

BORDERS BALKS

One of our members from Bohemia, Long Island went book browsing at Borders on a Sunday evening and walked away angry. His anger was fed by what he encountered in the "Religion" section of the store. There he found a quartet singing anti-Catholic songs. The quartet, billed as a "lesbigay" group, started singing lines like "Jesus loves me yes I know," followed by attacks on Jesus and Christians.

Bob Micca, who brought this to our attention, said that one of the lesbians began blasting the Catholic Church, especially priests, for its teachings on sexuality (e.g., condoms make priests afraid, etc.) The group was part of the Dream OUT Loud series, a set of programs featuring homosexuals during Gay Pride Month; they tour various Borders stores on Long Island, singing their message of hate to everyone, like it or not. It says something, not favorable to Borders, that other bookstores on the island refused to host them.

Rick Hinshaw wrote a letter to the owner of the Bohemia store, sending a copy to its headquarters in Ann Arbor, Michigan. When he received no response, William Donohue called the owner, who, in turn, referred him to headquarters. That's when the fun began.

Donohue was told that Borders believes in free speech and would never censor anyone. Donohue told the spokesman that no one has a constitutional right to speak in any privately-owned bookstore and that Borders makes decisions every day on which books to stock: it does not make Borders a censor, he said, simply because they refuse to stock most books that come to their attention.

The Borders representative continued to say that people have a right to sing about whatever they want, using any lyrics they find appropriate. Donohue replied, "Would you allow a group to

sing about blacks and gays using lyrics such as niggers and queers?" Finally, he got the point.

What happened next was an investigation of the matter by Borders. They concluded that they could not substantiate the allegations, but they also said that "We take issues such as those raised in your letter very seriously" and pledged to intervene if something like this happens again.

Had Borders not balked in the first place, perhaps things might have been different. At any rate, the only way we could get through to them was to make an analogous case that tapped their sensitivities. In other words, we have a long way to go.