country. It's not there, the potentiality is not there. Let's stop worrying about each other. Feeling guilty about the Holocaust and try to avoid something that nobody has ~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> intention of doing."

Has he personally talked to you physically about this?

"Oh yeh. Sure, and he was very fatherly about it and very nice. He's a very sweet man. He was worried about my future more than anything. At some point after that talk, before he wrote this (Buckley's editorial disassociating himself and National Review from Sobran's anti-semitic statements) he got to the point where he was worried about the magazine too. He doesn't have to worry - you don't have to worry. Let's be polite and civil and all that, but let's not pull our punches because we're afraid it's going to cause some gigantic racial conflagration. It's not going to happen."