

ACT UP DEFACES CATHOLIC LEAGUE ADS

On June 1, the MTA posted 2500 anti-condom ads sponsored by the Catholic League. The ad said: "Want to Know a Dirty Little Secret? CONDOMS DON'T SAVE LIVES. But restraint does. Only fools think condoms are foolproof. Remember, better safe than sorry."

Even before the Catholic League's ads were posted, there were calls to censor it. The most prominent person calling for censorship was New York City Councilman Thomas Duane. But the reaction since the ads have been posted has moved from threat to action. In addition to seeing first-hand the defacement of many Catholic League ads, employees of the League have received dozens of phone calls from New Yorkers describing the mutilation of the ads. But now Act Up has actually organized a campaign to censor the ads.

As reported in the June 22nd edition of the New York Times (and as verified by calls from League supporters), the Youth Education League of Act Up has pasted its own handbills on the Catholic League ad. The commentary includes a sentence on the benefits of condoms preceded by the following: "It is no secret the Catholic League would sooner see you die than use a condom."

In a statement released today, Dr. William A. Donohue, President of the Catholic League, offered the following comment:

"When the Gay Men's Health Crisis put their offensive ads in the subways this past winter, the response from the Catholic League was to criticize the ads. It did not deface or remove them. Nor did it learn of any such attempts to do so from any segment of the Catholic population. But the situation of the

Catholic League's ads is different. Gays have phoned the Catholic League taking credit for vandalizing the ads and the Youth Education League of Act Up has engaged in a concerted effort to censor the ads throughout the subway system.

"That a contingent of Act Up would engage in fascistic maneuvers is hardly surprising. It was Act Up, after all, that previously busted into St. Patrick's Cathedral and desecrated the Host by spitting it on the floor. Anti-Catholic bigotry, then, is a defining characteristic of this gay group.

"The purpose of the Catholic League's ad was to challenge the reigning orthodoxy on the wonders of condoms. It was not promoting the idea that death is preferable to condom use. Only that restraint makes more sense than the mindless distribution of condoms to youngsters. The Catholic League is willing to debate this point with all responsible parties.

"The Catholic League has contacted the MTA about this problem and they have ordered an immediate clean-up of its ads. The League is grateful for this response and expects that the more than 1200 reserve ads that it paid for will be used to replace the defaced ads."

The Catholic League is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.