

# BOY SCOUTS TOOK THE INCLUSION BAIT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the fate of the Boy Scouts:

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is exploring the possibility of declaring bankruptcy. How could an organization which had roughly 5.5 million members in the early 1970s, and now commands only 2.3 million, collapse so rapidly?

Several factors are at work, but none are more important than the left-wing assaults on the BSA, and the role of molesting Scout masters.

In the early 1990s, I was asked by the Center for the Study of Natural Law at the Claremont Institute in California to write a monograph on the problems facing the BSA. The second edition of *On the Front Line of the Culture War: Recent Attacks on the Boy Scouts of America* was published in 1993, the year I came to the Catholic League. More than any other left-wing entity, it was the ACLU that first declared war on the BSA.

The ACLU started suing the BSA left and right, and this, in turn, inspired other left-wing organizations to do likewise. The ACLU sued over the Three “G’s”—Gays, Godless, and Girls—hoping to force the organization to allow homosexuals, atheists, and girls to join. While the BSA officials initially fought these efforts, they eventually succumbed to the politics of inclusion, changing its traditional standards to appease its critics.

History shows, however, that hard-core ideologues are not interested in being appeased—they are interested in winning. In this case, victory meant the demise of the BSA.

The only one of the Three “G’s” that the BSA held the line on

were the atheists. But even there, the organization that prided itself on honoring the Judeo-Christian ethos adjusted its sails to appease its critics. So they let anyone join who professed a belief in anything, ranging from devotees of Zeus to Wiccans.

Allowing girls to join the BSA was long considered a non-starter: after all, there is an organization called the Girl Scouts of America. But to zealots this is not enough—their radical egalitarian agenda demanded that the girls crash the BSA. Last year, the BSA gave in and allowed girls to join.

Two things immediately happened: the BSA lost 425,000 members in the month it made the announcement (October 2017), and last month the Girl Scouts sued them as well. Inclusion anyone?

The biggest headache for the BSA came from homosexual activists. They won the support of the media, higher education, left-wing legal groups, even corporate America. In 2013, the BSA allowed homosexual boys to join and in 2015 it ended its ban on gay adult leaders. In 2017, it yielded again, ruling that biological boys who identify as girls can join. Not much left after that.

In 1920, ten years after the BSA was founded, it started a “red flag” system to identify adult males who were known to sexually abuse the boys and young men. It would later be known as the “Ineligible Volunteer Files,” commonly referred to as the “perversion files.”

Fast forward to October 2012. The Oregon Supreme Court ordered the release of 1,200 confidential files detailing cases of sexual molestation that occurred between 1965 and 1985. It was this that started a wave of lawsuits, with victims, alleged and real, seeking lucrative financial settlements. This proved to be devastating.

In 2012, the *Los Angeles Times* also got its hands on 1,600 confidential files dating from 1970 to 1991. In most cases,

the BSA found out about the sexual abuse after it had been reported to the authorities.

It is hard to say exactly how many of the molesters were pedophiles (those who hit on prepubescent boys or girls) and how many were homosexuals (those who hit on postpubescent males). For reasons that are entirely political, the media have shown no interest in getting to the bottom of this.

Why the left-wing assault on the BSA? It is a bastion of traditionalism, and that is one thing the Left hates, especially the core Judeo-Christian values. It is also a voluntary organization, one of the most important intermediate associations in the nation; these social institutions separate the individual from the state.

Leftists are nothing but statist: They want the power to control the people. Thus, anything that stands in their way—such as the family, church, and voluntary associations (the BSA)—are an obstacle to the power and reach of the state. Following the philosophy of Rousseau, these institutions must be destroyed.

Would matters have turned out differently had the BSA officials not adopted the politics of inclusion? Hard to say, but at least they could have made their mark in the culture war. Instead, they caved, and now they are paying the price.