

SOFT-CORE BIAS

Some expressions of bias are of the flagrant, in-your-face type, what can be called the hard-core version. Others are not so noticeable—they are more of the soft-core variety. But both are a problem, and while the latter may not be as offensive, in many ways it is more insidious. It certainly is more difficult to combat. Take, for instance, two recent examples, both served up by the *New York Times*.

Whenever there is a march in urban areas, the police give an estimate of the size of the crowd. They may not be correct, but whatever figure they offer, it is accepted as the official count. The march's organizers will frequently provide their own figure, which, not surprisingly, is always higher than the official one.

At this year's Gay Pride Parade in New York City, the *Times* never cited the police estimate. But it did say that "by the thousands—700,000 according to parade organizers—participants marched joyously." Some also marched without their pants. More to the point, we can never remember the *Times* asking the organizers of a pro-life march how many showed up. That they show up with their pants on really isn't newsworthy, which is why this omission is understandable.

The World Church of the Creator is what attracted Benjamin Nathaniel Smith, the young man who went on a killing spree over Fourth of July weekend, killing two and injuring twelve in Indiana and Illinois. "Promulgating an anti-Jewish, anti-black, anti-Christian doctrine," the *Times* wrote, "the group [World Church of the Creator] has increased chapters from 13 to 41 in 17 states in the last year, experts on hate groups and the group's leader say."

That was fine, but what caught our eye was the omission of any reference to Christians in the break-out heading that appeared

within the text of the story. What was printed was, "Pushing an anti-black and anti-Jewish doctrine, a burst of growth."

This was done intentionally. The damage? Lots of people don't have time to read an entire story so they scan as best they can. The result in this case is that they never would know that the World Church of the Creator is anti-Christian.

Soft-core bias may be hard to root out, but it is no more tolerable than the more egregious examples we spend most of our time fighting.