

# OREGON D.A. LOSES IN COURT

On January 27, a federal appeals court ruled that the District Attorney who authorized the bugging of a confessional last year in Oregon violated the constitutional rights of the priest and penitent involved in the case. The Associated Press story on this issue correctly said that the court decision "represents a victory for the Catholic Church in Oregon and a defeat for the Lane County Prosecutor."

The ruling also represents a victory for the Catholic League. It was the league that led a national outcry against the surreptitious taping of the confession between Father Tim Mockaitis of Eugene, Oregon and Conan Wayne Hale, a man suspected of a crime. Father Mockaitis, unbeknownst to him, was taped when administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation; it was District Attorney Doug Harclerod who authorized the bugging. The circuit court ruled that both the priest and the penitent had their First and Fourth Amendment rights violated.

The taping took place on April 22, 1996. In early May, a reporter for the Eugene *Register-Guard* discovered in court records that Harclerod had authorized the bugging. The reporter, Bill Bishop, called the Catholic League to alert us to this violation and the league, in turn, led a massive public relations campaign against the D.A. The league got Harclerod to apologize and pledge never to do this again. The league also secured the support of Congressman Peter King who introduced federal legislation forever barring this practice again.