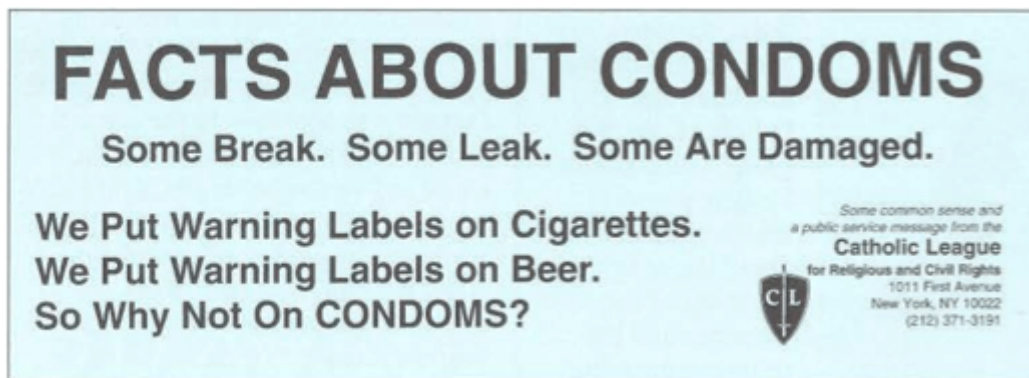


League Public Service Ads Provoke a Strong Response

The latest installment in the Catholic League's public service ad campaign came in November in Washington D.C., where fifty buses carried seven foot long posters of the ad. The ad appears in the box below.



The ad provoked a large and controversial response. In response to correspondence related to the ad, the Surgeon General's office called to ask for the data which we used to support our claims.

Another interesting result of the ads was the Whitman-Walker AIDS Clinic press conference, which was organized specifically to denounce the League's ads. In his opening remarks, the executive director, Jim Graham, condemned the League's ads for encouraging ignorance about AIDS. He added that "We are not standing alone in our fight against the Catholic League." The next speaker was Mr. Cornelius Baker, Director of Public Policy for the National Association of People with AIDS. He called the message "wrong and misleading. For the Catholic League to send the message that condoms are ineffective is to contribute to murder." As for the idea that warning labels should be put on condom packaging, Mr. Graham's response was simply, "I say, put a warning label on the Catholic League."

In dismissing the idea of warning labels, the Walker-Whitman

director showed a casual disregard for human choice and responsibility. This disregard was further evidenced in the confident dismissal of self-control as a means of fighting AIDS (“...we will continue to advocate the use of condoms as the only effective method to prevent the spread of AIDS for people who are sexually active”). It was only highlighted by the list of critical points for their upcoming public announcements. The first read, “Get tested for HIV and tell – for the first time we are saying that this is the responsible thing to do.” What were they saying before? No need to tell your partner as long as you use a condom? In this manner, with alarming ease, the fatal consequences of condom failure and the security of abstinence were swept under the rug.

The story was picked up by the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, the *Blade* (the Capitol’s gay newspaper) and **News Channel 8 TV**, where Catholic League board member Kenneth Whitehead was interviewed on behalf of the League. He clarified the position behind the League’s ads, saying, “Unfortunately, condoms are not perfect. Some break, some are defective, some leak. It’s responsible to warn and inform that individual of the possible dangers, just as we would put a warning label on a drug.”

The Catholic League will continue to work to see that the Catholic position on these issues is given a public hearing and that Catholics can speak out on public crises without defamation or discrimination.

As for the suggestion that a warning label be put on the Catholic League, we take that as a backhanded tribute to our effectiveness.