

REAPING LAST YEAR'S HARVEST

In 2007, the Catholic League vehemently protested an exploitative movie that debuted at the Sundance Film Festival, "Hounddog." Those behind the film, which featured a rape scene of 12-year-old actress Dakota Fanning, were so shaken up that when "Hounddog" finally hit the big screen in September of this year, the worst parts of it were completely excised.

Similarly, last year we waged a strong protest against Miller Brewing Company for sponsoring an obscene, anti-Catholic display, the Folsom Street Fair; the San Francisco event is held at the end of September every year. There was no Miller sponsorship in 2008.

We ended last year with a boycott of "The Golden Compass," hoping to hurt its sales and make it unlikely that a planned sequel would be made. It appears we've seen the last of Philip Pullman's works to hit the big screen.

We took on the movie "Hounddog" because we wanted to send a message to the cultural elites in New York and Hollywood: their anger over a small minority of priests who have molested youngsters is belied by their robust embrace of movies that sexually exploit children. Quite simply, if sexual molestation of minors is immoral—and it is—then it is also immoral to sensationalize such degradation in a movie.

We did more than issue a news release—we asked for a federal investigation into the movie. Our position was that the child pornography statutes may have been violated. Fortunately, the Justice Department agreed with us and turned the case over to the FBI. All of this effectively killed any prospect of "Hounddog" being picked up by a reputable distributor.

When "Hounddog" was released this fall, filmmaker Deborah Kampmeier admitted that "Fifty percent of the footage is different," adding that "the film is much more nuanced." Eric

Parkinson, the chief executive of the movie's distributor, Empire Film Group, was more blunt: "We knew there was a lot of negative publicity. But we predicated our deal not on the Sundance cut [the original version]; we made it on the new cut, which is substantially different."

The Folsom Street Fair protest last year was occasioned by the Miller Brewing Company's adamant refusal to apologize for sponsoring an incredibly offensive event. Every year at this "street fair," homosexual men have sex in the street, get whipped in public and engage in grotesque anti-Catholic acts. San Francisco is so far gone that the police are instructed to do absolutely nothing while sodomy, mutilation and Satanic acts are conducted in broad daylight.

We pressed Miller to issue four apologies for four specific outrageous incidents. When it decided to issue only one, we launched a boycott of Miller beer and launched a huge PR campaign against the Milwaukee brewer: we sent graphic photos of what went on to all Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim clergy in Milwaukee, as well as to Miller officials and community leaders.

The avalanche of bad publicity, coupled by a boycott led by a great Chaldean Catholic from Michigan, Mike Setto, proved too much for the company. Miller delivered on the other apologies and made it clear that it was not about to sponsor this sick event ever again.

At the end of last year, we called for a boycott of "The Golden Compass." The movie, based on the first book of Philip Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, did well in Europe but it did not do well in the United States. We objected to the movie not because we thought it was profoundly anti-Catholic, but because the watered-down film might prove to be "bait for the books." In other words, unsuspecting Catholic parents might buy the trilogy for their children if they found the movie unobjectionable. That was the danger—the books are

clearly anti-Catholic.

We had another objective and that was to hurt box office sales to such an extent that it would kill the chances of making a movie based on the second book of Pullman's trilogy. Well, it appears we have succeeded. In an article in the U.K. publication, *The Independent*, it recently said that it looks "increasingly unlikely" that "the planned film sequels" will be made. Plans have been "put on ice following the fervent Christian protests surrounding the first film, which led to boycotts and box office disappointment in the United States." In other words, we won.

We fight these fights whether we win, lose or draw. It's always nice to win, even if sometimes it takes a while to reap the harvest.