

A MINI “CHARIOTS OF FIRE” STRIKES THE U.S.

The national Junior Olympics qualifying competition scheduled volleyball games on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, with no time allotted for attending religious services. The alleged reason for this scheduling was to “unify the nation” by having every part of the country participate in the trials over the same weekend.

The league learned of this move about one month before Easter and immediately sent a letter to Ms. Kerry Klostermann, the executive director of USA Volleyball, expressing our grievance. We stressed the need for her organization to accommodate the religious rights of Catholic and Protestant participants in the games.

At press time, the outcome of this case was unknown. But one thing is for sure: whoever thought he could “unify the nation” by scheduling the games on Good Friday and Easter Sunday obviously doesn’t know just how disingenuous he is.

DAVID BOWIE MOCKS CHRIST

The rock star, David Bowie, is featured in a promotional for his latest work standing with his arms outstretched, palms up, staring upwards with a halo of lights surrounding him. Obviously posing as Christ, the singer’s ad appeared in *Pulse*, a magazine for young people published by Tower Records. If this is supposed to be cute, it fails. The league let Tower Records know why.

CATHOLIC-BASHING PLAY TO HIT HAWAII

“Tony and Tina’s Wedding,” a play that takes pot shots at Catholics, is about to run in Hawaii. The play, which hit Off-Broadway in 1988, is a stage show about an Italian American wedding that features a pregnant bride on drugs and foul language. The wedding ceremony is a mock rendition that includes a crude characterization of nuns and priests; it is also one that defames Catholicism.

The league has contacted individuals in Hawaii who are most likely to have an adverse impact on the play’s success.

BEWARE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATORS

In the February edition of educational journal, Phi Delta Kappan, there appeared an article by author Alfie Kohn entitled, “How Not to Teach Values: A Critical Look at Character Education.” Kohn argues that it is not a change in the character of students that should be sought, but a change in “educational structures,” the result of which ideally will mean “turning schools into caring communities.”

How Kohn expects to accomplish his vision of schools as “caring communities” without addressing the debased character of many of today’s students he does not say, but that is not the league’s concern. What the league is concerned about is Kohn’s stab at Catholic educators.

Kohn says that character education relies, in part, on religion. Anticipating criticism for what he is about to say, Kohn opines that “it is of no relevance that almost all of the leading proponents of character education are devout Catholics. But it is entirely relevant that, in the shadows of their writings, there lurks the assumption that only religion can serve as the foundation of good character.”

This is truly remarkable. If the Catholicity of many pro-character education scholars “is of no relevance,” then why did Kohn feel compelled to make it relevant? And while we’re at it, just how does Kohn know that the authors he is speaking about are “devout”?

Imagine for a moment if someone said that “it is of no relevance that almost all of the leading proponents of abortion are non-observant Jews,” and then tried to squirm out of it by saying that what counts is the assumption that only a secular approach to the subject of abortion makes any sense. No one in his right mind would understand that as anything less than an anti-Semitic slur. Similarly, no one in his right mind can understand Kohn to be doing anything but engaging in Catholic-bashing for writing what he did.

Many thanks to Boston University professor Kevin Ryan (cited by Kohn as one of those “devout Catholic” troublemakers) for bringing this magic to our attention.

ALBERT SHANKER SHOWS BIAS

Just a few weeks before he died, Albert Shanker, the long-time head of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), impugned the good will of Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews by making a derogatory statement about both groups. In speaking about his

decision to rethink the right of communist teachers to be in the classroom (he was previously opposed), Shanker remarked that communists have no monopoly on blind obedience and robotic thinking. "Take Orthodox Jews and Catholics, for example," he said.

The league sent a letter stating its objections to Sandra Feldman, president of the UFT. We branded Shanker's comment as "pure, unadulterated bigotry."

JAY LENO GRANTS APOLOGY

On February 7, *Tonight Show* host Jay Leno once again offended Catholics, this time by commenting that there is a Catholic church that features "all you can eat Communion." The day before, Leno referred to a Catholic school as "Our Lady of the Evening."

