

OPEN LETTER TO MAYOR DAVID N. DINKINS

September 20, 1993

Hon. David N. Dinkins
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mayor Dinkins:

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is disturbed that the Metropolitan Transit Authority has permitted VH1, the MTV outlet, the right to conduct an ad campaign that is highly offensive to Roman Catholics and to other Christians as well. Throughout the city, there appears on the sides of buses and on the back of public phone booths a picture of the pop star, Madonna, and a picture of Our Blessed Mother with baby Jesus. In between the two photos is the VHI inscription "The Difference Between You and Your Parents."

We have no doubt that if the picture consisted only of Our Blessed Mother and Jesus that it would not have been approved by the MTA. That, we are convinced, would have offended too many people and thus not have been sanctioned. Why, then, has the MTA allowed the posting of an ad that Catholics find offensive? Have we come to the point that the only Catholic symbol allowed on public property is one that has been blasphemed?

The Catholic League does not hold you, Mayor Dinkins, directly responsible for sanctioning this ad. But this issue did occur on your watch and that is why we hope you will authorize the removal of this ad and attend to disciplining those responsible for it.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President
Catholic League

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE NOMINATION OF DR. ELDERS

September 2, 1993
National Press Club, Washington, D.C.

The nomination of Dr. Joycelyn Elders to be Surgeon General is not something that any of us can take lightly. While some of us are primarily disturbed by the substance of her positions, and others are primarily disturbed by the tone of her remarks, all of us agree that Dr. Elders has a record that is profoundly troubling. We feel confident that if the American people knew as much about Dr. Elders as we do that they would surely share our convictions.

Dr. Elders believes that the best way to combat teenage pregnancies is to freely distribute condoms to public school students. But the evidence is not supportive of this approach. Under her tenure as director of the Arkansas Health Department, the teen pregnancy rate rose by 12 percent in the 11 Arkansas counties that had school-based clinics. What is most striking about this figure, however, is that it was a complete turn-around: in the period just prior to Dr. Elders' tenure, the teen pregnancy rates had actually declined. Indeed, one of the reasons why the condom-giving approach failed in Arkansas was that a large portion of the condoms were defective. Dr. Elders knew this to be true yet

inexplicably continued the distribution program.

Now consider, for a moment, what would happen if a candidate for a position in the Department of Defense knew that the missile system that he had trumpeted had already proven to be a failure, and that, worse still, many of the missiles had in fact been shown to be defective. Is there any wonder what would happen to his nomination?

Just as troublesome is the cavalier attitude that Dr. Elders exhibits towards condoms: "I tell every girl that when she goes out on a date, put a condom in her purse." Now that may pass as responsible in some quarters, but most parents, we believe, would agree with us that that it is the wrong message to send to adolescents, many of whom are struggling to practice a degree of restraint.

Even more objectionable, however, is the following comment, made by Dr. Elders on April 2, 1993: "We have had driver's ed for our kids. We've taught them what to do in the front seat of the car, but not what to do in the back seat of the car." It would be instructive to know who should be teaching what technique to these youngsters. The much reputed "condom plant" that Dr. Elders proudly displays in her office suggests that whatever method is taught, no lesson will be complete without a "how-to" session on the proper application of condoms.