

POPE IS ANTICHRIST?

On Interstate 5 near Medford, Oregon, is a billboard that reads, "The Pope is the Antichrist." The Catholic League got involved by joining with local Catholics to protest the sign. A spokesman for the owner of the billboard, Outdoor Media Dimensions, initially said he wasn't sure whether he would post any more anti-Catholic messages once the contract for the offensive ad expires next spring. Then he changed his mind and said he wouldn't.

The ad was paid for by Larry Weathers, a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Remnant Ministries (a splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventists); many such ads have appeared since 1993 in the southern part of Oregon. The Catholic League's strategy was to show the hypocrisy involved: the owner initially said that while he doesn't endorse the anti-Catholic message, he felt comfortable posting the ad because of his commitment to free speech.

We decided to call the company's bluff. We contacted Outdoor Media Dimensions with a proposal. We said we were prepared to pay for a billboard along Interstate 5 near Medford that reads, "Outdoor Media Dimensions Sponsors Anti-Catholicism." "If free speech is their god," William Donohue said, "they'll go for it."

The company's first reaction was to deny us our request. Then, on the same day they said they wouldn't renew the contract with Weathers, they said we could put up our sign. We decided not to, having gotten what we wanted.