After the league verified the comment about Communion, a letter was sent to the executive producer of the *Tonight Show*. Within one week, the executive producer phoned Dr. Donohue to listen to his complaint. The response she offered was unsatisfactory; she then said that Jay himself would call, which he did.

Donohue spoke with Leno for ten minutes explaining why jokes about the Eucharist are not synonymous with jokes about Catholic school traditions. He was convinced that Leno meant no harm and was especially grateful that Leno extended a sincere apology.

During the conversation, Donohue said that a person who really offends him is Howard Stern. It was good news to hear Leno say that just recently he took a bible away from Stern as he was

about to go on the show.

According to Leno, he tells some 11,000 jokes a year and sometimes does unwittingly offend people. What pleased the league was his forthrightness and honesty in admitting a mistake and his willingness to apologize.

FLORIDA PROFESSOR APOLOGIZES

A professor in the Continuing Education department at the University of Central Florida has been using e-mail to send anti-Catholic “humorous” statements to her students, as well as to others. When this was brought to the attention of her superiors, the league was extended an apology.

The league was upset with such comments as: a) “When Jesus broke the bread at the Last Supper he said, ‘Take this all of you and eat it, for this is my body...’ He did not say, ‘Eat me.’” b) “The Virgin Mary is not referred to as the ‘Mary with the Cherry.’”

The league is pleased that two school officials met with the professor and that they successfully urged her to send an apology to her students. We were also assured that this would not happen again.

HMO AD WITHDRAWN

It wasn’t the worst ad we’ve seen, but it wasn’t acceptable, either. “Why was Jesus born in a manger?”, the ad questioned,

to which the reply came, "Because Mary and Joseph belonged to an HMO!"

This ad was placed, without authorization, in the New Jersey editions of the New York Times. The newspaper wasn't happy with the clandestine tactic used by the advertiser and we weren't pleased with the ad itself.

We are happy to report that the offending party got the message from both sides. In a letter to us, he said that "Obviously, I was wrong and I am sorry." We're satisfied.

LeVar BURTON APOLOGIZES

LeVar Burton, of Roots fame, made a devilish remark about the Catholic Church on the TV show, "Politically Incorrect." On the February 10 episode of the talk show, Burton delighted the live audience when he quipped, "I can say with conviction that the Roman Catholic Church is evil."

After Burton made this remark, the show's host, Bill Maher, tried to give him an out and Burton only half took it. He said what he meant was that it was the sisters he was exposed to in elementary school that were the real problem.

The league was incensed with Burton's comment and let the show's producer and Burton's book publisher know it. In the end, it was Burton to whom we wanted to express our outrage. We did.

On February 27, Burton called Dr. Donohue. Quite unlike Jay Leno, Burton was aggressively defensive about what he said. When pressed, Burton remarked that what he meant to say was that religion has caused a great deal of harm in world

history.

Donohue's rejoinder was that Burton is a lousy communicator as that was not even close to what he said. Donohue, who first took issue with the inaccuracy of Burton's clarification, wanted to know why his religion was singled out for scorn. He said to Burton, "If I went on TV and I said that African Americans have some real problems, and then you called me for a explanation, I don't think you'd buy it if I said that what I really meant is that all races have problems."

Donohue then said that he hadn't heard what he wanted to hear. Being more explicit, he said he wanted an apology. Burton retorted, "You haven't heard that," to which Donohue answered, "no." At was at this point that Burton rendered his apology.

ANOTHER ANTI-CATHOLIC PLAY

Continuing the trend of playwrights who delight in bashing the Catholic Church, Colleen Werthmann has made her contribution in *Catholic School Girls Rule*. The play, which was performed in a public school in New York's Greenwich Village, is described as "excavating the bonny surface of parochial life." "Is there any better preparation for catharsis," says the promo on the play, "than an all-girls Catholic school? In the Midwest, no less)."

It is a telling commentary on the play that a sympathetic reviewer used four-letter words to convey the message inherent in the performance. The one-woman show is replete with attacks on nuns and the saints and is peppered with obscenities.